

Mike Steele War History
Research Foundation



His Vision for Germany
And the White World

Research Work
and from the Archives
of
Hagur 88/14

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Introduction

White Survival Today in this Islamic Invasion

The loss of racial identity in the Western world is symptomatic of a deeper crisis within the European peoples, whose culture and technology have provided the world with much of what we know today as modern civilization. At its core, the crisis is the inevitable consequence of a profound, and perhaps fatal, misunderstanding of the nature of morality. We have lost sight of ancient and eternal laws of Nature on which our civilization must be based if we are to survive. We no longer have the luxury of indulging in Universalist altruistic principles that, no matter how noble they may appear, have driven us to the brink of ruin.

Demographic projections based on American and European immigration policies, as well as the evidence of one's own senses as one walks the streets of any large Western city, point to a bleak future. Within a century or two, perhaps less, the peoples of the West, those whose ancestry derives from the Nordic and Alpine sub races of Europe will have ceased to exist as a cohesive entity. How quickly the end will come depends on immigration rates, differential birth-rates among ethnic groups, and mixed-race childbearing rates. But the final outcome is fixed so long as we adhere to our present course.

And yet, frank discussion of the outcome, the submergence of the race that produced the world's first, and perhaps only technological civilization, is usually silenced with words like "racist," "bigot," and "xenophobe." Neither the flawed moral system that enforces this silence nor the people who support it will outlive the demise of the West. But when the West is gone, it will be of little consolation that those responsible will have expired as well. If we are to reverse course, it is vital that we take steps now, before it is too late.

If, today, the West's moral system is flawed, how can it be corrected? The first question we must ask is whether it is moral for ethnic groups as well as individuals to seek survival. And if so, what are the moral actions we may undertake to secure survival? What must be the moral basis of our civilization if it is not to be lost? In his book, "Destiny of Angels", Richard McCulloch calls these questions a matter of "ultimate ethics."

The Moral Dilemma of the West

The dilemma of our people is the product of a deep misconception about nature and morality. It arises from the mistaken, sentimental belief that altruism can be

extended beyond its evolutionary origin--kinship and within-group altruism--to the whole of humanity. It results from failure to accept the role of genetic factors in defining human temperament and potential.

The standards that govern public debate are reminiscent of the Dark Ages in that they have no basis in science or in human experience. Instead, they consist of moralistic assertions derived from a world view rooted in radical egalitarianism. The long term consequence of adherence to these principles is rarely examined, let alone subjected to scientific scrutiny.

Most Western people would agree that an innate sense of right and wrong plays a key role in the Western moral system, a system that values individual worth and reciprocal fairness. The tragedy of this moral view is that it has been extended to the world at large--seemingly the most noble behavior humanity has ever exhibited--and has become the threat to the survival of the West.

As biologist Garrett Hardin¹ demonstrated in his 1982 essay, "Discriminating Altruisms," universalism--a chimerical One World without borders or distinctions--is impossible. Groups that practice unlimited altruism, unfettered by thoughts of self-preservation, will be disadvantaged in life's competition and thus eliminated over time in favor of those that limit their altruistic behavior to a smaller subset of humanity, usually their own genetic kin, from whom they receive reciprocal benefits.

Professor Hardin writes:

"_Universalism" is altruism practiced "without discrimination" of kinship, acquaintanceship, shared values, or propinquity in time or space To people who accept the idea of biological evolution from amoeba to man, the vision of social evolution from egoism to universalism may seem plausible. In fact, however, the last step is impossible Let us see why.

"In imagination, picture a world in which social evolution has gone no further than egoism or individualism. When familialism appears on the scene, what accounts for its persistence? It must be that the costs of the

¹ **Garrett James Hardin** (April 21, 1915 – September 14, 2003) was an American Ecologist who warned of the dangers of overpopulation. His exposition of the “tragedy of the commons”, in a 1968 paper called attention to "the damage that innocent actions by individuals can inflict on the environment". He is also known for Hardin's First Law of Human Ecology: "You cannot do only one thing", which expresses the interconnectedness of every action.

sacrifices individuals make for their relatives are more than paid for by the gains realized through family solidarity...

"The argument that accounts for the step to familiarise serves equally well for each succeeding step--except for the last. Why the difference? Because the One World created by universalism has--by definition--no competitive base to support it . . . [Universalism] cannot survive in competition with discrimination." [emphasis in original]

Professor Hardin adds:

"[W]e must not forget that for three billion years, biological evolution has been powered by discrimination. Even mere survival in the absence of evolutionary change depends on discrimination. If universalists now have their way, discrimination will be abandoned. Even the most modest impulse toward conservatism should cause us to question the wisdom of abandoning a principle that has worked so well for billions of years. It is a tragic irony that discrimination has produced a species (*homo sapiens*) that now proposes to abandon the principle responsible for its rise to greatness." It is to the advantage of non-Europeans, virtually all of whom retain their cohesion as distinctive, discriminating groups, to exploit the economic wealth and social order of the West, benefits many demonstrably cannot create for themselves. When this cohesive drive is placed in competition with self-sacrificing Western altruism, there can be only one outcome. In the near term, Europeans will be displaced by groups acting in their own self-interest. In the long run, biological destruction awaits us. Since those who displace us do not, by definition, maintain our moral standards -- for if they did, they would not be replacing us -- our flawed moral system will vanish with us.

The fact that universal, self-sacrificing altruism destroys its practitioners is its most obvious flaw. Any survivable moral order must recognize this.

The Cosmic Race

The dream of a Utopia in which racial harmony prevails, has never come true. Today, racial encroachment is a threat to the very existence of Western peoples. Lawrence Auster, author of "The Path to National Suicide, An Essay on Immigration and Multiculturalism," has elsewhere summarized the situation thus:

"Modern liberalism told us that racial differences don't matter, and on the basis of that belief, liberals then set about turning America into a

multiracial, integrated, race-blind society. But now that very effort has created so much race consciousness, race conflict and race inequality, that the same liberals have concluded that the only way to overcome those problems is to merge all the races into one. The same people who have always denounced as an extremist lunatic anyone who warned about 'the racial dilution of white America,' are now proposing, not just the dilution of white America, but its complete elimination. Race-blind ideology has led directly to the most race-conscious -- and indeed genocidal -- proposal in the history of the world."

This change of strategy was signalled by the cover story of a Fall 1993 special edition of "Time". The story featured a computer synthesized image of a woman representing the intermixture of all of the ethnic population elements of the United States in their present proportions. The subliminal message conveyed by this computerized android, obviously still of predominantly European ancestry, was:

"Don't worry, this is harmless." Or, in the current idiom of multiculturalism, "let us celebrate our diversity." Of course, this image represents the utter destruction of diversity, not its conservation.

This computer-generated android is a lie. The American population base is in a state of rapid change. Whites are now having fewer children, and there are thus fewer whites of child bearing age than "Time" assumes. This is happening worldwide. The question is, what would be the result of this plan being carried forward on a larger scale, carried to its logical conclusion in a world sans borders? Time's android is but a way station on the road to what some lovingly call the Cosmic Race.

People of European ancestry constitute something over ten percent of the world's population, but since 1980, white births amount to only a little more than five percent of the world's new children.

The birth rate in the West has fallen to dangerously low levels, now about 1.8 children per woman. A level of 2.1 is required to balance deaths. Birth rates in the third world remain very high, thanks in large measure to the infusion of Western food, medicine, and "peacekeeping."

Because people are not computer morphs but have discrete ancestors, let us assume that the fraction of people with European ancestry is now one-sixteenth of the child-bearing population. When the Time experiment is complete on a world-wide scale, the resulting human will have only one white great-great-grandparent. He will be visibly Asian since about 60 percent of the world's

population is Asian. In round numbers, this amounts to ten of the sixteen great-great-grandparents, including four from China alone. Three would come from India and three more from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Africa would supply three and non-white Latin America and the Caribbean basin the remaining two.

In this scenario, which is already unfolding on the North American continent and in Europe and Australia, the single European ancestor would leave no discernible residue in "homo cosmicus". Europeans would be extinct, fulfilling the nightmare vision that Jean Raspail described in "The Camp Of The Saints". This is not a condemnation of any real human being with such an ancestry. Nevertheless, this process would eradicate the biological diversity that multiculturalists claim to cherish. In its place would be only uniformity, the irreversible submergence of all races.

The passing of any race is an event of great significance. The destruction of an entire population is, in fact, genocide by the definitions of the UN Genocide Convention, which defines genocide as ". . . the destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial or national group. The acts so defined include. . . the destruction of the conditions of life necessary for the physical existence of the group"

The debate about race must be framed in these terms in order to convey its true importance. The battle cannot be won by allowing the other side to limit the terms of debate by declaring certain subjects beyond discussion. The consequences are too important.

The Dual Code of Morality

Why, though, does race matter? The answer lies in the biology of genes and in the impact of genetic kinship on altruism. For many decades, altruism was a paradox for theories of evolution. Darwin himself realized that altruism was difficult to explain in terms of individual "survival of the fittest." In his book, "Race, Evolution and Behaviour," Philippe Rushton² writes,

² **Jean Philippe Rushton** (December 3, 1943 – October 2, 2012) was a Canadian psychology professor at the University of Western Ontario who became known to the general public during the 1980s and 1990s for research on race and intelligence, race and crime, and other apparent racial variation. His book *Race, Evolution and Behaviour* (1995) is about the application of r/K selection theory to humans. Rushton's controversial work came under attack within the scientific community for the quality of the research, and attacked by some even for being "racist". From 2002 he was head of the Pioneer Fund, a research foundation accused of being racist.

"If the most altruistic members of a group sacrifice themselves for others, they run the risk of leaving fewer offspring to pass on the very genes that govern the altruistic behaviour. Hence, altruism would be selected against, and selfishness would be selected for."

Prof. Rushton suggests that this paradox is resolved by genetic similarity theory, a field pioneered by biologist W.D. Hamilton and others. Prof Rushton writes:

"By a process known as kin selection, individuals can maximize their inclusive fitness rather than only their individual fitness by increasing the production of successful offspring by both themselves and their genetic relatives Genes are what survive and are passed on, and some of the same genes will be found not only in direct offspring but in siblings, cousins, nephews/nieces, and grandchildren thus, from an evolutionary perspective, altruism is a means of helping genes to propagate."

Over time, kin selection has resulted in a dual code of morality, an altruistic code for one's genetic kin and a non-altruistic code for everyone else. Anthropologists have suggested that humans evolved through a process of migration and tribal warfare between groups composed of genetically related individuals. In "A New Theory of Human Evolution", Sir Arthur Keith wrote:

"The process which secures the evolution of an isolated group of humanity is a combination of two principles . . . namely, cooperation with competition I hold that from the very beginning of human evolution the conduct of every local group was regulated by two codes of morality, distinguished by Herbert Spencer as the 'code of amity' and the 'code of enmity'."

Garrett Hardin writes:

"The essential characteristic of a tribe is that it should follow a double standard of morality--one kind of behaviour for in-group relations, another for out-group."

In-group relations are characterized by cooperation while out-group relations are characterized by conflict. Liberals have tried to discredit the role of tribal conflict, claiming that such distinctions have been lost as groups reached nation size. But in so doing, they miss the vital message of genetic similarity theory. National ethnic groups represent the growth and consolidation of genetically related tribes over time.

Professor Hardin argues that, because of the nature of altruism and competition, the dual code of morality is inescapable and cannot be eliminated from human society:

"In the absence of competition between tribes the survival value of altruism in a crowded world approaches zero because what ego gives up necessarily . . . goes into the commons. What is in the commons cannot favor the survival of the sharing impulses that put it there--unless there are limits placed on sharing. To place limits on sharing is to create a tribe--which means a rejection of One World. . . . A state of One World, if achieved, would soon rediscover into an assemblage of tribes."

The in-group out-group distinction still operates today; it is only the battleground that has shifted. Tribal warfare has been replaced by territorial irredentism and competing birth-rates.

The liberal campaign to eliminate feelings of national, cultural, or racial solidarity among Western peoples was undertaken largely in the hope that the abolition of "tribalism" would inaugurate an era of world peace. As Professor Hardin has shown, tribalism cannot be eliminated. Worse still, any idealistic group that unilaterally dismantles its own tribal sense will be swept away by groups that have retained theirs. Unless the current direction is changed, the West will be destroyed in this new form of biological warfare.

The dual code of morality is therefore the cornerstone on which any enduring moral order must be based. It is also an answer to the question of ultimate ethics posed earlier: "Is it moral for ethnic groups to seek to survive?" Since it is impossible to eliminate "tribes" from the human race, the answer to this question must be yes. That which is built inextricably into the laws of the universe cannot be immoral.

Universalists might try to caricature the dual code of morality as an invidious double standard, but it is something we practice every day without even thinking about it. Without it, no group, be it a family, club, corporation, political party, nation, or race would exist. It is how groups distinguish between members and non-members. Employees of the same company treat each other differently from the way they treat competitors. Members of the same political party cooperate with each other and run against opponents. Families draw sharp distinctions between members and strangers. It is easy to overlook the dual code of morality precisely because it is so fundamental a part of human nature.

The "code of amity, code of enmity" explains racial loyalties. It is an extension of the biologically necessary fact that parents love their children more than the children of strangers. Such feelings are normal and natural. Yet "racism" has

become the curse-word that stops discussion. Those who use the word as a weapon say that racial loyalty is racism when exhibited by whites but is justifiable pride when exhibited by non-whites. The word is simply a means of gaining power over people who have exaggerated moral scruples.

The Biology of Diversity

Feelings of racial loyalty are grounded in biological differences. These are discussed authoritatively in J. Philippe Rushton's "Race, Evolution, and Behavior", but they do not imply that one race has a right to rule over another. Frank discussion of real differences must not be considered morally repugnant. Scientific truth cannot be racism, at least not in the pejorative sense that the word is now used.

Most forms of behaviour (by whites) that are characterized as racism do not involve unprovoked assault on people of other races, but are simply the natural loyalty of humans for their own group. They are necessary for survival. Unprovoked violence is a moral evil, but by all statistical measures, whites are overwhelmingly the victims of crimes of racial violence, not the perpetrators.

Blacks are twelve percent of the population but commit almost two-thirds of the violent crime in America, are over twelve times more likely to murder whites than the reverse, are more than a thousand times more likely to rape white women than the reverse, and choose whites as crime victims fifty percent of the time compared to whites choosing blacks as victims only two percent of the time.

Interracial crime is just one manifestation of a fundamental biological principle called Gause's Law of Exclusion. In his book, "The Mammals of North America", University of Kansas biology professor Raymond Hall states the law as follows: "Two subspecies of the same species do not occur in the same geographic area." [emphasis in original] One will inevitably eliminate or displace the other. Prof. Hall specifically includes humans in this rule: "To imagine one subspecies of man living together on equal terms for long with another subspecies is but wishful thinking and leads only to disaster and oblivion for one or the other."

Oblivion need not come in the form of physical destruction. It may simply involve the loss of habitat. Harlem, Watts, East St. Louis, and many other black neighbourhoods were once occupied by whites. The arrival of blacks (or other non-whites) in sufficient numbers makes it impossible for whites to survive, whereas the process does not work in reverse. Even without the carnage of inter-

racial crime, whites could be eliminated through sheer loss of territory. Viewed in biological terms, ethnic diversity is prelude to destruction.

The great majority of people, of any age and origin, do not concern themselves with the rise and fall of civilizations. Like fish in water, they are conscious of their environment only when it changes rapidly and threateningly, a rarity in most people's lifetimes. Yet civilizations do fall, and the warning signs for ours have been present for more than a century. Rudyard Kipling's line, "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," presaged the message of early twentieth century Americans, Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, whose books, "The Passing of the Great Race" and "The Rising Tide of Colour", helped bring about the immigration restrictions of 1924.

The 1924 national origins quota system was dismantled in 1965 during the wave of self-recrimination that accompanied the Civil Rights era. Should Chinese historians of the twenty-second century be writing the final history of Western civilization, no doubt they will cite the 1965 Immigration Act as the blow that broke the back of Western man.

Elmer Pendell³, in his book, "Why Civilizations Self-Destruct", surveyed historians' theories as to why civilizations fall. They include Oswald Spengler's analogy to individual aging and death, theories of moral decay, and theories based on ecological deterioration. Concerning the latter, Garrett Hardin notes in "The Limits of Altruism":

"No civilization has ever recovered after ruining its environment."

All of these theories have their appeal, yet none is a complete explanation for what is happening to the West.

Pendell's own hypothesis seems closer to the mark. A civilization arises when natural selection produces a people of above-average intelligence. As the founders conquer natural culling forces, those who would have been removed from the population due to their lesser abilities survive and produce more children than the more intelligent founders. Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin and author of "Hereditary Genius", first noted that 'men of eminence'

³ **Elmer Pendell** (1894–1982) was an American sociologist. Elmer Pendell studied population issues, and acquired his B.S. at the University of Oregon, M.A. at the University of Chicago, LL.B. at George Washington University and Ph.D. at Cornell. Dr Pendell's teaching career has included posts at the Universities of Nevada, Arkansas and Oregon, as well as Jacksonville State University and Cornell. He is the holder of a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Service Cross. He served with the 168th Aero Squadron in France during World War I.

have fewer children than the average. Eventually the intelligence level of the population falls below that needed to sustain civilization.

Pendell suggests another factor in the collapse of civilizations, the gradual adulteration of ethnically homogeneous founding populations through losses in wars and, in ancient times, the taking of slaves. The modern analogue of slavery is immigration.

Tenny Frank⁴, in his book "History of Rome", wrote, "The original peoples were wasted in wars and scattered in migrations and colonization and their places were filled chiefly with Eastern Slaves." We cannot speak of the spirit of Rome or the culture of Rome, Frank said, "without defining whether the reference is to the Rome of 200 BC or 200 AD."

Theodor Mommsen wrote in "The History of Rome", "The patrician body. . . had dwindled away more and more in the course of centuries and in the time of Caesar there were not more than fifteen or sixteen patrician gentes (clans) still in existence." In 9 A. D. laws were passed requiring each patrician family to have three children. Lead poisoning has been implicated in the failure to reverse the decline of Roman blood, but the reasons do not change the outcome. Even in ancient Rome, slaves did not stay slaves forever, and their gradual suffusion through the population by intermixture would have contributed to Rome's demise. The same situation, massive infusion of non-Western peoples and a birthrate below replacement level, threatens the West, and for reasons quite unrelated to lead poisoning.

After The Fall

Eric Fischer, writing in "The Passing of the European Age", said that a new civilization never arises where an earlier civilization has died. If Pendell's theory is correct and if the hypothesis of Tenny Frank and others explains the loss of a hereditary capacity for civilization, then Fischer's observation has a genetic explanation. Civilization cannot arise on the site of an earlier civilization once the hereditary character of the people is permanently altered. This process is happening in the Western world today through immigration, welfare, and liberal policies that promote the submergence of ethnic groups into a global "melting pot."

Should the West suffer the fate of Rome, there will be no recovery. Whether or not other civilizations arise among other peoples remains to be seen. Present economic success indicates that East Asia may be a future center of civilization.

⁴ **Tenny Frank** (born Clay Center, Kansas, USA May 19, 1876; died April 3, 1939, in Oxford, England) was a prominent ancient historian and classical scholar.

However, modern innovations flow predominantly from the creative wellsprings of the West. Whether innovation could be sustained in the absence of Western peoples remains to be seen. There is evidence that this might not happen; intelligence testing of Asians shows a relatively small standard deviation, suggesting a smaller right tail of the IQ distribution and a smaller percentage of innovative individuals.

Although dire predictions about the future are often ridiculed, it is wise to remember Rome--catastrophes can and do occur, and in a globally linked world, the consequences could be shattering.

In "The Limits of Altruism", Garrett Hardin cites Harrison Brown, author of "The Challenge of Man's Future", as the first person to recognize the vulnerability of the West's advanced civilization. Brown focused on the role of metals in modern civilization and on the technology required to obtain metals. Prof. Hardin summarizes the situation:

"Looking only at the copper component of the problem, we should note that preliterate man managed to create the Bronze Age only because of the ready availability of copper ores assaying greater than 20 percent. . . . Only the most primitive of means are required to process high grade ores. But now we are reduced to extracting our copper from ores that assay less than 1 percent, and soon we will have nothing better than 0.1 percent. It takes a very sophisticated technology to deal with low-grade ores, a technology that only a large population of technologically advanced people can muster."

Prof. Hardin continues,

"Our many technologies form an incredible network of mutual support, mutual dependence. If this network were disrupted . . . it is doubtful if our kind of technology could ever be rebuilt. . . . On all counts, it looks as though our civilization, once fallen, will never be replaced by another of comparable quality."

Prof. Hardin suggests two possible causes for the destruction of modern civilization: nuclear warfare and a population crash brought on by exceeding the Earth's carrying capacity. However, "genetic submergence of the peoples with the innate ability to sustain civilization" will do just as well

The Roots of Western Order

The Map of Freedom, published annually by Freedom House, graphically demonstrates that free forms of government generally track population concentrations of people of European descent, a strong suggestion that freedom has a genetic origin. Although there are exceptions, notably Japan, which lost a nuclear war to the West and had a Western constitution imposed on it, the world of the free is largely the world of the Western European. The partially free include newly emerged Eastern Europeans and a scattering of other nations around the world. Much of Africa and Asia remains in the not free category.

Thomas Jefferson foresaw this. Fearing "importation of foreigners," he wrote in "Notes on Virginia",

"They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, or if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as usual, from one extreme to the other. . .

In proportion to their number, they will infuse into it [the nation] their spirit, warp or bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted
mass."

Because economic inequality between groups inevitably produces envy, stable societies are almost always homogeneous. Multi-ethnic and multicultural societies live on the edge of dissolution. In such cases, the role of government turns to conflict management, as Brent Nelson points out in "America Balkanized". "Government as conflict management is an emerging theme of public life in the U.S., a theme which recurrently manifests itself in the concepts of dialogue, mediation, sensitivity, tolerance, and balance. The latter terms are increasingly the shibboleths of American public life. The fiction is maintained that these concepts . . . will produce a final resolution of intergroup conflicts. . . .

[T]he reality is something quite other." Laws against "hate crime" and "hate speech" reflect that other reality.

If today's ethnic minorities become a majority it will be beyond the power of Western peoples to control, peacefully by means of the ballot, the destiny of the nations that were once their own. There is no guarantee that protections prevalent in Western societies will be preserved in societies that become non-Western.

There is no historical reason to believe that governments based on principles of individual liberty will survive the disappearance of Western peoples.

Post-colonial Africa is enlightening. For the most part, the Dark Continent is reverting to its ancestral ways, suitably updated by the infusion of Western weapons, as evidenced by carnage in Somalia and Rwanda. That this disturbs our heightened Western sense of compassion is understandable. But sentimentality should not blind us to the long term implications for our own survival. Nature's books are being balanced in Africa, and they will be balanced in the West, either by us or by Nature itself. Just as giving food to people who cannot feed themselves simply hastens an inevitable population crash, bringing third world people into the West simply hastens the transformation of the West into an extension of the third world.

The European tradition of ordered, self-governing liberty is probably part of our genetic heritage. Throughout the third world, governments range from anarchy to dictatorship. That too, is surely genetic. Those few non-European countries that appear to be free have generally maintained democracy through intimate contact with the West. If Europeans are marginalized and ultimately absorbed by the third world, the idealism of Western liberalism that permitted the third world invasion will have proved to be a lethal genetic flaw.

Few concepts are more ingrained in Western thought than respect for the "rule of law." The West has a history of order that predates the eight-hundred-year-old Magna Carta. Roman Law was supreme in the Mediterranean world for nearly a thousand years. Unique among the peoples of the earth, the people of the West recognize, at least in theory, the subordination of government to individual rights. But laws have been instrumental in bringing on the current crisis. Although there is virtually no popular support for immigration in the Western world, it is everywhere proceeding under laws passed by governments elected by the people.

In the end, laws are no better at ensuring liberty than the people who make and enforce them. Sir Roger L'Estrange⁵ said, "The greatest of all injustice is that which goes under the name of law." America's Founders recognized the existence of a natural order to freedom that supersedes laws made by men. Although the American concept of liberty owed much to British and French political thought, the American act of creation, the Declaration of Independence, provided perhaps the best-known expression of "natural law" ever penned. Writing about securing "unalienable Rights" endowed by "Nature and Nature's God,"

⁵ Sir **Roger L'Estrange** (17 December 1616 – 11 December 1704) was an English pamphleteer, author and staunch defender of Royalist claims. L'Estrange was involved in political controversy throughout his life. Perhaps his best known polemical pamphlet was *An Account of the Growth of Knavery*, which ruthlessly attacked the parliamentary opposition, placing them as "dissenting fanatics" and truly beyond the pale.

Thomas Jefferson ⁶wrote:

"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, having the foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The rights Jefferson identified, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," were set forth by George Mason in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, ratified on May 6th, 1776. Mason's work was the basis for Jefferson's statement, but the Mason version is superior because it eschews Jefferson's poetic nonsense about all men being created equal. Mason's language still stands as a monument of Western political thought:

"[A]ll men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety."

Mason's words are preferable to Jefferson's for two reasons. First, he said that men are "equally free," not "equal." The difference is vast. There is ample evidence that Jefferson understood the difference as well as Mason, but much of the dispossession of Europeans in their own homelands can be traced to exploitation of this egalitarian philosophy by later Western liberals. Second, Mason states directly the central thesis of natural law:

"People cannot, by any agreement, deprive their posterity of rights. Natural law is therefore the fulcrum on which rests the case that immigration is genocide. The governments of the West have no right to impose present levels of immigration and race mixing on their people. Nor are we morally bound to accept them."

⁶ **Thomas Jefferson** (April 13, 1743 (April 2, 1743 O.S.) – July 4, 1826) was an American Founding Father, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the third President of the United States (1801–1809). At the beginning of the American Revolution, he served in the Continental Congress, representing Virginia and then served as a wartime Governor of Virginia (1779–1781). Just after the war ended, from mid-1784 Jefferson served as a diplomat, stationed in Paris. In May 1785, he became the United States Minister to France.

The Ultimate Moral Principle

Mason recognized the role of "safety" as a motive for the creation of law and government. Others have said the same thing.

William Blackstone wrote, "self-defence is justly called the primary law of nature. . . [It] cannot be taken away by the laws of society." Jefferson wrote, "A strict observance of the written laws is doubtless "one" of the highest duties of a good citizen, but it is not "the highest". The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation."

Their message is simple. Laws alone, independent of their survival utility, are not, and cannot be, the underlying basis of civilization. In the end, whoever makes and enforces the laws has the power to determine who lives and who dies. "Survival is the ultimate principle upon which all enduring moral systems must be based." This is the third, and final, cornerstone of any permanent moral order, for any people who "divest" their posterity of the right to existence will vanish, and their flawed moral system will vanish with them.

All systems of law and government must serve the imperative of survival. Speaking on the eve of the War for Southern Independence, and in the aftermath of John Brown's attempt to incite a slave uprising at Harper's Ferry, President James Buchanan expressed the fear felt by white Southerners who saw their very existence imperilled: "Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and therefore any state of society in which the sword is all the time suspended over the heads of the people must at last become intolerable." Where law and survival were in conflict the Founders took their cue from Cicero: "Laws are silent in the midst of arms."

The West is surrendering the power of life and death into the hands of third world aliens. In a world ruled by the dual "code of amity, code of enmity," this decision, which was never subjected to systematic scrutiny by an informed electorate, is tantamount to suicide. Sometime in the next century, the sword Western society has suspended over its own head will become intolerable. What our response will be remains to be seen. If there is no response, the long descent into night is sure to follow

Which Way Western Man?

What would be lost with the passing of Western civilization and its peoples? Two thousand years ago, the Roman historian, Tacitus, wrote in "De Germania" that the peoples of the Germanic tribes possessed a fondness for personal freedom, an independence of spirit, an unusually high status accorded women

and a deep affection for the land. These traits have survived twenty centuries. Without the West, will the spirit of individual liberty persevere? The Map of Freedom suggests not. Despite the tendency of liberals to denigrate the only culture on earth that would tolerate their presence, these virtues uniquely characterize only Europeans and their civilization.

Now, the descendants of those same Germanic tribes, the ancestors of much of the white world, and the creators of the only advanced technological civilization the world has ever known, are on the road to extinction. Do Western moral principles require that its creators commit suicide in order to fulfil those principles? "Such a belief is insane". It therefore follows that if the West is to survive it must come to grips, as Jean Raspail foresaw, with the profoundly destructive nature of its moral beliefs.

Any enduring moral order must be based on the following principles:

“A dual code of morality, which is of evolutionary origin, binds the members of ethnic and racial groups together; universal, self-sacrificing altruism in a world in which racial cohesion is elsewhere the norm is lethal; and the imperative of survival and the primacy of self-preservation supersede all laws made by man.”

What then, must we do? Raymond Cattell, in his book "A New Morality From Science: Beyondism", called for a reversal of the universalist creed and creation of many social laboratories where evolution can proceed without harm or subjugation of anyone by anyone else. Wilmot Robertson urged this path as the basis of nationhood in "The Ethnostate". Richard McCulloch has elevated this principle to a "racial Golden Rule" in "The Racial Compact".

The only course that gives cohesive groups a chance to survive is ethnic separation. Without separation, the dual code of morality will ensure a long, chaotic period of strife and bloodshed. Eventually, what racial conflict does not finish, miscegenation, diminished birth-rates, and physical and psychological displacement will. Personal liberty and individuality, without which Europeans simply cannot exist, will disappear long before the European genetic heritage is completely submerged. Lest this outcome seem remote and therefore of no concern, let the time scale of Rome's decline be always kept in mind. Though those reading this may or may not live to see the collapse of the West, the white children being born today may well suffer it.

Jean Raspail⁷ also believed that the end was not far off. In the introduction to the 1985 edition of "The Camp of the Saints", he wrote, "The Roman empire did not die any differently, though, it's true, more slowly, whereas this time we can expect a more sudden conflagration Christian charity will prove itself powerless. The times will be cruel."

Louis Veuillot, the 19th century French writer, captured the dilemma facing the West in confronting peoples who do not conform to Western moral principles. "When I am the weaker, I ask you for my freedom, because that is your principle; but when I am the stronger, I take away your freedom, because that is my principle." The West must recognize this appeal for compassion by "the wretched refuse of [the non-Western world's] teeming shore," for what it is: a form of beguiling parasitism that can, by definition, only seduce those with Western moral principles.

In "The Decline of the West", Oswald Spengler⁸ wrote, "One grows or dies. There is no third possibility." The peoples of the West must come to believe in and act in accordance with the only moral principle Nature recognizes: for those who live in harmony with Nature, survival is moral. For those who do not, the penalty is extinction. Without this understanding, Western Man, progenitor of law, compassion, technology and a spirit of quest that is unparalleled in the history of the human race, will perish at the hands of those who do not possess the same innate spark. For the sake of our children who are yet to be, let us choose life--by whatever means we must--while the choice is still ours.

⁷ **Jean Raspail** (born 5 July 1925 at Chemillé-sur-Dême, Indre-et-Loire) is a French author, traveler and explorer.

⁸ **Oswald Arnold Gottfried Spengler** (29 May 1880 – 8 May 1936) was a German historian and philosopher whose interests also included mathematics, science, and art. He is best known for his book *The Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*), published in 1918 and 1922, where he proposed a new theory, according to which the lifespan of civilizations is limited and ultimately they decay.

A few thoughts about the White Race

What exactly is meant by the White race? Essentially there are three main sub groupings to the White race, with two further divisions of note. The three major sub groupings are known to academics as Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean.

The White Race is often called the Aryans but that is wrong, as only Indians are Aryans as clearly stated in the Bhagavad Gita, from my own translation work:

**sri-bhagavan uvaca
kutas tva kasmalam idam visame samupasthitam
anarya-justam asvargyam akirti-karam Arjuna (2.02)**

sri-bhagavan uvaca -- the Supreme Lord said; *kutah* – whence, wherefrom; *tva* – upon you, unto you; *kasmalam* -- dejection; *idam* -- this; *visame* – in perilous strait, in this hour of crisis; *samupasthitam* – comes, arrived; *anarya* -- persons who do not know the value of life; *justam* -- practiced by; *anaryajustam* – unworthy (unaryanlike); *asvargyam* -- which does not lead to higher realms, spheres, heaven excluding; *akirti* -- infamy; *akirti* -- the cause of; *akirtiakirti* – disgraceful; *arjuna* -- O Arjuna.

The Supreme Lord said: From where has this dejection come into your mind in this perilous hour? This is unknown to an Aryan, not leading to heaven but causing disgrace, O Arjuna. (2.02)

Although these names have come about mainly as a result of the geographic areas these sub groupings have been associated with in the Christian era (Nordics in northern Europe, Alpines in central Europe and Mediterraneans in southern Europe) it is incorrect to believe that these groupings always occupied these regions. These three main sub groupings have played a role in events in almost every geographical region where the White race as a group has appeared.

Of these three original groupings, only two are existent in any large numbers today: the Nordics and the Alpines. The original Mediterranean of ancient history are not to be confused with those people loosely termed "Mediterranean" today - the present day inhabitants of the Mediterranean region are largely mixtures of several races, with the original White Mediterranean component for the greatest part having long since been submerged amongst invasions first of the Nordic and Alpine White sub-groupings, and then under Nonwhite Arabic, Turkish and other Middle Eastern and North African racial groupings.

To illustrate the concept of these three main sub groupings: although there is a broadly termed "Black race" in existence, there are major sub-groupings amongst that racial grouping: the Congo basin Pygmy and the ultra tall Masai

tribesmen of Kenya are two good examples of sub groupings within the Black racial group.

A sub grouping is therefore a branch of a particular race which exhibits slightly different physical characteristics but still shares enough of a common genetic inheritance with other sub-groupings to be included in a broad racial category.

The Categories among the White Race

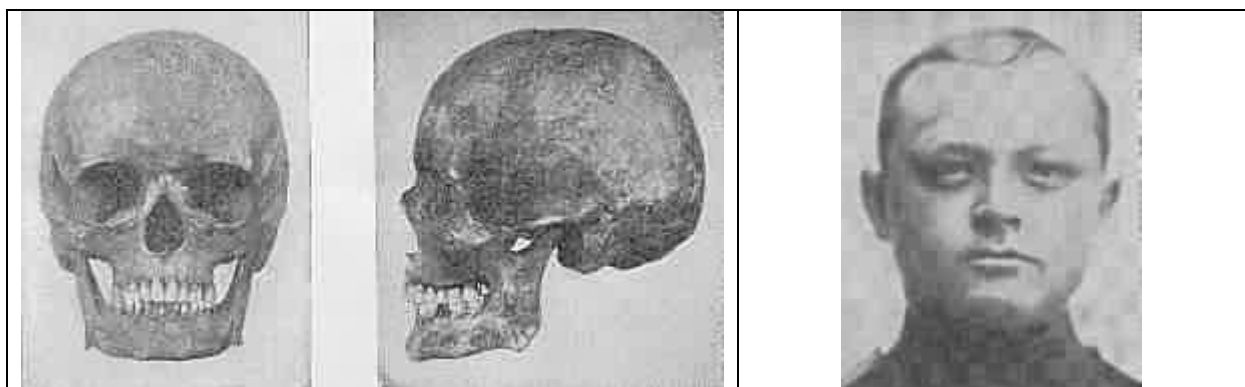
Nordic



The skull of a member of the Nordic White subrace, viewed from the front and the side. The long nature of the facial structure is clearly visible. Right: A classic Nordic male from Sweden.

Alpine

The Alpine sub racial grouping, which also still exists in a large measure today, is characterized by brown hair and eyes, a short, more "solid" body build and a distinctive "round" (that is, almost, but not quite, circular) skull shape.



The skull of a member of the Alpine White subrace, viewed from the front and the side. The rectangular shape of the facial structure is clearly visible. Right: a classic Alpine male from southern Germany.

Mediterranean's

The Mediterranean sub racial grouping virtually no longer exists today - the first of the three White racial sub-groupings to disappear from the earth, submerged into the gene pools of surrounding races. The Mediterranean sub grouping was predominantly (but not totally) characterized by dark hair and eye color, slim (Nordic) or solid (Alpine) body build and either long or round skull shapes.



The skull of a member of the Mediterranean White sub race, viewed from the front and the side. Right: as close an example of a true Mediterranean as is to be found in modern times: a First World War soldier from Wales in Britain.

Mediterranean's Virtually Extinct

It is worth stating again, as it is of great significance in more ways than one, that there are very few of these original Mediterranean racial types left in the world today. They were known as the "Old Europeans" and inhabited large parts of Europe, Egypt, the Middle and Near East and Egypt at the dawn of history.

These Mediterranean types bear almost no resemblance to the present day inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin: the original Old Europeans have been absorbed almost completely into either the Nordic/Alpine stock in Europe itself, or the African/Semitic/Asian stock of North Africa, the Near and Middle East.

The only place in Europe where occasional glimpses of this original Mediterranean sub racial grouping can still be seen, is in the Celtic fringes of Britain, most notably in Wales and Devonshire, and in the Basque territory of Spain. In these regions there exists a short dark strain - remnants of the original inhabitants of Europe.

Pure examples of this Mediterranean type are however still fairly rare, as even they have for the largest degree had some Nordic or Alpine admixture over the years.

Other Sub-groupings

Two other White racial sub groupings exist (called Dinarics and East Baltics) - these groupings are to the largest degree the result of mixtures of the three main sub groupings. The Dinarics and East Baltics are found in large numbers in present day Eastern Europe, and exhibit Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean physical characteristics.

A very small percentage of these two sub-groupings also display the physical characteristics resulting from physical mixing with the waves of Asiatic invaders who penetrated Europe from the east during the course of history: this issue is discussed in full later in this book.

Genetic Unity

For the purposes of this book, an ethnic or cultural group is defined as part of the White race as long as it shares for the greatest part enough of a common genetic inheritance with the broad racial group. When such an ethnic group loses this genetic commonality (as has happened to the Mediterranean's) it is then formally excluded from the broad White racial category.

Means of Tracking Race in Civilization

How is race tracked in civilization? How is it determined whether the populations of certain societies or civilization belonged to specific races? The answer to this is simple: race in history is tracked in three ways: palaeoserology, art forms and language.

Palaeoserology

Palaeoserology is the study of skeletal remains - physical remains of people who died during the time periods under study. As different racial groups have different physical characteristics, it is a relatively simple matter to determine the racial make-up of the inhabitants of a particular region by studying the contents of grave sites.

This skill is today often used by modern police pathologists in identifying the race of unidentified corpses, and this science has proven equally useful in historical diggings.

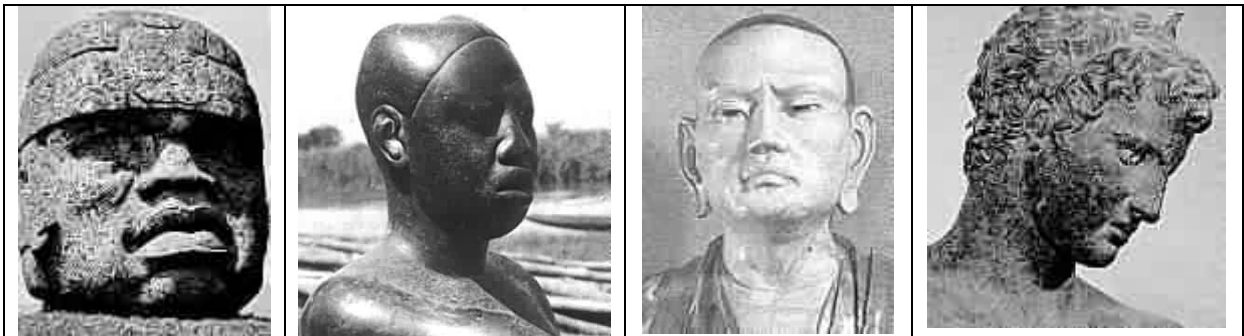
The process of examining burial sites and corpses has proven invaluable in creating an understanding of the racial make-up of the peoples who lived in different areas at different times when there are no other indicators as to their racial origins.

Art Forms

Art forms (artistic illustrations, be they conventional pictures or illustrations on pottery; or even statues) also provide significant indicators of the racial make-up of contemporary inhabitants.

The ancient civilizations in particular - of all racial groupings - reflected themselves in their art forms (often because their own racial types were the only human models from which they had to work).

In this way for example, early Chinese art depicted principally Chinese people, Inca and Aztec art depicted only Inca or Aztec people, and so on. In virtually all societies, original art forms portraying people closely followed contemporary physical appearances. This principle is well illustrated in the four art forms portrayed above.



Tracking race in history: race depicted in art forms. Early civilizations very often depicted images of their own racial types in their works of art, based on the reality that their own types were the most common (or only) human models they had to work with. A comparison of (from left to right) Olmec art, 400 BC; African art, circa 1400 AD; Japanese art, 1,000 AD; and Greek art, 340 BC; reflects this principle well. The study of art forms is a reliable indicator of the racial type of the communities in which the art works were created.

Languages

The study of language is another important clue in the dispersion of peoples: commonalities in language forms leave clearly identifiable "fingerprints" in cultures.

Similar words, phrases or language forms are a clear indication of a single origin for civilizations, due to the fact that the people in those civilizations would at some stage have had a common origin.

In this way the route of a culture (and hence a people) can be traced by following a language.

English	German	Latin	Greek	Old Persian	Sanskrit
brother	bruder	frater	bhrater	brater	bhrater
mother	mutter	mater	meter	matar	matar
father	vater	pater	pater	pitar	pitar

Climate and Genes

The argument of climatic influence as a cause of physical racial differences is as flawed as the belief in a common racial ancestor.

Often the argument is heard that the White race has its color because it originated in the cold north, and that the Black race has its color because it originated in the hot south. Apart from the obvious geographical impossibility of this conjecture (because of the fact that many of the White race's greatest achievements were made in a hot climate - the Near East and Egypt) this argument does not explain why for example members of the Mongolian races (Chinese, Japanese and others) have their distinctive racial characteristics.

How did the climate of Asia for example create the distinctive eye shape and skull structure by which Mongolian races are known?

The reality is that physical characteristics are genetically determined at the moment of conception, and there is absolutely no evidence to indicate that living in a cold or a hot climate changes the genetic makeup of a group of people. If a large group of Chinese people had to move to Norway, live there for any length of time, all the while remaining (marriage and children wise) within their racial group, will anyone seriously suggest that they will "evolve" into blue eyed blond people over any period of time?

The same argument can be used in reverse: who will seriously contend that Whites moving to China, (as remaining within their own genetic community, not interbreeding with the local population) will become Mongolian in physical appearance after any length of time?

People may grow a little taller, or live a little longer with better nutrition or medical services, but this is merely an extension of the genetic potential of those people, rather than a change in the genes themselves. Climate then can never change the gene pool of a people.

The only way a gene pool can be changed is if enough members of that gene pool physically mix - physically integrate and have offspring with - a gene pool outside of that original group. This is the only way in which genes can "change" - and history is full of examples of where this has happened, where original

racial groups have integrated with other previously separate racial groups to produce new groupings having overall different physical and even cognitive characteristics from both the original parent groupings.

Environment and Achievement

Another popular modern myth is that some racial groups developed faster than others because of the accident of their geographic location. This is known collectively as the environmental theory of development: that because some races were "lucky" enough to live around, for example, fertile river basins, or had access to certain types of domesticable animals or edible plants, that they developed faster than other racial groupings elsewhere in the world.

This world view attempts essentially to explain the huge technological gap which existed between the White Europeans and the Black Africans, Native Americans (Amerinds), Asians and Australian Aborigines, at the time of the period of White exploration and colonization of the world.

While it is not the purpose of this book to delve into what are after all, subjective notions of superiority and inferiority (what is regarded as superior by some can be regarded as inferior to another) nonetheless the issue of the technological gap between the races needs addressing, if only because it played such a huge role in the history of the White race's interaction with the other races of the world.

The "environmental" theory as expounded by modern sociologists is destroyed by two main examples: Egypt - and a comparison between the indigenous cultures of Equatorial Africa and Central America.

In Egypt, as will be shown, the Black and White races shared what was virtually an identical geographic location along the banks of the Nile River - yet despite this the ancient White Egyptians produced a civilization which is still a marvel of world history; while the achievements of the Black (Nubian) inhabitants of the same region are distinctly unremarkable in comparison to the wonders of the pyramids.

If the "lucky environmental accident" were true, then the vast difference between the original White Egyptians and Black Nubians should never have come about, as they shared an identical environment.

Often the argument is made that Whites had an advantage because they had pack animals and horses while the native peoples did not - this argument ignores the fact that the White Egyptians did not have horses until long after the creation of many of their finest apexes of technological marvels. In fact horses were

introduced to Egypt by the Semitic Hyksos invasion which occurred hundreds of years after the first flowering of Egyptian civilization.

Comparisons

It is of value to compare the achievements of the Nonwhite Inca and Aztec Amerind peoples in Central and South America, lying just north and south of the equator, with that of the original heartland of the Black race, also just north and south of the equator in Africa. Due to the proximity to the equator, virtually identical environmental conditions prevailed (and still prevail) in Central America and Central Africa. Neither region had horses, and both had the challenges of the equatorial rain forest with which to deal.

Despite the similarity in environment, the Amerinds in Central America were able to build sophisticated buildings, establish written forms of communication, establish gold and precious metal working and a host of other advances: while in Africa little or no progress beyond the Stone Age was made.

The disparity between the Nonwhite Amerinds and the Nonwhite Africans cannot be explained by the "accident of geography".

Lastly, and most devastatingly, the "environment" argument falls flat when measured against the rise and fall of civilizations. Why is it that Ancient Egypt at one stage led the world in culture and civilization, yet today is a majority backward Third World country?

If environment alone gave certain peoples a "permanent advantage" then it would surely follow that Egypt would today be one of the most advanced countries in the world.

In reality it is, as any visitor to that land will testify, filled with misery, poverty and backwardness - despite the "environment" being exactly the same as it was during the great age of the civilization which built the pyramids.

The "environmental" theory does therefore not explain why Egypt, with exactly the same environmental conditions, could have lost its preeminence over the rest of the world.

Technological Gap - Reasons

Just what caused the technological gap then? If environment did not cause it, the only other logical explanation must be that certain types of culture, or civilization, are the products of certain types of people - representative of the innate potential of any given group of people. While this is presently deemed a

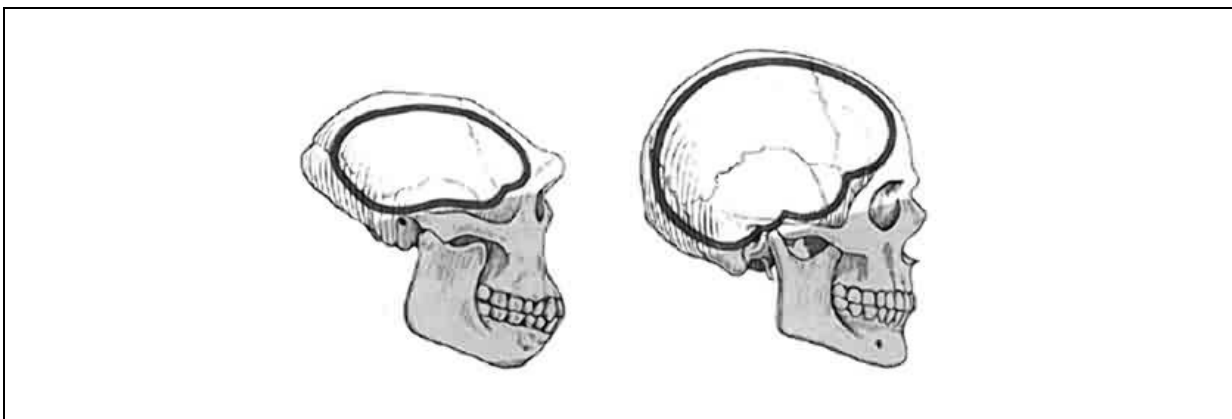
politically incorrect point of view, the facts of historical development support no other conclusion.

One further example - the progress of North America can be compared with that of South America. North America was for the greatest part colonized by White Europeans, and subsequently became the leading power in the modern world. South America, on the other hand, having far richer natural resources than North America, was never majority colonized by White Europeans and today has a majority mixed race population.

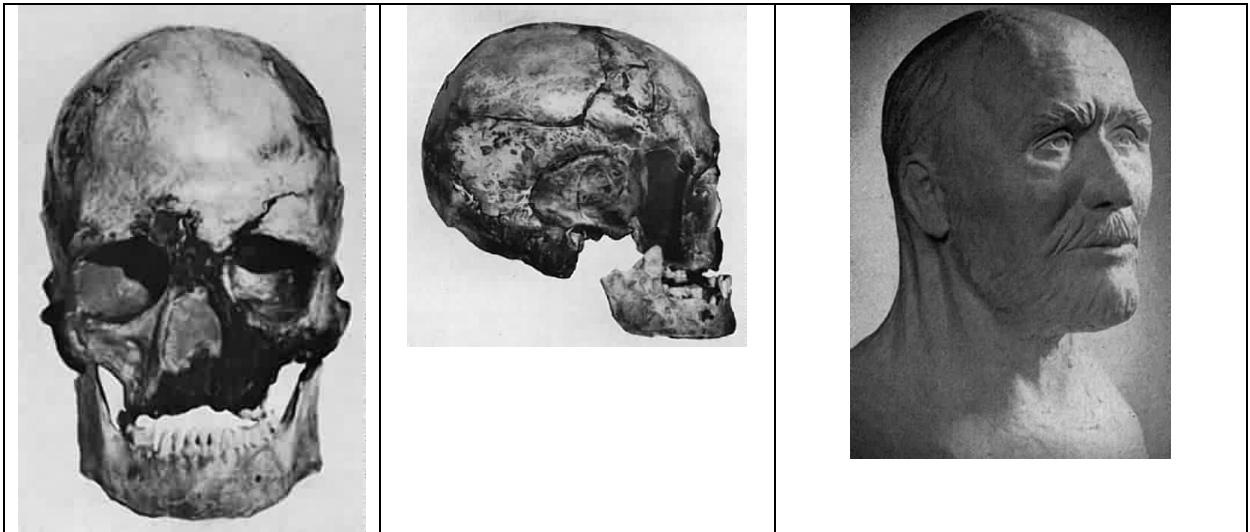
This continent is classed as Third, or at best Second World. Clearly, if environment were the only factor determining levels of achievement, South America should in theory be more advanced than North America, having far more "environmental advantages" than North America.

Homo Erectus

Archaeology and its allied science, palaeoserology, have revealed that life forms in the general shape of humans (that is, two arms, two legs, a torso, a head and walking upright on the two legs) appeared in different places across the earth approximately two million years ago. These were the "Homo Erectus" (or "upright man") racial types so favored by evolutionists as the "ancestors of man". These creatures have been found scattered throughout Europe, Africa, China and Australia. It remains however speculative to say with any certainty that modern man is descended from any of these Homo Erectus racial types.



Cro-magnon – The First Modern White Racial Type



Above left and center: Cheddar Man. The well preserved skull of a complete example of Cro-Magnon man, discovered in the Cheddar Gorge in England. The skeleton is between 40,000 and 30,000 years old. Right: A flesh reconstruction bust of Cro-Magnon man, made by the famous anthropologist, Maurice Putnam Coon. It is from the emergence of Cro-Magnon man that recorded White history begins.

The first modern White racial type only emerged between approximately 40,000 BC and 15,000 BC in differing parts of Europe and the Near East. This time period is known as the Late Paleolithic period, also known generically as the Stone Age. This first racial type is known as Cro-Magnon man - after a site in the Dordogne region of France where the first skeletal remains were found.

Cro-Magnon man is the first biped life form with whom modern Whites can clearly claim a direct genetic affinity. White racial history therefore begins around the year 35,000 BC - and so it is with the Late Paleolithic period that the story in this book really begins.

This chapter is not complete, but just a beginning of another study later as separate subject.

The Unknown Adolf Hitler becoming a Dictator

Birth of Adolf Hitler – April 20, 1889

At 6:30 p.m. on the evening of April 20, 1889, he was born in the small Austrian village of Braunau Am Inn just across the border from German Bavaria.

Adolf Hitler would one day lead a movement that placed supreme importance on a person's family tree even making it a matter of life and death. However, his own family tree was quite mixed up and would be a lifelong source of embarrassment and concern to him.

His father, Alois, was born in 1837. He was the illegitimate son of Maria Anna Schicklgruber and her unknown mate, which may have been someone from the neighborhood or a poor millworker named Johann Georg Hiedler. It is also remotely possible Adolf Hitler's grandfather was Jewish.

Maria Schicklgruber was said to have been employed as a cook in the household of a wealthy Jewish family named Frankenberger. There is some speculation their 19-year-old son got her pregnant and regularly sent her money after the birth of Alois.

Adolf Hitler would never know for sure just who his grandfather was.

He did know that when his father Alois was about five years old, Maria Schicklgruber married Johann Georg Hiedler. The marriage lasted five years until her death of natural causes, at which time Alois went to live on a small farm with his uncle.

At age thirteen, young Alois had enough of farm life and set out for the city of Vienna to make something of himself. He worked as a shoemaker's apprentice then later enlisted in the Austrian civil service, becoming a junior customs official. He worked hard as a civil servant and eventually became a supervisor. By 1875 he achieved the rank of Senior Assistant Inspector, a big accomplishment for the former poor farm boy with little formal education.

At this time an event occurred that would have big implications for the future.

Alois had always used the last name of his mother, Schicklgruber, and thus was always called Alois Schicklgruber. He made no attempt to hide the fact that he was illegitimate since it was common in rural Austria.

But after his success in the civil service, his proud uncle from the small farm convinced him to change his last name to match his own, Hiedler, and continue

the family name. However, when it came time to write the name down in the record book it was spelled as Hitler.

And so in 1876 at age 39, Alois Schicklgruber became Alois Hitler. This is important because it is hard to imagine tens of thousands of Germans shouting "Heil Schicklgruber!" instead of "Heil Hitler!"

In 1885, after numerous affairs and two other marriages ended, the widowed Alois Hitler, 48, married the pregnant Klara Pölzl, 24, the granddaughter of uncle Hiedler. Technically, because of the name change, she was his own niece and so he had to get special permission from the Catholic Church.

The children from his previous marriage, Alois Hitler, Jr., and Angela, attended the wedding and lived with them afterwards. Klara Pölzl eventually gave birth to two boys and a girl, all of whom died. On April 20, 1889, her fourth child, Adolf, was born healthy and was baptized a Roman Catholic. Hitler's father was now 52 years old.

Throughout his early days, young Adolf's mother feared losing him as well and lavished much care and affection on him. His father was busy working most of the time and also spent a lot of time on his main hobby, keeping bees.

Baby Adolf had the nickname, Adi. When he was almost five, in 1893, his mother gave birth to a brother, Edmund. In 1896 came a sister, Paula.

In May of 1895 at age six, young Adolf Hitler entered first grade in the public school in the village of Fischlham near Linz, Austria.

Hitler's Boyhood

In 1895, at age six, two important events happened in the life of young Adolf Hitler. First, the unrestrained, carefree days he had enjoyed up to now came to an end as he entered primary school. Secondly, his father retired on a pension from the Austrian civil service.

This meant a double dose of supervision, discipline and regimentation under the watchful eyes of teachers at school and his strict father at home. His father, now 58, had spent most of his life working his way up through the civil service ranks. He was used to giving orders and having them obeyed and also expected this from his children. The Hitler family lived on a small farm outside of Linz, Austria. The children had farm chores to perform along with their school work.

Hitler's mother was now preoccupied with caring for her new son, Edmund. In 1896, she gave birth to a girl, Paula. The Hitler household now consisted of

Adolf, little brother Edmund, little sister Paula, older half-brother Alois Jr., older half-sister Angela and two parents who were home all the time. It was a crowded, noisy little farm house that seems to have gotten on the nerves on Hitler's father who found retirement after 40 years of work to be difficult.

The oldest boy, Alois Jr., 13, bore the brunt of his father's discontent, including harsh words and occasional beatings. A year later, at age 14, young Alois had enough of this treatment and ran away from home, never to see his father again. This put young Adolf, age 7, next in line for the same treatment.

Also at this time, the family moved off the farm to the town of Lambach, Austria, halfway between Linz and Salzburg. This was the first of several moves the family would make during the restless retirement of Hitler's father.

For young Adolf, the move to Lambach meant an end to farm chores and more time to play. There was an old Catholic Benedictine monastery in the town. The ancient monastery was decorated with carved stones and woodwork that included several swastikas. Adolf attended school there and saw them every day. They had been put there in the 1800s by the ruling Abbot as a pun or play on words. His name essentially sounded like the German word for swastika, Hakenkreuz.

Young Hitler did well in the monastery school and also took part in the boys' choir. He was said to have had a fine singing voice. Years later Hitler would say the solemn pageantry of the high mass and other Catholic ceremonies was quite intoxicating and left a very deep impression.

As a young boy he idolized the priests and for two years seriously considered becoming a priest himself. He especially admired the Abbot in charge, who ruled his black-robed monks with supreme authority. At home Hitler sometimes played priest and even included long sermons.

At age nine, he got into schoolboy mischief. He was caught smoking a cigarette by one of the priests, but was forgiven and not punished.

His favorite game to play outside was cowboys and Indians. Tales of the American West were very popular among boys in Austria and Germany. Books by James Fenimore Cooper and especially German writer Karl May were eagerly read and re-enacted.

May, who had never been to America, invented a hero named Old Shatterhand, a white man who always won his battles with Native Americans, defeating his enemies through sheer will power and bravery. Young Hitler read and re-read every one of May's books about Old Shatterhand, totaling more than 70 novels.

He continued to read them even as Führer. During the German attack on Soviet Russia, he sometimes referred to the Russians as Redskins and ordered his officers to carry May's books about fighting Indians.

In describing his boyhood, Hitler later said of himself that he was an argumentative little ring leader who liked to stay outside and hang around with 'husky' boys. His half-brother Alois later described him as quick to anger and spoiled by his indulgent mother.

In 1898, the Hitler family moved once again, to the village of Leonding, close to Linz. They settled into a small house with a garden located next to a cemetery. This meant another change of schools for Adolf.

He found school easy and got good grades with little effort. He also discovered he had considerable talent for drawing, especially sketching buildings. He had the ability to look at a building, memorize the architectural details, and accurately reproduce it on paper, entirely from memory.

One day, young Hitler went rummaging through his father's book collection and came across several of a military nature, including a picture book on the War of 1870-71 between the Germans and the French. By Hitler's own account, this book became an obsession. He read it over and over, becoming convinced it had been a glorious event.

"It was not long before the great historic struggle had become my greatest spiritual experience. From then on, I became more and more enthusiastic about everything that was in any way connected with war or, for that matter, with soldering," Hitler stated in his book *Mein Kampf*.

Cowboys and Indians gave way to battle re-enactments, especially after the Boer War broke out in Africa. Hitler, now eleven years old, took the side of the Boers against the English and never tired of playing war. Sometimes, he even wore out the boys he was playing with and then simply went and found other boys to continue.

But now at home, tragedy struck. Adolf's little brother Edmund, age 6, died of measles. Adolf, the boy who loved warplay and its 'pretend' death now had to confront genuine death for the first time. It seems to have shaken him badly.

To make matters worse, the little boy was buried in the cemetery next to their house. From his bedroom window, Adolf could see the cemetery.

Years later, neighbors recalled that young Adolf was sometimes seen at night sitting on the wall of the cemetery gazing up at the stars.

And there were now more problems for Adolf. His grade school years were coming to an end and he had to choose which type of secondary school to attend, classical or technical. By now, young Hitler had dreams of one day becoming an artist. He wanted to go to the classical school. But his father wanted him to follow in his footsteps and become a civil servant and sent him to the technical high school in the city of Linz, in September 1900.

Hitler, the country boy, was lost in the city and its big school. City kids also looked down on country kids who went to the school. He was very lonely and extremely unhappy. He did quite poorly his first year, getting kept back.

He would later claim he wanted to show his father he was unsuited for technical education with its emphasis on mathematics and science and thus should have been allowed to become an artist.

"I thought that once my father saw what little progress I was making at the [technical school] he would let me devote myself to the happiness I dreamed of," Hitler explained in *Mein Kampf*.

There were frequent arguments at home between young Hitler and his father over his career choice. To the traditional-minded, authoritarian father, the idea of his son becoming an artist seemed utterly ridiculous.

But in the grand scheme of things, as young Adolf saw it, the idea of a career spent sitting in an office all day long doing the boring paperwork of a civil servant was utterly horrible. The dream of becoming an artist seemed to be the answer to all his present day problems.

But his stubborn father refused to listen. And so a bitter struggle began between father and son.

Hitler began his second year at the high school as the oldest boy in his class since he had been kept back. This gave him the advantage over the other boys. Once again he became a little ring leader and even led the boys in afterschool games of cowboys and Indians, becoming Old Shatterhand. He managed to get better grades in his second year, but still failed mathematics.

Another interest of great importance surfaced at this time, German nationalism.

The area of Austria where Hitler grew up is close to the German border. Many Austrians along the border considered themselves to be German-Austrians. Although they were subjects of the Austrian Hapsburg Monarchy and its multicultural empire, they expressed loyalty to the German Imperial House of Hohenzollern and its Kaiser.

In defiance of the Austrian Monarchy, Adolf Hitler and his young friends liked to use the German greeting, "Heil," and sing the German anthem "Deutschland Über Alles," instead of the Austrian Imperial anthem.

Hitler's father had worked as an Austrian Imperial customs agent and continually expressed loyalty to the Hapsburg Monarchy, perhaps unknowingly encouraging his rebellious young son to give his loyalty to the German Kaiser.

There was also a history teacher at school, Dr. Leopold Pötsch, who touched Hitler's imagination with exciting tales of the glory of German figures such as Bismarck and Frederick The Great. For young Hitler, German nationalism quickly became an obsession.

Adding to all this, was another new interest, the operas of German composer Richard Wagner. Hitler saw his first opera at age twelve and was immediately captivated by its Germanic music, pagan myths, tales of ancient Kings and Knights and their glorious struggles against hated enemies.

But now, for young Hitler, the struggle with his father was about to come to a sudden end. In January 1903, Hitler's father died suddenly of a lung hemorrhage, leaving his 13-year-old son as head of the Hitler household.



Adolf



Mother



Adolf at 12



Father

Hitler's Father Dies

In the town of Leonding, Austria, on the bitterly cold morning of Saturday, January 3, 1903, Alois Hitler, 65, went out for a walk, stopping at a favorite inn where he sat down and asked for a glass of wine. He collapsed before the wine was brought to him and died within minutes from a lung hemorrhage. It was not the first one he had suffered.

Young Adolf, now 13, broke down and cried when he saw his father's body laid out. His father's funeral mass in the small church at Leonding was well attended. A newspaper in nearby Linz published an obituary that included the following sentence: "The harsh words that sometimes fell from his lips could not belie the warm heart that beat under the rough exterior."

For Adolf, there would be no more harsh words and no more arguing with his father, especially over his career choice. Hitler's father had insisted Adolf become a civil servant like himself. Young Hitler, however, had dreams of becoming a great artist. Now Hitler was free from the stern words and domineering authority of his father. In fact, young Adolf was now the male head of the household, a position of some importance in those days.

Financially, his father had left the Hitler family fairly well provided for. Hitler's mother received half of her husband's monthly pension, plus death benefits. Adolf received a small amount each month, plus a small inheritance. The family also owned a house in Leonding which had been paid for mostly in cash.

For convenience, young Hitler went to live at a boys' boarding house in Linz where he was attending the technical high school. This saved him the long daily commute from Leonding. On weekends, he went back home to his mother.

Hitler was remembered by the woman who ran the boarding house as a nervous, awkward boy, who spent most of his time reading and drawing. Although Hitler loved to read, he was a lazy and uncooperative student in school.

In Autumn 1903, when he returned to school after summer vacation, things got worse. Along with his poor grades in mathematics and French, Hitler behaved badly, knowing he was likely to fail. With no threat of discipline at home and disinterest shown by his school teachers, Hitler performed pranks and practical jokes aimed at the teachers he now disliked so much.

Among Hitler's antics – giving contrary, insulting, argumentative answers to questions which upset the teacher and delighted the other boys who sometimes applauded him. With those boys, he also released cockroaches in the classroom, rearranged the furniture, and organized confusion in the classroom by doing the opposite of what the teacher said.

Years later, even as Führer, Hitler liked to dwell on his schoolboy pranks and would recall them in detail to his top generals in the midst of waging a world war.

It was only Hitler's history teacher, Dr. Leopold Pötsch, and his tales of heroic Germans from bygone eras who kept his interest and earned his respect. By his early teens, Hitler already had a keen interest in German nationalism along with a big interest in art and architecture.

Young Hitler put all his hopes in the dream of becoming a great artist, especially as his prospects at the high school grew dimmer. Some of the teachers were also anxious to see Hitler thrown out of the school because of the trouble he caused.

One teacher later recalled young Hitler as one who "reacted with ill-concealed hostility to advice or reproof; at the same time, he demanded of his fellow pupils their unqualified subservience, fancying himself in the role of leader, at the same time indulging in many a less innocuous prank of a kind not uncommon among immature youths."

In May of 1904, at age 15, Adolf Hitler received the Catholic Sacrament of Confirmation in the Linz Cathedral. As a young boy he once entertained the idea of becoming a priest. But by the time he was confirmed he was bored and uninterested in his faith and hardly bothered to make the appropriate responses during the religious ceremony.

Shortly after this, Hitler left the high school at Linz. He had been given a passing mark in French on a make-up exam on the condition that he not return to the school. In September 1904, he entered another high school, at Steyr, a small

town 25 miles from Linz. He lived in a boarding house there, sharing a room with another boy. They sometimes amused themselves by shooting rats.

Hitler got terrible marks his first semester at the new school, failing math, German, French, and even got a poor grade for handwriting. He improved during his second semester and was told he might even graduate if he first took a special make-up exam in the fall. During the summer, however, Hitler suffered from a bleeding lung ailment, an inherited medical problem.

He regained his health and passed the exam in September 1905, and celebrated with fellow students by getting drunk. He wound up the next morning lying on the side of the road, awakened by a milkwoman. After that experience he swore off alcohol and never drank again.

But Hitler could not bring himself to take the final exam for his diploma. Using poor health as his excuse, he left school at age sixteen never to return. From now on he would be self taught, continuing his heavy reading habits and interpreting what he read on his own, living in his own dreamy reality and creating his own sense of truth.

Hitler Fails Art Exam

After dropping out of high school in 1905 at age sixteen, Adolf Hitler spent the next few years in brooding idleness. His indulgent mother patiently urged him to learn a trade or get a job. But to young Hitler, the idea of daily work with its necessary submission to authority was revolting.

With his father now dead, there was no one who could tell young Hitler what to do, so he did exactly as he pleased. He spent his time wandering around the city of Linz, Austria, visiting museums, attending the opera, and sitting by the Danube River dreaming of becoming a great artist.

Hitler liked to sleep late then go out in the afternoon, often dressed like a young gentleman of leisure and even carried a fancy little ivory cane. When he returned home, he would stay up well past midnight reading and drawing.

He would later describe these teenage years free from responsibility as the happiest time of his life.

His only friend was with another young dreamer named August Kubizek, who wanted to be a great musician. They met at the opera in Linz. Kubizek found Hitler fascinating and a friendship quickly developed. Kubizek turned out to be a patient listener. He was a good audience for Hitler, who often rambled for

hours about his hopes and dreams. Sometimes Hitler even gave speeches complete with wild hand gestures to his audience of one.

Kubizek later described Hitler's personality as "violent and high strung." Hitler would only tolerate approval from his friend and could not stand to be corrected, a personality trait he had shown in high school and as a younger boy as well.

Young Hitler did not have a girlfriend. But he did have an obsessive interest in a young blond named Stephanie. He would stare at her as she walked by and sometimes followed her. He wrote her many love poems. But he never delivered the poems or worked up the nerve to introduce himself, preferring to keep her in his fantasies. He told his friend Kubizek he was able to communicate with her by intuition and that she was even aware of his thoughts and had great admiration for him. He was also deeply jealous of any attention she showed to other young men.

In reality, she had no idea Hitler had any interest in her. Years later, when told of the interest of her now-famous secret admirer, she expressed complete surprise, although she remembered getting one weird unsigned letter.

Hitler's view of the world, also based in fantasy, began to significantly take shape. He borrowed large numbers of books from the library on German history and Nordic mythology. He was also deeply inspired by the opera works of Richard Wagner and their pagan, mythical tales of struggle against hated enemies. His friend Kubizek recalled that after seeing Wagner's opera "Rienzi," Hitler behaved as if possessed. Hitler led his friend atop a steep hill where he spoke in a strange voice of a great mission in which he would lead the people to freedom, similar to the plot in the opera he had just seen.

By now Hitler also had strong pride in the German race and all things German along with a strong dislike of the Hapsburg Monarchy and the non-Germanic races in the multicultural Austro-Hungarian Empire which had ruled Austria and surrounding countries for centuries.

In the Spring of 1906, at age seventeen, Hitler took his first trip to Vienna, capital city of the empire and one of the world's most important centers of art, music and old-world European culture. With money in his pocket provided by his mother, he went there intending to see operas and study the famous picture gallery in the Court Museum. Instead, he found himself enthralled by the city's magnificent architecture.

Hitler had developed a big interest in architecture. He could draw detailed pictures from memory of a building he had seen only once. He also liked to ponder how to improve existing buildings, making them grander, and

streamlined city layouts. In Vienna, he stood for hours gazing at grand buildings such as the opera house and the Parliament building, and looking at Ring Boulevard.

As a young boy he had shown natural talent for drawing. His gift for drawing had also been recognized by his high school instructors. But things had gone poorly for him in high school. He was a lazy and uncooperative student, who essentially flunked out. To escape the reality of that failure and avoid the dreaded reality of a workaday existence, Hitler put all his hope in the dream of achieving greatness as an artist.

He decided to attend the prestigious Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. In October 1907, at age eighteen, he withdrew his inheritance money from the bank and went to live and study in Vienna. Hitler's mother was by now suffering from breast cancer and had been unsuccessfully operated on in January. But Hitler's driving ambition to be a great artist overcame his reluctance to leave her.

He took the two day entrance exam for the academy's school of painting. Confident and self assured, he awaited the result, quite sure he would get in. But failure struck him like a bolt of lightning. His test drawings were judged unsatisfactory and he was not admitted. Hitler was badly shaken by this rejection. He went back to the academy to get an explanation and was told his drawings showed a lack of talent for artistic painting, notably a lack of appreciation of the human form. He was told, however, that he had some ability for the field of architecture.

But without the required high school diploma, going to the building school and after that, the academy's architectural school, seemed doubtful. Hitler resolved to take the painting school entrance exam again next year. Now, feeling quite depressed, Hitler left Vienna and returned home where his beloved mother was now dying from cancer, making matters even worse

Hitler's Mother Dies

On January 14, 1907, Adolf Hitler's mother went to see the family doctor about a pain in her chest, so bad it kept her awake at night. The doctor, Edward Bloch, who was Jewish, examined her and found she had advanced breast cancer.

Adolf Hitler sobbed when the doctor told him she was gravely ill and needed immediate surgery. A few days later, Klara Hitler, 46, was operated on and had one of her breasts removed. But the operation was too late. Her illness, malignant cancer, would slowly ravage her body. She couldn't make it up the stairs to the family apartment, so they moved into a first floor apartment in a suburb next to Linz, Austria.

Eighteen-year-old Adolf had grand ideas of someday becoming a great artist. Each October, entrance examinations were held at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Despite his misgivings about leaving his mother, Hitler's artistic ambitions had driven him to withdraw his inheritance from the bank and move to Vienna to study at the academy.

Problems had arisen for Hitler when he failed the academy's entrance exam and his mother's condition took a turn for the worse. He left Vienna, feeling quite depressed, and went back home to his mother and did not tell her he failed the exam.

Hitler consulted Dr. Bloch who recommended drastic treatment to save his mother's life. The painful, expensive treatment involved applying dosages of iodoform directly onto the ulcerations caused by the cancer. She was moved into the warm kitchen of the Hitler apartment where Adolf kept constant watch and even helped out with household chores such as cooking and washing the floor. The apartment, however, always smelled of iodoform.

She bore the pain well, but Adolf anguished over every moment of her suffering. Her condition steadily worsened and as the festive Christmas season approached in December 1907, she was near death. In the early hours of December 21st, amid the glowing lights of the family's Christmas tree, she died quietly. Adolf was devastated. Dr. Bloch arrived later that day to sign the death certificate. He later said he had never seen anyone so overcome with grief as Adolf Hitler at the loss of his mother.

Klara Hitler was buried on a misty, foggy December day in the cemetery at Leonding, next to her husband. The cemetery also contained her son Edward, Adolf's younger brother, who had died from measles at age six.

The next day, Christmas Eve, Hitler and his sisters paid a visit to Dr. Bloch and settled the medical bill. The doctor gave the family a break on the charges considering the many home visits he had made to his patient. Adolf Hitler expressed profound gratitude to the doctor. "I shall be grateful to you forever," Hitler told him.

Now, with both parents gone, Hitler once again set his sights on Vienna and the art academy. He moved there in February 1908. But in that beautiful old city things would go quite poorly for Hitler. He would eventually wind up sleeping on park benches and eating at charity soup kitchens. His years of misery in Vienna would also be a time when he formulated many of his ideas on politics and race which would have immense consequences in the future.

Hitler is Homeless in Vienna

The beautiful old world city of Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with its magnificent culture that had seen the likes of Beethoven and Mozart, now had a new resident, a pale, lanky, sad looking 18-year-old named Adolf Hitler.

Vienna was a city alive with music and full of diverse people who loved the arts and felt lucky to call the place home. In February 1908, Hitler moved there with the goal of attending the art academy and becoming a great artist.

Sixty years before him, Hitler's father also came to Vienna seeking opportunity. At that time the Hapsburg Empire was ruled by Emperor Franz Josef. When Adolf Hitler arrived, it was still ruled by him, although he was now senile and under the influence of corrupt ministers. His empire, which had ruled Austria and surrounding countries for centuries, was now in great decline. Vienna, however, remained a city of opportunity and attracted a multicultural population from all over the empire.

Hitler's friend from his hometown of Linz, August Kubizek, also came to Vienna and they roomed together. In Vienna, Hitler continued the same lazy lifestyle he had enjoyed in Linz after dropping out of school. Kubizek described Hitler as a night owl who slept till noon, would go out for walks taking in all the sights, then stay up late discussing his ideas on everything from social reform to city planning. Hitler made no effort to get a regular job, considering himself far above that. He dressed like an artist and at night dressed like a young gentleman of leisure and often attended the opera.

Kubizek also recalled Hitler displayed an increasingly unstable personality with a terrible temper. At times he was quite reasonable but he was always prone to sudden outbursts of rage especially when he was corrected on anything. He had no real interest in women, preferring to keep away from them and even smugly rebuffed those who showed any interest in him. He strictly adhered to his Catholic upbringing regarding sex, believing men and women should remain celibate until marriage.

Hitler was also prone to sudden bursts of inspiration and had many interesting ideas but never finished anything he started. Whether composing his own opera or redesigning the city of Vienna, he would start with much enthusiasm and work hard, only to eventually lose interest.

In October 1908, Hitler tried for the second time to gain admission to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. However, his test drawings were judged as so poor that he was not even allowed to take the formal exam. It was a bitter disappointment

to Hitler and effectively left him on the outside looking in at the artistic community in Vienna. His friend Kubizek had successfully gained entrance to the Vienna Conservatory and was studying music there, doing quite well, in contrast to Hitler.

Hitler soon parted company with his friend in a rather strange manner. When Kubizek returned to Vienna after two months of military training in November 1908, he found Hitler had moved out of their shared apartment and left no forwarding address.

Hitler now had no use for his friend and made no attempt to find him again. He lived by himself, moving from place to place as his savings gradually dwindled and his lifestyle spiraled downward. Despite the need for money, Hitler made no attempt to get regular employment. He eventually pawned all his possessions and actually wound up sleeping on park benches and begging for money. He quickly became a dirty, smelly, unshaven young man wearing tattered clothes and did not even own an overcoat. In December of 1909, freezing and half starved, he moved into a homeless shelter. He ate at a soup kitchen operated by the nuns from a nearby convent.

In February 1910, he moved into a home for poor men where he would stay for the next few years. Hitler sometimes earned a little money as a day laborer, shoveling snow and carrying bags at the train station. He then discovered he could earn a meager living selling pictures of famous Vienna landmarks which he copied from postcards. Another resident at the home, Reinhold Hanish, acted as his agent, hawking Hitler's works of art to various shops where they were mostly used to fill empty picture frames. Hitler also painted posters for shop windows.

Hanish recalled Hitler as undisciplined and moody, always hanging around the men's home, eager to discuss politics and often making speeches to the residents. He usually flew into a rage if anyone contradicted him. Eventually, Hitler quarreled with Hanish, even accusing him of stealing his property and falsely testified against him in court in August 1910, getting Hanish an eight-day jail sentence. (In 1938 Hanish was murdered on Hitler's orders after talking to the press about him).

Hitler took to selling his own paintings to mostly Jewish shop owners and was also assisted by Josef Neumann, a Jew he befriended.

Hitler had a passion for reading, grabbing all the daily newspapers available at the men's home, reading numerous political pamphlets and borrowing many books from the library on German history and mythology. He had a curious but academically untrained mind and examined the complex philosophical works of

Nietzsche, Hegel, Fichte, Treitschke and the Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Hitler picked up bits and pieces of philosophy and ideas from them and wound up with a hodgepodge of racist, nationalistic, anti-Semitic attitudes that over time became a die-hard philosophy, later to be described in his book, *Mein Kampf*.

The utter misery of his poverty also deeply influenced Hitler. He adopted a harsh, survivalist mentality, which left little room for consideration of kindness and compassion – an attitude that would stay with him until the end.

"I owe it to that period that I grew hard and am still capable of being hard," Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*.

Even before he came to Vienna, Hitler had a personality notable for its lack of empathy. Many historians have concluded Hitler suffered psychological distress partly brought on by an unhappy childhood, notably his relationship with his father, a domineering, at times cruel man. At the same time, Hitler had also shown extraordinary attachment to his over-indulgent mother.

In Vienna, and later, Hitler suffered bouts of depression. Other times he experienced extreme highs, only to be followed by a drop back into the depths. One consistent personality trait was the hysteria evident whenever someone displeased him. Hitler's personality has been described as basically hysterical in nature.

Now, at age 21, he was becoming keenly interested in politics, watching events unfold around him in Vienna.

After witnessing a large protest march by workers, he immersed himself in an intensive study of the politics of the workers' party, the Social Democrats. He gained appreciation of their ability to organize large rallies and use propaganda and fear as political weapons.

From the sidelines, he also watched the two other main parties, the Pan German Nationalists and the Christian Social Party, which heightened his interest in German nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Vienna, a city of two million, had a Jewish population of just under two hundred thousand, including many traditionally dressed ethnic Jews. In Linz, Hitler had only known a few "Germanized" Jews. The poor men's home Hitler lived in was near a Jewish community.

Among the middle class in Vienna, anti-Semitism was considered rather fashionable. The mayor, Karl Lueger, a noted anti-Semite, was a member of the Christian Social Party which included anti-Semitism in its political platform.

Hitler admired Lueger, a powerful politician, for his speech-making skills and effective use of propaganda in gaining popular appeal. He also admired Lueger's skill in manipulating established institutions such as the Catholic Church. He studied Lueger carefully and modeled some of his later behavior on what he learned.

There were also anti-Semitic tabloids and pamphlets available at the newsstands and at local coffee shops. On first reading them, Hitler claims in his book *Mein Kampf* to have been put off.

"...the tone, particularly of the Viennese anti-Semitic press, seemed to me unworthy of the cultural tradition of a great nation."

But also in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler describes the transformation in his thinking regarding the Jews. It began with a chance meeting.

"Once, as I was strolling through the inner city, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought."

"For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form: is this a German?"

To answer his own question, he immersed himself in anti-Semitic literature. Then he went out and studied Jews as they passed by.

"...the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity..."

"For me this was the time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I have ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and become an anti-Semite."

But at this point Hitler's anti-Semitism was not apparent in his personal relationships with Jews. He still did business with Jewish shop owners in selling his paintings and maintained the friendship with Josef Neumann. However, the seeds of hate were planted and would be nurtured by events soon to come, laying the foundation for one of the greatest tragedies in all of human history.



A jubilant young Hitler among the crowd celebrating the German proclamation of war on the Odeonplatz in Munich, Germany, August 2, 1914. Right: Close-up of the photo highlight showing Hitler.

Hitler left Vienna at age 24, to avoid mandatory military service in the Austrian army, and thus avoided serving the multicultural Austrian Empire he now despised.

Twenty-four years after leaving Vienna, Adolf Hitler would make a triumphant return as Führer of the German Reich. However, the memory of those miserable days of failure in his youth and the attitudes and ideas he acquired would forever remain.

In May of 1913, he moved to the German Fatherland and settled in Munich. But he was tracked down by the Austrian authorities in January 1914. Faced with the possibility of prison for avoiding military service, he wrote a letter to the Austrian Consulate apologizing and told of his recent years of misery.

"I never knew the beautiful word youth," Hitler stated in his letter.

The tone of the letter impressed the Austrian officials and Hitler was not punished for dodging the service. He took the necessary medical exam which he easily failed and the matter was dropped altogether.

In Munich, Hitler continued painting, once again making a small living by selling painted pictures of landmarks to local shops. When asked by an old acquaintance how he would make a permanent living, Hitler said it did not matter since there soon be a war.

On August 1st, 1914, a huge, enthusiastic crowd including Hitler gathered in a big public plaza in Munich – the occasion – to celebrate the German proclamation of war.

Two days later, Hitler volunteered for the German Army, enlisting in a Bavarian regiment.

"For me, as for every German, there now began the greatest and most unforgettable time of my earthly existence. Compared to the events of this gigantic struggle, everything past receded to shallow nothingness," Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*.

On first hearing the news of war Hitler had sunk to his knees and thanked heaven for being alive.

Hitler in World War I

In the muddy, lice infested, smelly trenches of World War I, Adolf Hitler found a new home fighting for the German Fatherland. After years of poverty, alone and uncertain, he now had a sense of belonging and purpose.

The "war to end all wars" began after the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was gunned down by a young Serbian terrorist on June 28, 1914. Events quickly escalated as Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany urged Austria to declare war on Serbia. Russia then mobilized against Austria. Germany mobilized against Russia. France and Britain then mobilized against Germany.

All over Europe and England, young men, including Adolf Hitler, eagerly volunteered. Like most young soldiers before them, they thought it would be a short war, but hopefully long enough for them to see some action and participate in the great adventure.

It would turn out to be a long war in which soldiers died by the millions. An entire generation of young men would be wiped out. The war would also bring the downfall of the old European culture of kings and noblemen and their codes of honor.

New technologies such as planes, tanks, machine-guns, long-range artillery, and deadly gas were used by the armies against each other. But a stalemate developed along a line of entrenched fortifications stretching from the North Sea, all the way through France to the Saar River in Germany. In these miserable trenches, Adolf Hitler became acquainted with war.

Hitler had volunteered at age 25 by enlisting in a Bavarian Regiment. After its first engagement against the British and Belgians near Ypres, 2,500 of the 3,000 men in the Hitler's regiment were killed, wounded or missing. Hitler escaped without a scratch. Throughout most of the war, Hitler had great luck avoiding

life-threatening injury. More than once he moved away from a spot where moments later a shell exploded killing or wounding everyone.

Hitler, by all accounts, was an unusual soldier with a sloppy manner and unmilitary bearing. But he was also eager for action and always ready to volunteer for dangerous assignments even after many narrow escapes from death.

Corporal Hitler was a dispatch runner, taking messages back and forth from the command staff in the rear to the fighting units near the battlefield. During lulls in the fighting he would take out his watercolors and paint the landscapes of war.

Hitler, unlike his fellow soldiers, never complained about bad food and the horrible conditions or talked about women, preferring to discuss art or history. He received a few letters but no packages from home and never asked for leave. His fellow soldiers regarded Hitler as too eager to please his superiors, but generally a likable loner notable for his luck in avoiding injury as well as his bravery.

On October 7, 1916, Hitler's luck ran out when he was wounded in the leg by a shell fragment during the Battle of the Somme. He was hospitalized in Germany. It was his first time away from the Front after two years of war. Following his recovery, he went sightseeing in Berlin, then was assigned to light duty in Munich. He was appalled at the apathy and anti-war sentiment among German civilians. He blamed the Jews for much of this and saw them as conspiring to spread unrest and undermine the German war effort.

This idea of an anti-war conspiracy involving Jews would become an obsession to add to other anti-Semitic notions he acquired in Vienna, leading to an ever-growing hatred of Jews.

To get away from the apathetic civilians, Hitler asked to go back to the Front and was sent back in March of 1917.

In August 1918, he received the Iron Cross 1st Class, a rarity for foot soldiers. Interestingly, the lieutenant who recommended him for the medal was a Jew, a fact Hitler would later obscure. Despite his good record and a total of five medals, he remained a corporal. Due to his unmilitary appearance and odd personality, his superiors felt he lacked leadership qualities and thought he would not command enough respect as a sergeant.

As the tide of war turned against the Germans and morale collapsed along the Front, Hitler became depressed. He would sometimes spend hours sitting in the

corner of the tent in deep contemplation then would suddenly burst onto his feet shouting about the "invisible foes of the German people," namely Jews and Marxists.



Hitler (seated on right) and fellow soldiers during World War I. The dog had the name Fuchsl and was actually Hitler's pet during the war until it was stolen from him.

In October 1918, he was temporarily blinded by a British chlorine gas attack near Ypres. He was sent home to a starving, war weary country full of unrest. He laid in a hospital bed consumed with dread amid a swirl of rumors of impending disaster.

On November 10, 1918, an elderly pastor came into the hospital and announced the news. The Kaiser and the House of Hollenzollern had fallen. Their beloved Fatherland was now a republic. The war was over.

Hitler described his reaction in *Mein Kampf*: "There followed terrible days and even worse nights – I knew that all was lost...in these nights hatred grew in me, hatred for those responsible for this deed."

Not the military, in his mind, but the politicians back at home in Germany and primarily the Jews.

War Ends with German Defeat

Faced with an effective British blockade, fierce resistance from the British and French armies, the entrance of the United States Army, political unrest and starvation at home, an economy in ruins, mutiny in the navy, and mounting defeats on the battlefield, German generals requested armistice negotiations with the Allies in November 1918.

Under the terms of the Armistice, the German Army was allowed to remain intact and was not forced to admit defeat by surrendering. U.S. General John J. Pershing had misgivings about this, saying it would be better to have the German generals admit defeat so there could be no doubt. The French and British were convinced however that Germany would not be a threat again.

The failure to force the German General Staff to admit defeat would have a huge impact on the future of Germany. Although the Army was later reduced in size, its impact would be felt after the war as a political force dedicated to German nationalism, not democracy.

The German General Staff also would support the false idea that their Army had not been defeated on the battlefield, but could have fought on to victory, except for being betrayed at home, the infamous 'Stab in the Back' theory.

This 'Stab in the Back' theory would become hugely popular among many Germans who found it impossible to swallow defeat. During the war, Adolf Hitler became obsessed with this idea, especially laying blame on Jews and Marxists in Germany for undermining the war effort. To Hitler, and so many others, the German politicians who signed the Armistice on November 11th, 1918, would become known as the "November Criminals."

After the Armistice, the remnants of the German Army straggled home from the Front to face tremendous uncertainty.

Germany was now a republic, a form of government (democracy) the Germans historically had little experience or interest in. With the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm and the collapse of the Hohenzollern Monarchy, the German Empire founded by Bismarck in 1871 (the Second Reich) had come to an end.

The new German Republic would eventually have a constitution that made it, on paper, one of the most liberal democracies in history. Its ideals included: equality for all; that political power would be only in the hands of the people; political minority representation in the new Reichstag; a cabinet and chancellor elected by majority vote in the Reichstag; and a president elected by the people.

But Germany was also a nation in political and social chaos. In Berlin and Munich, left-wing Marxist groups proclaimed Russian-like revolutions, only to meet violent opposition from right-wing nationalist Freikorps (small armies of ex-soldiers for hire) along with regular Army troops.

Communists, Socialists and even innocent bystanders were rounded up and murdered in January 1919, in Berlin, and in May in Munich.

The leaders of the new German democracy had made a deal with the German General Staff which allowed the generals to maintain rank and privilege in return for the Army's support of the young republic and a pledge to put down Marxism and help restore order.



Socialists stage a propaganda ride through the streets of Berlin in 1919. Below: Counter-revolutionary troops under the command of Army Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard march in formation along the Unter den Linden Avenue in Berlin.



Amid this political turmoil, on June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the victorious Allies and was then dutifully ratified by the German democratic government. Under the terms of the treaty, Germany alone was forced to accept responsibility for causing the war and had to pay huge war reparations for all the damage. Germany also had to give up land to France and Poland. The German Army was limited to 100,000 men and was forbidden to have submarines or military aircraft.

The treaty had the effect of humiliating the German nation before the world. This would lead to a passionate desire in many Germans, including Adolf Hitler, to see their nation throw off the "shackles" of the treaty and once again take its place in the world – the "rebirth" of Germany through a strong nationalist government. In years to come, Hitler would speak out endlessly against the treaty and gain much support. In addition, he would rail against the 'November Criminals' and 'Jewish Marxists.'

In the summer of 1919, Adolf Hitler was still in the Army and was stationed in Munich where he had become an informer. Corporal Hitler had named soldiers in his barracks that supported the Marxist uprisings in Munich, resulting in their arrest and executions.

Hitler then became one of many undercover agents in the German Army weeding out Marxist influence within the ranks and investigating subversive political organizations.

The Army sent him to a political indoctrination course held at the University of Munich where he quickly came to the attention of his superiors. He describes it in *Mein Kampf*:

"One day I asked for the floor. One of the participants felt obliged to break a lance for the Jews and began to defend them in lengthy arguments. This aroused me to an answer. The overwhelming majority of the students present took my standpoint. The result was that a few days later I was sent into a Munich regiment as a so-called educational officer."

Hitler's anti-Semitic outbursts impressed his superiors including his mentor, Captain Karl Mayr (who later died in Buchenwald). In August 1919, Hitler was given the job of lecturing returning German prisoners of war on the dangers of Communism and pacifism, as well as democracy and disobedience. He also delivered tirades against the Jews that were well received by the weary soldiers who were looking for someone to blame for all their misfortunes.

An Army report on Hitler referred to him as "a born orator."

Hitler had discovered much to his delight that he could speak well in front of a strange audience, hold their attention, and sway them to his point of view.

For his next assignment, he was ordered in September of 1919 to investigate a small group in Munich known as the German Workers' Party.

Hitler Joins German Workers' Party

Corporal Adolf Hitler was ordered in September 1919 to investigate a small group in Munich known as the German Workers' Party.

The use of the term 'workers' attracted the attention of the German Army which was now involved in crushing Marxist uprisings.

On September 12th, dressed in civilian clothes, Hitler went to a meeting of the German Workers' Party in the back room of a Munich beer hall, with about twenty five people. He listened to a speech on economics by Gottfried Feder entitled, "How and by what means is capitalism to be eliminated?"

After the speech, Hitler began to leave when a man rose up and spoke in favor of the German state of Bavaria breaking away from Germany and forming a new South German nation with Austria.

This enraged Hitler and he spoke out forcefully against the man for the next fifteen minutes uninterrupted, to the astonishment of everyone. One of the founders of the German Workers' Party, Anton Drexler, reportedly whispered: "He's got the gift of the gab. We could use him."

After Hitler's outburst ended, Drexler hurried over to Hitler and gave him a forty-page pamphlet entitled: "My Political Awakening." He urged Hitler to read it and also invited Hitler to come back again.

Early the next morning, sitting in his cot in the barracks of the 2nd Infantry Regiment watching the mice eat bread crumbs he left for them on the floor, Hitler remembered the pamphlet and read it. He was delighted to find the pamphlet, written by Drexler, reflected political thinking much like his own – building a strong nationalist, pro-military, anti-Semitic party made up of working class people.

A few days later, Hitler received an unexpected postcard saying he had been accepted as a member into the party. He was asked to attend an executive committee meeting, which he did. At that meeting he was joyfully welcomed as a new member although he was actually very undecided on whether to join.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler describes the condition of the party: "aside from a few directives, there was nothing, no program, no leaflet, no printed matter at all, no membership cards, not even a miserable rubber stamp..."

Although unimpressed by the present condition of the German Workers' Party, Hitler was drawn to the sentiment expressed by Drexler that this would somehow become a movement not just a political party. And in this disorganized party, Hitler saw opportunity.

"This absurd little organization with its few members seemed to me to possess the one advantage that it had not frozen into an 'organization,' but left the individual opportunity for real personal activity. Here it was still possible to work, and the smaller the movement, the more readily it could be put into the proper form. Here, the content, the goal, and the road could still be determined..."

He spent two days thinking it over then decided.

"I finally came to the conviction that I had to take this step...It was the most decisive resolve of my life. From here there was and could be no turning back."

Adolf Hitler joined the committee of the German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or DAP) and thus entered politics.

Nazi Party is formed

Adolf Hitler never held a regular job and aside from his time in World War I, led a lazy lifestyle, from his brooding teenage days in Linz through years spent in idleness and poverty in Vienna. But after joining the German Workers' Party in 1919 at age thirty, Hitler immediately began a frenzied effort to make it succeed.

The German Workers' Party consisted mainly of an executive committee which had seven members, including Hitler. To bring in new members Hitler prepared invitations which each committee member gave to friends asking them to attend the party's monthly public meeting, but few came.

Next they tried having invitations printed at a stationary store. A few people came.

Then they placed an advertisement in an anti-Semitic newspaper in Munich and at Hitler's insistence, moved the public meeting to a beer cellar that would hold about a hundred. The other committee members were concerned they might

have trouble filling the place, but just over a hundred showed up at the meeting held on October 16, 1919.

Hitler was scheduled to be the second speaker at this meeting. It was to be his first time as a featured speaker, despite the misgivings of some committee members who doubted Hitler's ability at this time.

But when Hitler got up to speak, he astounded everyone with a highly emotional, at times near hysterical manner of speech making. For Hitler, it was an important moment in his young political career. He described the scene in *Mein Kampf*:

"I spoke for thirty minutes, and what before I had simply felt within me, without in any way knowing it, was now proved by reality: I could speak! After thirty minutes the people in the small room were electrified and the enthusiasm was first expressed by the fact that my appeal to the self-sacrifice of those present led to the donation of three hundred marks."

The money was used to buy more advertising and print leaflets. The German Workers' Party now featured Hitler as the main attraction at its meetings. In his speeches Hitler railed against the Treaty of Versailles and delivered anti-Semitic tirades, blaming the Jews for Germany's problems. Attendance slowly increased, numbering in the hundreds.

Hitler took charge of party propaganda in early 1920, and also recruited young men he had known in the Army. He was aided in his recruiting efforts by Army Captain Ernst Röhm, a new party member, who would play a vital role in Hitler's eventual rise to power.

In Munich, there were many alienated, maladjusted soldiers and ex-soldiers with a thirst for adventure and a distaste for the peace brought on by the Treaty of Versailles and the resulting democratic republic. They joined the German Workers' Party in growing numbers.

There were many other political groups looking for members, but none more successful than the Marxists. Genuine fear existed there might be a widespread Communist revolution in Germany like the Russian revolution. Hitler associated Marxism with the Jews and thus reviled it.

He also understood how a political party directly opposed to a possible Communist revolution could play on the fears of so many Germans and gain support.

In February of 1920, Hitler urged the German Workers' Party to hold its first mass meeting. He met strong opposition from leading party members who thought it was premature and feared it might be disrupted by Marxists. Hitler had no fear of disruption. In fact he welcomed it, knowing it would bring his party anti-Marxist notoriety. He even had the hall decorated in red to aggravate the Marxists.

On February 24, 1920, Hitler was thrilled when he entered the large meeting hall in Munich and saw two thousand people waiting, including a large number of Communists.

A few minutes into his speech, he was drowned out by shouting followed by open brawling between German Workers' Party associates and disruptive Communists. Eventually, Hitler resumed speaking and claims in *Mein Kampf* the shouting was gradually drowned out by applause.

He proceeded to outline the "Twenty Five Points" of the German Workers' Party, its political platform, which included: the union of all Germans in a greater German Reich; rejection of the Treaty of Versailles; the demand for additional territories for the German people (Lebensraum); citizenship determined by race with no Jew to be considered a German; all income not earned by work to be confiscated; a thorough reconstruction of the national education system; religious freedom except for religions which endanger the German race; and a strong central government for the execution of effective legislation.

One by one Hitler went through the Twenty Five Points, asking the rowdy crowd for its approval on each point, which he got. For Hitler, the meeting was now a huge success.

"When after nearly four hours the hall began to empty and the crowd, shoulder to shoulder, began to move, shove, press toward the exit like a slow stream, I knew that now the principles of a movement which could no longer be forgotten were moving out among the German people."

"A fire was kindled from whose flame one day the sword must come which would regain freedom for the Germanic Siegfried and life for the German nation."

Hitler realized one thing the movement lacked was a recognizable symbol or flag. In the summer of 1920, Hitler chose the symbol which to this day remains perhaps the most infamous in history, the swastika.

It was not something Hitler invented, but is found even in the ruins of ancient times. Hitler had seen it each day as a boy when he attended the Benedictine monastery school in Lambach, Austria. The ancient monastery was decorated with carved stones and woodwork that included several swastikas. They had also been seen around Germany among the Freikorps (soldiers for hire), and appeared before as an emblem used by anti-Semitic political parties.

But when it was placed inside a white circle on a red background, it provided a powerful, instantly recognizable symbol that immediately helped Hitler's party gain popularity.

Hitler described the symbolism involved: "In the red we see the social idea of the movement, in the white the national idea, in the swastika the mission to struggle for the victory of Aryan man and at the same time the victory of the idea of creative work, which is eternally anti-Semitic and will always be anti-Semitic."

The German Workers' Party name was changed by Hitler to include the term National Socialist. Thus the full name was the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or NSDAP) called for short, Nazi.

By the end of 1920 it had about three thousand members.

Hitler Named Leader of Nazi Party

By early 1921, Adolf Hitler was becoming highly effective at speaking in front of ever larger crowds. In February, Hitler spoke before a crowd of nearly six thousand in Munich. To publicize the meeting, he sent out two truckloads of Party supporters to drive around with swastikas, cause a big commotion, and throw out leaflets, the first time this tactic was used by the Nazis.

Hitler was now gaining notoriety outside of the Nazi Party for his rowdy, at times hysterical tirades against the Treaty of Versailles, rival politicians and political groups, especially Marxists, and always the Jews.

The Nazi Party was centered in Munich which had become a hotbed of ultra right-wing German nationalists. This included Army officers determined to crush Marxism and undermine or even overthrow the young German democracy centered in Berlin.

Slowly, they began looking toward the rising politician, Adolf Hitler, and the growing Nazi movement as the vehicle to hitch themselves to. Hitler was

already looking at how he could carry his movement to the rest of Germany. He traveled to Berlin to visit nationalist groups during the summer of 1921.

But in his absence, he faced an unexpected revolt among his own Nazi Party leadership in Munich.

The Party was still run by an executive committee whose original members now considered Hitler to be highly overbearing, even dictatorial. To weaken Hitler's position, they formed an alliance with a group of socialists from Augsburg.

Hitler rushed back to Munich and countered them by announcing his resignation from the Party on July 11, 1921.

They realized the loss of Hitler would effectively mean the end of the Nazi Party. Hitler seized the moment and announced he would return on the condition that he was made chairman and given dictatorial powers.

Infuriated committee members, including Anton Drexler, founder of the Party, held out at first. Meanwhile, an anonymous pamphlet appeared entitled: "Adolf Hitler: Is he a traitor?" It attacked Hitler's lust for power and criticized the violence prone men now surrounding him. Hitler responded to its publication in a Munich newspaper by suing for libel and later won a small settlement.

The executive committee of the Nazi Party eventually backed down and Hitler's demands were put to a vote of the party members. Hitler received 543 votes for, and only one against.

At the next gathering, July 29, 1921, Adolf Hitler was introduced as Führer of the Nazi Party, marking the first time that title was publicly used to address him.

The Beer Hall Putsch

A series of financial events unfolded in the years 1921 through 1923 that would propel the Nazis to new heights of daring and would even prompt Hitler into attempting to take over Germany.

In April of 1921, the victorious European Allies of World War I, notably France and Britain, presented a bill to Germany demanding payment for damages caused in the war which Germany had started. This bill (33 billion dollars) for war reparations had the immediate effect of causing ruinous inflation in Germany.

The German currency, the mark, slipped drastically in value. It had been four marks to the U.S. dollar until the war reparations were announced. Then it

became 75 to the dollar and in 1922 sank to 400 to the dollar. The German government asked for a postponement of payments. The French refused. The Germans defied them by defaulting on their payments. In response to this, in January 1923, the French Army occupied the industrial part of Germany known as the Ruhr.

The German mark fell to 18,000 to the dollar. By July 1923, it sank to 160,000. By August, 1,000,000. And by November 1923, it took 4,000,000,000 marks to obtain a dollar.

Germans lost their life savings. Salaries were paid in worthless money. Groceries cost billions. Hunger riots broke out.

For the moment, the people stood by their government, admiring its defiance of the French. But in September of 1923, the German government made the fateful decision to resume making payments. Bitter resentment and unrest swelled among the people, inciting extremist political groups to action and quickly bringing Germany to the brink of chaos.

The Nazis and other similar groups now felt the time was right to strike. The German state of Bavaria where the Nazis were based was a hotbed of groups opposed to the democratic government in Berlin. By now, November 1923, the Nazis, with 55,000 followers, were the biggest and best organized. With Nazi members demanding action, Hitler knew he had to act or risk losing the leadership of his Party.

And so Hitler and the Nazis hatched a plot in which they would kidnap the leaders of the Bavarian government and force them at gunpoint to accept Hitler as their leader. Then, according to their plan, with the aid of famous World War I General, Erich Ludendorff, they would win over the German Army, proclaim a nationwide revolt and bring down the German democratic government in Berlin.

They put this plan into action when they learned there was going to be a large gathering of businessmen in a Munich beer hall and the guests of honor were scheduled to be the Bavarian leaders they now wanted to kidnap.

On November 8, 1923, Nazi troops under the direction of Hermann Göring surrounded the place. At 8:30 p.m., Hitler and his storm troopers burst into the beer hall causing instant panic.

Hitler fired a pistol shot into the ceiling. "Silence!" he yelled at the stunned crowd.

Hitler and Göring forced their way to the podium as armed storm troops continued to file into the hall. State Commissioner Gustav von Kahr, whose speech had been interrupted by all this, yielded the podium to Hitler.

"The National Revolution has begun!" Hitler shouted. "No one may leave the hall. Unless there is immediate quiet I shall have a machine gun posted in the gallery. The Bavarian and Reich governments have been removed and a provisional national government formed. The barracks of the Reichswehr and police are occupied. The Army and the police are marching on the city under the swastika banner!"

None of that was true, but those in the beer hall could not know otherwise.

Hitler then ordered the three highest officials of the Bavarian government into a back room. State Commissioner Kahr, along with the head of the state police, Colonel Hans von Seisser, and commander of the German Army in Bavaria, General Otto von Lossow, did as they were told and went into the room where Hitler informed them they were to join him in proclaiming a Nazi revolution and would become part of the new government.

But to Hitler's great surprise, his three captives simply glared at him and at first even refused to talk to him. Hitler responded by waving his pistol at them, yelling: "I have four shots in my pistol! Three for you, gentlemen. The last bullet for myself!"

However, the revolution in the back room continued to go poorly for Hitler. Then, on a sudden impulse, Hitler dashed out of the room and went back out to the podium and shouted: "The government of the November criminals and the Reich President are declared to be removed. A new national government will be named this very day in Munich. A new German National Army will be formed immediately...The task of the provisional German National Government is to organize the march on that sinful Babel, Berlin, and save the German people! Tomorrow will find either a National Government in Germany or us dead!"

This led everyone in the beer hall to believe the men in the back room had given in to Hitler and were joining with the Nazis. There was now wild cheering for Hitler.

General Ludendorff then arrived. Hitler knew the three government leaders still in the back room would actually listen to him.

At Hitler's urging, Ludendorff spoke to the men in the back room and advised them to go along with the Nazi revolution. They reluctantly agreed, then went

out to the podium and faced the crowd, showing their support for Hitler and pledging loyalty to the new regime.

An emotional Hitler spoke to the crowd: "I am going to fulfill the vow I made to myself five years ago when I was a blind cripple in the military hospital – to know neither rest nor peace until the November criminals had been overthrown, until on the ruins of the wretched Germany of today there should have arisen once more a Germany of power and greatness, of freedom and splendor."

The crowd in the beer hall roared their approval and sang "Deutschland Über Alles." Hitler was euphoric. This was turning into a night of triumph for him. Tomorrow he might actually be the new leader of Germany.

But then word came that attempts to take over several Army barracks had failed and that German soldiers inside those barracks were holding out against the Nazi storm troopers. Hitler decided to leave the beer hall and go to the scene to personally resolve the problem.

Leaving the beer hall was a fateful error. In his absence the Nazi revolution quickly began to unravel. The three Bavarian government leaders, Kahr, Lossow, and Seisser, slipped out of the beer hall after falsely promising Ludendorff they would remain loyal to Hitler.

Meanwhile, Hitler had no luck in getting the German soldiers who were holding out in the barracks to surrender. Having failed at that, he went back to the beer hall.

When he arrived back at the beer hall he was aghast to find his revolution fizzling. There were no plans for tomorrow's march on Berlin. Munich wasn't even being occupied. Nothing was happening.

In fact, only one building, Army headquarters at the War Ministry had been occupied by Ernst Röhm and his troopers. Elsewhere, rogue bands of Nazi thugs roamed the city of Munich rounding up some political opponents and harassing Jews.

In the early morning hours of November 9th, State Commissioner Kahr broke his promise to Hitler and Ludendorff and issued a statement blasting Hitler: "Declarations extorted from me, General Lossow and Colonel von Seisser by pistol point are null and void. Had the senseless and purposeless attempt at revolt succeeded, Germany would have been plunged into the abyss and Bavaria with it."

Kahr also ordered the breakup of the Nazi Party and its fighting forces.

General Lossow also abandoned Hitler and ordered German Army reinforcements into Munich to put down the Nazi Putsch. Troops were rushed in and by dawn the War Ministry building containing Röhm and his troops was surrounded.

Hitler was up all night frantically trying to decide what to do. General Ludendorff then gave him an idea. The Nazis would simply march into the middle of Munich and take it over. Because of his World War I fame, Ludendorff reasoned, no one would dare fire on him. He even assured Hitler the police and the Army would likely join them. The now-desperate Hitler went for the idea.

Around 11 a.m. on the morning of November 9th, a column of three thousand Nazis, led by Hitler, Göring and Ludendorff marched toward the center of Munich. Carrying one of the flags was a young party member named Heinrich Himmler.

After reaching the center of Munich, the Nazis headed toward the War Ministry building but they encountered a police blockade. As they stood face to face with about a hundred armed policemen, Hitler yelled out to them to surrender. They didn't. Shots rang out. Both sides fired. It lasted about a minute. Sixteen Nazis and three police were killed. Göring was hit in the groin. Hitler suffered a dislocated shoulder when the man he had locked arms with was shot and pulled him down onto the pavement.

Hitler's bodyguard, Ulrich Graf, jumped onto Hitler to shield him and took several bullets, probably saving Hitler's life. Hitler then crawled along the sidewalk out of the line of fire and scooted away into a waiting car, leaving his comrades behind. The rest of the Nazis scattered or were arrested. Ludendorff, true to his heroic form, walked right through the line of fire to the police and was then arrested.

Hitler wound up at the home his friends, the Hanfstaengls, where he was reportedly talked out of suicide. He had become deeply despondent and expected to be shot by the authorities. He spent two nights hiding in the Hanfstaengl's attic. On the third night, police arrived and arrested him. He was taken to the prison at Landsberg where his spirits lifted somewhat after he was told he was going to get a public trial.

With the collapse of the Nazi revolution, it now appeared to most observers that Hitler's political career and the Nazi movement itself had come to a crashing, almost laughable end.



During the Putsch, Hitler's storm troopers are seen with socialist politicians they have arrested in Munich. Below: Chaotic scene at the Marienplatz as Nazi storm troopers arrive amid onlookers.



Bewildered citizens linger at the Odeonplatz following the failure of the Putsch.

Hitler on Trial for Treason

The trial of Adolf Hitler for high treason after the Beer Hall Putsch was not the end of Hitler's political career as many had expected. In many ways marked the true beginning.

Overnight, Hitler became a nationally and internationally known figure due to massive press coverage. The judges in this sensational trial were chosen by a Nazi sympathizer in the Bavarian government. They allowed Hitler to use the courtroom as a propaganda platform from which he could speak at any length on his own behalf, interrupt others at any time and even cross examine witnesses.

Rather than deny the charges, Hitler admitted wanting to overthrow the government and outlined his reasons, portraying himself as a German patriot and the democratic government itself, its founders and leaders, as the real criminals.

"I alone bear the responsibility. But I am not a criminal because of that. If today I stand here as a revolutionary, it is as a revolutionary against the revolution. There is no such thing as high treason against the traitors of 1918."

Hitler considered the traitors of 1918 to be the German politicians responsible for the so called 'stab in the back,' who prematurely ended World War I and established the German democratic republic. In Hitler's mind and among many Germans, their Army had not been defeated on the battlefield but had been undermined by political treachery at home.

In reality, German Army leaders themselves had opened negotiations with the Allies to end the war which they were losing.

But newspapers quoted Hitler at length. Thus, for the first time, the German people as a whole had a chance to get acquainted with this man and his thinking. And many liked what they heard.

During 24 days of long, rambling arguments, Hitler's daring grew. As the trial concluded, sensing the national impact he was having, Hitler gave this closing statement:

"The man who is born to be a dictator is not compelled. He wills it. He is not driven forward, but drives himself. There is nothing immodest about this. Is it immodest for a worker to drive himself toward heavy labor? Is it presumptuous of a man with the high forehead of a thinker to ponder through the nights till he gives the world an invention? The man who feels called upon to govern a people has no right to say, 'If you want me or summon me, I will cooperate.' No! It is his duty to step forward. The army

which we have now formed is growing day to day. I nourish the proud hope that one day the hour will come when these rough companies will grow to battalions, the battalions to regiments, the regiments to divisions, that the old cockade will be taken from the mud, that the old flags will wave again, that that there will be a reconciliation at the last great divine judgment which we are prepared to face. For it is not you, gentlemen, who pass judgment on us. That judgment is spoken by the eternal court of history...Pronounce us guilty a thousand times over: the goddess of the eternal court of history will smile and tear to pieces the State Prosecutor's submissions and the court's verdict; for she acquits us."

The court's verdict – guilty. Possible sentence – life. Hitler's sentence – five years, eligible for parole in six months.

The three judges in the trial had become so sympathetic that the presiding judge had to persuade them to find him guilty at all. They agreed to find Hitler guilty only after being assured he would get early parole.

Other Nazi leaders arrested after the failed Putsch got light sentences as well. General Ludendorff was even acquitted.

On April 1st, 1924, Hitler was taken to the old fortress at Landsberg and given a spacious private cell with a fine view. He got gifts, was allowed to receive visitors whenever he liked and had his own private secretary, Rudolf Hess.

The Nazi Party after the Putsch became fragmented and disorganized, but Hitler had gained national influence by taking advantage of the press to make his ideas known. Now, although behind bars, Hitler was not about to stop communicating.

Pacing back and forth in his cell, he continued expressing his ideas, while Hess took down every word. The result would be the first volume of a book, *Mein Kampf*, outlining Hitler's political and racial ideas in brutally intricate detail, serving both as a blueprint for future actions and as a warning to the world.



The defiant defendant, Adolf Hitler, with fellow defendants in the Putsch trial, including Gen. Ludendorff (left) and Ernst Röhm (right front) who will soon loom large in the Nazi movement. Below: The prisoner Adolf Hitler looking comfortable in Landsberg with fellow Nazis, Hermann Kriebel (left) and Emil Maurice (first photograph rear).

Hitler's Book "Mein Kampf"

Although it is thought of as having been 'written' by Hitler, *Mein Kampf* is not a book in the usual sense. Hitler never actually sat down and pecked at a typewriter or wrote longhand, but instead dictated it to Rudolf Hess while pacing around his prison cell in 1923-24 and later at an inn at Berchtesgaden.

Reading *Mein Kampf* is like listening to Hitler speak at length about his youth, early days in the Nazi Party, future plans for Germany, and ideas on politics and race.

The original title Hitler chose was "Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice." His Nazi publisher knew better and shortened it to "Mein Kampf," simply My Struggle, or My Battle.

In his book, Hitler divides humans into categories based on physical appearance, establishing higher and lower orders, or types of humans. At the top, according to Hitler, is the Germanic man with his fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes. Hitler refers to this type of person as an Aryan. He asserts that the Aryan is the supreme form of human, or master race.

And so it follows in Hitler's thinking, if there is a supreme form of human, then there must be others less than supreme, the Untermenschen, or racially inferior. Hitler assigns this position to Jews and the Slavic peoples, notably the Czechs, Poles, and Russians.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler states: "...it [Nazi philosophy] by no means believes in an equality of races, but along with their difference it recognizes their higher or lesser value and feels itself obligated to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker in accordance with the eternal will that dominates this universe."

Hitler then states the Aryan is also culturally superior.

"All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan..."

"Hence it is no accident that the first cultures arose in places where the Aryan, in his encounters with lower peoples, subjugated them and bent them to his will. They then became the first technical instrument in the service of a developing culture."

Hitler goes on to say that subjugated peoples actually benefit by being conquered because they come in contact with and learn from the superior Aryans. However, he adds they benefit only as long as the Aryan remains the absolute master and doesn't mingle or inter-marry with inferior conquered peoples.

But it is the Jews, Hitler says, who are engaged in a conspiracy to keep this master race from assuming its rightful position as rulers of the world, by tainting its racial and cultural purity and even inventing forms of government in which the Aryan comes to believe in equality and fails to recognize his racial superiority.

"The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew."

Hitler describes the struggle for world domination as an ongoing racial, cultural, and political battle between Aryans and Jews. He outlines his thoughts in detail, accusing the Jews of conducting an international conspiracy to control world finances, controlling the press, inventing liberal democracy as well as Marxism, promoting prostitution and vice, and using culture to spread disharmony.

Throughout *Mein Kampf*, Hitler refers to Jews as parasites, liars, dirty, crafty, sly, wily, clever, without any true culture, a sponger, a middleman, a maggot, eternal blood suckers, repulsive, unscrupulous, monsters, foreign, menace, bloodthirsty, avaricious, the destroyer of Aryan humanity, and the mortal enemy of Aryan humanity...

"...for the higher he climbs, the more alluring his old goal that was once promised him rises from the veil of the past, and with feverish avidity his keenest minds see the dream of world domination tangibly approaching."

This conspiracy idea and the notion of 'competition' for world domination between Jews and Aryans would become widespread beliefs in Nazi Germany and would even be taught to school children.

This, combined with Hitler's racial attitude toward the Jews, would be shared to varying degrees by millions of Germans and people from occupied countries, so that they either remained silent or actively participated in the Nazi effort to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.

Mein Kampf also provides an explanation for the military conquests later attempted by Hitler and the Germans. Hitler states that since the Aryans are the master race, they are entitled simply by that fact to acquire more land for themselves. This Lebensraum, or living space, will be acquired by force, Hitler says, and includes the lands to the east of Germany, namely Russia. That land would be used to cultivate food and to provide room for the expanding Aryan population at the expense of the Slavic peoples, who were to be removed, eliminated, or enslaved.

But in order to achieve this, Hitler states, Germany must first defeat its old enemy France, to avenge the German defeat of World War I and to secure the western border. Hitler bitterly recalls the end of the First World War, saying the German Army was denied its chance for victory on the battlefield by political treachery at home. In the second volume of *Mein Kampf* he attaches most of the blame to Jewish conspirators in a highly menacing and ever more threatening tone.

When *Mein Kampf* was first released in 1925 it sold poorly. People had been hoping for a juicy autobiography or a behind-the-scenes story of the Beer Hall

Putsch. What they got were hundreds of pages of long, hard to follow sentences and wandering paragraphs composed by a self-educated man.

However, after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, millions of copies were sold. It was considered proper to own a copy and to give one to newlyweds, high school graduates, or to celebrate any similar occasion. But few Germans ever read it cover to cover. Although it made him rich, Hitler would later express regret that he produced *Mein Kampf*, considering the extent of its revelations.

Those revelations concerning the nature of his character and his blueprint for Germany's future served as a warning to the world. A warning that was mostly ignored.

A New Beginning

A few days before Christmas 1924, Adolf Hitler emerged a free man after nine months in prison, having learned from his mistakes. In addition to creating the book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had given considerable thought to the failed Nazi revolution (Beer Hall Putsch) of November 1923, and its implications for the future.

He now realized it had been premature to attempt to overthrow the democratic government by force without the support of the German Army and other established institutions. He was determined not to make that mistake again. Now, no matter how much his Nazi Party members wanted action taken against the young German democratic republic, it simply would not happen. He would not give in to them as he had done in November 1923, with disastrous, even laughable results.

Hitler had a new idea on how to topple the government and take over Germany for himself and the Nazis – play by the democratic rules and get elected.

"Instead of working to achieve power by an armed coup we shall have to hold our noses and enter the Reichstag against the Catholic and Marxist deputies. If outvoting them takes longer than outshooting them, at least the results will be guaranteed by their own Constitution! Any lawful process is slow. But sooner or later we shall have a majority – and after that Germany," Hitler stated while in prison.

The Nazi Party would be organized like a government itself, so that when power was achieved and democracy was legitimately ended, this 'government in waiting' could slip right into place.

But before any of this could be started, Hitler had some problems to overcome. After the Beer Hall Putsch, the government of the German state of Bavaria banned the Nazi Party and its newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (Peoples' Observer). Also, the Nazi Party was now badly disorganized with much infighting among its leaders.

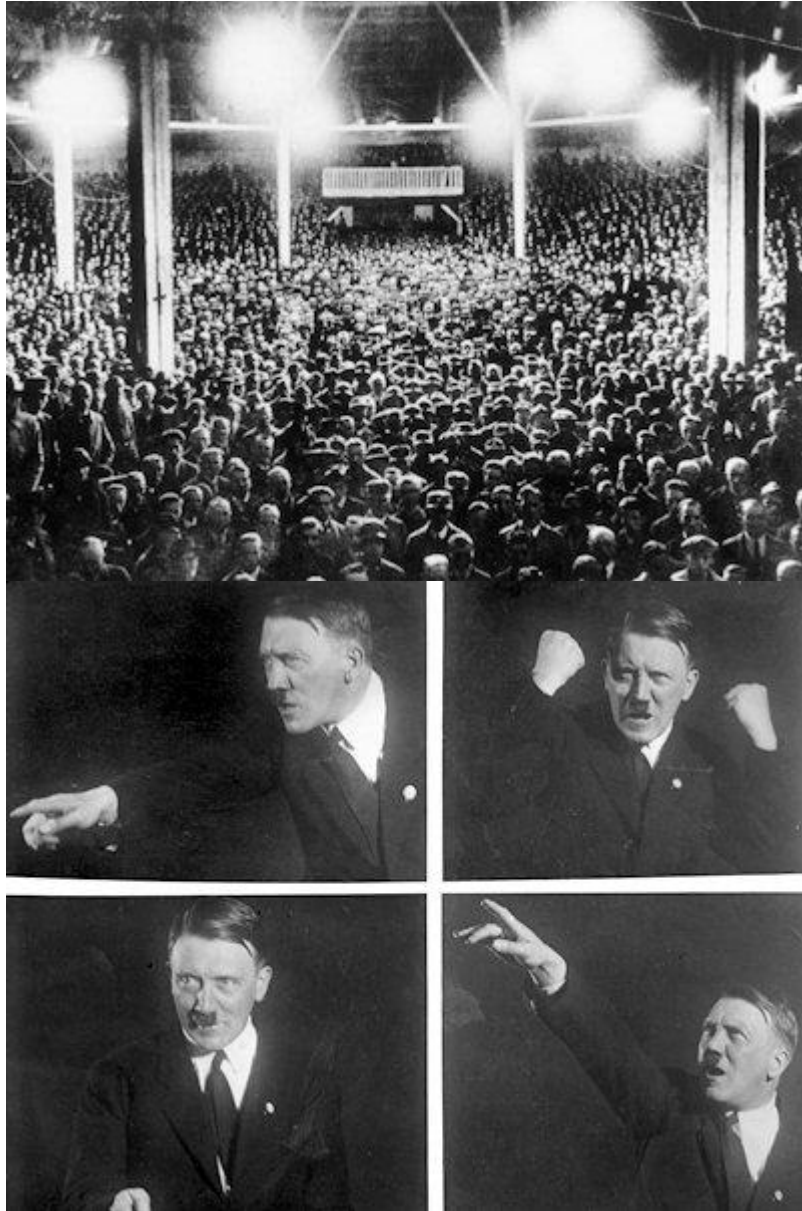
Early in 1925, Hitler visited the Prime Minister of Bavaria and managed to convince him to lift the ban, on the promise of good behavior, and after promising that the Nazis would work within the rules of the democratic constitution. He then wrote a long editorial for the *Völkischer Beobachter* called "A New Beginning," published February 26, 1925.

On February 27th, the Nazis held their first big meeting since the Beer Hall Putsch at which Hitler reclaimed his position as absolute leader of the Nazi Party and patched up some of the ongoing feuds. But during his two-hour speech before four thousand cheering Nazis, Hitler got carried away and started spewing out the same old threats against the democratic republic, Marxists, and Jews.

For this, the government of Bavaria slapped him with a two-year ban on public speaking. It was a major setback for Hitler who owed much of his success to his speech making ability. But rather than be discouraged or slowed down, Hitler immediately began reorganizing the Nazi Party with feverish effort.



Now a free man - Adolf Hitler exits Landsberg prison - soon to restart his Nazi movement. Below: The crowd attending a Hitler speech inside the Circus Krone building in Munich about 1925.



An extraordinary photo montage created by Hitler's personal photographer reveals the well-rehearsed dramatic gestures routinely used by Hitler during his speeches to great effect.

The Party itself was divided into two major political organizations.

PO I - Dedicated to undermining and overthrowing the German democratic republic.

PO II - Designed to create a government in waiting, a highly organized Nazi government within the republic that would someday replace it. PO II even had its own departments of Agriculture, Economy, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Propaganda, Justice, along with Race and Culture.

Germany was divided up by the Nazis into thirty-four districts, or Gaue, with each one having a Gauleiter, or leader. The Gau itself was divided into circles, Kreise, and each one had a Kreisleiter, or circle leader. The circles were divided

into Ortsgruppen, or local groups. And in the big cities, the local groups were divided along streets and blocks.

For young people, the Hitler Jugend, or Hitler Youth was formed. It was for boys aged 15 to 18, and was modeled after the popular Boy Scout programs. Younger boys aged 10 to 15 could join the Deutsches Jungvolk. There was an organization for girls called Bund Deutscher Maedel and for women, the Frauenschaften.

Also at this time, Hitler began to reorganize his Nazi storm troopers, the SA (Sturmabteilung) which he referred to in *Mein Kampf* as "an instrument for the conduct and reinforcement of the movement's struggle for its philosophy of life."

The SA began as an organization of Nazi street brawlers originally called the "monitor troop" that kept Nazi meetings from being broken up by Marxists and fought with them in the streets as well. It had also been Hitler's main 'instrument' in the failed Beer Hall Putsch.

Realizing the German man's fondness for uniforms, the SA adopted a brown-shirted outfit, with boots, swastika armband, badges and cap. Nazi uniforms along with the swastika symbol would become important tools in providing recognition and visibility, thus increasing public awareness of the Party.

At this time, within the SA, a new highly disciplined guard unit was formed by Hitler that would be solely responsible to him and would serve as his personal body guard. It was called the Schutzstaffel, the staff guard or SS for short. The SS adopted a black uniform, modeled partly after the Italian Fascists. A former stationery salesman, Josef Berchtold, was its first leader. A young man who had done a variety of odd jobs for the Party became member number 168. His name was Heinrich Himmler.

But despite all this effort, the Nazis now ran into a big obstacle that limited the Party's success. Things were getting better in Germany. The economy was improving and unemployment was dropping. The big German industrialists were now debt free. Factory output was increasing as investment capital came pouring in from the United States.

An American named Charles G. Dawes had drawn up a plan, approved by the Allies, that reduced German war reparations (the amount of money Germany had to pay for damages it caused in the World War I). The Dawes Plan stabilized the German currency, the mark. The plan also provided for huge loans from America to help German industry rebuild. The German government also borrowed from the U.S. to finance its vast array of new social programs and

municipal building projects including airfields, sports stadiums and even swimming pools.

And Germany now had a new president, a sleepy-eyed Old Gentleman named Paul von Hindenburg, the famed World War I Field Marshal. He was unanimously backed by the conservative and middle-of-the-road political parties to help bring stability to the republic and to thwart any attempt by radical parties to capture the presidency.

The German Army had made its peace with the young republic. Although forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles to exceed 100,000 soldiers and denied modern equipment and planes, thousands of men existed in thinly veiled paramilitary organizations funded by the Army. The German General Staff, disbanded by the treaty, simply disguised itself among its troops. The Army was also secretly engaged in developing new technologies in Russian factories and was involved in training exercises with the Russian Army.

Thus, despite appearances to the Allies, the German General Staff and its Army was allowed to achieve its primary goal, self preservation and advancement, and so it supported German democracy for the time being.

As things got better economically, there was a sense of relaxation among the German people. Since they didn't have to struggle so much for daily existence, they had time for enjoyment, outdoor recreation, the arts, and sitting around beer halls and cafés. Among these people, the name of Adolf Hitler was likely to bring a smile, perhaps getting him a bit confused with the great film comedian Charlie Chaplin who looked like him and even had some of the same body language.

Amid all this, Adolf Hitler knew it was going to be slow going for his Party which had counted so many unhappy, disgruntled men among its early members. But Hitler also had a sense that the good times would not last. The German republic was living on borrowed money and borrowed time. The underlying political and racial tensions he was so keen to exploit were still there, only dormant. And when the good times were over, they would once again come looking for him. But for now he just had to wait.

The Quiet Years

Adolf Hitler described the quiet years between 1926 and 1929 as one of the happiest times of his life. In the scenic mountains above the village of Berchtesgaden in the German state of Bavaria, he found an ideal home. He spent his days gazing at inspiring, majestic mountain views and dreaming of future glory for himself and his German Reich.

Those dreams centered around asserting the supremacy of the Germanic race, acquiring more living space (Lebensraum) for the German people, and dealing harshly with Jews and Marxists.

By May of 1926, Hitler had overcome any remaining rivals within the Nazi Party and assumed the title of supreme leader (Führer). Ideological differences and infighting between factions of the Nazi Party were resolved by Hitler through his considerable powers of personal persuasion during closed door meetings with embattled leaders.



Portrait of Joseph Goebbels a failed writer and virulent anti-Semite who found his calling in the Nazi Party.

The Party itself experienced slow growth, numbering only about 17,000 in early 1926. Hitler had been forbidden to speak in public until 1927 by the Bavarian government. He was still on parole, facing the possibility of being deported back to his Austrian homeland.

Much to his advantage, however, he enjoyed a following among upper class socialites who were strangely drawn to this charismatic but socially awkward man. Hitler delighted in their attention and their money. He wound up with a brand new red Mercedes in which he was chauffeured around the Bavarian countryside taking in the sights with his Nazi companions.

During these quiet years, Joseph Goebbels first came to Hitler's attention and experienced a quick rise in the Nazi hierarchy. Goebbels, a brilliant but somewhat neurotic would-be writer, displayed huge talents for speech making, organizing, and propaganda. He was a rarity among the Nazis, a highly educated man, with a Ph.D. in literature from Heidelberg.

Goebbels was a little man, about five feet tall, who walked with a limp as a result of infantile paralysis. He kept a diary which reveals how quickly he became infatuated with Hitler.

"Great joy. He greets me like an old friend. And looks after me. How I love him!" Goebbels wrote after his second meeting with Hitler.

But this 'love' was tempered by ideological differences. Goebbels belonged to the Nazi faction led by Gregor Strasser that actually believed in the 'socialism' of National Socialism and had sympathy for Marxism, a sentiment totally unacceptable to Hitler.

In his diary, Goebbels describes his reaction to a meeting in which Hitler attempted to straighten him out.



Berliners cheer Reich President Hindenburg (in car) upon his 80th birthday in October 1927. Below: The world-renowned Adlon Hotel, frequented by Berlin society and wealthy visitors in the 1920s.



A gathering of Nazis in Weimar - waiting for their day to come.
Ernst Thalmann (center) leads his Red Front (communist) troopers through the streets of Berlin - posing a sizable challenge to the struggling Nazi Party there

"We ask. He gives brilliant replies. I love him. Social question. Quite new perspectives. He has thought it all out...He sets my mind at rest on all points. He is a man in every way, in every respect. Such a firebrand, he can be my leader. I bow to the greater man, the political genius!"

And later, after spending a few days with Hitler at Berchtesgaden...

"These days have signposted my road! A star shines leading me from deep misery! I am his to the end. My last doubts have vanished. Germany will live. Heil Hitler!"

Goebbels was sent by Hitler in October 1926 to the German capital, Berlin, to be its Gauleiter. Once there, he faced the huge task of reorganizing and publicizing the largely ignored Nazi Party.

Berlin proved to be a training ground for the future Propaganda Minister. He skillfully used good and even bad publicity to get the Party noticed. He organized meetings, gave speeches, published a newspaper, plastered posters all over neighborhoods, and provoked confrontations with Marxists. Party membership grew.

But problems arose after Nazi storm troopers badly beat up an old pastor who heckled Goebbels during a Nazi rally. The police declared the Party illegal in Berlin and eventually banned Nazi speech making throughout the entire German state of Prussia.

The ban was short-lived however. It was lifted in the spring of 1927. Hitler then came to Berlin and gave a speech before a crowd of about 5,000 supporters.

On May 20th, national elections were held in Germany. The Nazis had a poor showing, although Goebbels won a seat in the Reichstag. For the average German, the Nazis at this time had little appeal. Things seemed to be just fine without them. The economy was strong, inflation was under control, and people were working again.

Adolf Hitler was simply biding his time, knowing it would not last. At Berchtesgaden, Hitler finished dictating the second volume of *Mein Kampf* to Rudolf Hess. In the summer of 1928, Hitler rented a small country house with a magnificent view of the Bavarian mountains. Years later this would be the site of his sprawling villa.

Now, at age 39, Hitler had a place he could finally call home. He settled into the little country house and invited his step sister, Angela, to leave Vienna and come to take over the daily chores. Angela arrived along with her two daughters, Friedl and Geli.

Geli was a lively 20-year-old with dark blond hair and Viennese charm, qualities that were hugely appealing to a man nearly twice her age. Hitler quickly fell in love with her. He fawned over her like a teenager in love for the first time. He went shopping with her and patiently stood by as she tried on clothes. He took her to theaters, cafés, concerts and even to Party meetings.

This relationship between Hitler and his niece was for the most part socially acceptable according to local customs since she was the daughter of his half sister.

It was a relationship that would ultimately end in tragedy a few years later with her suicide. But for now, in late 1929, she existed as the object of Hitler's affection.

In another part of the world, Wall Street in New York, events were happening that would bring an end to this quiet time for Adolf Hitler and would ultimately help put the Nazis in power in Germany.

On October 29th, the Wall Street stock market crashed with disastrous worldwide effects. First in America, then the rest of the world, companies went bankrupt, banks failed and people instantly lost their life's savings.

Unemployment soon soared and poverty and starvation became real possibilities for everyone.

The people panicked. Governments seemed powerless against the worldwide economic collapse. Fear ruled. Governments stood on the brink. The Great Depression had begun.

Adolf Hitler knew his time had come.

Great Depression Begins

When the stock market collapsed on Wall Street on Tuesday, October 29, 1929, it sent financial markets worldwide into a tailspin with disastrous effects.

The German economy was especially vulnerable since it was built upon foreign capital, mostly loans from America and was very dependent on foreign trade. When those loans suddenly came due and when the world market for German exports dried up, the well oiled German industrial machine quickly ground to a halt.

As production levels fell, German workers were laid off. Along with this, banks failed throughout Germany. Savings accounts, the result of years of hard work, were instantly wiped out. Inflation soon followed making it hard for families to purchase expensive necessities with devalued money.

Overnight, the middle class standard of living so many German families enjoyed was ruined by events outside of Germany, beyond their control. The Great Depression began and they were cast into poverty and deep misery and began looking for a solution, any solution.

Adolf Hitler knew his opportunity had arrived.

In the good times before the Great Depression the Nazi Party experienced slow growth, barely reaching 100,000 members in a country of over sixty million. But the Party, despite its tiny size, was a tightly controlled, highly disciplined organization of fanatics poised to spring into action.

Since the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, Hitler had changed tactics and was for the most part playing by the rules of democracy. Hitler had gambled in 1923, attempting to overthrow the young German democracy by force, and lost. Now he was determined to overthrow it legally by getting elected while at the same time building a Nazi shadow government that would one day replace the democracy.

Hitler had begun his career in politics as a street brawling revolutionary appealing to disgruntled World War I veterans predisposed to violence. By 1930 he was quite different, or so it seemed. Hitler counted among his supporters a number of German industrialists, and upper middle class socialites, a far cry from the semi-literate toughs he started out with.

He intentionally broadened his appeal because it was necessary. Now he needed to broaden his appeal to the great mass of voting Germans. His chief assets were his speech making ability and a keen sense of what the people wanted to hear.

By mid-1930, amid the economic pressures of the Great Depression, the German democratic government was beginning to unravel.

Gustav Stresemann, the outstanding German Foreign Minister, had died in October 1929, just before the Wall Street crash. He had spent years working to restore the German economy and stabilize the republic and died, having exhausted himself in the process.

The crisis of the Great Depression brought disunity to the political parties in the Reichstag. Instead of forging an alliance to enact desperately need legislation, they broke up into squabbling, uncompromising groups. In March of 1930, Heinrich Bruening, a member of the Catholic Center Party, became Chancellor.

Despite the overwhelming need for a financial program to help the German people, Chancellor Bruening encountered stubborn opposition to his plans. To break the bitter stalemate, he went to President Hindenburg and asked the Old Gentleman to invoke Article 48 of the German constitution which gave emergency powers to the president to rule by decree. This provoked a huge outcry from the opposition, demanding withdrawal of the decree.

As a measure of last resort, Bruening asked Hindenburg in July 1930 to dissolve the Reichstag according to parliamentary rules and call for new elections.

The elections were set for September 14th. Hitler and the Nazis sprang into action. Their time for campaigning had arrived.

The German people were tired of the political haggling in Berlin. They were tired of misery, tired of suffering, tired of weakness. These were desperate times and they were willing to listen to anyone, even Adolf Hitler.



Fallout from the Great Depression - A young and hopelessly unemployed Berliner panhandles for spare change. Below: A run on a bank in Berlin.





May Day 1930 brings a huge turn-out of pro-communist Berliners expressing admiration of Soviet Russia.

Germans Elect Nazis

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis waged a modern whirlwind campaign in 1930 unlike anything ever seen in Germany. Hitler traveled the country delivering dozens of major speeches, attending meetings, shaking hands, signing autographs, posing for pictures, and even kissing babies.

Joseph Goebbels brilliantly organized thousands of meetings, torchlight parades, plastered posters everywhere and printed millions of special edition Nazi newspapers.

Germany was in the grip of the Great Depression with a population suffering from poverty, misery, and uncertainty, amid increasing political instability.

For Hitler, the master speech maker, the long awaited opportunity to let loose his talents on the German people had arrived. He would find in this downtrodden people, an audience very willing to listen. In his speeches, Hitler offered the Germans what they needed most, encouragement. He gave them heaps of vague promises while avoiding the details. He used simple catchphrases, repeated over and over.

His campaign appearances were carefully staged events. Audiences were always kept waiting, deliberately letting the tension increase, only to be broken by solemn processions of Brown shirts with golden banners, blaring military music, and finally the appearance of Hitler amid shouts of "Heil!" The effect in a closed in hall with theatrical style lighting and decorations of swastikas was overwhelming and very catching.

Hitler began each speech in low, hesitating tones, gradually raising the pitch and volume of his voice then exploding in a climax of frenzied indignation. He

combined this with carefully rehearsed hand gestures for maximum effect. He skillfully played on the emotions of the audience bringing the level of excitement higher and higher until the people wound up a wide-eyed, screaming, frenzied mass that surrendered to his will and looked upon him with pseudo-religious adoration.

Hitler offered something to everyone: work to the unemployed; prosperity to failed business people; profits to industry; expansion to the Army; social harmony and an end of class distinctions to idealistic young students; and restoration of German glory to those in despair. He promised to bring order amid chaos; a feeling of unity to all and the chance to belong. He would make Germany strong again; end payment of war reparations to the Allies; tear up the treaty of Versailles; stamp out corruption; keep down Marxism; and deal harshly with the Jews.

He appealed to all classes of Germans. The name of the Nazi Party itself was deliberately all inclusive – the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

All of the Nazis, from Hitler, down to the leader of the smallest city block, worked tirelessly, relentlessly, to pound their message into the minds of the Germans.

On election day September 14, 1930, the Nazis received 6,371,000 votes – over eighteen percent of the total – and were thus entitled to 107 seats in the German Reichstag. It was a stunning victory for Hitler. Overnight, the Nazi Party went from the smallest to the second largest political party in Germany.

It propelled Hitler to solid national and international prestige and aroused the curiosity of the world press. He was besieged with interview requests. Foreign journalists wanted to know – what did he mean – tear up the Treaty of Versailles and end war reparations? – and that Germany wasn't responsible for the First World War?

Gone was the Charlie Chaplin image of Hitler as the laughable fanatic behind the Beer Hall Putsch. The beer hall revolutionary had been replaced by the skilled manipulator of the masses.

On October 13, 1930, dressed in their brown shirts, the elected Nazi deputies marched in unison into the Reichstag and took their seats. When the roll-call was taken, each one shouted, "Present! Heil Hitler!"

They had no intention of cooperating with the democratic government, knowing it was to their advantage to let things get worse in Germany, thus increasing the appeal of Hitler to an ever more miserable people.

Nazi storm troopers dressed in civilian clothes celebrated their electoral victory by smashing the windows of Jewish shops, restaurants and department stores, an indication of things to come.

Now, for the floundering German democracy, the clock was ticking and time was on Hitler's side.



A typical campaign scene with Nazi posters on display next to the Center Party, Communists, Socialists and others. Below: Repeated propaganda marches became a cheap and effective form of publicity - sometimes leading to violence between rival political groups. Horst Wessel, pictured at the front, was killed during such a brawl in 1930 and raised to the status of a martyr by Nazis via the "Horst Wessel" banner anthem.

Success and a Suicide

The years 1930 and 1931 had been good for Hitler politically. The Nazis were now the second largest political party in Germany. Hitler had become a best-selling author, with *Mein Kampf* selling over 50,000 copies, bringing him a nice income. The Nazi Party also had fancy new headquarters in Munich called the Brown House.

Money was flowing in from German industrialists who saw the Nazis as the wave of the future. They invested in Hitler in the hope of getting favors when he came to power. Their money was used to help pay the growing numbers of salaried Nazis and fuel Goebbels' propaganda machine.

The German General Staff was also investing support in Hitler, hoping he meant what he said about tearing up the Treaty of Versailles which limited their Army to 100,000 men and also prevented modernization. The generals had been encouraged by Hitler's performance as a witness during the trial of three young regular Army officers charged with spreading Nazi doctrines in the German Army.

Hitler had used his appearance in the courtroom to send a message to the General Staff that there would be no attempt to replace the regular Army with an army of storm troopers and that once in power, the Nazis would raise the German Army to new heights of greatness. This was exactly what the generals wanted to hear.

It was however, the SA, his own storm troopers, that gave Hitler problems. Many of the violence prone, socialist leaning SA members wanted to become a new German revolutionary army. They also embarrassed Hitler by wreaking havoc in the streets despite his order to lay low. Hitler had to use his personal bodyguard, the SS, under its chief, Heinrich Himmler, to put down a small SA revolt in Berlin led by Captain Walter Stennes.

Hitler installed former SA leader, Ernst Röhm, as the new leader to reorganize and settle down the SA, now numbering over 60,000 members. The SA, however, and its leadership would remain a problem for years for Hitler, culminating in a major crisis a few years down the road.

It was in his personal life, however, that Adolf Hitler was about to face a crisis that would shake him to the core.

Back in the summer of 1928, Hitler had rented a small country house at Berchtesgaden which had a magnificent view of the Bavarian mountains and years later would be the site of his sprawling villa.

For Hitler, then aged 39, it was the first place he could truly call home. He settled into the little country house and invited his step sister, Angela, to leave Vienna and come to take over the daily household chores. Angela arrived along with her two daughters, Friedl and Geli.

Geli was a lively 20-year-old with dark blond hair and Viennese charm, qualities that were hugely appealing to a man nearly twice her age. Hitler fell deeply in love with her. He fawned over her like a teenager in love for the first time. He went shopping with her and patiently stood by as she tried on clothes. He took her to theaters, cafés, concerts and even to Party meetings.

This relationship between Hitler and his niece was for the most part socially acceptable according to local customs since she was the daughter of his half sister.

Young Geli enjoyed the attention of this man who was becoming famous. Strangers would come over and ask Hitler for a souvenir or an autograph while they were sitting in a café. There were also the trappings of power, SS body guards, a chauffeur, and obedient aides.

But young Geli had a tendency to flirt. Although she liked the attention of this older man, she yearned for the company of young people. She had a number of romances, including one with Hitler's chauffeur, who got fired as a result.

Though Hitler cast a jealous and disapproving eye on Geli's romances, he was flirting himself with a fair-haired 17-year-old named Eva Braun, who worked in the photography shop run by his personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann.

Hitler's jealousy and possessiveness of his niece made her life increasingly claustrophobic, especially after she moved in with him to a fancy nine-room apartment in Munich. Everywhere she went, she had two Nazi chaperons and had to be back home precisely at the time her uncle ordered. She couldn't do anything without his permission. And each time she tried to get free of her uncle's constraints, he tightened his grip.

Hitler's stormy relationship with Geli worsened. There were many loud arguments.

In September of 1931, Hitler ordered her to stay at his apartment and not go to Vienna while he was away. This made her furious. A huge argument followed. She desperately wanted to go. Hitler said no.

As Hitler headed outside to his car to leave for an SA meeting, Geli went to the window and yelled down to him asking one more time if she could go. Hitler yelled back a stern "No!"

He departed with an uneasy feeling about the whole situation.

The next morning, on the way to Hamburg, Hitler's car was flagged down by a taxi. Rudolf Hess was on the telephone line back at the hotel Hitler had just left and wanted to speak to him immediately.

When Hitler picked up the phone there, he was told his niece had shot herself. In a frenzy, Hitler rushed back to Munich. But by the time he got back to his apartment, Geli's body had been already removed. She had shot herself through the heart with a pistol.

The love of his life was gone, and under horrible circumstances. To make matters worse, there were rumors in the press she might have been murdered, perhaps even on Hitler's orders. Hitler became deeply depressed and spent days pacing back and forth without stopping to eat or sleep.

Hermann Göring would later say Adolf Hitler was never the same after the suicide of his beloved niece. Hitler later said Geli was the only woman he ever loved. He always kept portraits of her hung on the wall, decorated with flowers on the anniversaries of her birth and death. Whenever he spoke of her, it was often with teary-eyed reverence.

Curiously, shortly after her death, Hitler looked with disdain on a piece of ham being served during breakfast and refused to eat it, saying it was like eating a corpse. From that moment on, he refused to eat meat.



Ever-larger crowds for Hitler - the packed Sports Palace in Berlin during a Nazi campaign rally. Below: Newly elected Nazis give the Hitler salute while entering the Reichstag building to take their seats.



Hitler surrounded by supporters inside the Brown House, Nazi headquarters in Munich.



Hitler's niece and love interest, Geli Raubal.

Hitler Runs for President

Just three weeks after the suicide of his beloved niece, Adolf Hitler met the 84-year-old President of Germany, Paul von Hindenburg, for the first time.

Hitler pulled himself out of the severe depression he fell into after her death. Twice before he had sunk into the abyss of despair, only to emerge stronger – in 1918, lying in a hospital, blinded by poison gas, after hearing news of the Germany's defeat ending World War I – and in 1924, in prison after the failed Beer Hall Putsch.

In October 1931, the former Austrian Corporal was presented to the former Field Marshal. Hitler was a bit unnerved by the Old Gentleman and rambled on at length trying to impress him. Hindenburg was not impressed and later said Hitler might be suited for Postmaster, but never for a high position such as the Chancellorship of Germany.

October of 1931 marked the beginning of the political intrigue that would destroy the young republic and ultimately make Hitler Führer of Germany.

Constant political squabbling among the numerous political parties in the Reichstag resulted in ineffective government.

Adding to the problem, there were now over a hundred elected Nazis in the Reichstag. Under the leadership of Hermann Göring, they regularly disrupted proceedings with vulgar, rowdy behavior to help undermine democracy in Germany.

The German people were desperate for relief from the tremendous personal suffering brought on by the Great Depression, now two years old. Millions were unemployed, thousands of small businesses had failed, homelessness and starvation were real possibilities for everyone.

Civilization itself was unraveling in Berlin where people were fighting in the streets, killing each other in the chaos.

But from their elected leaders, the people got nothing but indecision. In ever growing numbers they turned to the decisive man, Adolf Hitler, and his promises of a better future.

The republic now faced another problem. In 1932, there was supposed to be a presidential election, according to law. But Hindenburg, the glue holding the floundering democracy together, was getting too old and said he was not interested in running again.

Even if he could be convinced to run, he would be 92 by the time the seven-year term ended, with Hitler looming in the background the whole time. If he didn't live the entire term, considered likely since he was failing, then Hitler would have his chance even sooner.

Early in 1932, Adolf Hitler received a telegram from Chancellor Bruening inviting him to come to Berlin to discuss the possibility of extending Hindenburg's present term. Hitler was delighted at the invitation.

"Now I have them in my pocket! They have recognized me as a partner in their negotiations!" Hitler told Rudolf Hess.

He went to the meeting and listened to the proposal, but gave no response. There was no reason to help the chancellor and thus help keep the republic alive.

In February 1932, President Hindenburg reluctantly agreed to run again and announced his candidacy for re-election. Hitler decided to oppose him and run for the presidency himself.

"Freedom and Bread," was the slogan used by Hitler to great effect during the Nazi campaign against tired old President Hindenburg.

Joseph Goebbels waged a furious propaganda campaign on behalf of Hitler, outdoing the previous election effort of 1930. Nazi posters were plastered everywhere. There was a whirlwind schedule of speeches for himself and Hitler. The Nazis held thousands of rallies each day all across Germany. They gave out millions of pamphlets and extra copies of Nazi newspapers. Goebbels also used new technology, making phonograph records and films of Hitler to distribute.

President Hindenburg essentially did nothing. He was content to ride on his reputation and counted on the votes of Germans who wanted to keep the radicals out of power. Goebbels had high hopes that Hitler might pull an upset and sweep into office. Hitler, however, had his doubts. He campaigned knowing he was unlikely to unseat the Old Gentleman. But the campaign was also an opportunity to win support for himself and his Party and extend Nazi influence.

Many in Germany saw the Nazis as the wave of the future. After the stunning success of the 1930 election, thousands of new members had poured into the Party. Now, in the spring of 1932, with six million unemployed, chaos in Berlin, starvation and ruin, the threat of Marxism, and a very uncertain future – they turned to Hitler by the millions.

In the presidential election held on March 13, 1932, Hitler got over eleven million votes (11,339,446) or 30% of the total. Hindenburg got 18,651,497 votes or 49%.

Hindenburg failed to get the absolute majority he needed, making a run-off election necessary. Goebbels and many of the Nazi leaders were quite disappointed.

But Hitler immediately urged them to start a vigorous campaign for the run-off to be held on April 10, less than a month away.

In the campaign that followed, Hitler criss-crossed Germany in an airplane, descending from the clouds into the arms of growing numbers of fanatics, at ever larger rallies. He gave them a positive message, promising something for everyone, then ascended back into the clouds. "In the Third Reich every German girl will find a husband!" Hitler once promised.

But like any politician, Hitler was subject to scandal. A newspaper run by one of the opposition parties, the Social Democrats, somehow got hold of letters between SA Chief Ernst Röhm and a male doctor, concerning their mutual interest in men. Hitler knew Röhm was a homosexual and had ignored it for years because of Röhm's usefulness to him.

The issue as far as Hitler was concerned was whether Röhm had abused any underage males. Nazi lawyer Hans Frank investigated this and assured Hitler he had found no evidence. Hitler was a little more at ease. Thus, Ernst Röhm, the battle scarred, aggressive storm trooper leader would stay, at least for now, as leader of the SA, now numbering over 400,000.

The campaign for president continued with the Nazis mounting another furious campaign effort with Hitler making several campaign stops a day. President Hindenburg did less than before and didn't make a single speech, causing rumors about ill health.

On a dark, rainy Sunday, April 10, 1932, the people voted. They gave Hitler 13,418,547 or 36%, an increase of two million, and Hindenburg 19,359,983 or 53%, an increase of under a million.

The Old Gentleman, now 85, was elected by an absolute majority to another seven-year term. But no one was at ease. Hitler and the Nazis had shown massive popularity.

Berlin was now a swirling mess of fear, intrigue, rumors, and disorder. Out of that mess arose a man named Kurt von Schleicher, a highly ambitious Army officer, driven by the idea that he, not Hitler, might possibly rule Germany.

The German republic was now as unsteady as the teetering Old Gentleman leading it and up against Schleicher and Hitler, was soon to be buried.



Hitler seen in the midst of tough negotiations with Chancellor Bruening about extending President Hindenburg's term. Below: After the negotiations failed - the race for the presidency is underway."



: Nazis tack up a stark-looking Hitler poster that only shows his face and name. Right: A large handshake billboard for President Hindenburg that says "With Him."



A radio broadcast by the elderly Hindenburg who limited his campaigning to a few radio speeches and select social gatherings.



A speech by candidate Hitler to a large crowd in Berlin's Lustgarten in April 1932.



The Republic Collapses

Amid the swirling mess in Berlin of political intrigue, rumors, and disorder, the SA, the Nazi storm troopers, stood out as an ominous presence. In the spring of 1932, many in the German democratic government came to believe the Brownshirts were about to take over by force.

There were now over 400,000 storm troopers under the leadership of SA Chief Ernst Röhm. Many members of the SA considered themselves to be a true revolutionary army and were anxious to live up to that idea. Adolf Hitler had to rein them in from time to time so they wouldn't upset his own carefully laid plans to undermine the republic.

Hitler knew he could not succeed as Führer of Germany without the support of existing institutions such as the German Army and the powerful German industrialists, both of whom kept a wary eye on the revolutionary SA.

In April of 1932, Heinrich Brüning, Chancellor of Germany, invoked Article 48 of the constitution and issued a decree banning the SA and SS all across Germany. The Nazis were outraged and wanted Hitler to fight the ban. But Hitler, always a step ahead of them all, knew better. He agreed, knowing the republic was on its last legs and that opportunity would soon come along for him.

That opportunity came in the form of Kurt von Schleicher, a scheming, ambitious Army officer who had ideas of leading Germany himself. But he made the mistake (that would prove fatal) of underestimating Hitler. Schleicher was acquainted with Hitler and had been the one who arraigned for Hitler to meet Hindenburg, a meeting that went poorly for Hitler.

On May 8, 1932, Schleicher held a secret meeting with Hitler and offered a proposal. The ban on the SA and SS would be lifted, the Reichstag dissolved and new elections called, and Chancellor Brüning would be dumped, if Hitler would support him in a conservative nationalist government. Hitler agreed.

Schleicher's skillful treachery behind the scenes in Berlin first resulted in the humiliation and ousting of General Wilhelm Groener, a longtime trusted aide to President Hindenburg and friend of the republic. In the Reichstag, Groener, who supported the ban on the SA, took a severe public tongue lashing from Hermann Göring and was hooted and booed by Goebbels and the rest of the Nazis.

"We covered him with such catcalls that the whole house began to tremble and shake with laughter. In the end one could only have pity for him. That man is finished," Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary in 1932.

Groener was pressured by Schleicher to resign. He appealed without success to Hindenburg and wound up resigning on May 13. Schleicher's next target was Chancellor Bruening.

Heinrich Bruening was one of the last men in Germany who stood up to Hitler with the best interest of the people at heart. He was responsible for getting Hindenburg re-elected as president to keep out Hitler and preserve the republic. He was also hard at work on the international scene to help the German economy by seeking an end to war reparations. But his economic policies at home brought dismal results. As Germany's economic situation got worse, with nearly six million unemployed, Bruening was labeled "The Hunger Chancellor."

Bruening had also continued the dangerous precedent of ruling by decree. He invoked Article 48 of the German constitution several times to break the political stalemate in Berlin.

To Schleicher and Hitler, he was simply in the way and had to go. Schleicher went to work on him by undermining the support of Hindenburg. Bruening was already in trouble with Hindenburg, who blamed him for the political turmoil that had made it necessary to run for re-election at age 85 against the 'Bohemian Corporal' Adolf Hitler.

Bruening also made an error in proposing that the huge estates of bankrupt aristocrats be divided up and given to peasants, sounding like a Marxist. Those same aristocrats, along with big industrialists, had scraped together the money to buy Hindenburg an estate of his own. When Hindenburg took his Easter vacation there in mid-May, he had to listen to their complaints about Bruening. All the while, Schleicher was at work against Bruening as well.

On May 29, 1932, Hindenburg called in Bruening and told him to resign. The next day, Heinrich Bruening handed in his resignation, effectively ending democracy in Germany.

Schleicher was now in control. He chose as his puppet chancellor, an unknown socialite named Franz von Papen who had grave doubts about his own ability to function in such a high office. Hindenburg, however, took a liking to Papen and encouraged him to take the job.

The aristocratic Papen assembled a cabinet of men like himself. This ineffective cabinet of aristocrats and industrialists presided over a nation that would soon be on the verge of anarchy.

When Adolf Hitler was asked by President Hindenburg if he would support Papen as chancellor, he said yes. On June 4th, the Reichstag was dissolved and

new elections were called for the end of July. On June 15, the ban on the SA and SS was lifted. The secret promises made to the Nazis by Schleicher had been fulfilled.

Murder and violence soon erupted on a scale never before seen in Germany. Roaming groups of Nazi Brownshirts walked the streets singing Nazi songs and looking for fights.

"Blut muss fließen, Blut muss fließen! Blut muss fließen Knuppelhageldick! Haut'se doch zusammen, haut'se doch zusammen! Diese gotverdammte Juden Republik!" the Nazi storm troopers sang.

Translation: "Blood must flow, blood must flow! Blood must flow as cudgel thick as hail! Let's smash it up, let's smash it up! That goddamned Jewish republic!"

The Nazis found many Communists in the streets wanting a fight and they began regularly shooting at each other. Hundreds of gun battles took place. On July 17, the Nazis under police escort brazenly marched into a Communist area near Hamburg in the state of Prussia. A big shoot-out occurred in which 19 people were killed and nearly 300 wounded. It came to be known as "Bloody Sunday."

Papen invoked Article 48 and proclaimed martial law in Berlin and also took over the government of the German state of Prussia by naming himself Reich Commissioner. Germany had taken a big step closer to authoritarian rule.

Hitler now decided that Papen was simply in the way and had to go.

"I regard your cabinet only as a temporary solution and will continue my efforts to make my Party the strongest in the country. The chancellorship will then devolve on me," Hitler told Papen.

The July elections would provide that opportunity. The Nazis, sensing total victory, campaigned with fanatical energy. Hitler was now speaking to adoring German audiences of up to 100,000 at a time. The phenomenon of large scale 'Führer worship' had begun. On July 31st, the people voted and gave the Nazis 13,745,000 votes, 37% of the total, granting them 230 seats in the Reichstag. The Nazi Party was now the largest and most powerful in Germany.

On August 5th, Hitler presented his list of demands to Schleicher – the chancellorship; passage of an enabling act giving him control to rule by decree; three cabinet posts for Nazis; the creation of a propaganda ministry; control over the Ministry of the Interior; and control of Prussia. As for Schleicher, he would get the Ministry of Defense as a reward.

Schleicher listened, didn't say yes or no, but would let him know later.

With gleeful anticipation, Hitler awaited Schleicher's response and even ordered that a memorial tablet be made to mark the place where the historic meeting with Schleicher had occurred.

Meanwhile, the SA began massing in Berlin anticipating a takeover of power. But old President Hindenburg soon put an end to Hitler's dreams. Hindenburg by now distrusted Hitler and would not have him as chancellor, especially after the behavior of the SA.

On August 13, Schleicher and Papen met with Hitler and gave him the bad news. The best they could offer was a compromise – vice chancellorship and the Prussian Ministry of the Interior.

Hitler became hysterical. In a display of wild rage that stunned Schleicher and Papen, he spewed out threats of violence and murder, saying he would let loose the SA for three days of mayhem all across Germany.

Later that same day, Hitler was called on the carpet by President Hindenburg. The former Austrian Corporal got a tongue lashing from the former Field Marshal after once again demanding the chancellorship and refusing to cooperate with Papen and Schleicher.

In the presence of the steely-eyed old Prussian, Hitler backed down. The gamble for total victory had failed. He put the SA on a two week furlough and went to Berchtesgaden to lick his wounds. They would all have to wait, he told them. Just a little longer.

On September 12, the Reichstag under the new chairmanship of Hermann Göring gave a vote of no confidence to Papen and his government. But just before that vote was taken, Papen had slapped an order on Göring's desk dissolving the Reichstag and calling yet again for new elections.

This was a problem. Everyone was getting tired of elections by now. Goebbels had a hard time getting the Nazi effort up to the same level of a few months earlier.

In the middle of the campaign, Hitler's girlfriend Eva Braun shot herself in the neck during a suicide attempt. Hitler was still haunted by the suicide of his beloved niece a few years earlier. Eva Braun was deeply in love with Hitler but didn't get the attention she craved. Hitler rushed to the hospital and resolved to look after her from that moment on.

This distraction served to slow down the already sluggish Nazi campaign. More problems came after Goebbels and a number of Nazis went along with the Communists in a wildcat strike of transport workers in Berlin, thus alienating a lot of middle class voters.

Bad publicity from siding with the Reds plus the bad publicity Hitler got after his meeting with Hindenburg combined to lose them votes. Adding to all this were the wild antics of the SA. On November 6th, the Nazis lost two million votes and thirty four seats in the Reichstag. It seemed the Nazis were losing momentum. Hitler became depressed.

But there was still no workable government in Berlin. Papen's position as chancellor was badly weakened. And Schleicher was now at work behind the scenes to further undermine him. On November 17, Papen went to Hindenburg and told him he was unable to form any kind of working coalition, then resigned.

Two days later, Hitler requested a meeting with Hindenburg. Once again Hitler demanded to be made chancellor. Once again he was turned down. This time however, Hindenburg took a friendlier tone, asking Hitler, soldier to soldier, to meet him half way and cooperate with the other parties to form a working majority, in other words, a coalition government. Hitler said no.

On November 21st, Hitler saw Hindenburg again and tried a different approach. He read a prepared statement claiming that parliamentary government had failed and that only the Nazis could be counted on to stop the spread of Communism. He asked Hindenburg to make him the leader of a presidential cabinet. Hindenburg said no, and only repeated his own previous requests.

The Government of Germany had ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, a group of the country's most influential industrialists, bankers, and business leaders sent a petition to Hindenburg asking him to appoint Hitler as chancellor. They believed Hitler would be good for business.

Hindenburg was in a terrible bind. He called in Papen and Schleicher and asked them what to do. Papen came up with a wild idea. He would be chancellor again and rule only by decree, eliminate the Reichstag altogether, use the Army and police to suppress all political parties and forcibly amend the constitution. It would be a return to the days of Empire, with the conservative, aristocratic classes ruling.

Schleicher objected, much to Papen's surprise. Schleicher said that he, not Papen, should head the government and promised Hindenburg he could get a

working majority in the Reichstag by causing a rift among the Nazis. Schleicher said he could get Gregor Strasser and as many as 60 Nazi deputies to break from Hitler.

Hindenburg was dumbfounded and finally turned to Papen and asked him to go ahead and form his government. After Hindenburg left the room, Papen and Schleicher got into a huge shouting match.

At a cabinet meeting the next day, Schleicher told Papen that any attempt by him to form a new government would bring the country to chaos. He insisted that the Army would not go along and then produced a Major Ott who backed up his claims. Schleicher had been at work behind the scenes to sway the Army to his point of view. Papen was in big trouble.

He went running to Hindenburg, who, with tears rolling down his cheeks, told Papen there was no alternative at this point except to name Schleicher as the new chancellor.

"My dear Papen, you will not think much of me if I change my mind. But I am too old and have been through too much to accept the responsibility for a civil war. Our only hope is to let Schleicher try his luck," President Hindenburg told Papen.

Thus Kurt von Schleicher became Chancellor of Germany on December 2, 1932. There now began an incredible amount of behind-the-scenes political intrigue and backstabbing that would put Hitler in power in only 57 days.

To begin with, Schleicher made good on his promise to try to split the Nazis. He held a secret meeting with Gregor Strasser, a Nazi who had been with Hitler from the start, and offered him the vice-chancellorship and control of Prussia.

To Strasser, the offer was quite appealing. The Nazi Party's recent decline, losing millions of votes and now experiencing terrible financial problems, seemed to indicate that Hitler's rigid tactics might not be the best thing for long-term success. Strasser had also acquired a distaste for the brutal men who now made up Hitler's inner circle.

Through Papen, Hitler found out what was going on. On December 5th, Strasser and his infuriated Führer met, along with other Nazi leaders, in a Berlin hotel. Strasser insisted that Hitler and the Nazis cooperate or at least tolerate the Schleicher government. Göring and Goebbels opposed him. Hitler sided with them against Strasser.

Two days later, Strasser and Hitler met again and wound up getting into a huge shouting match. Strasser accused Hitler of leading the Party to ruin. Hitler accused Strasser of stabbing him in the back.

The following day, Strasser wrote a letter to Hitler, resigning all of his duties as a member of the Nazi Party. Hitler and the Nazi leaders were stunned. One of the founding members and most influential leaders had abandoned them. The Nazi Party seemed to be unraveling. Hitler became depressed, even threatening to shoot himself with a pistol.

Strasser headed for a vacation in Italy.

"Whatever happens, mark what I say. From now on Germany is in the hands of an Austrian, who is a congenital liar (Hitler), a former officer who is a pervert (Röhm), and a clubfoot (Goebbels). And I tell you the last is the worst of them all. This is Satan in human form," declared Gregor Strasser in 1932.

As for Hermann Göring:

"Göring is a brutal egotist who cares nothing for Germany as long as he becomes something."

Regarding Strasser, Goebbels wrote in his diary: "Strasser is a dead man."

Hitler assigned his trusted aid, Rudolf Hess, to take over Strasser's duties. Over the Christmas season, Hitler became quite depressed over the failing fortunes of his Party.

And it seemed to many political observers that the danger of a Hitler dictatorship had passed.

But the new year brought new intrigue. The big bankers and industrialists who had petitioned Hindenburg on behalf of Hitler still liked the idea of Hitler in power. And Papen was now out to bring down Schleicher. On January 4, 1933, Hitler went to a meeting with Papen at the house of banker Kurt von Schroeder. Papen surprised Hitler by offering to oust Schleicher and install a Papen-Hitler government with himself and Hitler, both equal partners.

Hitler liked the idea of ousting Schleicher but insisted that he would have to be the real head of government. He would, however, be willing to work with Papen and his ministers. Papen gave in and agreed.

When Schleicher found out, he went running to Hindenburg, charging Papen with treachery. But Hindenburg had a soft spot for Papen and would not go along.

Schleicher's position was already badly weakened. He was unable to get the government moving because nobody trusted him enough to join him in a working coalition. The German government remained at a standstill with the people and Hindenburg getting more impatient by the day. Something had to be done. Hindenburg authorized Papen to continue negotiating with Hitler, but to keep it secret from Schleicher.

In the small German state of Lippe, local elections were scheduled for January 15. Hitler and the Nazis took this opportunity to make a big impression. They saturated the place with propaganda and campaigned heavily, hoping to win big and prove they had regained momentum.

They received a small increase in votes over their previous election total. But they used their own widely circulated Nazi newspapers to exaggerate the significance and to once again lay claim that Hitler and the Nazis were the wave of the future. It worked well and even impressed President Hindenburg.

On Sunday, January 22, 1933, a secret meeting was held at the home of Joachim von Ribbentrop. It was attended by Papen, Hindenburg's son Oskar, along with Hitler and Göring. Hitler grabbed Oskar and brought him into a private room and worked on him for an hour to convince him that the Nazis had to be taken into the government on his terms. Oskar emerged from the meeting convinced it was inevitable. The Nazis were to be taken in. Papen then pledged his loyalty to Hitler.

Next, Schleicher went to Hindenburg with a proposal – declare a state of emergency to control the Nazis, dissolve the Reichstag, and suspend elections. Hindenburg said no.

But word of this proposal leaked out, bringing Schleicher the wrath of the liberal and centrist parties. Schleicher then backed down, bringing him the wrath of anti-Nazi conservatives. His position was hopeless.

On January 28th, he went to Hindenburg and asked him once again to dissolve the Reichstag. Hindenburg said no. Schleicher resigned.

Papen and the president's son, Oskar, moved in on the Old Gentleman to convince him to appoint a Hitler-Papen government. Hindenburg was now a tired old man weary of all the intrigue. He seemed ready to give in. Hitler sensed

his weakness and issued an additional demand that four important cabinet posts be given to Nazis.

This did not set well with the old man and he started having doubts about Hitler as chancellor. He was reassured when Hitler promised that Papen would get one of those four posts.

On the 29th, a false rumor circulated that Schleicher was about to arrest Hindenburg and stage a military takeover of the government. When Hindenburg heard of this, it ended his hesitation. He decided to appoint Adolf Hitler as the next Chancellor of Germany.

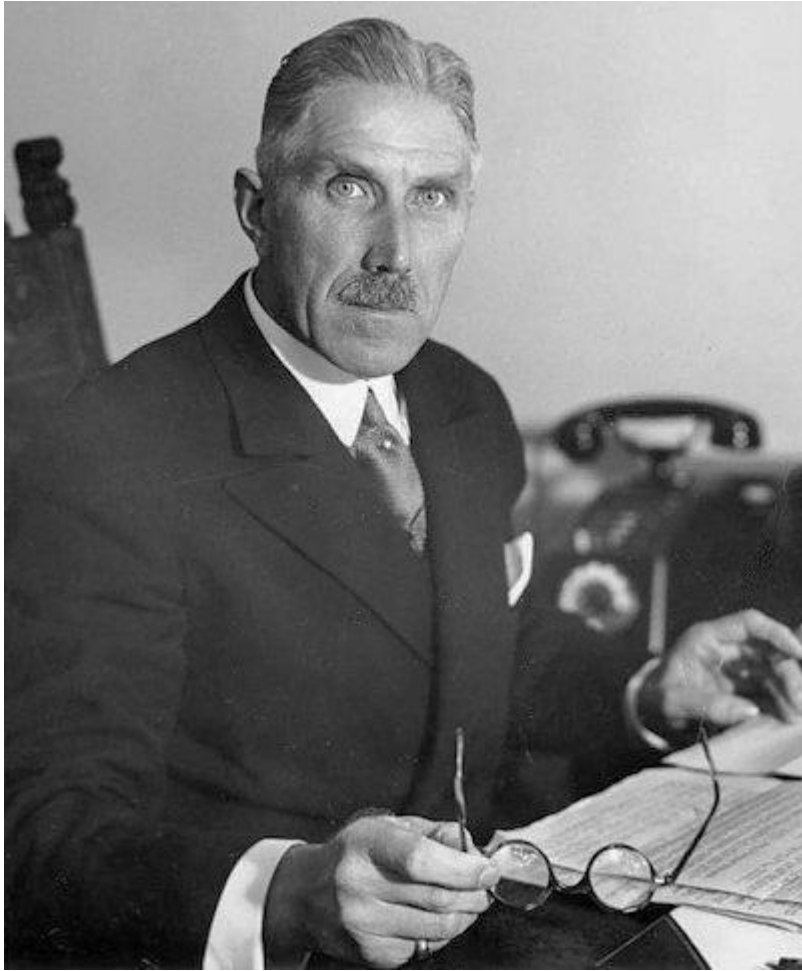
However, a last minute objection by conservative leader, Alfred Hugenberg, nearly ruined everything. On January 30, while President Hindenburg waited in the other room to give Hitler the chancellorship, Hugenberg held up everything by arguing with the Nazis over Hitler's demand for new elections. He was persuaded by Hitler to back down, or at least let Hindenburg decide. With that settled they all headed into the president's office.

Around noon on January 30, 1933, a new chapter in German history began as a teary-eyed Adolf Hitler emerged from the presidential palace as Chancellor of the German Nation. Surrounded by admirers, he got into his car and was driven down the street lined with cheering citizens.

"We've done it! We've done it!" a jubilant Adolf Hitler exclaimed.



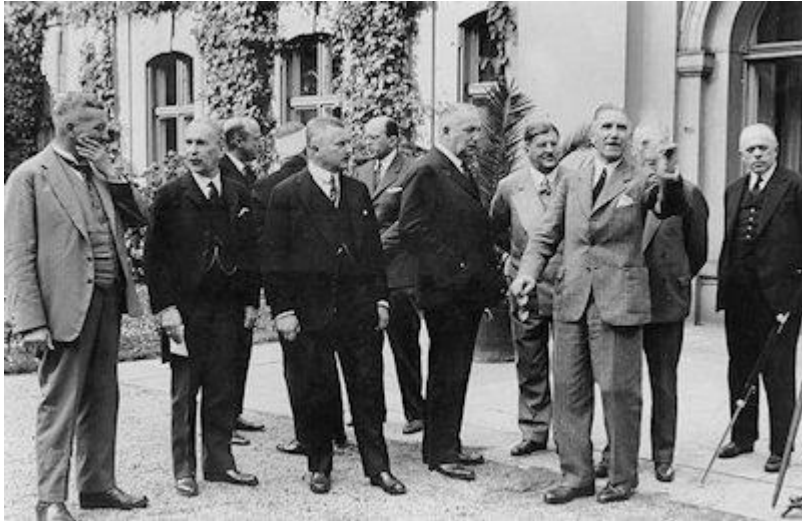
Left: Franz von Papen who became deeply involved in the political intrigue that brought Hitler to power.



Franz von Papen



May 1932 - A mass gathering of the unemployed outside a government-run job office in Berlin. Such gatherings sometimes led to street riots. Below: Chancellor Papen (third from right) with his befuddled Cabinet in June 1932.



A determined-looking Hermann Göring enters the Reichstag building in August 1932 - helping to stifle the democratic government for Hitler. Below: Hitler is cheered and saluted as he heads into a big meeting with President Hindenburg in November 1932.



Hitler's car is mobbed by admirers after his meeting with Hindenburg on November 19th

Hitler named Chancellor of Germany

When Adolf Hitler walked into the presidential office of Paul von Hindenburg to become chancellor, the Old Gentleman was so annoyed he would hardly look at him.

He had been kept waiting while Hitler and conservative leader Alfred Hugenberg argued over Hitler's demand for new elections. It was the final argument in what had been a huge tangled web of political infighting and backstabbing that finally resulted in Adolf Hitler becoming Chancellor of Germany.

Germany was a nation that in its history had little experience or interest in democracy. In January 1933, Adolf Hitler took the reins of a 14-year-old German democratic republic which in the minds of many had long outlived its usefulness. By this time, the economic pressures of the Great Depression combined with the indecisive, self-serving nature of its elected politicians had brought government in Germany to a complete standstill. The people were without jobs, without food, quite afraid and desperate for relief.

Now, the man who had spent his entire political career denouncing and attempting to destroy the Republic, was its leader. Around noon on January 30th, Hitler was sworn in.

"I will employ my strength for the welfare of the German people, protect the Constitution and laws of the German people, conscientiously discharge the duties imposed on me, and conduct my affairs of office impartially and with justice to everyone," swore Adolf Hitler.

But by this time, that oath had been repeatedly broken by previous chancellors out of desperation and also out of personal ambition. Chancellors Schleicher and Papen had seriously suggested to Hindenburg the idea of replacing the republic itself with a military dictatorship to solve the crisis of political stagnation. He had turned them both down.

When a teary-eyed Adolf Hitler emerged from the presidential palace as the new chancellor, he was cheered by Nazis and their supporters who believed in him, not the constitution or the republic.

"We've done it!" Hitler had jubilantly shouted to them.

He was to preside over a cabinet that contained, including himself, only 3 Nazis out of 11 posts. Hermann Göring was Minister without Portfolio and Minister of

the Interior of Prussia. Nazi, Wilhelm Frick, was Minister of the Interior. The small number of Nazis in the cabinet was planned to help keep Hitler in check.

Franz von Papen was vice-chancellor. Hindenburg had promised him that Hitler would only be received in the office of the president if accompanied by Papen.

This was another way to keep Hitler in check. In fact, Papen had every intention of using the conservative majority in the cabinet along with his own political skills to run the government himself.

"Within two months we will have pushed Hitler so far in the corner that he'll squeak," Papen boasted to a political colleague.

Papen and many non-Nazis thought having Hitler as chancellor was to their advantage. Conservative members of the former aristocratic ruling class desired an end to the republic and a return to an authoritarian government that would restore Germany to glory and bring back their old privileges. They wanted to go back to the days of the Kaiser. For them, putting Hitler in power was just the first step toward achieving that goal. They knew it was likely he would wreck the republic. Then once the republic was abolished, they could put in someone of their own choosing, perhaps even a descendant of the Kaiser.

Big bankers and industrialists, including Krupp and I. G. Farben, had lobbied Hindenburg and schemed behind the scenes on behalf of Hitler because they were convinced he would be good for business. He promised to be for free enterprise and keep down Communism and the trade union movements.

The military also placed its bet on Hitler, believing his repeated promises to tear up the Treaty of Versailles and expand the Army and bring back its former glory.

They all had one thing in common – they underestimated Hitler.

On the evening of January 30th, just about every member of the SA and SS turned out in uniform to celebrate the new Führer-Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. Carrying torches and singing the Hörst Wessel song, they were cheered by thousands as they marched through the Brandenburg gate and along the Wilhelmstrasse to the presidential palace. Cops on the beat who used to give them trouble now wore swastika armbands and smiled at them. Everywhere was heard the rhythmic pounding beats of jackboots, drums and blaring military parade music.

They saluted Hindenburg as he looked out from a window of the presidential palace. Then they waited at the chancellery for Hitler in a scene carefully staged

by Joseph Goebbels. A sea of hand held burning torches cast flickering light on red and gold Nazi banners amid the slow beating of drums in anticipation of seeing the Führer. Men, women and children along with the SA and SS waited. He kept them waiting, letting the tension rise. All over Germany, people listened to this on the radio, waiting, and hearing the throngs calling for their Führer.

When he appeared in the beam of a spotlight, Hitler was greeted with an outpouring of worshipful adulation unlike anything ever seen before in Germany. Bismarck, Frederick the Great, the Kaiser, had not seen this.

"Heil! Sieg Heil!," (Hail! Hail Victory!) went the chorus of those who believed the hour of deliverance had come in the form of this man now gazing down at them.

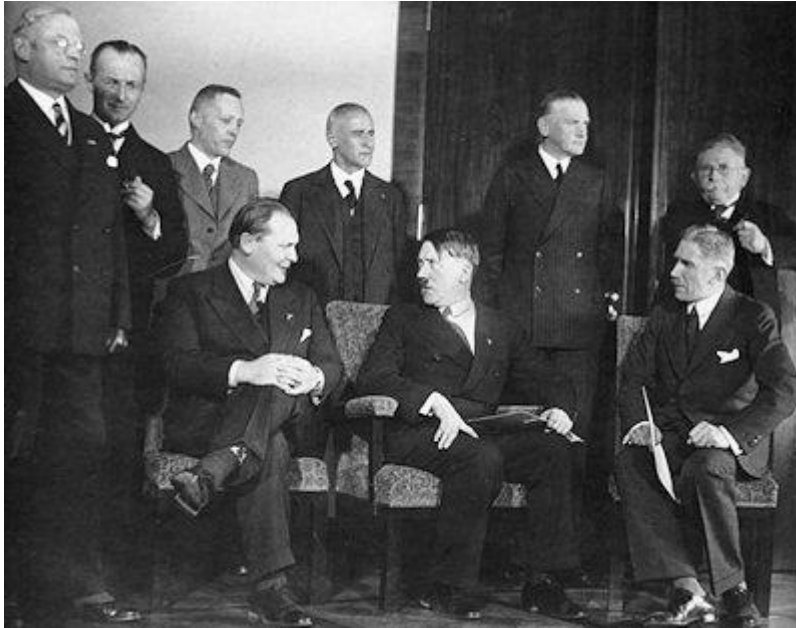
"It is almost like a dream – a fairytale. The new [Third] Reich has been born. Fourteen years of work have been crowned with victory. The German revolution has begun!" Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary that night.

Meanwhile, an old comrade of Hitler's sent a telegram to President Hindenburg regarding his new chancellor. Former General Erich Ludendorff had once supported Hitler and had even participated in the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.

"By appointing Hitler Chancellor of the Reich you have handed over our sacred German Fatherland to one of the greatest demagogues of all time. I prophesy to you this evil man will plunge our Reich into the abyss and will inflict immeasurable woe on our nation. Future generations will curse you in your grave for this action," the telegram from Ludendorff stated.

Within weeks, Hitler would be absolute dictator of Germany and would set in motion a chain of events resulting in the Second World War and the eventual deaths of nearly 50 million humans through that war and through deliberate extermination.

To begin, Hitler would see the German democratic republic go down in flames, literally. In February 1933, the Nazis hatched a plan to burn the Reichstag building and end democracy once and for all.



Chancellor Hitler chats with Göring as Papen and other Cabinet members look on. Behind Papen is Hugenberg who had nearly ruined the whole day for Hitler. Below: Nazi stormtroopers parade through the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate the dawn of a new era.



Below: Hitler in the spotlight gazing at the cheering throngs.



Below: Close-up of both Hitler and Göring acknowledging the cheering crowd.



The Reichstag Burns

Adolf Hitler, the new Chancellor of Germany, had no intention of abiding by the rules of democracy. He intended only to use those rules to legally establish himself as dictator as quickly as possible then begin the Nazi revolution.

Even before he was sworn in, he was at work to accomplish that goal by demanding new elections. While Hindenburg waited impatiently in another room, Hitler argued with conservative leader Hugenberg, who vehemently opposed the idea. Hitler's plan was to establish a majority of elected Nazis in the Reichstag which would become a rubber stamp, passing whatever laws he desired while making it all perfectly legal.

On his first day as chancellor, Hitler manipulated Hindenburg into dissolving the Reichstag and calling for the new elections he had wanted – to be held on March 5th, 1933.

That evening, Hitler attended a dinner with the German General Staff and told them Germany would re-arm as a first step toward regaining its former position in the world. He also gave them a strong hint of things to come by telling them there would be conquest of the lands to the east and ruthless Germanization of conquered territories.

Hitler also reassured the generals there would be no attempt to replace the regular army with an army of SA storm troopers. For years this had been a big concern of the generals who wanted to preserve their own positions of power and keep the traditional military intact.

Hitler's storm troopers were about to reach new heights of power of their own and begin a reign of terror that would last as long as the Third Reich.

President Hindenburg had fallen under Hitler's spell and was signing just about anything put in front of him. He signed an emergency decree that put the German state of Prussia into the hands of Hitler confidant, Vice Chancellor Papen. Göring as Minister of the Interior for Prussia took control of the police. Prussia was Germany's biggest and most important state and included the capital of Berlin.

Göring immediately replaced hundreds of police officials loyal to the republic with Nazi officials loyal to Hitler. He also ordered the police not to interfere with the SA and SS under any circumstances. This meant that anybody being harassed, beaten, or even murdered by Nazis, had nobody to turn to for help.

Göring then ordered the police to show no mercy to those deemed hostile to the State, meaning those hostile to Hitler, especially Communists.

"Police officers who use weapons in carrying out their duties will be covered by me. Whoever misguidedly fails in this duty can expect disciplinary action," stated the order of Hermann Göring to the Prussian Police.

On February 22nd, Göring set up an auxiliary police force of 50,000 men, composed mostly of members of the SA and SS. The vulgar, brawling, murderous Nazi storm troopers now had the power of police.

Two days later, they raided Communist headquarters in Berlin. Göring falsely claimed he had uncovered plans for a Communist uprising in the raid. But he

actually uncovered the membership list of the Communist Party and intended to arrest every one of the four thousand members.

Göring and Goebbels, with Hitler's approval, then hatched a plan to cause panic by burning the Reichstag building and blaming the Communists. The Reichstag was the building in Berlin where the elected members of the republic met to conduct the daily business of government.

By a weird coincidence, there was also in Berlin a deranged Communist conducting a one-man uprising. An arsonist named Marinus van der Lubbe, 24, from Holland, had been wandering around Berlin for a week attempting to burn government buildings to protest capitalism and start a revolt. On February 27, he decided to burn the Reichstag building.

Carrying incendiary devices, he spent all day lurking around the building, before breaking in around 9 p.m. He took off his shirt, lit it on fire, then went to work using it as his torch.

The exact sequence of events will never be known, but Nazi storm troopers under the direction of Göring were also involved in torching the place. They had befriended the arsonist and may have known or even encouraged him to burn the Reichstag that night. The storm troopers, led by SA leader Karl Ernst, used the underground tunnel that connected Göring's residence with the cellar in the Reichstag. They entered the building, scattered gasoline and incendiaries, then hurried back through the tunnel.

The deep red glow of the burning Reichstag caught the eye of President Hindenburg and Vice-Chancellor Papen who were dining at a club facing the building. Papen put the elderly Hindenburg in his own car and took him to the scene.

Hitler was at Goebbels' apartment having dinner. They rushed to the scene where they met Göring who was already screaming false charges and making threats against the Communists.

At first glance, Hitler described the fire as a beacon from heaven.

"You are now witnessing the beginning of a great epoch in German history...This fire is the beginning," Hitler told a news reporter at the scene.

After viewing the damage, an emergency meeting of government leaders was held. When told of the arrest of the Communist arsonist, Van der Lubbe, Hitler became deliberately enraged.

"The German people have been soft too long. Every Communist official must be shot. All Communist deputies must be hanged this very night. All friends of the Communists must be locked up. And that goes for the Social Democrats and the Reichsbanner as well!"

Hitler left the fire scene and went straight to the offices of his newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, to oversee its coverage of the fire. He stayed up all night with Goebbels putting together a paper full of tales of a Communist plot to violently seize power in Berlin.

At a cabinet meeting held later in the morning, February 28th, Chancellor Hitler demanded an emergency decree to overcome the crisis. He met little resistance from his largely non-Nazi cabinet. That evening, Hitler and Papen went to Hindenburg and the befuddled old man signed the decree "for the Protection of the people and the State."

The Emergency Decree stated: "Restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press; on the rights of assembly and association; and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications and warrants for house searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property, are also permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed."

Immediately, there followed the first big Nazi roundup as truckloads of SA and SS roared through the streets bursting in on known Communist hangouts and barging into private homes. Thousands of Communists as well as Social Democrats and liberals were taken away into 'protective custody' to SA barracks where they were beaten and tortured.

"I don't have to worry about justice; my mission is only to destroy and exterminate, nothing more!" Hermann Göring declared on March 3rd, 1933.

Fifty-one anti-Nazis were murdered. The Nazis suppressed all political activity, meetings and publications of non-Nazi parties. The very act of campaigning against the Nazis was in effect made illegal.

"Every bullet which leaves the barrel of a police pistol now is my bullet. If one calls this murder, then I have murdered. I ordered this. I back it up. I assume the responsibility, and I am not afraid to do so," declared Hermann Göring.

Nazi newspapers continued to print false evidence of Communist conspiracies, claiming that only Hitler and the Nazis could prevent a Communist takeover. Joseph Goebbels now had control of the State-run radio and broadcast Nazi propaganda and Hitler's speeches all across the nation.

The Nazis now turned their attention to election day, March 5th.

All of the resources of the government necessary for a big win were placed at the disposal of Joseph Goebbels. The big industrialists who had helped Hitler into power gladly coughed up three million marks. Representatives from Krupp munitions and I. G. Farben were among those reaching into their pockets at Göring's insistence.

"The sacrifice we ask is easier to bear if you realize that the elections will certainly be the last for the next ten years, probably for the next hundred years," Göring told them.

With no money problems and the power of the State behind them, the Nazis campaigned furiously to get Hitler the majority he wanted.

On March 5th, the last free elections were held. But the people denied Hitler his majority, giving the Nazis only 44 percent of the total vote, 17, 277,180. Despite massive propaganda and the brutal crackdown, the other parties held their own. The Center Party got over four million and the Social Democrats over seven million. The Communists lost votes but still got over four million.

The goal of a legally established dictatorship was now within reach. But the lack of the necessary two-thirds majority in the Reichstag was an obstacle. For Hitler and his ruthless inner circle, it was obstacle that was soon to be overcome.

As for Van der Lubbe, the Communist arsonist, he was tried and convicted, then beheaded.



Roll-call and weapons inspection for Nazi storm troopers now functioning as Hilfspolizei (Auxiliary Police).
Below: Berliners gaze toward the Reichstag building following the overnight fire.



Below: Police stand guard inside the charred building in a former VIP area used by the Reichstag leadership.



Below: A regular policeman (left) and his dog on street patrol side-by-side with a Nazi auxiliary.



A storm trooper with accused Communists.



Political prisoners are lined up inside the new SA-run concentration camp at Oranienburg.

Hitler Becomes Dictator

After the elections of March 5, 1933, the Nazis began a systematic takeover of the state governments throughout Germany, ending a centuries-old tradition of local political independence. Armed SA and SS thugs barged into local government offices using the state of emergency decree as a pretext to throw out legitimate office holders and replace them with Nazi Reich commissioners.

Political enemies were arrested by the thousands and put in hastily constructed holding pens. Old army barracks and abandoned factories were used as prisons. Once inside, prisoners were subjected to military style drills and harsh discipline. They were often beaten and sometimes even tortured to death. This was the very beginning of the Nazi concentration camp system.

At this time, these early concentration camps were loosely organized under the control of the SA and the rival SS. Many were little more than barbed-wire stockades known as 'wild' concentration camps, set up by local Gauleiters and SA leaders.

For Adolf Hitler, the goal of a legally established dictatorship was now within reach. On March 15, 1933, a cabinet meeting was held during which Hitler and Göring discussed how to obstruct what was left of the democratic process to get an Enabling Act passed by the Reichstag. This law would hand over the constitutional functions of the Reichstag to Hitler, including the power to make laws, control the budget and approve treaties with foreign governments.

The emergency decree signed by Hindenburg on February 28th, after the Reichstag fire, made it easy for them to interfere with non-Nazi elected representatives of the people by simply arresting them.

As Hitler plotted to bring democracy to an end in Germany, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels put together a brilliant public relations display at the official opening of the newly elected Reichstag.

On March 21st, in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, the burial place of Frederick the Great, an elaborate ceremony took place designed to ease public concern over Hitler and his gangster-like new regime.

It was attended by President Hindenburg, foreign diplomats, the General Staff and all the old guard going back to the days of the Kaiser. Dressed in their handsome uniforms sprinkled with medals, they watched a most reverent Adolf Hitler give a speech paying respect to Hindenburg and celebrating the union of old Prussian military traditions and the new Nazi Reich. As a symbol of this, the old Imperial flags would soon add swastikas.

Finishing his speech, Hitler walked over to Hindenburg and respectfully bowed before him while taking hold of the old man's hand. The scene was recorded on film and by press photographers from around the world. This was precisely the impression Hitler and Goebbels wanted to give to the world, all the while plotting to toss aside Hindenburg and the elected Reichstag.

Later that same day, Hindenburg signed two decrees put before him by Hitler. The first offered full pardons to all Nazis currently in prison. The prison doors sprang open and out came an assortment of Nazi thugs and murderers.

The second decree signed by the befuddled old man allowed for the arrest of anyone suspected of maliciously criticizing the government and the Nazi Party.

A third decree signed only by Hitler and Papen allowed for the establishment of special courts to try political offenders. These courts were conducted in the military style of a court-martial without a jury and usually with no counsel for the defense.

On March 23rd, the newly elected Reichstag met in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin to consider passing Hitler's Enabling Act. It was officially called the "Law for Removing the Distress of the People and the Reich." If passed, it would in effect vote democracy out of existence in Germany and establish the legal dictatorship of Adolf Hitler.

Brown-shirted Nazi storm troopers swarmed over the fancy old building in a show of force and as a visible threat. They stood outside, in the hallways and even lined the aisles inside, glaring ominously at anyone who might oppose Hitler's will.

Before the vote, Hitler made a speech in which he pledged to use restraint.

"The government will make use of these powers only insofar as they are essential for carrying out vitally necessary measures...The number of cases in which an internal necessity exists for having recourse to such a law is in itself a limited one," Hitler told the Reichstag.

He also promised an end to unemployment and pledged to promote peace with France, Great Britain and Soviet Russia. But in order to do all this, Hitler said, he first needed the Enabling Act. A two-thirds majority was needed, since the law would actually alter the constitution. Hitler needed 31 non-Nazi votes to pass it. He got those votes from the Catholic Center Party after making a false promise to restore some basic rights already taken away by decree.

Meanwhile, Nazi storm troopers chanted outside: "Full powers – or else! We want the bill – or fire and murder!!"

But one man arose amid the overwhelming might. Otto Wells, leader of the Social Democrats stood up and spoke quietly to Hitler.

"We German Social Democrats pledge ourselves solemnly in this historic hour to the principles of humanity and justice, of freedom and socialism. No enabling act can give you power to destroy ideas which are eternal and indestructible."

Hitler was enraged and jumped up to respond.

"You are no longer needed! The star of Germany will rise and yours will sink! Your death knell has sounded!"

The vote was taken – 441 for, and only 84, the Social Democrats, against. The Nazis leapt to their feet clapping, stamping and shouting, then broke into the Nazi anthem, the Hörst Wessel song.

Democracy was ended. They had brought down the German Democratic Republic legally. From this day onward, the Reichstag would be just a sounding board, a cheering section for Hitler's pronouncements.

Interestingly, the Nazi Party was now flooded with applications for membership. These latecomers were cynically labeled by old time Nazis as 'March Violets.' In May, the Nazi Party froze membership. Many of those kept out applied to the SA and the SS which were still accepting. However, in early 1934, Heinrich Himmler would throw out 50,000 of those 'March Violets' from the SS.

The Nazi Gleichschaltung now began, a massive coordination of all aspects of life under the swastika and the absolute leadership of Adolf Hitler.

Under Hitler, the State, not the individual, was supreme.

From the moment of birth one existed to serve the State and obey the dictates of the Führer. Those who disagreed were disposed of.

Many agreed. Bureaucrats, industrialists, even intellectual and literary figures, including Gerhart Hauptmann, world renowned dramatist, were coming out in open support of Hitler.

Many disagreed and left the country. A flood of the finest minds, including over two thousand writers, scientists, and people in the arts poured out of Germany and enriched other lands, mostly the United States. Among them – writer Thomas Mann, director Fritz Lang, actress Marlene Dietrich, architect Walter Gropius, musicians Otto Klemperer, Kurt Weill, Richard Tauber, psychologist Sigmund Freud, and Albert Einstein, who was visiting California when Hitler came to power and never returned to Germany.

In Germany, there were now constant Nazi rallies, parades, marches and meetings amid the relentless propaganda of Goebbels and the omnipresent swastika. For those who remained there was an odd mixture of fear and optimism in the air.

Now, for the first time as dictator, Adolf Hitler turned his attention to the driving force which had propelled him into politics in the first place, his hatred of the Jews. It began with a simple boycott on April 1st, 1933, and would end years later in the greatest tragedy in all of human history.



March 21, 1933 - With the eyes of Germany and the whole world on him - a respectful stroll by Hitler toward the Garrison Church in Potsdam for ceremonies opening the new Reichstag session. Below: Reassuring to all - Hitler greets President Hindenburg in the manner of the age-old German custom - hand outstretched and head bowed.



Below: Inside the Garrison Church - Hitler speaks as President Hindenburg (lower right) and Germany's old guard listen.



Below: Outside the church, a bemused Chancellor Hitler chats with the Kaiser's son and heir, Crown Prince Wilhelm.





Two days later - March 23rd - Hitler appears before the Reichstag in Berlin to reassure them that - if granted - his new powers under the Enabling Act will be used sparingly.



The Quest for a Nazi Empire

1939 - 1945

Poland is Crushed

At dawn on Friday morning, September 1, 1939, two decades of pent-up military frustration among the German officer corps was unleashed by Adolf Hitler as a million-and-a-half German soldiers roared into Poland via several gigantic mechanized formations, smashing all opposition in sight. It was first time the world had ever witnessed *Blitzkrieg* (lightning warfare) involving carefully coordinated attacks of planes, tanks, motorized troops and self-propelled artillery, all set to a precise timetable.

The outgunned Polish Army, consisting of 35 divisions, and totaling just half-a-million soldiers, put up a brave but futile resistance against this mechanized onslaught. The revolutionary German tactic was to pinpoint one small spot on the front line, attack it with overwhelming force, then send a flood of tanks, armored troops and motorized infantry through that narrow opening. The motorized infantry then split into two formations, circled around and surrounded the confused enemy. Meanwhile, the main armored thrust continued forward, rolling through the countryside at speeds up to 40 miles-per-hour while heading toward the main goal, Poland's major cities.

Along with this, the German *Luftwaffe* (Air Force) conducted terror-bombings of the cities, to create civilian panic, chaos and confusion, which softened up the intended targets prior to ground attack. Worse for the Poles, the Luftwaffe methodically attacked Polish airfields, destroying nearly 500 sitting warplanes during the onset of the invasion, further weakening the Polish defense.

Overall, Blitzkrieg worked better than anyone in the German High Command or Hitler himself had anticipated. In a few days, the hopelessly outgunned Polish Army teetered on the verge of collapse. By September 6th, Cracow, Poland's second most important city had fallen.

Polish officials then hurried off to exile, signaling the collapse of the Polish government and the effective end of national resistance as the Germans overtook the scattered remnants of the Polish Army.

Only at Warsaw, the country's capital, did Polish troops continue to hold out, inspired by the city's radio station which played the Polish national anthem non-stop around the clock. The Germans responded with massive artillery and aerial bombardments, personally witnessed by Hitler who came to the front to watch.

Amid mounting civilian casualties and with the historic city nearly reduced to rubble, Polish troops in Warsaw finally surrendered.

It had taken Hitler's incredible war machine just 18 days to conquer Poland.

Now it was time for Soviet dictator Josef Stalin and the Russians to get in on the action. In late August 1939, just before invading Poland, Hitler had forged the Nazi-Soviet Pact with Stalin. The political agreement contained secret clauses promising Stalin about half of Poland, along with Latvia and Estonia, two adjoining countries once a part of Russia.

Upon the German invasion of Poland, the Russians were supposed to strike from the east and grab their share. But Poland's speedy demise caught Stalin off guard and the Russians were unprepared. Under pressure from Hitler's diplomats, Stalin sped things up and sent Russian troops to invade the now-defenseless country beginning on September 17th, grabbing the eastern half of Poland which included territories home to various Russian speaking communities.

Stalin, a calculating and ruthless opportunist like Hitler, now sensed the chance to grab even more. He pressured the Germans into letting him take Lithuania in addition to Latvia and Estonia. As a trade-off, he offered the Germans a portion of his Polish territory east of the Vistula River, which included the entire Warsaw Province.

Hitler accepted the deal without argument. Right now, with other things to worry about, he needed to placate Stalin and keep the Pact going. Thus the two dictators traded whole populations. When all of the bargaining was done, the Germans were left with the bulk of western Poland, home to millions of ethnic Poles, a Slavic people whom the Nazis contemptuously regarded as *Untermenschen* (sub-humans).

To break the pride and spirit of the Poles, five SS execution squads called *Einsatzgruppen* entered German-occupied Poland. Under the command of Reinhard Heydrich, they rounded up and shot thousands of Polish civic leaders, intellectuals, clergy and anyone else who might oppose Nazi rule. Additionally, over a million Poles were abruptly expelled from their homes and farms to make way for ethnic Germans. As winter approached, many of the homeless Poles would die from hunger and exposure to the elements.

In Poland, the pattern of Nazi behavior in conquered territories was first established. Advancing German Army troops would be followed by SS units and Nazi administrators who would coordinate their efforts to subjugate, exploit, resettle, and even murder the native population.

For Adolf Hitler, his very first military victory had come easily, just like the string of easy diplomatic victories dating back to 1936. But the specter of Europe's last war still loomed large in his mind. When he gave the order to invade Poland, Hitler really didn't know how Britain and France, the enemies of World War I, who had sacrificed millions of lives to stop German aggression back then, would react to Nazi military aggression now. But he would soon find out.



Hitler with binoculars in Poland, watching the bombardment of Warsaw in September 1939. To his left is Erwin Rommel, who did not have a field command during the invasion. Below: German and Russian soldiers mingle at Brest-Litovsk, the halfway point in Poland



A New World War

Like most of the German leaders who had come before him, Adolf Hitler had a fascination with the British. For the better part of three centuries, as the Germans duly noted, people from the small island nation of Britain had managed to rule a fifth of the world via an all-powerful navy, a well-trained army, and cagey diplomatic gamesmanship.

The British also had a long and impressive history of squashing rival empires such as Spain and wrecking upstarts like Napoleon. By the late 1800s, the British Empire was the envy of the world and the focal point of the world's diplomatic and financial activity. Watching from the sidelines, the Germans both admired and envied the British, and wanted very much to be like them. As a result, in August 1914, German soldiers marched off to war in Europe, cheered on by a people who thought they were embarking on a great adventure that, among other things, would help them secure an empire of their own.

In the First World War, the leaders of Imperial Germany had considered the British to be their *real* enemy, not the French, Russians, Belgians, Americans or anyone else. For four years, the British fought the Germans in Belgium, in France and on the high seas. They also waged global warfare against Germany's allies in Turkey, the Middle East and elsewhere. Not only did the British help to squash the German quest for empire, but the British Empire itself actually expanded by acquiring chunks of the Middle East including Jerusalem and surrounding areas.

Now, some 21 years after that war had ended badly for the Germans, the Führer, Adolf Hitler, and his top aides, in the aftermath of their attack on Poland, began to obsess over the question: What would the British do?

Hitler already knew he had gravely offended the British a year earlier at Munich. He had dangled the prospect of peace before Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain only to snatch it away, rather like teasing a child, then imposed demands that weakened Czechoslovakia and paved the way for its humiliating dissolution.

For Hitler, the consequences of his antics at Munich were ominous. Outraged members of the British Parliament had vowed they would never again compromise with Hitler – on anything. Subsequently, the British had guaranteed to protect Poland from Nazi aggression. The French followed the British lead and issued a guarantee as well. Thus the stage had been set for a Second World War.

At the same time, memories of the disastrous First World War were still quite fresh in the minds of the German people. On Friday morning, September 1, 1939, about five hours after the invasion of Poland had begun, Hitler was driven through the streets of Berlin, going from the Chancellery building to the Kroll Opera House, home of the Nazi Reichstag. News of the invasion had spread by now via radio announcements and special edition newspapers. However, people on the street reacted to the news of war with silent dread. The only cheering Hitler heard this day was from the handpicked members of his Nazi Reichstag.

As he had done so often in the past, Hitler used the Reichstag podium to put forward his own version of events, broadcast live on radio for the ears of the German people and for the outside world as well.

At the onset of his speech, Reichstag members that morning could see Hitler was not wearing his usual brown-colored Führer tunic. Instead, he wore a new field-grey tunic precisely matching the color of a German Army uniform. In his speech, Hitler claimed the invasion of Poland was in response to Polish aggression along the border. In truth, those border incidents had been faked by the Germans as a propaganda excuse for the invasion.

Knowing his people were uneasy about the war, Hitler tried to reassure them: "I am from now on just the first soldier of the German Reich. I have once more put on that [Army style] coat that was most sacred and dear to me [in the First World War]. I will not take it off again until victory is secured, or I will not survive the outcome."

This statement was indeed true and had broader implications. The Führer by now *was* Germany – therefore it was the German nation itself that would either secure victory or not survive along with Hitler.

In any case, the grandiose statements by Hitler and his war posture on display that morning were a bit premature. At that moment, he still didn't know whether or not the British, and therefore the French, would honor their pledge to Poland and engage in a shooting war with him.

The nagging uncertainty began to get on Hitler's nerves. When he returned to the Chancellery after his speech, he let off some steam, telling Hermann Göring, "If England wants to fight for a year, I shall fight for a year; if England wants to fight two years, I shall fight two years...if England wants to fight for three years, I shall fight for three years." Finally, with a clenched fist, Hitler shouted, "And if necessary, I will fight for ten years!"

British reaction to the events of September 1st was less emotional. At 9 p.m. that day, Ambassador Nevile Henderson met with Hitler's Foreign Minister, Joachim Ribbentrop, and simply handed him a note containing the official British response – a demand that German troops in Poland halt their aggression immediately and prepare to withdraw. If this did not occur, "His Majesty's Government will without hesitation fulfill their obligation to Poland."

An hour later, the French ambassador met with Ribbentrop and handed him a similarly worded note, which had been composed in coordination with the British.

For Hitler, the idea of backing down and ordering his soldiers to halt in their tracks and withdraw was ludicrous, and so he decided not to respond at all to either the British or French notes.

Meanwhile, Hitler's Italian ally, Benito Mussolini, decided the best thing right now would be to arrange another Munich-style conference to sort everything out. But the British would have none of it. In Parliament there were calls for Prime Minister Chamberlain to put his foot down and honor the Polish guarantee "at a time when Britain and all that Britain stands for, and human civilization, are in peril."

Therefore, at 9 a.m. Sunday morning, September 3rd, the British ultimatum was formally delivered by Ambassador Henderson to the German Foreign Office in Berlin. It said that a state of war would exist by 11 a.m. that day unless the Germans complied with the original demand of September 1st for troop withdrawal from Poland.

In the meantime, a nervous Hitler and his top advisors, including Ribbentrop, had somehow deluded themselves into thinking the British weren't serious about war, and would either change their minds about negotiating, or simply back down. Thus the ultimatum came like a slap in the face. When it was read to Hitler, he just glared at Ribbentrop and said, "What now?"

"I assume the French will hand in a similar ultimatum within the hour," Ribbentrop responded. And they did.

Nevertheless, Hitler was not about to back down and be humiliated in the eyes of the world. Shortly after the 11 a.m. British deadline passed, Ribbentrop summoned Henderson and told him Germany flatly refused to cooperate.

Blaring loudspeakers in Berlin then made it official, informing the people they were at war with Great Britain once again. Germans on the street just stared at the pavement as they walked along in morbid silence.

Seeking to rally his people, Hitler issued a proclamation that afternoon entitled "Appeal to the German People" which blasted the British, saying, "Great Britain has for centuries pursued the aim of rendering the peoples of Europe defenseless against the British policy of world conquest." The British, Hitler claimed, had pursued a "policy of encirclement" against Germany in Europe and "oppressed the German people under the Versailles *Diktat*."

In a second proclamation that day, intended only for the German Army, Hitler said, "The British Government, driven on by those war mongers whom we knew in the last war, have resolved to let fall their mask and to proclaim war on a threadbare pretext."

In London, Prime Minister Chamberlain reacted to the day's events in a speech before the House of Commons: "This is a sad day for all of us, and to none is it sadder than to me. Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, has crashed into ruins...I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established."

The people of Britain reacted much the same as their German counterparts upon the news of war. There were no cheering crowds or marching bands to be seen in London or elsewhere as there had been at the outbreak of World War I. No one rushed to enlist as they had back then.

The French, having received a negative response to their ultimatum as well, began mobilizing troops to defend the French-German border. They would be allies once again with the British against their traditional foe, the Germans. All that remained was to wait and see who would fire the first shot.



The face of Nazi arrogance--Hitler's Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, wearing an SS uniform. He served for a time as Hitler's ambassador to Britain--and never lived down the fact he foolishly greeted the King of England with the Nazi salute.

Attack on France

In France, people had shaken their heads in disbelief upon the announcement of a new war with Germany. This would be their third major war against the Germans in the last 70 years. Their grandfathers had fought the war of 1870-71, which the French had lost. Their fathers had fought the First World War from 1914-18. And now this.

The great problem for France was that civilian indifference toward this new war was shared by rank and file soldiers of the French Army.

The French officer corps also had its problems. Senior army leaders had witnessed first-hand the horrific carnage of World War I when men died by the tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, during battles of attrition at places like Verdun. Haunted by this legacy, they cautiously committed the entire French Army to a defensive posture this time around, thereby passing up the chance to take quick action that could have drastically changed the course of this new war.

With the German Army entirely preoccupied in Poland, the French had a huge numerical and tactical advantage on Germany's western border. A hundred well-

equipped French divisions stood in place all along the border, while Hitler had just 23 lightly equipped divisions set up as a defensive screen to hold them back. At this point, a French thrust into western Germany targeting the military industries of the Ruhr Valley would have, at the very least, disabled the German war machine by curtailing armaments production, the lifeblood of Hitler's Army.

Instead, the French held their positions, content to rely on a series of newly built steel and concrete fortifications known as the Maginot Line to ward off a potential German invasion. Four British divisions soon joined the French and also stood by on the defensive. Like the French, the British were commanded by cautious generals who had survived the blood-stained battlefields of World War I.

Worse for the French, the country was beset by bitter and disruptive political infighting which caused government leaders to become indecisive at a moment of great national peril. Closely watching all of this, Hitler correctly concluded France's political leadership, officer corps, and soldiers, really didn't have the stomach for a fight this time around.

But to knock the French out of the war, Hitler felt he needed to act fast, before the British could fully mobilize and reinvigorate the sagging French. And so, on September 27, 1939, Hitler assembled the Army High Command and ordered his generals to prepare for an invasion of France as soon as possible.

However, there was a problem with this. Hitler's own generals, like their British and French counterparts, now preferred caution. The German Army had just expended nearly all of its available resources to mount the amazing Blitzkrieg attack on Poland and badly needed a few months to regroup, refit and resupply. Right now, German soldiers were simply not ready to leave Poland and abruptly turn westward to fight the French and British. The generals even worried that another drawn-out battle of attrition in France, similar to the First World War, could easily unfold if they rushed into things without adequate preparation.

World War II was barely a month old, but already the seeds of conflict between Hitler and his generals had been sown. Hitler wanted bold action to seize the opportunity of the moment with little regard for the logistics of war or the battle readiness of his frontline soldiers. His generals favored super careful preparation, followed by an attack utilizing overwhelming force to tilt the odds supremely in their favor – just as they had done in Poland.

Now, they needed to stall for time.

Meanwhile, Hitler the politician ascended the world stage once again, appearing before the Nazi Reichstag on October 6, 1939, to talk peace. Over the past three years, each of his bombastic diplomatic maneuvers or brazen troop movements had been followed by such a speech, offering his own version of events, blaming his victims for their own demise, all the while attempting to placate nervous Germans and manipulate world opinion.

"Germany has no further claims against France," Hitler declared. "I have always expressed to France my desire to bury forever our ancient enmity and bring together these two nations, both of which have such glorious pasts."

To the British, Hitler said, "I have devoted no less effort to the achievement of Anglo-German understanding, no, more than that, of an Anglo-German friendship. At no time and in no place have I ever acted contrary to British interests."

Next, Hitler questioned why anyone would want to fight to save now-defeated Poland. "Why should this war in the West be fought? For the restoration of Poland? The Poland of the Versailles Treaty will never rise again."

To resolve the whole situation, and to address a lengthy list of additional German concerns, including a "solution and settlement of the Jewish problem," Hitler proposed a conference of European leaders.

"And let those who consider war to be the better solution reject my outstretched hand," Hitler added. He then concluded the speech with a warning that if it came to a fight "there will never be another November 1918 in German history," referring to the end of the First World War when the Germans had meekly requested peace terms.

So it seemed, at least to most Germans, that Hitler had offered a genuine peace proposal. All that remained was to wait and see how the British and French would respond.

The next day, French Premier, Edouard Daladier, informed Hitler that specific guarantees for peace and security would first be needed. The British response came five days later, on October 12th, when Prime Minister Chamberlain addressed the House of Commons. He cited the vagueness of Hitler's proposal, and added there had been no mention of "righting the wrongs done to Czechoslovakia and Poland." Chamberlain also said Hitler needed to demonstrate his desire for peace through acts – not words alone.

Chamberlain's response provided the necessary grist for the Nazi propaganda mill and it swung into high gear, informing the German people that the British wanted war despite the peaceful intentions of the Führer.

Amid all of this trickery, the Army High Command was still trying to stall Hitler. Hoping to persuade the Führer to postpone the attack on France indefinitely, two of its highest ranking generals, Army Commander-in-Chief, Walther von Brauchitsch, and Chief of the General Staff, Franz Halder, met with him on October 7th. They presented solid facts and figures supporting their contention that a major delay was needed.

But the meeting backfired. Three days later, on October 10th, the Führer assembled the entire General Staff. There was to be no discussion. Citing a history of European conflict dating back to the mid-1600s, Hitler lectured them: "The German war aim is the final military dispatch of the West, that is, the destruction of the power and ability of the Western Powers ever again to be able to oppose the state consolidation and further development of the German people in Europe. As far as the outside world is concerned, this eternal aim will have to undergo various propaganda adjustments...This does not alter the war aim. It is and remains the destruction of our Western enemies."

The Führer then issued Directive Number 6 for the Conduct of the War requiring preparations for an attack to "gain as large an area as possible in Holland, Belgium and northern France as a base for conducting a promising air and sea war against England." He set November 12th as the launch date.

Despite Hitler's bombast, Brauchitsch and Halder, and other senior generals, were convinced this attack would be an utter disaster. After trying and failing once more to convince Hitler to wait, they mulled the possibility of taking the ultimate step – the removal of the reckless Führer from power.

It was not the first time they had considered such a move. But the problem now was that the newly expanded *Wehrmacht* (German Armed Forces) had thousands of young officers who had come of age since 1933. Raised during the Hitler era, they had been indoctrinated in Nazism at school, in the Hitler Youth, and by omnipresent propaganda. As true Nazi believers they simply could not be counted on to participate in a widespread military-led anti-Hitler coup. Upon considering this, and amid growing worries about the French and British troop buildup in the West, the generals yielded to caution and decided to do nothing. For the time being, Hitler would get his way.

To prepare for the coming attack, the generals dutifully rushed troops from Poland to the German-French border regardless of their readiness. Soon the number of Wehrmacht troops roughly equaled the number of French and British

troops positioned in eastern France along the Maginot Line and along the German-French border including the fortified West Wall, Germany's answer to the Maginot Line.

But when all of the troops were finally in place, nothing happened. Surprisingly, the generals caught a break from Hitler. He issued a weather-related postponement, pushing back the invasion date by three days. Shortly thereafter, he issued a second postponement, pushing the date back another ten days. Fourteen additional postponements followed. Incrementally, and without ever acknowledging their correctness, Hitler was giving his generals the big delay they had wanted.

During this extended lull, the German invasion plan underwent revision after revision. The first versions were eerily similar to the old World War I strategy in which the main invasion force would drive through Belgium into northern France – the same route the Germans had used in August 1914.

But Hitler was dissatisfied with this and urged his generals to think bolder. A daring alternative was then brought to Hitler's attention, concocted by General Erich von Manstein. Why not use the Wehrmacht's armored might to punch through the French lines in the Ardennes Forest, thereby bypassing the Maginot Line entirely, and then roll northward through the countryside to attack the French and British rear, in combination with the big assault through Belgium?

Hitler mulled it over. His senior generals thought it was too risky. But it was precisely that element of risk, even the bit of recklessness involved, that appealed to the Führer. He approved the Manstein Plan and ordered his generals to work out the details.

Meanwhile, frontline Germans stood by idly, staring at their French and British counterparts without firing a shot. The prolonged standoff in the West took on a somewhat comical aspect, jokingly referred to as the *Sitzkrieg* (sit down war) by the Germans and the Phony War by the British. There was even a touch of optimism in the air as large numbers of troops went home for the Christmas holidays. People began to wonder if there would be a shooting war at all.

The strange lull lasted through the Winter of 1940. However, it was not without consequences for Hitler. Complications soon arose.

First, the British, relying on their naval superiority, had successfully set up a sea blockade that cut off nearly all shipping imports to Germany. A similar blockade had devastated the Germans throughout World War I.

Next, Soviet Russia attacked Finland to steal back the country which had been part of the old Russian Empire. The unprovoked attack by Hitler's ally brought British and French promises of ground troops to aid the embattled Finns. The risk for Germany was that those troops, aided by the British Navy, would seize the opportunity to cut off the flow of iron ore from neighboring Norway into Germany, thereby endangering armaments production and the entire war economy.

To prevent this, Hitler chose a drastic measure. He would simply conquer Norway and take Germany's northern neighbor, Denmark, as well. The two neutral countries were militarily weak. The invasions could therefore be limited military operations, relying instead on Nazi ultimatums accompanied by threats of "useless bloodshed."

It began at 5:20 a.m., Tuesday, April 9, 1940, as five highly trained German divisions launched a daring seaborne invasion of Copenhagen, the Danish capital, and Oslo, the Norwegian capital, along with four Norwegian seaports.

In Denmark, things went smoothly. As German troops streamed into the country by sea and land, the Danish King was simply informed his country was now under Hitler's protection and that resistance was futile. With his small army already overpowered, and to protect his people and cities from Hitler's wrath, Denmark's King Christian and his government surrendered.

In Norway, the Germans had a harder time as the Norwegians refused to submit. Instead, they fended off the initial sea assault at Oslo with cannon blasts from ships and coastal fortifications. As a result, German paratroopers were sent in to capture the city. Norway's King Haakon then delivered a radio message imploring fellow Norwegians to continue resisting and escaped with his government into the northern mountains.

To aid the besieged Norwegians, the British Navy sailed in and blasted away at German warships wherever they were found, sinking ten destroyers at Narvik. Next, British ground troops landed near Trondheim and Hamar. But the outnumbered and ill-equipped British were unable to hold on against German tanks and Luftwaffe attack planes using nearby captured airfields. The British troops were then hastily evacuated from the country along with King Haakon who went into exile in London.

Against all odds, the Norwegians had held out over a month. When it was over, Nazi sympathizer, Vidkun Quisling, a Norwegian who had openly worked to topple his own country for Hitler, became the new head of government.

And so two more countries were swallowed up by Nazi Germany. Hitler regained the momentum in Europe and had bested the British for the moment. The iron ore shipments from Norway would continue and the German Navy and Luftwaffe could use new bases in both Norway and Denmark to confront the British.

With this matter settled, now at long last, Hitler turned his full attention to France, setting a final invasion date of Friday, May 10, 1940.

On that day, the battle began precisely as the British and French had anticipated, with the German invasion of France's northern neighbors, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. Reacting to this, the bulk of the Allied forces, including 136 divisions of French, British and Belgian troops rushed into position, ready to confront the invaders just as they had done in August 1914.

They didn't know they had been hoodwinked. Toward the south, the Manstein Plan was already in motion. A German armored column, stretching back a hundred miles, ripped through the lightly defended Ardennes Forest then roared northward through France toward the English Channel looking to trap the Allied armies. Along the way, French morale crumbled as motorized infantry and Panzer tank corps, commanded by the likes of Heinz Guderian and Erwin Rommel, smashed through the defenders.

At the same time, the Germans crushed Holland. To break the Dutch will to resist, Göring's Luftwaffe struck beautiful Rotterdam, dropping 98 tons of high explosives that destroyed much of the old city. As the Dutch armed forces caved in, Queen Wilhelmina and her government were evacuated to London by the British Navy.

By Monday, May 20, just ten days into the invasion, the entire British Expeditionary Force and three French armies had been cut off in Belgium with their backs to the sea. German armored units then tightened the noose, squeezing the bewildered Allies into a small pocket around the seaport of Dunkirk.

But then they stopped.

In one of the stranger twists of World War II, Hitler's armored units, seemingly on the verge of a stunning victory, suddenly halted their advance on Dunkirk on the morning of May 24th. The chief reason was that Hermann Göring now wanted to grab a share of the spotlight and impress Hitler. He boasted that his Luftwaffe alone could destroy the trapped troops.

Josef Schmid, a Luftwaffe intelligence officer, recalled how it unfolded: "I heard the telephone conversation...Göring described the situation at Dunkirk in

such a way as to suggest there was no alternative but to destroy by an attack from the air...and pointed out that the advance elements of the German Army, already battle weary, could hardly expect to succeed in preventing the British withdrawal. He even requested that the German tanks, which had reached the outskirts of the city, be withdrawn a few miles in order to leave the field free for the Luftwaffe."

Hitler agreed to Göring's proposal. German field commanders within sight of Dunkirk were aghast. They could hardly believe their orders.

The British could hardly believe their luck. They immediately prepared for a mass evacuation by sea. The British Navy, aided by a volunteer flotilla of nearly 900 small merchant ships, fishing vessels and pleasure boats of all sizes, sailed across the English Channel to Dunkirk as British soldiers waited for rescue on the beach. One British officer remembered, "Our only thoughts now were to get on a boat. Along the entire queue not a word was spoken. The men just stood there silently staring into the darkness, praying that a boat would soon appear, and fearing that it would not."

Meanwhile, Göring's planes were hampered by cloudy weather and then struck by British pilots flying their new Spitfires, the world's finest fighter plane, which could easily shoot down slow-moving German bombers and outmaneuver the Messerschmitt fighters protecting them. This bought time for the troops waiting on the beach and at Dunkirk harbor. It also gave the Allies a last minute chance to regroup. They quickly set up a defensive perimeter around Dunkirk to shield the evacuation from ground attack.

After a two-day wait, realizing that Göring couldn't live up to his boast so easily, Hitler ordered his armored columns to move on Dunkirk. But now they found it hard going in many spots, compared to the rout they might have had. They finally rolled into Dunkirk on June 4th, taking thousands of French prisoners. By this time, however, nearly the entire British Expeditionary Force, about 260,000 men, along with 60,000 Frenchmen, had escaped by sea, knowing that someday, somewhere, they would fight Hitler again.

With Dunkirk, northern France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg securely in hand, the entire German Army abruptly wheeled itself around and sped southward to seek out and destroy whatever was left of the French Army.

By now that army was on the verge of collapse. Demoralized, indifferent soldiers were led by indecisive generals paralyzed by the specter of Hitler's earth-shattering Blitzkrieg. A French observer, who spent an hour watching a senior French commander at his headquarters, recalled: "During all that time, he sat in tragic immobility, saying nothing, doing nothing, but just gazing at the

map spread on the table between us, as though hoping to find on it the decision which he was incapable of taking.”

The French government itself was in a state of panic. On June 10th, it fled Paris, declaring the capital an open city to hopefully spare its destruction by Hitler.

With ten armored divisions now freely rolling around France, the German Army was presently twice the size of the scattered French Army. On June 14th, German troops drove unhindered into Paris and hoisted the swastika flag of Nazi Germany on the symbol of France, the Eiffel Tower. Three days later, acknowledging the hopelessness of their situation, the French meekly asked Hitler for armistice terms.

For the Germans and for Hitler personally it was a victory almost beyond belief. The German people nearly went mad with joy upon the announcement, realizing there would be no repeat of the First World War in France and Belgium, and believing this new war was, by all appearances, just about won.

Hitler savored every moment, knowing how his people felt about him. He decided to personally attend the French surrender ceremony, forcing them to sign the document inside the identical railroad car and on the exact spot in the Compiègne Forest where the Germans had surrendered to France two decades earlier, concluding the First World War.

American journalist William Shirer was there that sunny Friday afternoon, June 21, 1940, and watched Hitler's face. "It was grave, solemn, yet brimming with revenge. There was also in it, as in his springy step, a note of the triumphant conqueror, the defier of the world."

Surrender terms required the French to hand over all anti-Nazi refugees along with the entire French navy. To encourage French cooperation, Hitler left mostly rural southern France unoccupied, for the time being, and allowed its day-to-day administration to be handled by a collaborationist regime headed by French Marshal Henri Pétain of World War I fame.

With the conquest of France, nine countries had now fallen to Hitler including Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland. Two countries, Spain and Italy, had forged political alliances with Hitler. Only Great Britain remained free among the major European powers.

Once again, Hitler decided to reach out and offer the British an easy way out – peace on his terms.

But Britain had changed. Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister Hitler had bullied at Munich, was gone. In his place as Britain's new leader was a man Hitler had never met, but already didn't like, an avowed anti-Nazi named Winston Churchill.



Hitler addresses the Reichstag on Friday, October 6, 1939. Behind him sits Hermann Göring, the Reichstag President--just one of his many titles. Below: Thursday, October 5th, the day before his peace speech, Hitler consults with Walther von Brauchitsch, Army Commander-in-Chief.





German Panzers punch through the Ardennes Forest then turn northward. Below: Meanwhile, German infantry and motorized troops dash forward before the French can catch their breath.



French prisoners of war are marched off under German guard . Below: The moment of capitulation as General Keitel presents the Armistice terms to the French.



Below: October 1940--French Marshal Henri Pétain is greeted by Adolf Hitler. Between them stands Hitler's interpreter, Dr. Schmidt. On the right is Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.



Britain Stands Alone

Every European leader thus far challenged by Adolf Hitler had either backed down or been conquered. By the summer of 1940, the Führer stood at the pinnacle of world power – feared by most, admired by many, and absolutely worshiped by his own people. Upon his return to Berlin after his conquest of France, he enjoyed an outpouring of popular delirium unprecedented in German history.

But there was a problem in all of this. For Hitler, the greater the success, the more he came to see himself as an infallible genius, compounded by the notion that if he, the Führer, said such and such a thing was true – then it *must* be true. It was the return of his old nemesis – megalomania. Bit by bit, it would become his worst enemy, clouding his judgment as he went forward, prompting him to act rashly, providing opportunities for his opponents they would not miss.

The first such misjudgment by the Führer occurred even before the ink was dry on the French surrender document. By now, Hitler had already turned his full attention to Great Britain. He was absolutely sure the British would respond positively to a magnanimous offer by him to let them hang onto the British Empire throughout the world, as long as the British publicly acknowledged his right to rule a Nazified Europe, thereby granting him a free hand to do whatever he pleased on the entire continent, without interference.

But he was wrong.

Upon the collapse of France, the new British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, told his people: "Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him all Europe may be free, and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands; but if we fail, then the whole world will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: 'This was their finest hour.' "

Churchill flatly refused to discuss anything with Hitler or any Nazi representative.

Reacting to such blatant and unprecedented defiance, Hitler assembled the Wehrmacht High Command on Tuesday, July 16, 1940, and ordered them to plan for the conquest of Britain.

Meanwhile, three days later, Hitler the politician ascended the world stage once more, giving a speech to the Nazi Reichstag, broadcast live on radio in Germany and around the world. He portrayed Churchill as a war monger and himself as a reasonable man desiring peace. "I feel a deep disgust for this type of unscrupulous politician who wrecks whole nations," Hitler said of Churchill. "I feel it to be my duty before my own conscience to appeal once more to reason and common sense in Great Britain as much as elsewhere. I consider myself in a position to make this appeal since I am not the vanquished begging favors, but the victor speaking in the name of reason."

Once more, Germans took the Führer at his word, concluding the British would be to blame for any continuation of the war. Hitler by now had learned to play his own people like a master fiddler. He even confided to the Italian ambassador, "It was always a good tactic to make the enemy responsible in the eyes of public opinion in Germany and abroad for the future course of events. This strengthened one's own morale and weakened that of the enemy."

Though the German people were easily swayed by Hitler, his generals were not. They had grave doubts that a seaborne invasion across the English Channel into southern England would ever succeed. The chief problem was that Britain's immensely powerful Royal Navy, aided by the increasingly dangerous Royal Air Force (RAF), would likely blast any seaborne troops out of the water. And any Germans attempting to wade ashore would encounter home-based British Army divisions, including many of the same men who had just escaped from Dunkirk.

Regardless, Hitler ordered preparations to move forward, eyeing a possible launch date of mid-September 1940. As a result, the High Command dutifully concocted Operation Sea Lion involving an invasion by 260,000 German soldiers to be ferried across the English Channel from northern France. But now the head of his navy, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, spoke up and advocated a much later invasion date, perhaps May of 1941, to allow adequate time for naval preparations.

For the moment, Hitler paused to mull things over. On the one hand, he wanted to punish the openly defiant Churchill, but on the other hand, his Wehrmacht clearly wasn't ready for action.

Sensing a golden opportunity to curry favor with the Führer, his old crony, Hermann Göring, Chief of the Luftwaffe, stepped up and boasted that his warplanes alone could force Churchill to his knees. It would be a daring, unprecedented alternative – to wage war entirely from the sky.

With no better option available, Hitler decided to give it a try. And so, on Thursday, August 15, 1940, an attack against southern England was launched by the world's largest air force – the Battle of Britain had begun.

Göring's first priority was to destroy the RAF itself, by targeting its airfields, warplane factories, communication stations and radar posts. Challenging this aerial onslaught were young British pilots, many right out of college, who scurried aloft in their new Spitfire and Hurricane fighter planes. At the onset, the Germans enjoyed a numerical advantage, hurling a thousand bombers, along with an equal number of fighter planes against 800 British fighters. The two sides battled furiously in the skies over England, knowing the fate of Britain and perhaps even the world was hanging in the balance.

Although British Fighter Command had fewer planes it had an important tactical advantage in aerial radar, which the Germans did not have yet. As wave upon wave of German bombers emerged, British pilots stayed in constant radio communication with coastal radar operators and fellow pilots. They were perfectly positioned to intercept and took a steady toll of the lumbering bombers

and slower German fighters. British pilot Richard Hillary recalled his feelings toward the German presently in his gun sight: "I wondered what he was like, this man I would kill. Was he young, was he fat, would he die with the Führer's name on his lips, or would he die alone...I would never know."

Göring soon realized success would not come easily. Not wanting to lose face with the Führer, he stepped up the pressure, throwing everything in his arsenal against the RAF, beginning on Saturday, August 24th. Over the next two weeks, the British suffered terribly, losing 466 planes. Fighter Command was desperately low on planes and pilots, flying its very last reserves. The Germans, by sheer weight of numbers, stood on the brink of victory.

But they didn't know this.

Göring had no idea the RAF was nearly knocked out. And now, in one of the great turning points of World War II, the German strategy abruptly changed.

It began by sheer accident. German bombers that were supposed to hit military targets on the outskirts of London strayed off course and instead bombed London proper, killing civilians inside their homes. Churchill assumed it was deliberate and British bombers retaliated by conducting the first-ever air raid on Berlin, capital of Nazi Germany. The nighttime bombing was small in scale, but hugely symbolic. Germans were utterly shocked. They had been personally assured by Göring time and time again their cities were impenetrable.

Hitler was furious. It was yet another blow to his prestige by the bombastic British. On September 4th, he told his people, "When the British Air Force drops two or three or four thousand kilograms of bombs, then we will in one night drop 150, 230, 300 or 400,000 kilograms. When they declare they will increase their attacks on our cities, then we will raze their cities to the ground. We will stop the handiwork of those night air pirates, so help us God! The hour will come when one of us will break and it will not be National Socialist Germany!"

And so the attacks against the battered RAF facilities were halted in favor of nighttime terror bombings against London to retaliate for the raids on Berlin and to break the morale of the British people so they would pressure Churchill to capitulate.

Starting on Saturday, September 7, 1940, and for 57 consecutive nights, London was struck. During the Blitz, as it came to be known, the people awoke each night to shrieking air raid sirens, then hurried from their homes to designated shelters including subway stations and basements in big buildings. They huddled together, listening as thunderous destruction fell from the sky, staying awake

most of the night nervously. At dawn, they emerged sleepy-eyed and went home to see if it was still there, gazing meanwhile at the wreckage of local shops and the ruins of cherished historical buildings. Despite it all they did not break. Rather, they went to work on time, helped neighbors in need, or helped to clean up the street. "Business As Usual," could be seen everywhere, written in chalk on boarded-up shop windows.

Meanwhile, British air raids continued on Berlin and other German cities, including Munich, the birthplace of Nazism. Hitler responded by adding a dozen British cities to Göring's target list including Birmingham, Liverpool and historic Coventry which was obliterated when 449 bombers dropped 1,400 high explosive bombs and 100,000 incendiaries.

Bombings of this magnitude brought something completely new to modern warfare – the firestorm – fueled by super-heated winds drawing in torrents of air to fan whirling walls of flames. Sometimes people were knocked off their feet by the rushing winds and sucked into the flames to be burned alive. In London, on the night of December 29, 1940, a firestorm scorched the whole area around St. Paul's Cathedral.

The death toll of British civilians steadily mounted, surpassing 15,000 by the end of 1940. But so too, did the German death toll mount, especially Luftwaffe pilots. The German emphasis on terror bombings against Britain's cities had given the RAF time to spring back to life by repairing its airfields, building new planes and training new fighter pilots.

As a result, incoming German bombers were shot down in ever increasing numbers. The air war thus evolved into a battle of attrition in the sky, and the Germans were losing skilled pilots and planes by the hundreds, with no end in sight. If this continued, the Luftwaffe would be broken in the skies over England. All the while, Churchill and the British people remained steadfast and undaunted.

Göring's boast had proven empty. The Battle of Britain was lost. The Luftwaffe had come up short again – just as it did at Dunkirk.

Against the odds, the young fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force had withstood everything the Germans could throw at them and saved Britain, inspiring Winston Churchill to say, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

With the air war against Britain unsuccessful, Hitler postponed all plans for the invasion of England. Instead, he ordered the Luftwaffe to transfer its entire resources to Eastern Europe. Nazi Germany, the Führer had now decided, would

bring Churchill to his knees and achieve final victory in the war not by conquering Britain, but by conquering Russia.



British Prime Minister Winston Churchill-a longstanding critic of Adolf Hitler and his entire Nazi regime. Below: Germans poke fun at Churchill's cigar smoking habit by writing 'Havana cigar for Churchill' on a bomb destined for England.



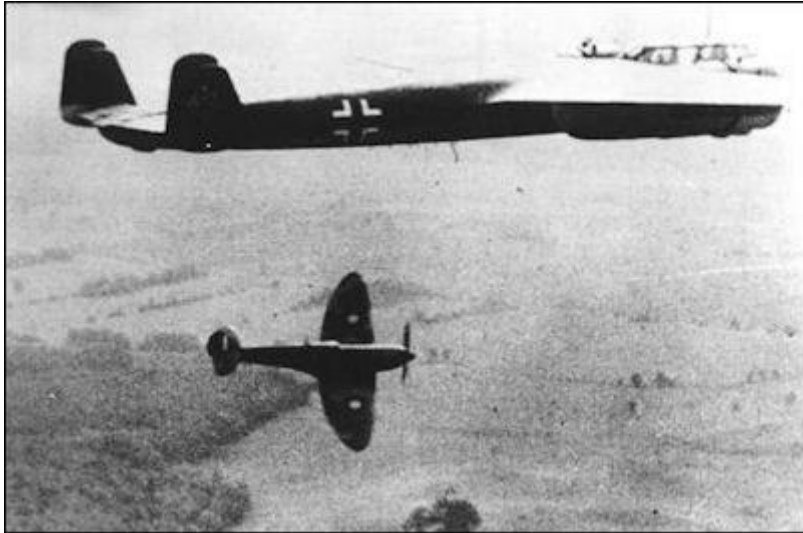


Photo taken by a Luftwaffe crewman during the Battle of Britain shows a German bomber menaced by a British Spitfire in the skies over England. Below: Inside an Air Raid Shelter in London's West End, people pass the time by listening to a harmonica duet.



Attack on Russia

In calling off Operation Sea Lion, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the world's most powerful armed forces, had suffered his first major setback. Nazi Germany had stumbled in the skies over Britain but Hitler was not discouraged. In the past, he had repeatedly overcome setbacks of one sort or another through drastic action elsewhere to both triumphs over the failure and to move toward his ultimate goal. Now it was time to do it again.

All of Hitler's actions in Western Europe thus far, including the subjugation of France and the now-failed attack on Britain, were simply a prelude to achieving his principal goal as Führer, the acquisition of *Lebensraum* (Living Space) in the East. He had moved against the French, British and others in the West only as a necessary measure to secure Germany's western border, thereby freeing him to attack in the East with full force.

For Hitler, the war itself was first and foremost a racial struggle and he viewed all aspects of the conflict in racial terms. He considered the peoples of Western Europe and the British Isles to be racial comrades, ranked among the higher order of humans. The supreme form of human, according to Hitler, was the Germanic person, characterized by his or her fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes. The lowest form, Hitler believed, were the Jews and the Slavic peoples of Eastern Europe, including the Russians.

All of this had been outlined in his book, *Mein Kampf*, first published in 1925. In it, Hitler stated his fundamental belief that Germany's survival depended on its ability to acquire vast tracts of land in the East to provide room for the expanding German population at the expense of the inferior peoples already living there, justified purely on racial grounds. Hitler explained that Nazi racial philosophy "by no means believes in an equality of races...and feels itself obligated to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker."

Therefore, in stark contrast to the battles so far in the West, Hitler intended the quest for Lebensraum in the East to be a "war of annihilation" utilizing the might of the German Army and Air Force against soldiers and civilians alike.

In March of 1941, he assembled his top generals and told them how their troops should behave: "This struggle is one of [political] ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful and unrelenting harshness. All officers will have to rid themselves of obsolete [moral] ideologies...I insist absolutely that my orders be executed without contradiction." Hitler then ordered the killing of all Russian political authorities. "The [Russian] commissars are the bearers of ideologies directly opposed to

National Socialism. Therefore the commissars will be liquidated. German soldiers guilty of breaking international law...will be excused." His generals listened in silence to this command, known later as the Commissar Order.

For his most senior generals, the utterances of their Supreme Commander posed a dilemma. They were mostly men of the old-school, born and raised in Imperial Germany, long before Hitler, amid traditional morals of bygone days. Now, they felt duty-bound to follow Hitler's orders, no matter how drastic, since they had all sworn an oath of obedience to the Führer. But to comply, they would have to abandon time-honored codes of military conduct, considered obsolete by Hitler, which prohibited senseless murder of civilians.

At the same time, they each owed a debt of gratitude to Hitler for restoring the Germany Army to greatness and for the slew of promotions bestowed upon them by the Führer in the wake of its continued success. Rank and privilege, and the immense prestige of holding the title of Colonel-General or Field Marshal in Hitler's Wehrmacht, had tremendous appeal for these men. Therefore, in the end, despite their misgivings, not one of them dared to speak up or refuse Hitler in regard to his war plans for Russia. Instead, they dutifully planned the invasion of Russia, knowing the attack would unleash an unprecedented wave of murder.

The invasion plan for Russia was named Operation *Barbarossa* (Red Beard) by Hitler in honor of German ruler Frederick I, nicknamed Red Beard, who had orchestrated a ruthless attack on the Slavic peoples of the East some eight centuries earlier.

Barbarossa would be Blitzkrieg again but on a continental scale this time, as Hitler boasted to his generals, "When Barbarossa commences the world will hold its breath and make no comment!" Set to begin on May 15, 1941, three million soldiers totaling 160 divisions would plunge deep into Russia in three massive army groups, reaching the Volga River, east of Moscow, by the end of summer, thus achieving victory.

Facing them would be Stalin's Red Army, estimated by the Germans at 200 divisions. Although somewhat outnumbered by the Russians, Hitler believed they did not pose a serious threat and would fall apart just like their fellow Slavs, the Poles, did in 1939. Against an army of battle-hardened, racially superior Germans, the Russians would be finished in a matter of weeks, Hitler claimed.

Most of his generals concurred, supported by recent evidence. They had watched with keen interest as Soviet Russia confidently invaded Finland in November 1939, only to see the Red Army disintegrate into a disorganized

jumble amid embarrassing defeats at the hands of a much smaller blond-haired Finnish fighting force.

Buoyed by Hitler and awash in their own arrogance, the generals confidently finalized the details of Operation Barbarossa as the bulk of the German troops and armor slowly moved into position in the weeks leading up to May 15. But as the invasion date neared, complications arose that upset the whole timetable.

Hitler's old friend and chief ally, Benito Mussolini, leader of Fascist Italy, had foolishly tried to imitate the Führer and achieve battlefield glory for himself by launching a surprise invasion of Greece. British troops stationed in the Mediterranean then moved in to help the Greeks fend off the Italians. For Hitler, the very idea of British troops in Southern Europe was enough to keep him awake at night. Their presence was a threat to Germany's vulnerable southern flank, the region of Europe known as the Balkans, which also supplied most of Germany's oil. It would therefore be necessary to secure the Balkans *before* launching Barbarossa.

To quickly achieve this, Hitler slipped back into a familiar role – the political master manipulator – forging overnight alliances with two Balkan countries, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

But in Yugoslavia, things unexpectedly spiraled out of control when the government, upon its alliance with Hitler, was immediately overthrown by its own citizens. Hitler was enraged by the news, perceiving it as a blow to his prestige. In a tirade, he ordered his generals to crush the country "as speedily as possible" and also ordered Göring's Air Force to obliterate the capital city, Belgrade, as "punishment." For the Luftwaffe, Belgrade was an easy target and they quickly turned it to rubble while killing 17,000 defenseless civilians.

Meanwhile, beginning on Sunday, April 6, 1941, the Wehrmacht poured 29 divisions into the region, taking Yugoslavia by storm, then took Greece for good measure, forcing British troops there to make a hasty exit. Thus the Balkans were secured. However, these actions took nearly five weeks and caused a lot of wear and tear on tanks and other armored equipment needed for the Russian campaign.

The new launch date for Barbarossa was Sunday, June 22, 1941. On that day, beginning at 3:15 am, 3.2 million Germans plunged headlong into Russia across an 1800-mile front, taking their foes by surprise. Russian field commanders made frantic calls to headquarters asking for orders, but were told there were no orders. Sleepy-eyed infantrymen scrambled out of their tents to find themselves already surrounded by Germans, with no option but to surrender. Bridges were

captured intact while hundreds of Russian planes were destroyed sitting on the ground.

At 7 am that morning, over the radio, a proclamation from the Führer to the German people announced, “At this moment a march is taking place that, for its extent, compares with the greatest the world has ever seen. I have decided again today to place the fate and future of the Reich and our people in the hands of our soldiers. May God aid us, especially in this fight.”

In attacking Russia, Hitler had indeed stunned the world. But he also made a lot of Germans very nervous. Maria Mauth, a 17-year-old German schoolgirl at the time, recalled her father's reaction: "I will never forget my father saying: 'Right, now we have lost the war!' " But then reports arrived highlighting the easy successes. "In the weekly newsreels we would see glorious pictures of the German Army with all the soldiers singing and waving and cheering. And that was infectious of course...We simply thought it would be similar to what it was like in France or in Poland – everybody was convinced of that, considering the fabulous army we had."

Indeed, it was true. Whole armies of hapless Russians were now surrendering as the relentless three-pronged Blitzkrieg blasted its way forward. Soviet Russia had been caught unprepared due to the astounding negligence of the country's dictator, Josef Stalin, who had stubbornly disregarded a flurry of intelligence reports warning that a Nazi invasion was imminent.

The result was chaos. Georgy Semenyak, a 20-year-old Russian soldier at the time, remembered: “It was a dismal picture. During the day airplanes continuously dropped bombs on the retreating soldiers...When the order was given for the retreat, there were huge numbers of people heading in every direction...The lieutenants, captains, second-lieutenants took rides on passing vehicles...mostly trucks traveling eastwards...And without commanders, our ability to defend ourselves was so severely weakened that there was really nothing we could do.”

Hitler and the Army High Command were now poised to achieve the greatest military victory of all time by trouncing the Russians. At present, three gigantic army groups were proceeding like clockwork toward their objectives. Army Group North, with 20 infantry divisions and six armored divisions, headed for Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) by the Baltic Sea. Army Group Center, the largest, with 33 infantry and 15 armored divisions, continued on its 700-mile-long journey toward Russia's capital, Moscow. Army Group South, with 33 infantry and eight armored divisions, headed for Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, the breadbasket of Europe with its fertile wheat fields. Along the way, German field commanders employed their already-perfected Blitzkrieg techniques time

and time again to pierce Russian defensive lines and surround bewildered Red Army soldiers.

By mid-July 1941, all that remained was for the Russians to give up and accept their fate under Hitler, just like Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

But the Russians kept fighting.

Despite staggering losses of men and equipment, pockets of fanatical resistance now emerged, unlike anything the Germans had encountered thus far in the war. And there were more surprises for the Germans. They had grossly underestimated the total fighting strength of the Red Army. Instead of 200 divisions, the Russians could field 400 divisions when fully mobilized. This meant there were three million additional Russians available to fight.

Another emerging factor was the vastness of Russia itself. It was one thing to ponder a map, something else to traverse the boundless countryside, as Field Marshal Manstein remembered: "Everyone was captivated at one time or other by the endlessness of the landscape, through which it was possible to drive for hours on end – often guided by the compass – without encountering the least rise in the ground or setting eyes on a single human being or habitation. The distant horizon seemed like some mountain ridge behind which a paradise might beckon, but it only stretched on and on."

The vastness created logistical problems including worn out foot soldiers and dangerously overstretched supply lines. It also taxed the ability of the Luftwaffe to provide close cover for advancing ground troops, a vital ingredient in the Blitzkrieg formula.

On top of this, Russian resistance began to stiffen all over as the soldiers and people rallied behind Stalin in the defense of their Motherland. Stalin, at first overwhelmed by the magnitude of Barbarossa, had regained his bearings and publicly appealed for a "Great Patriotic War" against the Nazi invaders. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, he enacted ruthless measures, executing his top commander in the west and various field commanders who had been too eager to retreat.

Under Stalin's tight-fisted grip, the chaos and panic that had initially enveloped the Russian officer corps gradually subsided. Red Army commanders took heed from Stalin, instilling his 'fight to the death' mentality in their frontline soldiers. They set up new defensive positions, not to be yielded until every last soldier was killed. They also began their first-ever counter-attacks against the advancing Germans.

As a result, with each passing day the Germans began to lose momentum. They could no longer easily blow through the Russian defenses and had to be wary of counter-strikes. All the while, German foot soldiers were becoming increasingly fatigued. By August of 1941, it had become apparent to the Army High Command there would be no speedy victory. “The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian colossus,” General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff, had to admit.

Therefore the question now arose – what to do – follow the original battle plan for Barbarossa or make changes to adapt?

Army Group Center was presently about 200 miles from Moscow, poised for a massive assault. However, the original plan called for Army Groups North and South to stage the main attacks in Russia, with Army Group Center playing a supporting role until their tasks were completed, after which Moscow would be taken.

A majority of Hitler’s senior generals now implored him to scrap Barbarossa in favor of an all-out attack on Moscow. If the Russian capital fell, they argued, it would devastate Russian morale and knock out the country’s chief transportation hub. Russia’s days would surely be numbered.

The decision rested solely with the Supreme Commander.

In what was perhaps his single biggest decision of World War II, Hitler passed up the chance to attack Moscow during the summer of 1941. Instead, he clung to the original plan to crush Leningrad in the north and simultaneously seize the Ukraine in the south. This, Hitler lectured his generals, would be far more devastating to the Russians than the fall of Moscow. A successful attack in the north would wreck the city named after one of the founders of Soviet Russia, Vladimir Lenin. Attacking the south would destroy the Russian armies protecting the region and place vital agricultural and industrial areas in German hands.

Though they remained unconvinced, the generals dutifully halted the advance on Moscow and repositioned troops and tanks away from Army Group Center to aid Army Groups North and South. By late September, bolstered by the additional Panzer tanks, Army Group South successfully captured the city of Kiev in the Ukraine, taking 650,000 Russian prisoners. As Army Group North approached Leningrad, a beautiful old city with palaces that once belonged to the Czars, Hitler ordered the place flattened via massive aerial and artillery bombardments. Concerning the five million trapped inhabitants, he told his generals, “The problem of the survival of the population and of supplying it with food is one which cannot and should not be solved by us.”

Now, with Leningrad surrounded and the Ukraine almost taken, the generals implored Hitler to let them take Moscow before the onset of winter. This time Hitler consented, but only partly. He would allow an attack on Moscow, provided that Army Group North also completed the capture of Leningrad, while Army Group South advanced deeper into southern Russia toward Stalingrad, the city on the Volga River named after the Soviet dictator.

This meant German forces in Russia would be attacking simultaneously on three major fronts over two thousand miles long, stretching their manpower and resources to the absolute limit. Realizing the danger, the generals pleaded once more for permission to focus on Moscow alone and strike the city with overwhelming force. But Hitler said no.

In the meantime, German troops still holding outside Moscow had remained idle for nearly two months, waiting for orders to advance. When the push finally began on October 2, 1941, a noticeable chill already hung in the morning air, and in a few places, snowflakes wafted from the sky. The notorious Russian winter was just around the corner.

At first it appeared Moscow might be another easy success. Two Russian army groups defending the main approach were quickly encircled and broken up by motorized Germans who took 660,000 prisoners.

Confident the war in Russia was just about won, Hitler took a leap by announcing victory to the German people: "I declare today, and I declare it without any reservation, that the enemy in the East has been struck down and will never rise again...Behind our troops already lies a territory twice the size of the German Reich when I came to power in 1933."

By mid-October, forward German units had advanced to within 40 miles of Moscow. Only 90,000 Russian soldiers stood between the German armies and the Soviet capital. The entire government, including Stalin himself, prepared to evacuate.

But then the weather turned.

It began with weeks of unending autumn rain, creating battlefields of deep, sticky mud that immobilized anything on wheels and robbed German armored units of their tactical advantage. The non-stop rain drenched foot soldiers, soaking them to the bone in mud up to their knees. And things only got worse. In November, autumn rains abruptly gave way to snow squalls with frigid winds and sub-zero temperatures, causing frostbite and other cold-related sickness.

The German Army had counted on a quick summertime victory in Russia and had therefore neglected to prepare for the brutal winter warfare it now faced. German medical officer Heinrich Haape recalled: "The cold relentlessly crept into our bodies, our blood, our brains. Even the sun seemed to radiate a steely cold and at night the blood red skies above the burning villages merely hinted a mockery of warmth."

Heavy boots, overcoats, blankets and thick socks were desperately needed but were unavailable. As a result, thousands of frostbitten soldiers dropped out of their frontline units. Some divisions fell to fifty-percent of their fighting strength. Food supplies also ran low and the troops became malnourished. Mechanical failures worsened as tank and truck engines cracked from the cold while iced-up artillery and machine-guns jammed.

The once-mighty German military machine had now ground to a halt in Russia.

Frontline Russians noticed the change. A Soviet commander in the 19th Rifle Brigade recalled: "I remember very well the Germans in July 1941. They were confident, strong tall guys. They marched ahead with their sleeves rolled up and carrying their machine-guns. But later on they became miserable, crooked, snotty guys wrapped in woolen kerchiefs stolen from old women in villages...Of course, they were still firing and defending themselves, but they weren't the Germans we knew earlier in 1941."

Ignoring the plight of his frontline soldiers, Hitler insisted that Moscow could still be taken and ordered all available troops in the region to make one final thrust for victory. Beginning on December 1, 1941, German tank formations attacked from the north and south of the city while infantrymen moved in from the east. But the Russians were ready and waiting. The weather delays had given them time to bring in massive reinforcements, including 30 Siberian divisions specially trained for winter warfare. Wherever the Germans struck they encountered fierce resistance and faltered. They were also stricken by temperatures that plunged to 40 degrees below zero at night.

Hitler had pushed his troops beyond human endurance and now they paid a terrible price. On Saturday, December 6th, a hundred Russian divisions under the command of the Red Army's new leader, General Georgi Zhukov, counter-attacked the Germans all along the 200-mile front around Moscow. For the first time in the war, the Germans experienced Blitzkrieg in reverse, as overwhelming numbers of Russian tanks, planes and artillery tore them apart. The impact was devastating. By mid-December, German forces around Moscow, battered, cold and tremendously fatigued, were in full retreat and facing the possibility of being routed by the Russians.

Just six months earlier, the Germans had been poised to achieve the greatest victory of all time and change world history. Instead, they had succumbed to the greatest-ever comeback by their Russian foes. By now a quarter of all German troops in Russia, some 750,000 men, were either dead, wounded, missing or ill.

Reacting to the catastrophe he had caused, Hitler blamed the Wehrmacht's leadership, dismissing dozens of field commanders and senior generals, including Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Hitler then took that rank for himself, assuming personal day-to-day operational command of the Army, and promptly ordered all surviving troops in Russia to halt in their tracks and retreat not one step further, which they did. As a result, the Eastern Front gradually stabilized.

In the bloodied fields of snow around Moscow, Adolf Hitler had suffered a breathtaking defeat. The German Army would never be the same. The illusion of invincibility that had caused the world to shudder in the face of Nazi Germany had vanished forever – replaced now by a sliver of hope.

But for the populations of Eastern Europe and occupied Russia, there was much suffering yet to be endured. In cities and villages behind the front lines, Hitler's war of annihilation was fully underway, comprising the most savage episode in human history.



July 1941. A confident looking Hitler with Luftwaffe Chief Hermann Göring (right) and a decorated fighter pilot. Behind Hitler is his chief military aide Wilhelm Keitel, now a Field Marshal. Below: General Heinz Guderian in Russia, full of confidence as well.



October 1941. German infantrymen plunge ever deeper into Russia. Below: Hitler at the map table with Army Commander-in-Chief Brauchitsch and others, including Friedrich Paulus (2nd from left).



Russian Winter. Near Moscow, a wounded German is rescued. Below: A Panzer III tank

stuck in the snow and cold as the whole offensive stalls.



Below: Both men and horses are pushed to the limit amid the intense wind and deep snows.



Mass Murder in the East

The quest for Lebensraum in the East was a carefully contemplated, step-by-step, process. First, the land was forcibly seized by Hitler's armies from its rightful inhabitants. Secondly, Heinrich Himmler's SS, with the knowledge and cooperation of the Wehrmacht, moved in to conduct special actions in accordance with the racial policies of the Führer. After this, Nazi political authorities moved in to administer and exploit the conquered lands in cooperation with the SS and Wehrmacht.

Poland was the first such conquest. Hitler loathed the neighboring country which had been set up by the victorious Allies at the end of the First World War. He ordered every facet of Polish culture and national identity obliterated and the people reduced to slave laborers.

Upon its conquest in September 1939, Himmler and his second-in-command, Reinhard Heydrich, quickly set up SS execution squads known as Einsatzgruppen to rid the population of all educated and prominent Poles. Trailing behind the Wehrmacht, the SS squads combed through cities and villages, shooting whomever they pleased, including Polish political leaders, land-owners, gentry, ex-army officers, business owners, professors, artists and intellectuals. Simply wearing eyeglasses was enough to get one shot, since it implied a person was educated.

Next, all higher education was abolished so the Poles would degenerate into a population of ignorant, obedient laborers. A memorandum Himmler wrote in May 1940 provided the details: “The non-German population of the eastern territories must not receive any education higher than that of an elementary school with four grades. The objective of this elementary school must simply be to teach simple arithmetic up to 500 at the most, how to write one’s name, and to teach that it is God’s commandment to be obedient to the Germans and to be honest, hard working, and well-behaved. I consider it unnecessary to teach reading.”

The model for Lebensraum, as outlined by Hitler, included large-scale resettlement of conquered territories by pure-blooded Germans at the expense of the people already living there. Over a million Poles were therefore forced out of their homes and farms which were confiscated along with shops, businesses, gold, artwork, raw materials, food and anything else of value – including children.

SS men were instructed by Himmler to keep an eye out for any blond-haired, blue-eyed children. When spotted, such children were kidnapped on the spot by the SS and sent off to Germany to be raised as Nazis. Parts of Poland had been settled by Germans in the past, and so Himmler wanted all 6 to 10-year-old Poles physically examined by Nazi racial specialists “to sort out those with valuable blood and those with worthless blood.” Those considered worthless were condemned to a life of slave labor under their German masters, or worse, if they happened to be Jewish.

Poland was also home to about three million Jews, the largest population of any country in Europe. Following its conquest, Hitler appointed an old comrade, Hans Frank, his longtime Nazi lawyer, to oversee the large southeastern portion of occupied Poland that was not annexed into the Reich. Much to the annoyance of Frank, Himmler used this area, known as the General Government, as the dumping ground for all of the unwanted Jews and Poles. As the number of Jews in the General Government continued to swell, Frank repeatedly expressed his dismay to Hitler and began advocating for some kind of alternative.

At this point, both Hitler and Himmler were still pondering a future "solution of the Jewish problem." In the meantime, as a temporary measure, Heydrich proposed rounding all up the Polish Jews in the General Government and placing them in SS-run ghettos at places such as Lodz, Cracow and Warsaw. Inside these walled-in ghettos, Heydrich explained, the Jews would be cut off from the outside world and squeezed into overcrowded areas where malnutrition and disease would naturally diminish their numbers.

Millions more Jews came under Nazi control as Hitler's armies swept across Russia beginning in June 1941. For Hitler and Himmler, the existence of so many of these unwanted people in the vast tracts of newly acquired Lebensraum was a pressing dilemma, requiring some thought.

Meanwhile, in compliance with Hitler's Commissar Order to liquidate all Russian political officials, Himmler unleashed his SS in Russia, creating four new Einsatz groups, totaling 3,000 men, which followed behind the German Army. At first, they only targeted Russian political officials, shooting them on sight. But SS field commanders soon enlarged the definition of a political official to include all Jewish men, in accordance with Hitler's belief that the Russian political system was the embodiment of Jewish-Bolshevism and therefore all Jews were implicated. The next step occurred in August 1941, when Himmler further expanded the task of the Einsatz units to include the shooting of Jewish families as well. This marked the beginning of a systematic, coordinated effort by the Nazis to murder all of the Jews in the East.

For the SS in Russia, the task ahead was huge. Throughout the vast countryside, there were hundreds of isolated little villages called *shtetls* populated exclusively by Jews. Into each village, truckloads of SS troops would arrive unannounced. The commanding SS officer would promptly summon the town's leading citizens and inform them the entire population was to be immediately resettled. With no time to think, the men from the village were rushed into the trucks and taken off to a secluded site, followed a short time later by the women and children.

Otto Ohlendorf, an Einsatz group commander, explained what happened at the execution site: "They were ordered to hand over their valuables to the leader of the unit, and shortly before their execution to surrender their outer clothing. The men, women and children were led to a place of execution which in most cases was located next to a deeply excavated anti-tank ditch. Then they were shot, kneeling or standing, and the corpses thrown into the ditch."

Einsatz leaders such as Ohlendorf kept a precise tally of executed Jews so the number could be reported back to Himmler. Soon a competition arose among

the four Einsatz groups to see who could report the highest tally, and so they dashed from place to place in search of ever-more Jews.

As Hitler's armies plunged deeper into Russia, the massacres grew in size, culminating in late September 1941, when 33,771 Jews in the Ukraine were rounded up and killed over two days in the Babi Yar ravine outside Kiev.

One of the few survivors, Dina Pronicheva, recalled: "It was dark already...They lined us up on a ledge which was so small that we couldn't get much of a footing on it. They began shooting us. I shut my eyes, clenched my fists, tensed all my muscles and took a plunge down before the bullets hit me. It seemed I was flying forever. But I landed safely on the bodies. After a while, when the shooting stopped, I heard the Germans climbing into the ravine. They started finishing off all those who were not dead yet, those who were moaning, hiccupping, tossing, writhing in agony...They started covering the corpses over with earth. They must have put quite a lot over me because I felt I was beginning to suffocate...Then I decided it was better to be shot than buried alive. Using my left arm I managed to move a little way up. Then I took a deep breath, summoned up my waning strength and crawled out from under the cover of earth. It was dark...I was lucky enough to crawl up one of the high walls of the ravine, and straining every nerve and muscle, got out of it."

Curious about the whole process, Himmler ventured into Russia and watched an Einsatz squad execute a hundred Jews at Minsk. As the squad fired upon the first set of lined-up people, Himmler appeared on the verge of fainting. When a second set of Jews went before the same firing squad, the shots failed to kill two women, greatly upsetting Himmler, who cried out for the women to be put out of their misery. After this emotional experience, Himmler settled on the idea of trying gas as an alternative to firing squads, believing it would spare his SS men the ordeal of shooting women and children.

Newly developed gas trucks were then introduced for experimental usage. Each of these mobile vans contained an airtight rear compartment into which the engine's exhaust fumes were fed to asphyxiate the 15 to 25 people inside while it was driven toward a mass grave. The vans, however, presented their own problems. The amount of time it took for people to perish from the carbon monoxide in the fumes varied widely causing some to arrive at the grave site still alive. Removal of the bodies from the rear of the van also became a gruesome sight for the SS men involved.

Although the vans were troublesome, the idea of gassing took hold. SS officials began experiments using air-tight chambers in concentration camps with exhaust fumes piped in from a diesel engine mounted just outside the chamber. Additional experiments involved the usage of a commercial pesticide called

Zyklon-B, which gave off deadly cyanide fumes when exposed to air. While the gassing experiments were underway, mass shootings of Jews continued all over occupied Russia with a tally that soon surpassed 630,000 persons.

By November 1941, Hitler's armies had conquered most of western Russia and stood on the outskirts of Moscow. By this time, Soviet leader Josef Stalin had issued a decree for all-out guerrilla warfare behind the lines. Hitler reacted to this new development with glee, privately telling his Nazi overseers for the East: "The Russians have now given out the order for a partisan war behind our Front. This partisan war again has its advantage: it gives us the possibility of exterminating anything that opposes us."

Thus began a spiral of death in occupied Russia in which all semblances of civilized behavior and traditional military protocol vanished and human life itself had no value. For Germans behind the lines, revenge became the order of the day. Wherever anti-Nazi partisans attacked, the Wehrmacht and SS responded with astounding brutality, killing a hundred hostages for every dead German – sometimes picking a village at random and killing all of the inhabitants.

But over time, this only deepened the resolve and hatred of the entire population. In Russia, everywhere the Germans went they made instant enemies. All opportunities to win people over were squandered, despite the fact that some ethnic regions, such as the Ukraine longed for independence from Stalin and his oppressive Soviet regime. Although the German invaders were initially welcomed upon their arrival in the Ukraine and other independence-minded communities, they treated everyone in Russia as Slavic sub-humans. Erich Koch, Nazi administrator for the Ukraine, summed it up: "We are a master race, which must remember that the lowliest German worker is racially and biologically a thousand times more valuable than the population here."

Koch and fellow overseers in Russia also viewed the population as a limitless pool of slave labor. Regular roundups soon began in which civilians of all ages were packed into railroad box cars and shipped off to Germany to toil in mines, fields and factories.

Those left behind focused their wrath on all things German, requiring whole divisions to be pulled from the Eastern Front to restore order behind the lines at a time when every available soldier was needed elsewhere. Too late, an observant Nazi official in the East would note: "The Russian fights today with exceptional bravery and self-sacrifice for nothing more or less than recognition of his human dignity."

Nazi contempt for Russian civilians also applied to the millions of now-helpless prisoners of war. Although the Eastern Front had become static by the end of 1941, till then each day saw thousands more Russians added to the tally of prisoners. On the long marches to the rear, they were denied all food and water and were subsequently penned up in giant outdoor stockades, left to starve or perish from the winter weather. Ultimately, half of all Russian POWs, some three million men, would die in German captivity.

On the surface, Hitler remained confident about the war in Russia, anticipating victory sometime in 1942. But his failure to achieve victory by the autumn of 1941, as originally planned, had unforeseen consequences. A quick victory over the Russians would have allowed Hitler to confront the lonely British with a fate-accomplished in Europe, forcing them to humbly negotiate for peace, or so he had believed.

But by now, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had squarely allied himself with Stalin and the Russians. Additionally, both the Russians and British were bolstered by their alliance with Hitler's newest enemy, the United States of America.



Polish nationals are expelled from their homes to make room for incoming Germans. The Germanic-looking youngster would likely attract the attention of the SS. Below: Nazi police escort Polish Jews during their deportation from Włocławek, southward toward Lodz.



Portrait of SS-Brigadeführer Otto Ohlendorf--a well educated, cultured German who resorted to mass murder of the Jews without hesitation. Below: Close-up of an SS-Einsatz report listing the precise tally of Jewish men, women and children (Judenkinder) killed at each locale.

47 Jaden, 165 Jüdinnen,
143 Jadenkinder
76 Jaden, 192 Jüdinnen,
134 Jadenkinder
710 Jaden, 767 Jüdinnen,
599 Jadenkinder

20 Jaden, 567 Jüdinnen,
197 Jadenkinder

582 Jaden, 1731 Jüdinnen,
1469 Jadenkinder



Russian civilians mourn the loss of a man who has just been hanged by Nazis, accused as a partisan.

America Enters the War

At the very moment his troops were being decimated on the outskirts of Moscow in early December 1941, Adolf Hitler's attention was riveted elsewhere. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes had attacked the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day, responding to the devastating air raid which killed over 2,400 American sailors and wounded another thousand, the United States declared war on Japan.

This had enormous implications for Hitler. By this time, Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, along with Fascist Italy, had entered into a strategic agreement known as the Tripartite Pact, pledging to provide mutual military assistance in the event any one of them was attacked by a nation not already involved in the war. The year-old Pact had been crafted mainly to intimidate America and to discourage it from helping Britain.

As an added measure, outside of the formal agreement, Hitler had given a verbal promise to the Japanese Foreign Minister that Germany would join the fight if Japan attacked America. It was a promise that would change history.

Deep down, the war-making potential of the United States worried Hitler, although he never missed an opportunity to mock America and President Roosevelt, publicly and in private, if only to reassure himself. From a racial viewpoint, he gleefully expressed a low opinion of America, describing multiracial United States as a "mongreloid" nation, unlike pure-bred Germany. For that reason alone, Hitler asserted, the fighting ability of the U.S. Army would pale in comparison to superior Germany. He also reasoned it would take years for the U.S. to adequately rearm. By that time, he believed, Nazi Germany would be victorious in Europe, while Japan would triumph in East Asia and the South Pacific by waging its own brand of Blitzkrieg.

Interestingly, the Japanese had not bothered to inform Hitler prior to their attack on Pearl Harbor – just as Hitler had not informed the Japanese prior to his attack on Russia – an indication of the coy and somewhat shady relationship between the two military allies.

Pearl Harbor therefore took the Nazis by surprise. When it occurred, Hitler was at his military headquarters for the Russian Front, a bunker complex called Wolf's Lair, in Rastenburg, East Prussia. On hearing the news, he rushed back to Berlin to mull things over.

Technically, according to the Tripartite Pact, the Germans were not obliged to declare war on the U.S., because Japan, not America, had been the aggressor. But Hitler was inclined to honor his personal promise and declare war anyway, believing it would greatly strengthen the German-Japanese alliance. He also assumed the United States was on the verge of declaring war on Germany and wanted to embarrass President Roosevelt by beating him to the punch.

Additionally, a war declaration would allow his submarines to unleash their full fury against the American warships now protecting British convoys in the North Atlantic. Hitler knew this would be welcome news for his eager U-boat commanders, restrained till now from unprovoked attacks on U.S. warships. By this time, America had become Britain's lifeline, supplying the British with

enormous amounts of food, fuel, war materials and manufactured goods, in accordance with President Roosevelt's Lend-Lease Act.

With the United States reeling from the Pearl Harbor attack, Hitler calculated, the bulk of America's naval power would surely be diverted to the South Pacific, away from Europe, thereby leaving the Atlantic shipping lanes vulnerable. And this played to Germany's advantage.

All things considered, therefore, a declaration of war against the U.S. appeared to be best move. Hitler mulled it over a little longer, then made the final decision on Tuesday, December 9th. He spent the next two days fine-tuning the war announcement speech he would make, especially the parts intended to soothe the already jangled nerves of the German people.

On Thursday, December 11, 1941, Hitler strode to the podium inside the packed Reichstag in Berlin for his speech which was also broadcast live around the world on radio. To the delight of the Nazi deputies, he ridiculed President Franklin Roosevelt and America: "I will pass over the insulting attacks made by this so-called President against me. That he calls me a gangster is uninteresting. After all, this expression was not coined in Europe, but in America, no doubt because such gangsters are lacking here."

Next, he mocked Roosevelt's leadership abilities: "National Socialism came to power in Germany in the same year as Roosevelt was elected President...While an unprecedented revival of economic life, culture and art took place in Germany under National Socialist leadership, President Roosevelt did not succeed in bringing about even the slightest improvement in his own country."

Following this, in keeping with his oft-stated theme of an international Jewish conspiracy, Hitler claimed they were unduly influencing Roosevelt: "A threatening [political] opposition was gathering over the head of this man. He guessed that the only salvation for him lay in diverting public attention from home to foreign policy...He was strengthened in this by the Jews around him...The full diabolical meanness of Jewry rallied around this man and he stretched out his hands. Thus began the increasing efforts of the American President to create conflicts...For years this man harbored one desire – that a conflict should break out somewhere in the world."

Finally, he blamed Roosevelt for the Japanese attack: "The fact that the Japanese Government, which has been negotiating for years with this man, has at last become tired of being mocked by him in such an unworthy way fills us all, the German people and, I think, all other decent people in the world, with deep satisfaction."

In concluding, Hitler started to announce that Germany was henceforth breaking off diplomatic relations with America, but was drowned out mid-sentence by wildly cheering Nazi deputies in the hall.

Shortly after the speech, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop handed the formal war declaration to the ranking American diplomat in Germany, Leland Morris – in the absence of the U.S. ambassador who had been withdrawn by Roosevelt in 1938 following Kristallnacht.

The declaration accused the United States of "overt acts of war against Germany" and therefore "declares that under these circumstances brought about by President Roosevelt, Germany too considers herself to be at war with the United States, as from today."

The American reaction was swift. That day, the United States Congress declared war on Germany at the behest of President Roosevelt who said: "Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty and civilization."

Roosevelt, as U.S. Commander-in-Chief, therefore directed nearly 90 percent of America's military resources toward the defeat of Hitler, not Japan. As a result, the might of the world's largest industrial nation was turned against Nazi Germany.

For Hitler, declaring war on America would prove to be his biggest political mistake of the war – a truly lethal blunder. With the stroke of a pen he had greatly reduced the odds of Nazi Germany's survival. The Führer now had to contend with three principal opponents – America, Britain and Russia – whose combined reservoir of manpower and total war production capacity dwarfed Nazi Germany – at a time when Germany had already lost a quarter of all troops and many thousands of tanks and planes on the Russian Front.

Even worse, Hitler had foolishly joined Japan's war against America with absolutely no guarantee from the Japanese they would join his war against Russia. And they didn't. This allowed the Russians to transfer 30 well-trained Siberian divisions away from Japanese-threatened areas in southeastern Russia to the opposite side of the country, where they blasted away at the beleaguered Germans outside Moscow.

For Adolf Hitler, however, the consequences of December 11th were not readily apparent. By now, the Führer was seeing only what he wanted to see – recognizing only the facts he desired to support his own version of reality – his own truth.

Unlike his counterparts, Roosevelt, Churchill and even Stalin, who relied on trusted advisors or special committees for advice on foreign affairs, Hitler trusted no one. He made history-changing decisions on his own, relying on gut instinct, hunches, a hodgepodge of knowledge gathered through self-education, or outright guesses, all the while convinced of his own genius. In truth, when it came to formulating global strategy simultaneously involving the British Empire, Soviet Union, Imperial Japan and the United States – the Führer was an amateur who didn't have a clue.

Worse for Hitler, long gone were the days when he enjoyed even a pretense of legitimacy on the world stage. Now the civilized world only saw a villain, no better than the violent Nazi street thugs who had helped put him in power. His own allies, including Italy and Spain, saw a man who was wearing himself out running the armed forces, foreign affairs, and functioning as head of state, stubbornly on his own.

For the moment, however, Hitler could still reassure himself and any naysayers by gloating over a map showing a Nazi Empire stretching from the outskirts of Moscow all the way to Paris and from Scandinavia southward to Greece. And he remained confident victory would still come, regardless of the present circumstances.

His generals began to think otherwise. When they looked at the map they saw German forces badly over-extended throughout Russia, Europe, and now in North Africa, their latest venture. It was there, that Hitler's next setback occurred.



Hitler receives unanimous support from his Nazi Reichstag deputies during his December 11th speech declaring war on America. Below: President Franklin Roosevelt signs the U.S. Declaration of War against Germany on December 11th.



Defeat in the Desert

Since the beginning of the war, the British had repeatedly landed ground troops in Europe only to hastily withdraw each time, while on the verge of a humiliating rout by Hitler's armies. For Britain's fiery leader, Winston Churchill, this all had to end. The British people and their Army needed a victory on land, somewhere, somehow, and they needed it now.

The opportunity to grab such a victory came in North Africa where troops of Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, were trying to create an African empire for their ambitious leader who was determined, above all, not to be overshadowed by Hitler. Thus far, Mussolini had taken over two countries, Abyssinia and Libya, where his troops had easily rolled over the mostly defenseless inhabitants.

Mussolini set his sights next on Egypt. With a half-million Italian troops at the ready, the only thing standing in his way was a small British force of 36,000 men, comprising the Western Desert Force, based in northern Egypt.

The Italian quest for empire resumed on Friday, September 13, 1940. Outlying British troops in Egypt quickly fell back in the face of overwhelming numbers. But rather than press their advantage, the Italians unwisely paused about 60 miles inside Egypt and set up a series of fortified base camps widely separated from each other. Sharp-eyed British commanders caught this tactical mistake and struck back, targeting the isolated base camps one-by-one, surprising the Italians at each turn and routing them. The British troops, greatly strengthened via the use of captured Italian tanks and artillery, turned their counter-attack into a sweeping offensive lasting for weeks. Two hundred thousand Italians surrendered as the British pushed westward into North Africa, seizing an area bigger than France. It was a stunning victory, just what Churchill had wanted.

But it wouldn't last.

The amazing British success aroused Hitler's attention and he decided to come to the aid of his floundering Italian ally, mindful that a British presence in North Africa brought the distinct threat of Allied entry into southern Europe. And so in February 1941, Hitler sent Blitzkrieg genius, General Erwin Rommel, to direct the newly formed *Afrika Korps*, featuring two armored divisions and a motorized infantry division.

Rommel took to his new post with vigor, relishing the wide open expanses to wage desert Blitzkrieg against the British. Beginning on March 31, his Afrika Korps attacked and within twelve days had pushed the British 500 miles eastward, all the way back into Egypt, while taking thousands of prisoners.

But the British did manage to hang onto one key position outside of Egypt, the port of Tobruk on the Mediterranean Sea, a hundred miles from their lines. At this point, Rommel badly needed that seaport to continue his advance into Egypt, as his own supply lines now stretched 600 miles, all the way back to Tripoli. He called in the Luftwaffe to pound the troops inside Tobruk via heavy bombing raids. However, the British and Australian troops inside the city bravely withstood the bombardment. In the meantime, the Royal Navy sailed in relief troops, including Indian, South African, and Polish replacements. As a result, Tobruk held out. And for the moment, Rommel had to cool his heels and settle for a stalemate.

Churchill, for his part, was unwilling to settle for stalemate. By now, his Western Desert Force had been transformed into the new British Eighth Army, and Churchill pressured its commanders to produce a victory one way or another. As a result, Eighth Army launched a big offensive against Rommel all along the Egyptian Front beginning on November 18, 1941. Although the British lost 300 tanks at the onset, Rommel's tanks ran low on fuel, forcing him to disengage and withdraw westward. By Christmas, Eighth Army had pushed Rommel back the 500 miles he had originally come.

But Rommel was not about to take this lying down. After pausing to regroup and resupply, his Afrika Korps counter-attacked, beginning in January of 1942, pushing Eighth Army back to the outskirts of Tobruk. After this a second stalemate developed and both sides dug in and prepared themselves for the next round in this back-and-forth desert fight.

It came on May 26, 1942, as the Afrika Korps, aided by fresh Italian troops, staged a classic Blitzkrieg attack, surging through the British defenses, finally taking the city of Tobruk, and causing yet another hasty British retreat. The battered British wound up at the village of El Alamein in northern Egypt, only 65 miles from the ancient city of Alexandria. Once again, so it seemed, the British stood on the verge of a humiliating rout – a defeat that could bring Hitler control of the entire Middle East.

But there was a hitch.

To finish off the British and seal the victory, Rommel needed significant troop reinforcements and supplies. When his Afrika Korps arrived on the outskirts of El Alamein poised to strike the British, Rommel had just 125 operational tanks.

Incredibly, Hitler denied Rommel's request, opting to keep all available resources for the coming spring offensive in Russia. Hitler was now obsessed with achieving victory over Stalin and therefore brushed aside the strategic importance of Egypt. As a result, Rommel's weakened Afrika Korps was forced

to hold its position on the outskirts of El Alamein, thereby giving the British a breather.

Just as they had done at Dunkirk, the British were quick to capitalize on Hitler's tactical blunder. But this time, instead of leaving, they did the opposite, rushing in soldiers, tanks, artillery and ammunition to support the troops at El Alamein.

In his personal war journal, Rommel himself noted: "When one comes to consider that supplies and materiel are the decisive factor in modern warfare, it was already becoming clear that a catastrophe was looming on the distant horizon for my army. The British were doing all they possibly could to gain control of the situation. With wondrous speed, they organized the shipment of fresh troops into the Alamein position...Our one and only chance to overrun the remains of the British Eighth Army and occupy the east Egyptian desert at a stroke was irretrievably lost."

Despite the unfavorable odds, however, the ever-aggressive Rommel was not prepared to passively wait for the attack. At the end of August, he tried to seize the momentum and attacked El Alamein utilizing his limited resources. But now he was confronted by a well-equipped Eighth Army outnumbering him two-to-one, and led by a brash new commander, General Bernard Law Montgomery. The attack stalled.

About this time, Rommel needed to leave North Africa. After a year and a half of blazing desert warfare, he was completely worn out physically, and so he went back home to Germany to restore his health.

Meanwhile, Montgomery launched an all-out offensive that would become known as the Battle of El Alamein. It began on Friday, October 23, 1942, with a massive nighttime artillery barrage from a thousand guns that demolished the German outer defenses. This was followed by an advance of British infantrymen across a narrow stretch of German minefields. In Rommel's absence, German field commanders reacted cautiously by sending in infantry, instead of tanks, to block the British and the two sides engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting with heavy casualties.

Rommel rushed back from Germany and immediately threw his 200 remaining Panzers into a ferocious counter-attack. Montgomery reacted by sending in the bulk of his armor, including nearly 800 brand new Sherman tanks, recently delivered from America. In the biggest tank battle of the desert war thus far, Montgomery got the upper hand and broke through the center of the German lines on November 2nd.

Rommel knew the time had come for a strategic withdrawal, but Hitler ordered him to stand his ground regardless. Thus the chance to fall back and properly regroup was missed, resulting in unnecessary losses for the Afrika Korps. Montgomery's tanks smashed through Rommel's weakened defenses, then pushed the decimated Afrika Korps, and its 20 remaining tanks, into a headlong westward retreat, which eventually stretched back over 700 miles.

In Great Britain, church bells were rung to celebrate the breathtaking victory.

For Rommel, things only got worse. On Sunday, November 8, 1942, a large naval armada brought the first contingent of American combat troops into the war amid Operation Torch, led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. They landed to the rear of Rommel on the beaches of Morocco and Algeria which were then French-controlled colonies in Northwest Africa. French troops defending the area, marginally loyal to their collaborationist government back in Paris, briefly resisted then caved in and began cooperating with the Americans.

The unexpected American landings astounded Hitler and his military staff. They had thought for sure that America would be entirely preoccupied with the Japanese war in the South Pacific.

To prevent the Allies from sweeping to victory in North Africa, Hitler rushed in reinforcements, mainly to halt the American advance at Tunisia. There the very first shots were exchanged between German and American troops in World War II. To the delight of Hitler and his command staff, the Germans got the upper hand in that first engagement at Kasserine Pass, confirming their low opinion of American troops. But the inexperienced Americans, subsequently led by General George S. Patton, recovered from their initial stumble and pressed forward alongside the battle-hardened Eighth Army.

For Rommel's troops, it was all too little, too late. British and American warships and fighter squadrons now dominated the Mediterranean by sheer weight of numbers and promptly isolated the Afrika Korps by completely severing its supply lines. Desperately low on ammunition, fuel and food, the entire Afrika Korps and all of the newly arrived reinforcements, totaling 248,000 men, surrendered to the British and Americans.

Rommel himself had left the area on sick leave once more and therefore was not captured. But he never forgave Hitler for the loss of his beloved Afrika Korps – and would later join an anti-Hitler conspiracy.

For the Allies, victory in North Africa was an important milestone, marking the first time Hitler's troops had ever been ousted from a region they had controlled. A southern front in Europe against Hitler was only a matter of time.

In Great Britain, Winston Churchill declared: “This is not the end, no it is not even the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning.”

To his command staff, Hitler acknowledged the loss of North Africa as a setback, but said their primary objective still remained the defeat of Soviet Russia, which would surely bring total victory in the war. To achieve this, Hitler had plunged his armies into a gigantic offensive to capture the city that bore the name of Russia’s leader, a place that would forevermore symbolize the beginning of Nazi Germany’s downfall – Stalingrad.



Erwin Rommel (center) and aides during a tense meeting at the Italian Army corps in November 1941. Below: Rommel (standing nearside in car) enters Tobruk in June 1942.





British Eighth Army Commander, General Bernard Montgomery, watches his tanks move up. Below: British artillery lights up the night while blasting the Germans in preparation for Montgomery's offensive at El Alamein.



Below: Men of the Eighth Army dash forward to confront the Germans while a shell explodes just ahead.



Catastrophe at Stalingrad

The German Army never fully recovered from the beating it took in Russia around Moscow and elsewhere during the winter of 1941-42 when it suffered over a million casualties. For a time, the entire Eastern Front had teetered on the verge of collapse as division upon division of well-equipped Russians materialized seemingly out of nowhere and attacked.

Reacting to the debacle, Hitler assumed personal day-to-day operational command of the Army, brushing aside some of the world's finest military experts, the same generals who had invented Blitzkrieg and engineered the lightning-fast victories over Poland and France. In their place, Hitler poured over the maps himself and made vital strategic decisions alone.

One of the men nearest to him throughout much of the war, General Alfred Jodl, Chief of Operations at OKW, reflected on the Führer's style: "If there is anything that clearly demonstrates the revolutionary character of Hitler's method of [military] leadership, it is that he did not concede to his military working staff, the OKW, and within it, the Operations Staff, the role of strategic adviser. All attempts I undertook in this direction failed. Hitler was willing to have a working staff that translated his decisions into orders which he would then issue as Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, but nothing more...He did not care to hear any other points of view; if they were even hinted at he would break into short-tempered fits of enraged agitation. Remarkable – and, for soldiers, incomprehensible – conflicts developed out of Hitler's almost mystical conviction of his own infallibility as leader of the nation and of the war."

Day-by-day Hitler took on more responsibility, directing the movements of individual divisions a thousand miles from his headquarters, based on information that was probably old by the time it reached him – especially bad

news which was usually slow to reach the Führer. Additionally, Hitler had odd work habits, staying up till 4 a.m. or so every day, then sleeping till noon, when he would hold his first military conference of the day, needing to catch up on the morning's events. Other times, he was distracted by unrelated political and Nazi Party events. For example, at the very moment American troops were landing in North Africa, Hitler was away from his headquarters, attending the annual commemoration of the Beer Hall Putsch which had occurred back in 1923.

And there were, for Hitler the commander, some deeper flaws as German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein observed: "He was a man who saw fighting only in terms of the utmost brutality. His way of thinking conformed more to a mental picture of masses of the enemy bleeding to death before our lines than to the conception of a subtle fencer who knows how to make an occasional step backwards in order to lunge for the decisive thrust. For the art of war he substituted a brutal force which, as he saw it, was guaranteed maximum effectiveness by the will-power behind it... Despite the pains Hitler took to stress his own former status as a frontline soldier, I still never had the feeling that his heart belonged to the fighting troops. Losses, as far as he was concerned, were merely figures which reduced fighting power. They are unlikely to have seriously disturbed him as a human being."

Now, in the late spring of 1942, as the muddy roads and fields finally dried out in Russia, Hitler steered the German Army into the region of southern Russia known as the Caucasus. Moscow would be left as-is for the time being. His new strategy was to grab the expansive oil fields in the Caucasus which fueled Russia's war machine, and seize Stalingrad, the region's major rail junction and industrial center, located along the Volga River. Conquering the city named after Soviet leader Josef Stalin, in addition to the oil fields, would be a fatal blow to Russia, Hitler believed.

But from the onset, the problem was a shortage of manpower. There simply were not enough available men of military age in Germany to make up for the losses already experienced in Russia. Therefore Hitler pressed his allies and coerced Nazi satellite states into sending him fresh troops. As a result, the Wehrmacht was boosted by the addition of 52 non-German divisions recruited from allies Italy and Spain and from satellites Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Their arrival in Russia made up for the shortage, but also made the German generals uneasy, realizing they were now dangerously reliant on troops with questionable training and skills, whose steadfastness and loyalty under fire remained to be seen.

Despite their concerns, Hitler's offensive, which he named Operation Blue, got off to a good start. Army Group B made steady eastward progress toward Stalingrad while Army Group A headed for the oil fields in the Caucasus. But it

was almost too easy. On closer look, German field commanders realized that Russian battle tactics had changed. Instead of stubbornly standing their ground and inviting encirclement, the Red Army had adopted a new strategy, the fighting retreat, to minimize losses and draw the Germans ever deeper into Russia, thereby stretching already-overtaxed supply lines to the breaking point. And it worked. The big Panzer tanks, which burned a gallon of fuel per mile, now had to stop and turn off their motors, just to wait for the fuel trucks to catch up, while the infantry sat around waiting for food and ammunition.

By mid-summer, as the two army groups and their 700 tanks inched toward the oil fields and Stalingrad, the worsening supply situation, combined with the Wehrmacht's already limited manpower in the region necessitated a critical decision – which of the two main objectives should be achieved first?

Without hesitation, Hitler decided to go for the oil fields. And so he directed Fourth Panzer Army southward away from Stalingrad to aid First Panzer Army which was already approaching the oil fields. But several days later, upon further reflection, now realizing the Russians had left Stalingrad virtually undefended, the Führer changed his mind and decided to turn Fourth Panzer Army completely around and send it northward, back toward Stalingrad.

But it took some time for Fourth Panzer Army to wheel itself around, thereby giving the Russians sufficient time to set up strong defensive positions south of Stalingrad to obstruct its northward advance. Regardless, Hitler ordered the attack on Stalingrad to proceed, and at the same time, ordered the oil fields to be taken. He had changed his mind again. Both objectives were now to be taken simultaneously.

German field commanders in Russia and members of the Army High Command were utterly dismayed. It seemed like the Moscow nightmare was about to be repeated. It was a reoccurrence of the long-standing, fundamental disagreement they had with Hitler – pick one target and attack it with overwhelming force – whereas Hitler preferred a piecemeal approach toward multiple targets to satisfy his broader ambitions.

Senior strategists urged the Führer to take Stalingrad first using all available resources, then go for the oil fields.

A year earlier, Hitler had ignored their advice regarding Moscow. Now he spurned their advice about Stalingrad, maintaining just as he had a year ago, that the Russian Army would be defeated if only they followed his plan.

Two of his most senior officers, General Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff, and Field Marshal List, Commander of Army Group A in the Caucasus,

openly criticized that plan. Hitler responded by sacking both men and took over List's post himself, assuming direct command of all the armies in the Caucasus.

For the main assault on Stalingrad, Hitler chose the pride of the Wehrmacht, its Sixth Army, commanded by General Friedrich Paulus. By mid-September, after rolling through the Russian outer defenses, Sixth Army entered the confines of the city. But this brought big problems. German armored commanders and their troops were used to fighting in Russia's wide open spaces which allowed for effective maneuvering of tanks and motorized infantry. Battle conditions in Stalingrad were exactly the opposite – a maze of city streets and multi-story buildings.

Even worse, Stalingrad was now a pile of rubble. Prior to invading the city, the Germans had tried to weaken Russian resistance via massive aerial and artillery bombardments. But this only created a jumble of blocked streets and broken cement, serving as very good cover for the thousands of Russian infantrymen now waiting to confront the Germans.

Under such conditions the Battle of Stalingrad quickly degenerated into a hand-to-hand street fight in which the Germans paid with blood for every piece of ground they gained. A German lieutenant on the scene wrote: “The street is no longer measured by meters but by corpses...Stalingrad is no longer a town. By day it is an enormous cloud of burning, blinding smoke; it is a vast furnace lit by the reflection of the flames. And when night arrives, one of those scorching, howling, bleeding nights, the dogs plunge into the Volga and swim desperately to gain the other bank. The nights of Stalingrad are a terror for them. Animals flee this hell; the hardest stones cannot bear it for long; only men endure.”

With German casualties piling up at a rate of 20,000 men a day, Hitler pulled divisions from his outer defenses in the region and sent them in one-by-one. Meanwhile, Soviet leader Josef Stalin plunged a million soldiers into the city, telling them: “You can no longer retreat...There is only one road, the road that leads forward. Stalingrad will be saved by you, or wiped out with you.”

Hitler had truly met his match in Stalin – a man like himself who saw fighting only in terms of the utmost brutality.

As November began amid the cold and snow of an early Russian winter, German troops at Stalingrad pressed harder than ever to finish the job. Along the outskirts of the city, they pushed forward to the banks of the Volga River, cutting off all Russian supply routes into Stalingrad. Inside the city, German infantrymen mounted a supreme effort to crush the last pockets of Russian infantry in their midst. To the German people, Hitler confidently announced the city, now ninety percent occupied, would fall at any moment.

And then the Russians struck back.

It began at dawn on Thursday, November 19, 1942, amid a raging blizzard as thirteen Russian armies led by Marshal Georgi Zhukov blasted thinly held German rear positions miles away from the city, attacking simultaneously from the north and south.

By sending so many rear units one-by-one into Stalingrad, Hitler had seriously eroded his outer sectors, leaving them to be held by mostly non-German troops. Marshal Zhukov had observed this and planned the entire counter-offensive to exploit this weakness. Now the worst fears of the German generals were realized as their shaky Romanian, Hungarian and Italian allies swiftly caved in under the weight of the Russian attack. In just three days, Russian troops from the north and south blasted their way through the crumbling lines and linked up, thereby encircling and trapping the entire Sixth Army inside Stalingrad.

Hitler's new Chief of the Army General Staff, General Kurt Zeitzler, pleaded with the Führer to allow Sixth Army to attempt a breakout. But Hitler just hollered at him, "I won't go back from the Volga!"

Instead, Hitler's plan was to supply his besieged army, some 20 German divisions, by air drops while relief troops led by Field Marshal Manstein fought their toward Stalingrad from the south.

But the plan was doomed from the start. Despite boasts by Göring that his Luftwaffe could pull it off, the supply planes were mostly grounded by bad weather. And when they did fly, Russian anti-aircraft guns and fighter planes blasted them out of the sky. As a result, only ten-percent of the needed supplies ever reached the troops. Meanwhile, Manstein's troops only got to within thirty miles of the city and had to pull back or risk being surrounded themselves.

As the weather worsened, thousands of wounded, starving German infantrymen in Stalingrad froze to death amid subzero temperatures. General Zeitzler now pleaded with Hitler to let the remnants of Sixth Army attempt a breakout to the south to possibly link up with Manstein. He told Hitler of the appalling conditions.

But Hitler was unfazed. Stalingrad was to be held at all costs.

By now, the Russians had assembled seven armies to crush the Germans in Stalingrad. But before launching their attack, they offered a last minute chance to avoid the onslaught. On Friday, January 8, 1943, three Russians carrying a white flag presented surrender terms. However, they were reluctantly turned down by General Paulus, acting on Hitler's direct order. As a result, two days

later, the Russians blasted the remaining Germans with five thousand artillery guns followed a week later by a massive infantry assault.

Once more the battle degenerated into a hand-to-hand street fight. This time the Russians paid with blood for every piece of ground they regained. But time was running out for Sixth Army. Food and ammunition supplies were critically low and the exhausted troops had been reduced to two narrow pockets in Stalingrad. On January 24th, the Russians offered another chance for surrender. This time Paulus sent a personal plea to Hitler: "Army requests immediate permission to surrender in order to save lives of remaining troops."

Hitler responded: "Surrender is forbidden. Sixth Army will hold their position to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance will make an unforgettable contribution toward the establishment of a defensive front and the salvation of the Western World."

Hitler followed this by bestowing over a hundred field promotions, hoping it would inspire Paulus and his command staff to go down in a blaze of glory. Paulus himself was elevated to Field Marshal by Hitler, knowing that no German Field Marshal had ever been captured alive.

But Paulus had other ideas. As Russian infantrymen approached Sixth Army's command bunker, the cellar of a wrecked department store, Field Marshal Paulus and his surviving staff officers simply came out and quietly surrendered, ignoring Hitler's order that they fight to the last man, as well as his implied desire that they commit suicide rather than capitulate. Thus the Battle of Stalingrad ended on a sullen, anticlimactic note, Sunday, January 31, 1943, ten years and one day after Hitler had come to power in Germany.

Out of an original force of 285,000 soldiers comprising Sixth Army, 165,000 had died in Stalingrad, while some 29,000 wounded had been air lifted out. The 91,000 survivors, including 24 generals and 2,500 officers, hobbled off in the snow to begin years of captivity in Russian POW camps in bitter cold Siberia. Only five thousand would survive the ordeal and return home, as the Russians, aware of how their men were faring in German hands, dished out the same treatment.

Russian casualties at Stalingrad are estimated at a million dead, including nearly all of the men Stalin had committed to fend off the initial attack.

After his surrender, an embittered Paulus turned against Hitler and Nazism. He collaborated with the Russians, forming a National Committee for Free Germany and made radio broadcasts from Moscow urging German troops to give up fighting for Hitler.

The refusal of Paulus to die honorably in battle, or by his own hand had enraged Hitler, who exclaimed: “How can one be so cowardly? I don’t understand it...What is life? Life is the Nation. The individual must die anyway. Beyond the life of the individual is the life of the Nation...So many people have had to die, and then a man like that besmirches the heroism of so many others at the last minute. He could have freed himself from all sorrow and ascended into eternity and national immortality, but he prefers to go to Moscow!”

On Wednesday, February 3, 1943, a special radio announcement informed the German people they had lost the Battle of Stalingrad. The news had a devastating impact on morale, casting an undeniable shadow of doubt on the Führer personally, and the future of Nazi Germany itself. A secret opinion survey taken shortly afterward by the Nazi intelligence service reported: “People ask, above all, why Stalingrad was not evacuated or relieved, and how it is possible, only a few months ago, to describe the military situation as secure? Fearing that an unfavorable end to the war is now possible, many compatriots are seriously thinking about the consequences of defeat.”

For Adolf Hitler and his most fanatical supporters, the military situation, although dire, was only part of the story. They were now fully engaged in another entirely different campaign – one they now considered equal in importance to the war, and here they were succeeding – the Final Solution of the Jewish problem.



June 1942. At the map table, the Führer speaks--his generals listen. To his left is Friedrich Paulus, a staff officer recently given command of Sixth Army. Below: A German armored column traverses Russia's wide open spaces, pushing toward Stalingrad.



Below: Sixth Army Commander General Friedrich Paulus (right) watches his troops approach the city.



Below: Russian civilians inside Stalingrad dash through the streets amid an intensive aerial and artillery bombardment by the Germans





September 1942. German troops in Stalingrad warily move forward. Below: Russian soldiers scurry through the smoldering wreckage to confront the invaders.



Below: Russian troops, well-equipped for winter warfare, counter-attack the Germans in force in January 1943.



Below: One of Hitler's elite soldiers, now barely recognizable, is escorted into captivity by a member of the Red Army.



The Final Solution

From 1933 onward, anti-Jewish propaganda had flooded Germany. Under the skillful direction of Joseph Goebbels, his Nazi Propaganda Ministry churned out a ceaseless stream of leaflets, posters, newspaper articles, cartoons, newsreels, slides, movies, speeches, records, exhibits and radio pronouncements. As a result, the accusations, denunciations and opinions which Hitler first expressed in his book, *Mein Kampf*, had become institutionalized, accepted as time-tested beliefs by all Nazis, taught as fact to impressionable youths, and drilled into the minds of eager-to-please SS recruits.

Of particular note, was Hitler's oft-repeated claim that Jews everywhere were engaged in an international conspiracy to achieve world domination. In a speech given on January 30, 1939, commemorating the sixth anniversary of his rule in Germany, Hitler added a stark new warning: "If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!"

Eight months later, when Hitler provoked a new world war as the means of achieving *Lebensraum* (living space) for his people, Nazi propaganda blamed the Jews for the war in addition to everything else they had been cited for over the years.

Hitler also believed the very presence of Jews in Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe posed a threat to German victory in the war. This was based on his experience during the First World War, when Germany had experienced a meltdown of civilian morale. In 1916, as a young soldier on sick leave in Munich, Hitler had been appalled at the apathy and anti-war sentiment he

witnessed among German civilians. At the time, he concluded disloyal Jews had banded together and conspired to undermine the German war effort. And he was convinced they would do it again now if given the chance.

From the very onset of war, Hitler and his inner circle, including Göring, Himmler, and Goebbels, contemplated what to do about removing the Jewish menace, or "the Jewish Question." The attack on Russia in June 1941 raised the level of intensity concerning this unresolved issue. On the Eastern Front, the future of the thousand-year Reich was clearly at stake. Hitler therefore adopted a more radicalized approach in his rule as Führer to put all of German society on a war footing and to squash all obstacles in the path of victory. At this time, Hitler also radicalized his outlook toward the Jews in favor of a "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," in which the war against Nazi Germany's external military enemies would be expanded to include the internal arch enemy scattered throughout Europe and Russia – the Jewish population.

And so, at the behest of their Führer, a handful of Nazi bureaucrats conspired to bring about the demise of millions. On January 20, 1942, they attended the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, organized by SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, who told them, "In the course of the practical execution of the Final Solution, Europe will be combed through from west to east."

Heydrich revealed statistics indicating a total Jewish population of 11 million which included Europe and Russia. The initial goal, Heydrich explained, was to round-up and deport Europe's Jews to the already-established SS-run ghettos in Poland, where many would perish through harsh conditions including brute physical labor.

Inside the sealed-off ghettos, the Nazis reduced food rations to starvation level, an experience described by Sara Grossman, confined at age 21 in the Lodz ghetto: "I don't think anything hurts as much as hunger. You become wild. You are not responsible for what you say and what you do. You become an animal in the full meaning of the word. You prey on others. You will steal. That is what hunger does to us. It dehumanizes you. You're not a human being any more. Slowly, slowly the Germans were achieving their goal. I think they let us suffer from hunger, not because there was not enough food, but because this was their method of demoralizing us, of degrading us, of torturing us. These were their methods, and they implemented these methods scrupulously. Therefore we had very many, many deaths daily. Very many sick people for whom there was no medication, no help, no remedy. We just stayed there, and lay there, and the end was coming."

The ghettos, and the slow death they brought, were only part of the overall plan. In the months following the Wannsee Conference, three specialized killing

centers, Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor, were constructed in southeast Poland, featuring large gas chambers with adjacent crematories or burial pits for the disposal of corpses. After they became operational, the ghettos were bypassed and Jews went directly by train to the new death camps.

Nearby, at Auschwitz in adjacent Upper Silesia, a much larger killing complex was constructed. Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Höss later testified that SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler instructed: "The Führer has ordered the Final Solution of the Jewish question. We, the SS, have to carry out this order. I have therefore chosen Auschwitz for this purpose."

Höss oversaw the rapid construction of a gigantic new annex called Birkenau containing four large gas chamber-crematory buildings and scores of huts for slave laborers. From the moment it became operational in the spring of 1943, Auschwitz-Birkenau served as the focal point of the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jews. Hour after hour, trainloads of Jews arrived from all over Europe. The people were subjected to a life-and-death selection process by SS medical personnel such as Dr. Josef Mengele. Adults who seemed fit for labor were allowed to live and were marched away. All others, including children, the elderly and anyone deemed unfit went straight to the gas chambers.

The SS used *Sonderkommandos* (Jewish slave laborers) during the gassing process to usher people in the undressing room and to clean up the gas chamber afterwards. One such survivor recalled the scene at Auschwitz: "There were all sorts of reactions from all sorts of people. There were disabled people. They would take out their war service cards showing that they had fought in the First World War with all kinds of distinctions and medals which they had from that time. They shouted, what's this? We fought for Germany. Now they're going to burn us, to kill us. This is impossible. We protest against such a thing. But everyone just laughed at them. Because they didn't take it seriously, these SS men. They laughed at the whole thing."

To remain efficient, the SS death factories required a steady supply of humans. To coordinate the flow of people to the gas chambers, Höss and fellow commandants relied on SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, who became a central figure in the day-to-day management of the Final Solution. Present at the Wannsee Conference, Eichmann assumed the leading role in facilitating the deportation of Jews from every corner of Europe. With boundless enthusiasm for his task and fanatical efficiency, Eichmann traveled the continent, insuring that trainload after trainload departed. "The trains," Eichmann said later, "ran like a dream."

The SS organization also found it could profit financially from the human traffic. Upon arrival in the camps, all belongings were taken from the Jews.

Foreign currency, gold, jewels and other valuables were sent to SS Headquarters of the Economic Administration. Wedding rings, eye glasses, shoes, gold fillings, clothing and even hair shorn from women also served to enrich the SS, with the proceeds funneled into secret Reichsbank accounts. Watches, clocks and pens were distributed to soldiers at the Front while clothing was given to German families.

To SS officials and the Nazi bureaucrats involved, it appeared the Final Solution was proceeding smoothly. In August 1944, Eichmann reported satisfactorily to Himmler that approximately 4 million Jews had been gassed while another 2 million had been shot in the East by mobile execution units.

By this time, news of the mass murders had leaked out of occupied Europe via first-hand accounts from eyewitnesses, escapees and other informed persons. Newspapers such as *The London Daily Telegraph* and *The New York Times* also published occasional reports of executions along with death toll estimates. World reaction to the reports changed little from what it had been to prewar reports of Nazi persecution – a few political speeches from Britain and America.

Inside the camps, the inmates fretted, as one Auschwitz survivor recalled: "We always used to say where is the whole world? Where is the United States? Where is Russia? And where are all those countries that could do something to help? Do they know what's happening here in the extermination camps at all?"

About this time, two Jewish inmates escaped from Auschwitz-Birkenau and made it safely to Czechoslovakia. One of them, Rudolf Vrba, submitted a detailed report concerning the gas chambers to the Papal Nuncio in Slovakia which was forwarded to the Vatican, received there in mid-June 1944. However, nothing came of it.

Throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, relatively few non-Jewish persons were willing to risk their own lives to help the Jews. Notable exceptions included Oskar Schindler, a German who saved 1,200 Jews by moving them from Plaszow labor camp to his hometown of Brunnlitz. The Nazi-occupied nation of Denmark rescued nearly its entire population of Jews, over 7,000, by transporting them to safety by sea. Italy and Bulgaria both refused to cooperate with Nazi demands for deportations. Elsewhere in Europe, people generally stood by passively and watched as their neighbors were marched through the streets toward waiting trains, or in some cases, actively participated in Nazi roundups.

Alone and against seemingly impossible odds, Jewish men and women struck back on occasion. In April 1943, Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto staged an armed battle against SS troops lasting five weeks. In October 1943, nearly 300 Jews

and Soviet POWs overpowered guards and broke out of Sobibor death camp, which was then shut down by the SS. A year later, a revolt by Jewish slave laborers at Auschwitz-Birkenau resulted in the destruction of one of the main gas chamber-crematories. Elsewhere, Jews who eluded capture became partisans, particularly in Russia, where some 30,000 Jews fought alongside the Soviets to disrupt Hitler's armies.

After the German defeat at Stalingrad, the oppressed peoples of occupied Europe and Russia, including the Jews, could sense that Hitler's Germany was in decline. However, time itself had become an enemy for the dwindling number of Jews.

How long would it take the Allies to win – and would they still be alive when victory came?

Meanwhile they waited, trying with all their strength to survive just one more day – the slave laborers, the fortunate few still not discovered – and those confined in ghettos such as the teenager who wrote in her diary: “When we look at the fence separating us from the rest of the world, our souls, like birds in a cage, yearn to be free. How I envy the birds that fly to freedom.”

The Third Reich that Hitler had founded was intended to last a thousand years. But it was already tearing around the edges, confronted by an ever-growing force of nations rallying to smash Hitler's empire, on land, and on the high seas.



Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, a powerful speaker and virulent anti-Semite, second only to Hitler in influence. Below: Reinhard Heydrich--coordinated the Final Solution until his assassination by Czech agents in June 1942.



Below: Photo taken by an SS man in occupied Poland reveals the innocent gazes of two Jewish youngsters, not long before the onset of the Final Solution.



Battle of the Atlantic

When all was said and done, British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, would comment, “The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril. I was even more anxious about this battle than I had been about the glorious air fight called the Battle of Britain.”

For a time, the danger had existed that Great Britain might fall without a single German soldier setting foot on the island nation. Rather, it would be strangled into submission at sea, deprived of the life giving food, raw materials and oil which flowed into its ports, causing perhaps millions to perish.

Interestingly, the whole scenario had played out once before. Just over two decades earlier, during the First World War, newly invented German subs had tried to sever the lifeline to North America and break the British Navy's blockade of Germany. Many of the German sub commanders in World War II were veterans of that prior battle of the Atlantic as were most of the British Naval commanders. Back then, the British had learned through hard experience that the best defense was to avoid letting ships sail alone, relying instead on the safety of protected convoys. But the Germans had learned as well and developed an effective new counter-measure which they used from September 1939 onward – the submarine wolf pack.

When a convoy was spotted, radio signals were sent to all nearby subs to assemble and line up to intercept the oncoming ships. They waited for darkness then attacked all at once while weaving through the convoy. The diesel-powered subs could dash along the surface at 20 miles-per-hour. Their low profiles against the horizon made them very difficult to spot at night. At the same time, the taller merchant ships were easy for the sub crews to see, making them very good targets.

For Admiral Karl Dönitz, leader of Germany's U-boat fleet, the only hindrance to success was the limited number of subs in service. He had wanted 300 U-boats ready by the onset of war, a number he considered sufficient to cut off Britain from the outside world. But when the war began only 57 U-boats were actually in service. Hitler had been skeptical about the strategic potential of sub warfare and had given little priority to the sub fleet during his prewar arms buildup, adding several super-sized battleships instead. Not to be outdone, Dönitz hoped to convince Hitler to enlarge the sub fleet by achieving great results early on.

The first such deed to attract Hitler's attention was the spectacular sinking of the British Battleship HMS Royal Oak by U-47 in October 1939. The U-boat had managed to silently slip into the Royal Navy base at Scapa Flow and torpedoed

Royal Oak while it was anchored, causing it to capsize with the loss of 833 men. Upon returning home, U-47's commander was presented to Hitler for congratulations while Nazi propaganda played up the triumph over Germany's traditional naval foe.

Dönitz kept the momentum going, making good use of his limited resources while benefiting from the high morale of his elite sub crews. Upon the fall of France in June 1940, Dönitz relocated his sub bases to France's northern coast, making it much easier for his wolf packs to reach the mid-Atlantic, where the British convoys were most vulnerable. By late December 1940, nearly five million tons of merchant shipping, over a thousand ships, had been sunk by wolf packs with minimal losses to the U-boat fleet, while some 6,000 merchant seamen had been killed.

The U-boats were further aided when German Naval intelligence broke the Royal Navy's radio communication code, providing precise information on British convoy movements and the numbers of ships and escorts, thereby giving wolf pack commanders at sea a powerful advantage. At the same time, the Royal Navy was slow to coordinate its anti-sub efforts with the Royal Air Force to track down the wolf packs, while British code breakers were unable to decipher German radio messages employing a newly improved coding scheme. And so, for a time, the U-boats had free range.

However, in spite of the ever-present danger, British, Canadian and American sailors and merchant seamen sailed the stormy seas to keep the lifelines to North America open, knowing they might be torpedoed without warning at any moment. An American ensign recalled being struck while standing on the deck of a freighter bound for England: "I became fascinated by the artificial torpedo tracks of moonlight and white water. I was not surprised when we were hit, for suddenly I saw, deep under the surface, two streaks of greasy light, parallel, moving fast, coming in at an angle. There was no time to shout a warning; in one instant there were the tracks; in another a great shattering crash."

When a ship was hit by torpedoes, hundreds of men drowned in the bone-chilling Atlantic or burned to death in floating pools of flaming gasoline. Others were left bobbing helplessly in life jackets, as convoy regulations strictly prohibited merchant ships from stopping to help.

A U-boat crew's only concern upon sinking a ship was to note its tonnage so the figure could be added to the list at Naval headquarters and duly reported to the Führer. By mid-1942, that number had swollen to 700,000 tons, or about 160 ships, sunk every month. This meant the Germans were sinking Allied ships faster than they could be built, including numerous American merchant ships and tankers along the sparsely defended U.S. East Coast.

For Dönitz, success of this magnitude had huge rewards. In March of 1943, Hitler appointed him as the new Chief of the German Navy and put a 400-strong U-boat fleet at his disposal. This allowed Dönitz to effectively block the Atlantic shipping lanes and left Britain nearly severed from North America. Churchill's naval nightmare was about to come true, so it seemed.

But fortunately for the British people, Allied technicians had been working hard behind the scenes, while Royal Navy and Air Force crews underwent intensive training to better coordinate their anti-sub efforts. A major break came when newly invented long-range radar devices were installed on British bombers, allowing them to pinpoint the far off positions of U-boats traveling along the surface, where they spent most of their time. Once detected, the bombers dropped depth charges and attacked with new rocket-propelled explosives. Radar-equipped American B-24 bombers also roared into the air from British land bases, while fast-moving British and American destroyers, now equipped with radar as well, blasted the U-boats with 300-pound depth charges.

The radar technique proved so effective that Dönitz wondered if a German traitor in his midst was somehow relaying the exact position of his subs to the Allies. Worse for Dönitz, newly improved sound detection technology allowed Allied warships to locate radio signals from distant wolf packs and organize surprise attacks. Additionally, the perilous mid-Atlantic crossing became safer after American aircraft carriers began escorting the convoys and launched fighter planes equipped with large caliber machine-guns to strafe and sink U-boats lurking nearby.

By comparison, German sub technology and wolf pack tactics had stagnated amid a complete lack of cooperation from Göring's Luftwaffe. As a result, the predictable wolf packs began to suffer heavy losses every time they attacked, causing morale to plummet amid a 75-percent casualty rate. The turning point in the sea battle occurred in May 1943, when 41 subs were lost, compelling Dönitz, whose youngest son was killed in a sub that month, to withdraw his U-boats from the North Atlantic.

However, when Dönitz met with the Führer to discuss the whole situation, Hitler told him, "There can be no question whatever of letting up in the U-boat war. The Atlantic is my western buffer zone..." Dönitz therefore sent the wolf packs back to the North Atlantic in the autumn of 1943, only to have his U-boats sunk at an even greater rate – one sub for every ship attacked – a truly unsustainable casualty rate. And so Dönitz withdrew again from the North Atlantic, this time permanently, leaving the shipping lanes wide open. Britain's lifeline to North America was thus restored.

Hitler had lost the Battle of the Atlantic, due the perseverance of individual sailors and merchant seamen who kept the ships moving no matter what, along with improved coordination between the British Navy and Air Force, and technological developments that tipped the scales in favor of the Allies. Additionally, American shipyards along the East Coast began turning out new merchant ships at an astounding rate, soon replacing all of the lost tonnage.

The British people would now receive all of the supplies they needed, along with a gigantic arsenal of American-made weapons, ready to be used for the invasion of northern Europe.

In the meantime, Hitler was still obsessed with achieving victory in Russia. He decided to make one last gamble on the Eastern Front, throwing everything into a gigantic attack at Kursk, a place that few people outside of Russia ever heard of – but would henceforth become known as the setting for the greatest tank battle ever fought.



A convoy and its life-giving cargo--ever vulnerable to attack. Below: A German U-Boat at sea, with crewmen perched on the sub's tower, scanning the horizon for targets.



Below: Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz with the crew of U-94, which includes Lt. Herbert Kuppisch, awarded the Knight's Cross.



Below: U-Boats lurking amid a convoy are blasted with depth charges by an American escort ship.



The Kursk Gamble

After the catastrophe at Stalingrad, the German Army in southern Russia had been forced to fall back in order to regroup, dig in and stabilize the whole Front. Gone was the notion of capturing the city named after Russia's leader or the rich oil fields deep in the Caucasus.

Hitler was now up against a Russian Army growing stronger by the day. His nemesis, Josef Stalin, could draw from a giant human reservoir to fill his ranks. By contrast, the failed attacks at Moscow, Stalingrad, and in the Caucasus, had cost Hitler two million men, sapping over half his strength in Russia. As a result, the call up had been sounded in Germany for young men formerly exempt from military service, and for men up to 50 years old, soldiers of the First World War, now needed to fill out the ranks.

Despite it all, Hitler yearned to go back on the offensive in Russia as soon as possible, hoping to seize the initiative and somehow turn things around. By the spring of 1943, he had massed a half-million soldiers near Kursk, located in the Eastern Ukraine. Facing them was a Russian force twice as large, including the Red Army's most experienced troops, along with the same units who had just beaten the Germans at Stalingrad.

Undaunted, Hitler eyed a daring plan for a Blitzkrieg attack reminiscent of the early days of Operation Barbarossa when huge Russian formations had been surprised by motorized German troops and tanks, then surrounded and captured. Called Operation Citadel, the new plan involved a two-pronged attack against the expansive Russian bulge in the lines west of Kursk. The German Ninth Army led by General Kluge would attack from the north while Field Marshal Manstein's Fourth Panzer Army attacked from the south. The two armies would

slice through the bulge, meet up in the middle at Kursk, then turn westward and smash the now-isolated Red Army units.

But there were some big problems for Hitler at this point. First, the element of surprise was gone. The Russians were now watching Hitler's every move. They also benefited enormously from good intelligence including the decoded messages of the Army High Command, passed on to them by the British who had broken the Wehrmacht's secret cipher code. This meant that all of the radioed instructions from the High Command to German field commanders at Kursk and elsewhere were known to the Russians.

The Germans had also misjudged the capacity and quality of Russian war production. The Russians were now fully utilizing factories they had relocated to the safety of eastern Russia beyond the range of Göring's Luftwaffe. As a result, wide-eyed German field commanders watched in amazement as fresh divisions streamed into battle alongside powerful new T-34 tanks with sloped armored plating that caused German anti-tank shells to bounce off harmlessly. Moreover, the Germans found the Russians could produce huge numbers of the tanks, along with state-of-the-art warplanes, top notch artillery and highly effective mobile rocket-grenade launchers.

Additionally, the Russian Army command staff of 1943 was a far cry from the disorganized rabble the Germans had nearly beaten two years earlier. Russian generals such as Georgi Zhukov had now proven they were a match for any of Hitler's commanders. They had learned how to win. In the meantime, Stalin had learned to trust the judgment of Zhukov and other similarly-successful Russian commanders, allowing them to make important strategic decisions on their own.

By contrast, Hitler had his hand in nearly all aspects of every decision, unwisely functioning both as Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces and as Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, responsible for day-to-day operational command of his troops on all fronts. And it was evident to those around him that he had taken on too much. He was plainly worn out by the burden, and by the unimagined consequences of piloting the German Army into one costly failure after another, ultimately endangering the very survival of his thousand-year Reich. The magnitude of that stress had begun to show. Nazi political cronies from the old days, upon seeing Hitler now, were shocked by his stooped, ashen-faced appearance. He looked like a man in his sixties, instead of 54, his actual age, with hands that trembled so badly at times that his tea cup clattered loudly against its saucer plate.

And now came indecision.

His generals knew of course that he didn't like to hear their opinions but they provided them to Hitler anyway, mindful of their frontline soldiers. When they examined the Kursk scenario they saw great danger and even suggested postponing the offensive altogether. This was prompted in part by critical delays in armaments deliveries, particularly the new Tiger I super-tanks, expected to outmatch the omnipresent Russian T-34s.

Beset by serious equipment delays, but still yearning to attack, Hitler couldn't decide whether or not to give the final go-ahead for Operation Citadel. The resulting delay, eventually lasting ten weeks, only made things worse, giving the Russians adequate time to perfect their defenses. This included three defensive rings around Kursk with miles of anti-tank ditches and traps, dense mine fields and barbed wire entanglements. The Russians also took the opportunity to increase their numerical advantage in men, tanks, planes and artillery for the big showdown.

Meanwhile, the Germans struggled to outfit 17 tank divisions by rushing newly built Panther and Tiger tanks straight from the assembly line to the battlefield, even though the Tigers were largely untested in field conditions, still had unresolved mechanical flaws, and German tank crews at Kursk had not trained in them.

By late June, decision time had finally come for Hitler. Satisfied that sufficient equipment and troops were in place, Hitler set Monday, July 5th, as the launch date for Operation Citadel. British intelligence, along with Russian spies, diligently tipped off Marshal Zhukov with the day and time of the attack. Zhukov reacted by beating Hitler to the punch via a massive artillery bombardment at 3:20 a.m. on July 5th, precisely ten minutes before Citadel was scheduled to begin, thereby knocking the Germans off-stride during their opening moves.

Nevertheless, the Germans pressed forward and one of the largest battles of World War II now unfolded as a million-and-a-half soldiers, 6,000 tanks and 4,000 planes clashed around Kursk. The original German plan to cut through the Russian bulge from the north and south met with little success. Kluge's Ninth Army only advanced four miles southward before it was bogged down by the effective anti-tank defenses, while Manstein's Fourth Panzer Army only got eight miles to the north.

The sweeping Barbarossa-style armored movements that Hitler hoped for were proving impossible. Russian defenses were simply too strong. Additionally, the Tiger tanks proved mechanically unreliable on the battlefield, and a majority dropped out within the first few days. The Germans would therefore have to rely on their smaller Panzer tanks, which they already knew were outgunned by the

mighty Russian T34s. The Germans were also relying on their Stuka dive bombers to help knock out the Russian tanks. But the slow moving Stukas proved to be an easy target for the state-of-the-art Russian Shturmovik fighters which soon gained air supremacy over the entire battlefield.

As a result, the worst-case scenario emerged for German tank commanders and infantrymen at Kursk, a bloody battle of attrition – exactly what Hitler's generals had feared the most – and exactly what the Russians wanted.

Bold moves were needed to stave off a costly stalemate. And so Manstein sent three Waffen-SS tank divisions rolling eastward on Sunday, July 11th. The 700 Panzers were supposed to probe for a weak spot behind the main Russian defenses. Purely by accident, they met head-on with a reserve formation of 850 tanks from the Russian Fifth Guards Tank Army. This resulted in the largest single tank battle ever fought as the two sides blasted away at each other at close range for eight hours non-stop, jousting at times like knights from medieval days. There was no clear winner in the tumultuous engagement and both sides gradually broke off, then brought in reinforcements just to maintain their positions.

For Hitler, the outlook at Kursk was getting bleaker by the day. Continued fighting would only prolong the battle of attrition which the numerically superior, well-supplied and well-commanded Russians would surely win.

Worse for Hitler, he was now confronted by staggering news from elsewhere. British and American troops had just landed on the island of Sicily, off the coast of Italy, opening a whole new front in the war. News of that invasion, coming on top of the dismal reports from Kursk, caused Hitler to call off Operation Citadel on July 13th. Thus far, the Kursk gamble had cost the Germans 70,000 men, nearly 3,000 tanks and 1,400 planes, losses that would prove irreplaceable. Russian losses were slightly higher but they could recoup.

For the Russians, the Battle of Kursk was a major turning point in the war, and a great turning point in their nation's history. At long last, they had broken the back of the German Army in Russia and could begin to expel Hitler's soldiers and SS men from the Motherland, knowing now that the Third Reich was going down to defeat.

Seizing the momentum, which they would never relinquish, the Russians began a general advance along a thousand-mile front, pushing back the Germans at every turn. One by one, Russian cities which had been under murderous Nazi domination for two years were liberated by the Red Army, including Orel, Kharkov, Smolensk and Kiev.

Observing the scope of Nazi devastation up close only intensified the hatred that individual Russian soldiers felt for the Germans as they ventured westward in the pursuit of Hitler's troops. That devastation worsened as the Germans withdrew while enacting a scorched earth policy to leave absolutely nothing of value behind for the Russians. This included the destruction of all bridges, railways, crops, live stock, homes and commercial buildings. Russian civilians caught up in the mayhem suffered terribly. Russian soldiers who found their bodies vowed bloody vengeance.

For Adolf Hitler, the much-vaunted dream of establishing Lebensraum in Russia was finally over. Now, he needed to figure out what to do about Italy and the new Southern Front in Europe before things slipped out of control there as well.



Hitler greets Field Marshal Erich von Manstein during a visit to the Eastern Front in March 1943 to shore up support for the coming offensive. Below: Soldiers of the Waffen-SS Division "Das Reich" advance alongside a Panzer VI (Tiger I) tank at Kursk in Operation Citadel.



Below: A German crouches beside a Russian T-34 tank knocked out during the battle.



Below: A view of Hitler's scorched earth policy in Russia, commenced upon the Wehrmacht's westward withdrawal following the battle.



Allies Invade Italy

Upon the demise of Rommel's Afrika Korps in early 1943, British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and President Franklin Roosevelt met at Casablanca in North Africa to plan their next move.

By now, Roosevelt's generals had their eyes squarely fixed on northern Europe and were already thinking about an invasion from southern England across the English Channel. But Churchill had a different idea. He thought the quickest way to go after Hitler would be to forge a pathway into Nazi Germany via southern Europe, by taking the island of Sicily, followed by an invasion of the Italian mainland. British and American troops would then proceed up the boot of Italy and link up with the Russian Army in southeastern Europe. The combined Russian-American-British force would be unstoppable and Hitler would be finished.

Although his generals were not keen on the idea, Roosevelt agreed to Churchill's Italian *offensive on one condition – the bulk of American manpower and resources would still be* reserved for the (D-Day) invasion of northern Europe via the English Channel.

And so the invasion of Sicily began on Saturday, July 10, 1943, with the British Eighth Army, led by General Bernard Montgomery, coming ashore the island's southern coast along with the American Seventh Army, led by General George Patton. Facing the battle-tested Allies were 400,000 Italians, reluctant warriors drafted into the army of Italy's longtime dictator, Benito Mussolini.

Staring down the barrels of Patton and Montgomery's tanks, most of the Italians dropped their weapons and surrendered, while the Sicilian population welcomed the British and Americans as liberators. But this did not lead to an easy victory. About 90,000 Germans stationed on the island, including the elite Hermann Göring Panzer Division, aided by a smaller number of Italians who did not surrender, contested the Allied advance in rugged northeast Sicily for about five weeks. As the Allies finally closed in, the Germans withdrew all of their troops and equipment from Sicily across the sparsely defended Strait of Messina onto the Italian mainland.

The Allied conquest of Sicily had huge political consequences for Italy, triggering changes that were a long time coming. Benito Mussolini had now ruled the country as dictator for two decades. In his early days, when it seemed Fascism was the wave of the future, the *Duce*, as he was known, enjoyed tremendous popular support, strutting before cheering throngs like a modern-day Roman emperor.

Later, Mussolini was very much overshadowed by Hitler. In 1940, when it appeared Nazism was Europe's future and the German military seemed unstoppable, Mussolini had plunged Italy into World War II on Hitler's side, seeking to share in the spoils of victory. But by 1943, after the German defeat at Stalingrad and the German-Italian defeat in North Africa, it was evident Mussolini had been mistaken. This emboldened his political opponents, led by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, to consider ousting the dictator, now blamed for Italy's war suffering. As Mussolini became increasingly unpopular, strikes and demonstrations erupted with Italians openly demanding "bread, peace and freedom."

By this time, Mussolini, similar to Hitler, had begun to cave in physically under the overall stress, and was a shadow of his former Romanesque self. In fact, when the two leaders met on July 19, 1943, at Hitler's request, they presented a sorry sight to those who saw them, compared to how they looked during their days of triumph. Hitler had sent for Mussolini to stiffen his resolve after the

Allied landings in Sicily. But Mussolini, exhausted and demoralized, was not encouraged at all. Even worse, during the meeting Mussolini received word the Allies had conducted their first-ever air-raid on the Italian mainland by bombing the outskirts of Rome.

A few days later, back in Rome himself, Mussolini was abruptly summoned to a meeting by the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel. He told the *Duce* the situation was hopeless. "At this moment you are the most hated man in Italy," the King declared. Mussolini, stunned to silence, was then dismissed from office by the King, escorted by police to a waiting ambulance and taken straight to jail – an unceremonious and humiliating end for the would-be Caesar. Upon his ouster, his Fascist Party was also disbanded.

Hitler's initial shock over the news soon gave way to anger and he vowed bloody vengeance on all those responsible. Nevertheless, the new Italian government formed by Marshal Badoglio immediately sought an armistice with the Allies. Unfortunately, it took six weeks for the Allies to work things out with Badoglio. This allowed Hitler much time to ponder a military response and also gave German troops in southern Italy a chance to withdraw northward while leaving behind a trail of blown up bridges and wrecked mountain roads.

On September 8, 1943, the news became official – Italy, the oldest ally of Nazi Germany, had surrendered unconditionally to the Americans and British. Hitler's response was dramatic. He pulled Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS divisions from Russia, France, and southern Germany, rushed them into Italy to quickly disarm the whole Italian Army, then occupied the northern two thirds of the country, including Rome. For the moment, it seemed Hitler had remarkably regained some of the decisiveness he had shown in his earlier days.

Meanwhile, the Allied offensive targeting the Italian mainland began. The American Fifth Army, led by General Mark Clark, landed on the coast at Salerno, south of Naples, encountering stiff opposition from German troops in the area. At the same time, Montgomery's troops moved up the boot from southernmost Italy, encountering the many wrecked bridges and roads, which slowed them to a crawl. The offensive was off to a shaky start.

In a further measure to prevent the Allies from ever advancing through Italy into southern Europe, Hitler set up the east-to-west Gustav Line, south of Rome. Under the command of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, a master of defensive warfare, the Germans took full advantage of Italy's mountainous terrain to dig entrenched positions all along the high ground, setting up mortars and 88-mm anti-tank guns to blast anyone attempting to climb up and dislodge them.

As a result, the Allies soon found themselves locked in a frustrating stalemate. Month after month passed with little progress to show since the landings at Salerno. To break the obvious deadlock, the Allies launched two bold offensives beginning in January 1944 – a ground attack at Cassino, located along the Gustav Line, and a seaborne invasion of Anzio, further northward, behind the Gustav Line. At Cassino, the initial attack failed outright. At Anzio, the Americans and British landed unopposed, with the highway to Rome seemingly open. But the American commander, General John Lucas, cautiously halted and went on the defensive even though there were no Germans around. It seemed as though the Americans were just waiting to be attacked. The Germans soon obliged, gathering up all of their forces in the region to slam them with a counter-attack twice their size.

At this point in the war, Hitler longed to deliver a knock-out punch on any front to prove the Wehrmacht was still potent – even better if it came against the Americans. And so he ordered Kesselring to throw everything at the embattled Americans and the British alongside them. As a result, waves of German infantrymen were sent dashing across the open ground at Anzio only to be needlessly machine-gunned, like a scene out of World War I. The failed infantry charges, along with heavy American artillery barrages and precise Naval gunfire, brought the German counter-attack to a halt and both sides dug trenches and settled in at Anzio.

More months of stalemate followed in which the Americans and British at both Anzio and Cassino were simply unable to dislodge the Germans. At Cassino, the battle culminated around a centuries-old hilltop monastery. Although American bombers leveled the monastery and nearby town, German troops used the wreckage as good cover and were able to fend off three separate Allied infantry attacks, including an assault by New Zealanders in which 4,000 men were lost.

By now, it had become quite clear to the American and British senior commanders watching from afar in England that the limited approach in Italy wasn't working. And so massive troop reinforcements were sent in to bulk up Clark's Fifth Army. At the same time, the Germans were cleverly deceived into believing another amphibious landing was imminent, this time north of Rome. As a precaution, Kesselring weakened his front lines and repositioned troops to fend off the phony landing.

By May of 1944, frontline Germans at Cassino and Anzio were outnumbered three-to-one by a multinational Allied force from 18 nations including Canada, India, South Africa, along with Free Poles and Free French. The Allies then blasted their way through Kesselring's weakened lines. Surviving Germans now abandoned the Gustav Line and went into a headlong northward retreat. Kesselring decided to evacuate Rome as well, declaring it an open city. For

General Clark, the opportunity to go down in history as the liberator of Rome proved irresistible. He therefore passed up the chance to pursue the tattered remnants of Kesselring's army and instead rolled into Rome.

In the weeks that followed, Kesselring managed to regroup and set up yet another defensive position, the Gothic Line, north of Rome, which became even stronger than the former Gustav Line. As a result, the whole bloody mountain scenario would play out again.

In this manner, Hitler and Kesselring were able to hold off the Allies in Italy for the war's duration, while inflicting 300,000 Allied casualties. The breakthrough that Churchill had envisioned into southern Europe never happened. The only consolation at all for the Allies was the weakening of Hitler's armies in Europe and Russia to supply Kesselring with adequate troops and equipment. For Hitler, the Supreme Commander, the skillful defense of Italy proved to be a rare success for him in the later years of the war.

And true to his earlier threat, several of those responsible for Mussolini's downfall were indeed hunted down and executed. Among those caught up in the wave of vengeance was Mussolini's former side-kick, his own son-in-law, Count Galeazzo Ciano. Others had fled to the Allies for safety, including King Victor, Marshal Badoglio, most of the Italian Navy, and the new Italian government.

On Hitler's order, Mussolini himself had been freed from Italian captivity. In September 1943, a special commando detachment led by SS master of espionage, Otto Skorzeny, had glided into the mountaintop location where Mussolini was imprisoned, scared away the local police, put the former *Duce* in a small plane and flew him off to Rome. From there he was taken to see Hitler.

Hitler had wanted Mussolini to set up a revived Fascist regime in German-occupied northern Italy. At Hitler's insistence, Mussolini dutifully proclaimed the new Italian Social Republic, to be led by the new Fascist Republican Party. In truth, they were names that amounted to nothing as worn out Mussolini now had zero interest in politics of any sort, preferring to spend all of his time relaxing with his mistress, Clara Petacci. They stayed at a lakeside villa in northern Italy surrounded by a detachment of the Leibstandarte-SS, Hitler's personal bodyguard.

For Hitler, the circumstances surrounding Mussolini's downfall, involving betrayal by Italy's military and King, left him feeling paranoid about his own security. As a precaution, he ordered SS-Reichsführer Himmler to be ready with "the most severe police measures" and subsequently expelled an array of German aristocrats and princes from the Wehrmacht. A few wound up in

concentration camps, a destination that would become commonplace for disfavored military officers in the months to come.

By 1944, that concentration camp system had reached its zenith, with hundreds of facilities, large and small, all designed to exploit their inmates, or in some cases, simply kill them. The largest camp, at Auschwitz, had grown into a giant complex of slave labor camps, and by now had also become the biggest killing center the world has ever known.



Field Marshal Albert Kesselring (2nd from right) with his officers during an inspection of the Italian Front. Below: At Monte Cassino, a German machine-gun crew finds good cover amid the rubble.



Below: A German mortar shell lands near an American infantryman attacking the Gustav Line.



Below: A German paratrooper surveys the plain below, ready to direct lethal artillery fire at anything that moves.



Below: Benito Mussolini (right) with Otto Skorzeny (next to him) and others elated over their accomplishment in liberating him.



The Auschwitz Experience

A terrible darkness had descended across Europe. An entire way of life had been turned upside down by one man, Adolf Hitler, and his followers. Instead of sitting in a classroom, pondering a career, or perhaps working in a local shop, young Jewish men and women found themselves without a future – isolated and cast out. Instead of kicking a ball around in the park, making new friends, or going on a class picnic, Jewish children found themselves deprived of these simple joys – shunned and excluded.

Meanwhile, their parents agonized. They had always thought of themselves as upstanding citizens, who happened to be Jewish. They had served in the government, fought bravely in prior wars, paid taxes, obeyed the law and otherwise aspired to lead decent lives while seeking happiness for their children, just like anyone else. But now they had been labeled as enemies.

Wherever the Nazis went, they poisoned minds, corrupting the attitudes of local people who had cared little, till now, whether their next door neighbors went to the temple on Saturday instead of church on Sunday. Under relentless pressure from the Nazis, many locals became eager to cooperate, including police and government officials who issued specially marked identity cards and then compiled comprehensive lists so that by the time of the Final Solution, no village, town, city, county, state or nation had been left uncatalogued as to the precise number of Jews and their exact whereabouts.

Following this, master timetables were created by the SS to enact orderly deportations. In each place, Nazis and local police rounded up the people, street by street, marching them off to the local train depot where they were crowded

into railroad boxcars normally used to transport freight or livestock, and sent off without food or proper sanitation, on a perilous week-long journey to the East.

Waiting for them along the railroad siding at Auschwitz-Birkenau were men of the SS-Totenkopf – the Death's Head battalion. Around the clock, seven days a week, the trains arrived from all over Europe. In June 1944, a train from Slovakia, carrying 18-year-old Alexander Ehrmann and his family pulled in:

"We arrived around one o'clock in the morning in an area with lights, floodlights, and stench. We saw flames, tall chimneys. We still did not want to accept that it was Auschwitz. We preferred to think we didn't know than to acknowledge, yes, we are there. The train stopped. Outside we heard all kinds of noises, stench, language, commands we didn't understand. It was in German but we didn't know what it meant. Dogs barked. The doors flung open, and we saw strange uniformed men in striped clothes. They started to yell at us in the Yiddish of Polish Jews: "Schnell! Raus! " We started to ask them, "Where are we?" They answered, "Raus, raus, raus!" Sentries and their dogs were there, and they yelled at us also. "Macht Schnell!" We got out and they told us to get in formations of five, and to leave all the luggage there. We asked one of the guys, "Tell me, tell me, where are we going?" "Dort, geht," and he pointed towards the flames. We had to move on. So we formed up, true to family tradition, two parents, the oldest sister, and the next sister and the child on my sister's hand. My mother asked her, "Let me carry him," two and a half years old. She said, "No, I'll take care of my own son." So the three sisters and my two parents were walking and the two boys in the next row with three other people. We came up to Mengele, we were standing there. He was pointing left, right. My sister was the first one, with a child, and he pointed to the right. Then my mother, who had a rupture, she had a big belly, she looked like she was pregnant, she wasn't. So I guess that made her go to that side. My father and the two sisters were pointed to his left. He asked my father, "Old man, what do you do?" He said, "Farm work." And then came the next row and the two of us were told also to go after our father and two sisters; and he stopped and he called my father back. "Put out your hand!" So my father showed him his hand and Mengele smacked him across the face and pushed him to the other side. And he continued, "Schnell!" And the sentries were there, and the dogs and we have to move, and that's the last we saw of our parents and sister and nephew."

Alexander had been allowed to live, selected by SS Doctor Josef Mengele for slave labor. His parents, sister and nephew, rejected by Mengele, were now moving with many others toward a sign saying "Baths." Taken down a flight of stairs to the underground facility, they wound up in what appeared to be a large undressing room, similar to the tiled room one might find at a public bath or swimming pool. With no time to think, they were told to undress completely and

hang their clothing on the numbered hooks located along the wall, and also instructed to memorize the hook number for later, so they could retrieve their clothing after their shower. Pieces of soap were handed out to some and they were all quickly ushered into what seemed, at first glance, to be very large shower room. But as soon as everyone was crammed inside, the main door was slammed and sealed tight.

As they stood there in anxious anticipation, SS men above the chamber opened cans of the commercial pesticide Zyklon-B and poured the contents, small blue crystalline pellets, into hollow shafts made of perforated sheet metal which extended to the floor of the gas chamber. The pellets fell to the bottom of the shaft and vaporized upon contact with air, emitting blue-tinged cyanide fumes that oozed out at floor level, rising slowly. The fumes had a noticeable burnt almond-like odor. When inhaled, the bitter smelling vapors combined with red blood cells, robbing the body of life-giving oxygen, causing the people to gasp for air, followed by unconsciousness, then death through oxygen deprivation. Children were the first to die first since they were closer to the floor. As the fumes expanded upward, pandemonium erupted with everyone else climbing on top of each other, forming a tangled heap of bodies all the way to the ceiling.

Fifteen minutes later the chamber was silent. Electric vents were activated by SS men to draw out the remaining fumes. The door was then opened and special squads of Jewish slave laborers called *Sonderkommandos* entered to untangle the corpses, now dripping with a combination of blood, urine and feces. The bodies were washed down with hoses, pried apart with hooks and then removed one-by-one. The corpses were then placed on carts and rolled onto special lifts taking them one floor up to the crematory ovens. There, other *Sonderkommandos* went about the task of removing the bodies from the carts. Any teeth with gold fillings were extracted, rings pulled off fingers, women's hair shorn and collected, and all body orifices were searched for hidden valuables. The bodies were then placed in the ovens.

Cremation was the slowest part of the extermination process, taking about fifteen minutes per body. Sometimes the ovens couldn't handle the volume of corpses when too many trainloads arrived. Therefore open fire pits were used to cremate bodies. By the summer of 1944, six huge fire pits were in use to accommodate the accelerated deportation of Hungary's Jews to the gas chambers. During that time, Auschwitz-Birkenau recorded its highest-ever daily number of persons gassed and burned at just over 9,000.

When Alexander was on his way to his slave labor quarters, he passed by one of the cremation pits. "We were walking, and beyond the barbed wire fences there were piles of rubble and branches, pine tree branches and rubble burning, slowly burning. We're walking by, and the sentries kept on screaming, "Lauf, Lauf "

and I heard a baby crying. The baby was crying somewhere in the distance and I couldn't stop and look. We moved, and it smelled, a horrible stench. I knew that things in the fire were moving, there were babies in the fire."

Occasionally SS men grabbed noisy babies from their mothers and threw them alive into the fire pit. Such behavior was not extraordinary at Auschwitz where SS personnel relished the opportunity to wield the power of life and death over beings they considered less than human.

Filip Müller, who spent time as a Sonderkommando working in the gas chambers, commented on mentality of the SS Sergeant who ruled over him. "We prisoners and [SS-Unterscharführer] Stark were worlds apart. For us he seemed to have no human feelings whatever. We only knew him as one who gave his commands brusquely, insulted, abused and threatened us continually, goaded us to work, and beat us mercilessly. To his superiors he was diligent and subservient. I often wondered how it was possible for this young man, scarcely older than myself, to be so cruel, so brutal, harboring so unfathomable a hatred of the Jews. I doubted whether he had actually ever come into close contact with Jews before he came to Auschwitz. He was no doubt a victim of that Nazi propaganda which put the blame for any misfortune, including the war, on the Jews. How was it possible, I often asked myself, for a young man of average intelligence and normal personality to carry out the unspeakable atrocities demanded of him in the belief that thereby he was doing his patriotic duty, without ever realizing that he was being used as a tool by perverted political dictators?"

Slave laborers such as Filip and Alexander existed from moment to moment, clinging to life, knowing they could be killed by an SS man for any reason at any time, and would never know why. Dressed in blue-striped uniforms, with an ID number tattooed on their left forearm, they resided with fellow laborers in crammed wooden barracks on starvation rations, while working twelve hours per day. The average life span under such conditions was about three months.

The sprawling Auschwitz complex included 30 labor camps with 100,000 inmates supporting entire industries. German companies, in cooperation with the SS, were eager to take advantage of the ready labor supply in an arrangement that became mutually profitable. This included world renowned companies such as I.G. Farben chemical works, and Krupp armaments.

SS doctors such as Mengele also exploited inmates as a ready supply of subjects for human medical experiments. Of particular interest to Dr. Mengele were twin children, and he set aside some 1500 pairs for rogue genetic research that killed nearly all of them.

One extraordinary aspect of the journey to Auschwitz was that the Nazis often charged Jews deported from Western Europe train fare as third class passengers under the guise that they were being "resettled in the East." The SS sometimes made new arrivals sign picture postcards showing the fictional location "Waldensee," mailed to relatives back home with the printed greeting: "We are doing very well here. We have work and we are well treated. We await your arrival."

A terrible darkness had descended across Europe, and in its shadow the light of joy, hope, and human potential was diminished. But by mid-1944, a million-and-a-half Allied soldiers were assembled in southern England, ready to invade Europe and open up a new front against Hitler's empire of death. All that remained was for General Eisenhower to choose the invasion date.

Views of Holocaust Concentration Camps



Holocaust stacked bodies



Auschwitz-Birkenau-main_



A group of naked Jewish women and girls walk to the execution site on the beach near
Liepaja



In Bergen - Belsen



Dachau



Shoah Pile



In the barracks



Cremation ovens – often bodies were not completely dead



Auschwitz





Romani children in Auschwitz



Above, children in camp



Pope Pius XII signed a concordant with the Nazi



Why the world should not trust Christianity

Christianity did not bother about the holocaust, when Jews were maltreated and killed, just because the New Testament, the second part of the Bible mentions that Jesus, the man of Nazareth was put to death by the Jews. Even today, among Evangelicals the same message prevails. Read the following:

JESUS WAS A JEW - AND YOU KILLED HIM!

The Jews killed Jesus. That fact will never change. They have never repented, and they try to bully into silence anyone who states that fact.

They try to deflect this awful sin by saying, “Jesus was a Jew.” Yes – he was. And the Jews killed him.

Paul the Apostle – also a Jew -- said, the Jews did not attain to righteousness because they “sought it not by faith,” and instead established their own righteousness and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God, Romans 8:31-32 and 9:1-4.

Only the ELECT JEWS will obtain righteousness, Romans 11:7. The APOSTATE REPROBATE JEWS have a vail on their heart when they read the Law of Moses, 2 Corinthians 3:13-15. And they forbade the apostles to speak to the Gentiles about salvation, “to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost,” 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

Jesus’ ministry of three-and-a-half years was to the lost house of Israel. But they would not obey, and they crucified him. When they did so, they screamed, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” Matthew 27:25. God hates Israel and her destruction is coming from God. You rebellious sinful Jews will NOT get a pass because Jesus was a Jew. The Jews killed Jesus!

FROM OUR SAVIOR'S MOUTH

Jesus said wrath and tribulation are going to come upon the Jews in the Last Days for their persecution of the people of God. Since Jesus was a Jew – YOU HAD BETTER LISTEN TO HIS WORDS. Like these: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35. Jesus traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem – because he knew it was nearing the time for the Jews to condemn him to death. Upon approach, he beheld the city and wept over it, because of the destruction that was coming in the “time of their visitation,” Luke 19:41-44.

When Jesus prophesied about the Last Days, he said, “[W]hen ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains ...; [f]or these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled,” Luke 21:20-22.

When the good women lamented his death on the way to his death, Jesus told

them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, because of the wrath that would come upon Israel. For “then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us,” Luke 23:26-31.

The above comes from the following website: <http://www.jewskilledjesus.com/>

D-Day Invasion

Since early 1942, Soviet leader Josef Stalin had been urging a major new front in Western Europe to take some of the pressure off his troops, complaining that his soldiers were carrying too much of the burden. Thus far in the war, eighty percent of German military casualties had occurred at the hands of Russian soldiers. All the while, Stalin had grown increasingly impatient with his Allies.

The opportunity to talk things out came in November 1943, when the Big Three – Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin – met for their first face-to-face meeting at Teheran in the Middle East. During the conference, Roosevelt consented to Stalin's request to set a specific date for the American-led invasion of Western Europe.

Churchill was not as keen on the idea, which involved a dangerous hundred-mile crossing of the English Channel into northern France. The British had already tried an amphibious assault on their own, targeting the French port of Dieppe in August 1942, with disastrous results. Churchill therefore maintained the quickest way to defeat Nazi Germany was through the Italian Front into southern Europe. However, he was overruled by Roosevelt and Stalin, and a preliminary date of May 1944 was set for the seaborne invasion of northern France.

Germans along the coast of France were already aware of the huge buildup of American troops, ships and equipment in southern England. They knew a crossing was coming at some point – the only question was where and when. As a defensive measure, they had begun building the Atlantic Wall, an elaborate system of heavy cement fortifications that would span the entire coastline opposite England. But as the spring of 1944 approached and the invasion appeared imminent, it was only about half finished. To make up for the shortfall, the Germans planted a million mines, laid mile upon mile of barbed-wire, and installed thousands of jagged underwater obstructions designed to rip holes in the hulls of landing craft.

To stave off the invasion, Hitler chose Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the brazen veteran of the North Africa campaign. Rommel's plan was to have German

infantrymen and tanks confront the Allies on the beaches and kick them back into the sea, to prevent the landing troops from gaining even a toehold in the sand.

Rommel and members of the High Command, including his superior, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Commander of Army West, thought the Allies would probably land at Calais, the narrowest distance between southern England and the coast of France. Their assumption was confirmed by the heavy buildup of Allied troops in the seaports directly opposite Calais. In truth, these were phony maneuvers cleverly combined with false intelligence leaked by the Allies to convince the Germans they had guessed correctly. Rommel and Rundstedt therefore positioned the bulk of their troops, fifteen infantry divisions, around Calais, while a smaller number was stationed about 200 miles to the west near the Normandy beaches, considered a less likely landing spot.

The Germans had also determined the invasion would likely come during May amid the favorable spring tides. And so they stood by on high alert. But despite weeks of calm weather and good tides, May was unexpectedly quiet. As June began, a powerful storm moved in bringing high winds, rain and heavy seas to the English Channel. Confident the rough seas and heavy cloud cover had postponed any invasion plans for a while, Rommel drove off to visit his family at their home in southern Germany. Additionally, most of Rommel's command staff headed inland to a military conference. At the same time, the stormy weather brought a temporary halt to all German aerial and seaborne reconnaissance around the English Channel.

Across the Channel, at his headquarters, Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, faced a momentous decision. Everything was now in place for Operation Overlord and the chosen invasion day, Monday, June 5th. But the seas were far too choppy. The American, British and Canadian landing troops might wind up at the bottom of the Channel, or land on the beaches too wobbly from sea sickness if they survived the crossing. On the other hand, if the invasion was postponed by more than a day or two, and the entire force was to stand down, the next workable date would be perhaps mid-July, or even later, due to the immense amount of logistical coordination involved.

General Eisenhower needed a break in the weather. Checking and rechecking the weather maps, his chief meteorologist saw a window of opportunity emerging for Tuesday morning, June 6th, although conditions would still not be ideal. After receiving this update, and upon consulting with his landing troop commanders, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and General Omar Bradley, Eisenhower came to his decision. "OK, We'll go," he said.

Two things then happened. In the predawn hours of June 6th, American paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions along with the British 6th Division parachuted into Normandy, attacking rear positions of the German 7th Army, while British glider troops seized key bridges. Additionally, BBC radio broadcasts included short declarative sentences which were special coded messages to the French Underground, spurring them to sabotage German communications throughout France.

By dawn of D-Day, the greatest seaborne invasion force ever assembled was slowly approaching the Normandy Coast, taking the German soldiers there by surprise. Four thousand vessels carried the troops while over 2,000 American and British warships furiously bombarded the landing zones, five beaches stretching along a sixty-mile front. The British 2nd Army landed toward the east at beaches code-named Gold, Juno and Sword. The American 1st Army landed toward the west at beaches named Utah and Omaha.



Rommel (left) looking relaxed during an inspection tour of the Atlantic Wall north of Caen, France, May 30, 1944, one week before the invasion. Below: A German soldier stands watch along the Atlantic Wall.



Below: General Dwight D. Eisenhower meets with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division in England, just before they board their planes to participate in the very first assault of the D-Day invasion.



American assault troops in a landing craft huddle behind the protective front of the craft as it nears

the beachhead. Smoke in the background is Naval gunfire supporting the landing. Below: At Omaha Beach, Americans aid men who reached the shore in a life raft after their landing craft was sunk.



Below: A German machine-gunner in heavy action following the landings.



Below: A large influx of Allied reinforcements and equipment arrives on now-secured Omaha Beach and moves inland.



Running Out of Time

The war of conquest Hitler had ignited in 1939 effectively ended upon the successful D-Day landings in northern France. Instead, the war became an all-out struggle to stave off the invasion of Germany and prevent the collapse of the eleven-year-old Nazi Reich.

The German military machine that had once frightened the whole world was now unraveling under the weight of an attack across three major fronts. In the East, Hitler's troops were withering in the face of an unstoppable Russian juggernaut. In the South, Rome had finally been liberated. In the West, more than a million Allied soldiers were now poised to smash through German defensive lines.

At this point, the great problem for Hitler as Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces was a dwindling supply of manpower. The German armaments industry could still produce tanks and planes in the hundreds, but there were not enough trained men available to operate them.

Worse for Hitler, in the skies above Germany, a virtual fourth front had been created upon the demise of the German Air Force. The Luftwaffe, which had once terrorized Europe and England, had largely expended itself over Russia and nearly run out of pilots. The result was total air supremacy for Hitler's enemies on all fronts along with the emergence of something completely new in the history of warfare – the thousand bomber air raid. Day and night, American and British bomber planes ranged deep into Nazi Germany targeting weapons factories and civilians alike, with the same ferocity German pilots had shown in raiding a dozen countries beginning in 1939.

For the German people, one of the worst bombing attacks occurred in July 1943, when a tornado-like firestorm erupted in Hamburg during a week of successive American and British carpet bombings. A German casualty report described the scene: "Children were torn from the hands of their parents by the tornado and whirled into the flames. People who thought they had saved themselves collapsed in a few minutes in the overwhelmingly destructive force of the heat. People who were fleeing had to make their way through the dead and the dying. The sick and frail had to be left behind by the rescuers since they themselves were in danger of burning. And each one of these nights of fire and flames was followed by a day which revealed the horror in the pale and unreal light of a smoke-covered sky. And these days were followed by new nights with new horrors, even more smoke and soot, heat and dust, with still more death and destruction. The streets were covered with hundreds of corpses. Mothers with their children, men, old people, burnt, charred, unscathed and clothed, naked and pale like wax dummies in a shop window, they lay in every position, quiet and peaceful, or tense with their death throes written in the expressions on their faces."

Over 40,000 persons were killed in the Hamburg firestorm while three quarters of the city was destroyed. Such scenes were repeated in several other cities including Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Cologne and Dresden. In addition to the human toll, centuries of art and culture vanished as thousand-year-old cathedrals and cherished historical monuments were instantly turned to rubble.

Although German civilians displayed a brave face at first, much as the British had done during the Blitz, the increasing severity was wearing them down nevertheless, as there was absolutely no end in sight. In the eyes of the people, the once exalted image of Adolf Hitler was beginning to erode amid the ceaseless air raids, gloomy war news from all fronts, increasing deprivations and shortages on the home front, and the ever-mounting death toll of loved ones in uniform. People who used to enthusiastically greet each other by saying "Heil Hitler," were now inclined to avoid eye contact and say nothing at all.

For his part, Hitler chose to isolate himself from the realities of war and from the suffering of his people. By now he had stopped making speeches and was rarely seen in public, preferring to spend his time secluded at his Wolf's Lair military headquarters in northeastern Germany or at his mountaintop villa at Berchtesgaden, along the German-Austrian border. He could not bring himself to tour cities wrecked by bombing or visit field hospitals. On one occasion, when his special Führer train momentarily stopped alongside a trainload of wounded, exhausted men returning from the Russian Front, Hitler promptly ordered his window shades pulled down.

Only among his old Nazi Party comrades did Hitler still feel comfortable. For them, his mystique had not diminished and they felt sure the military situation would be reversed, at some point down the road, by the Führer. They remembered that in the past, especially during their rise to power, Hitler had demonstrated the ability to grasp victory from thin air, time and time again, like some kind of wondrous magician.

The problem for Hitler, however, was that a growing number of his senior military commanders had lost faith in him. And these practical-minded, battle-hardened leaders had come to believe they were the last hope to save the German people from death and destruction on a nearly unimaginable scale. By the summer of 1944, it had become obvious that Germany was involved in a hopeless military struggle. And there was every indication Hitler was prepared to sacrifice countless German military and civilian lives to sustain it indefinitely for no good reason.

After the Hitler-led debacles in North Africa and Normandy, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, perhaps the most famous military personality in the world, and a man beloved by the German people, decided to lend his enormous prestige to a newly hatched military conspiracy that would save Germany from catastrophe by ousting Hitler from power and establishing a non-Nazi replacement government.

It was not the first time that Army leaders had considered ending the rule of Hitler. There had been a dozen or so conspiracies dating back to 1936 when Hitler's recklessness first became apparent. But all had failed, either due to Hitler's odd luck in avoiding the setup, or because of his stunning success through the early war years which discouraged the plotters from ever taking action.

But now they were determined to do it. General Henning von Tresckow, Chief of Staff of Second Army on the Russian Front, summed it up: "The assassination must be attempted at any cost. Even should it fail, the attempt to seize power in the capital must be undertaken. We must prove to the world and to future generations that the men of the German Resistance Movement dared to take the decisive step and hazard their lives upon it."

Killing Hitler would not be easy. By now, the Führer had become noticeably cautious and quite cagey. When taking a meal in the presence of his generals, two grim-looking SS bodyguards stood directly behind him and test-tasted his food for poison. He came and went unexpectedly, ignoring set schedules, or abruptly changed travel timetables at the last minute.

As it turned out, there was just one place where Hitler maintained a semblance of a predictable schedule and regularly lingered – his midday military conference held every day either at his Wolf's Lair headquarters or at his Berchtesgaden residence. It was now apparent to the plotters this would be their best chance. The method they chose was a unique time-delayed bomb that used a silent chemical reaction to trigger the plastic explosive rather than a conventional clock-style timer.

The man destined to plant the bomb was Colonel Klaus von Stauffenberg, a highly decorated young officer from a prestigious family. He had been wounded by a land mine in North Africa in April 1943, losing his left eye, right hand and two fingers of his left hand. Prior to North Africa, he had served in Poland, France and Russia, where he witnessed firsthand evidence of Hitler's terror methods. Inspired to join the plot by what he saw, Stauffenberg emerged as its central figure upon his appointment as Chief of Staff to the commander of the Home Army, based in Berlin. This provided regular access to Hitler's military conferences, since replacement troops were now being drawn from Berlin for the Russian Front.

Stauffenberg's Home Army authority also provided the potential to spur the downfall of Nazism, starting with Berlin. There already existed a plan for an emergency military occupation of Berlin, known as Operation Valkyrie. It was created at Hitler's own request, intended as the means to put down potential mass unrest, such as a revolt by slave laborers, since there were now millions of foreign laborers living in Germany including Berlin.

Stauffenberg's idea was to assassinate Hitler, then hijack Valkyrie as the means of putting down Nazism. Troops and tanks would roll into Berlin according to the pre-existing Valkyrie plans, only to be told that Hitler was dead and therefore the Army was now in supreme command of the German Nation, pending the announcement of a new post-Hitler government.

An absolutely critical component of the coup scenario was that Stauffenberg and fellow conspirators had to win over any lukewarm Army officers in Berlin and force any remaining Hitler loyalists in the Army to either yield to their authority or be arrested on the spot. Once achieved, they would rapidly dismember the entire Nazi apparatus in Berlin at gunpoint, including the SS and Gestapo administrations. At the same time, the coup would spread to the Western Front, beginning with Paris, where a similar scene would play out involving the arrest of SS and Gestapo personnel by Army officers allied with Stauffenberg. And, if everything succeeded up to this point, the conspirators would make a direct appeal to the Western Allies for armistice negotiations on behalf of the new government and request an immediate end to the aerial bombing raids on

German cities. Such were the ambitious plans concocted by Stauffenberg and fellow officers.

As things turned out, on the designated day, Thursday, July 20, 1944, hardly anything went according to plan. That morning, Stauffenberg reported as ordered to Wolf's Lair and tripped the ten-minute chemical fuse. He entered the Führer's conference room about 12:30 p.m., carrying the bomb inside his leather briefcase. He was positioned next to Hitler for the conference due to his war wounds, and resulting bad hearing. He put the briefcase by his feet under the conference table then slipped out of the room a few minutes later. But shortly after his departure, the briefcase was innocently moved out of the way by another officer so that it wound up about six feet from Hitler, on the far side of a solid oak trestle that supported the bulky table. When the bomb exploded at 12:42 p.m., its new placement shielded Hitler and he survived with apparently minor injuries.

Stauffenberg observed the blast from afar and felt sure Hitler was dead. He bluffed his way out of the Wolf's Lair compound, boarded a waiting airplane, then took off for the three-hour journey to Berlin, confident Operation Valkyrie was underway as planned. However, much to his surprise, when he arrived in Berlin he discovered the coup had stalled due to conflicting reports concerning Hitler's fate. Some said dead – others alive. Nobody knew what to think. Therefore all of Stauffenberg's co-conspirators in Berlin had chosen to do nothing except await his arrival, thereby losing precious hours in the meantime. Appalled by their inaction, Stauffenberg set out to become a one-man coup, hoping to inspire everyone else to get moving, all the while insisting Hitler was indeed dead.

But not only was the Führer alive, he even managed to keep an afternoon appointment with Benito Mussolini who arrived by train at Wolf's Lair for a scheduled visit. Hitler gave him a detailed rundown concerning the bombing and took him directly into the wrecked conference room, even showing Mussolini the pair of bomb-tattered trousers he had been wearing at the time of the blast.

Hitler boasted that his survival was stunning proof "that Fate has selected me for my mission. Otherwise I wouldn't be alive." As for those responsible, "Traitors in the bosom of their own people deserve the most ignominious of deaths – and they shall have it!"

By mid-afternoon of July 20th, Stauffenberg was already a wanted man.

Shortly after the bombing, SS-Reichsführer Himmler had rushed to Wolf's Lair and joined those around Hitler trying to fathom who might be responsible.

Stauffenberg's placement of the briefcase under the table was recalled, along with his hurried exit back to Berlin upon the bomb's detonation.

Meanwhile, Stauffenberg and fellow conspirators in Berlin pressed forward, despite everything. Operation Valkyrie finally commenced, although it was now three hours behind schedule. Army troops in Berlin dutifully began to seal off designated blocks of the government quarters.

But confusion remained over Hitler's status and this made it difficult to sway lukewarm officers and clamp down on the Hitler loyalists. One Army officer in particular, Major Otto Remer, a former Hitler Youth Leader, became increasingly suspicious. He wound up in the office of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels around 7 p.m., with orders from the conspirators to arrest Goebbels. But the quick-thinking Propaganda Minister calmly assured Remer the Führer was very much alive. Remer said he needed to hear it from Hitler himself. So Goebbels telephoned Hitler, who spoke to Remer, convincing him to restore order on his behalf, by brutal means if necessary. And for good measure, Hitler promoted Remer to full colonel.

This marked the beginning of the end for Stauffenberg and the conspirators. Remer immediately set up a command post right there inside the Propaganda Ministry building and began barking orders on the telephone in the name of the Führer. As instructed by Hitler, he took personal command of all military units in Berlin. As a result, Operation Valkyrie soon ground to a halt. Worse for the conspirators, at 9 p.m., a special radio announcement said the Führer himself would soon broadcast a statement to the nation.

The final scene that day played out two hours later when eight young Army officers, now determined to demonstrate their loyalty to Hitler, turned on the conspirators inside the Army headquarters building where they were based. Armed with machine-guns and pistols, they confronted the conspirators, shooting Stauffenberg in the left arm as he turned to flee. They chased him down and shortly thereafter Stauffenberg and chief co-conspirator, General Friedrich Olbricht, were in their custody.

At this point, an interesting bit of treachery unfolded as Stauffenberg's superior, General Friedrich Fromm, who had briefly sided with the conspirators earlier in the day, until he determined Hitler was alive, craftily played the part of a Hitler loyalist to deflect any suspicion. He offered the now-confined conspirators a chance to write a last letter and exited the room. He came back about five minutes later and announced that a court martial in the name of the Führer had just pronounced death sentences on Stauffenberg, Olbricht, and their two adjutants.

For Stauffenberg, the end came around midnight in the courtyard outside Army headquarters. As Fromm's firing squad took aim, Stauffenberg yelled, "Lang lebe unser heiliges Deutschland!" (Long live our sacred Germany!). He was then shot dead along with Olbricht and their adjutants.

Around this time SS-Reichsführer Himmler arrived in Berlin with orders from Hitler to take complete charge. This marked the start of an SS-led terror campaign not unlike the Röhm purge seen ten years earlier.

Surprisingly, Hitler at first thought the coup was the work of a small group of Army traitors. He even stated this in his radio statement regarding the bombing as if to reassure himself and the German people that the overall Army leadership was still solidly behind him. But within days, the 400 Gestapo agents and SS officers assigned by Himmler to untangle the plot, obtained evidence indicating a breathtaking scope. And each new revelation only served to increase Hitler's wrath. Particularly brutal was Hitler's decision to target family members of key participants, which led Himmler to publicly threaten he would "exterminate" the extended Stauffenberg family.

A further measure was the trial held in the People's Court beginning on August 7th, presided over by a fanatical Nazi named Roland Freisler. With an amazingly loud, sarcastic-sounding voice, he bellowed insults at the first set of defendants standing before him as Goebbels' film cameras recorded every moment. He called Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, dragged into court unshaven and wearing ill-fitting civilian clothes, a "dirty old man" for clutching his beltless pants to hold them up.

Freisler had express orders from Hitler to prohibit any courtroom speeches by the defendants. However, a cousin of Stauffenberg named Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, got in a few words. Grilled by Freisler as to why he never joined the Nazi Party, he responded: "What is important, what brings together all these questions is the totalitarian claim of the State on the individual which forces him to renounce his moral and religious obligations to God." To which Freisler shouted "Nonsense!" and cut him off from any further remarks.

All eight defendants at this first trial were found guilty of treason against the Führer. The punishment as proscribed by Hitler himself was that they were to be "hanged like cattle." And so they were transported to Plötzensee prison and brought into an execution room which had eight meat hooks attached to the ceiling. Instead of rope, piano wire was used so they would die slowly. The ghoulish execution scene played out in front of a film camera. That very night Hitler is claimed to have watched the film footage with great interest.

Germany would never be the same. The country's remaining anti-Hitler elite – intellectuals, aristocrats, members of the clergy, and political moderates – some five thousand persons in all, were rounded up. This included the web of conspirators, along with anyone suspected of aiding or sympathizing with them, and people of conscience whose viewpoints were known. The list included many who had hoped to form the nucleus of a post-Hitler government, such as the former ambassadors to Rome and Moscow, and lesser known resisters such as Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Several of the highest ranking military men, including Field Marshal von Kluge, Commander in Chief West, General Stuelpnagel, military governor of France, and General Tresckow, chose suicide before the Gestapo could get to them. On the brink of death, Tresckow declared: "Everybody will now turn upon us and cover us with abuse. But my conviction remains unshaken – we have done the right thing. Hitler is not only the archenemy of Germany – he is the archenemy of the world."

Ten years earlier, Hitler had used the Röhm purge to break the Stormtrooper (SA) leadership when it became a threat to him. Now, he broke the Army leadership, forever undermining the might and power of the once-venerable German General Staff organization, founded in the 1800s. He set up a military Court of Honor to expel hundreds of suspected officers from the Army so they would be handed over as humiliated civilians to the People's Court for quick Nazi justice. When Field Marshal Rommel was implicated, Hitler gave him a choice, as relayed by two generals who showed up at Rommel's home. Take poison and receive a state funeral with full military honors, with a guarantee his family would not be harmed, or wind up in the People's Court. Rommel explained it to his wife and 15-year-old son, said farewell, then drove off with the generals and took the poison when the car stopped a few miles away. Condolences, including one from Hitler, were immediately sent to his wife.

To shore up the surviving officer corps, so it could better serve him, Hitler appointed the unshakable and loyal Heinz Guderian, a brilliant Panzer commander, as the new Chief of the Army General Staff. Guderian quickly denounced the "cowardice and weakness" of those who had plotted against Hitler and commanded: "Every General Staff officer must be a National Socialist officer-leader...by actively cooperating in the political indoctrination of younger commanders in accordance with the tenants of the Führer." Symbolically, at this point, the traditional Army hand-to-forehead salute was scrapped in favor of the stiff-armed Nazi salute.

And so it seemed, as he had done so many times in the past, Hitler had turned near-disaster to victory for himself. The failed coup and sweeping purge actually

propelled Hitler to the zenith of his personal power over the military and people of Nazi Germany.

But there was a big problem now – his health was declining.

Hitler was never the same after the bomb blast of July 20th. At first, everyone around him optimistically thought he had only suffered minor injuries. But by the next day, various symptoms indicated some deeper problems. The bomb had exploded about six feet to his right. As a result, Hitler began to experience a persistent earache, which steadily worsened, in his right ear and temporarily lost all hearing in that ear. It turned out he had a ruptured eardrum. Additionally, his eyes developed an odd flicker and constantly drifted to the right. His ear and eye troubles affected his balance and he staggered like a man who had been drinking, needing to carefully focus on each step as he walked.

Presently there were four doctors hovering around the Führer and they provided a wild concoction of injections, pills and inhalers for all of his symptoms. The drugs in turn caused their own symptoms, such as severe stomach cramps, for which additional drugs were administered, resulting in an ever-increasing toxic stew of medications. On top of this, the insomnia which had plagued Hitler in recent years now became severe and he sometimes went days with little or no sleep. All of this had a dulling effect on his mind and his once-extraordinary memory and amazing recall of detail were no longer evident. At times, the exhausted Führer needed prompting as to the name of the person he was speaking with.

Personality changes were also evident after July 20th. The now-embittered Führer became impossible to reason with, as General Guderian himself recalled: "He believed no one anymore. It had been difficult enough dealing with him. It now became a torture that grew steadily worse from month to month. He frequently lost all self control and his language grew increasingly violent."

Each passing month brought Nazi Germany nearer to the end. However, for Adolf Hitler, though worn down, there was one thing that had not diminished at all – his will power. Even at this late stage, he remained driven by the same indomitable will that had propelled him into politics in the first place, a quarter-century ago.

Meanwhile, there were still those who believed Hitler, the magician, would stun everyone and somehow turn the whole military situation around. Not surprisingly, this is exactly what Hitler tried to do. As the winter of 1944 set in, he decided to gamble for victory again, this time against the upstart Americans, in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge.



July 15, 1944, five days before the bombing--Hitler greets a visitor at his Wolf's Lair headquarters. On the far left stands Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg. Below Left: Major-General Henning von Tresckow of the Eastern Front who provided moral backbone to the conspirators. Below Right: Lt.-General Friedrich Olbricht who functioned as Stauffenberg's chief co-conspirator in Berlin.





A view of the destroyed conference room just a few hours after the explosion. Below: Hitler and Mussolini survey the bomb damage.





Standing beneath the swastika flag and a bust of Hitler, Roland Freisler, President of the People's Court, pronounces judgment on a group of defendants during one of several show trials held after the bombing. Below: Close-up of a stooped Hitler visiting the bedside of Admiral Karl Puttkamer who was injured in the bomb blast.



Battle of the Bulge

In the summer of 1944, while Himmler's SS men were busy rounding up supposedly disloyal Army generals, Allied troops were busy blasting their way off the Normandy beachheads and into northern France.

German troops attempting to regroup for a massive counter-attack had instead suffered a crushing defeat when they were trapped in a pocket around Falaise. The Germans subsequently withdrew from northern France and then exited Paris amid a Resistance uprising. Fortunately the treasured city was left largely undamaged by the departing Germans as senior commanders turned a deaf ear to vengeful orders from Hitler. The city was formally liberated on August 25, 1944, by Free French troops.

Soon tank columns of the U.S. 3rd Army led by General George Patton were roaring eastward toward Germany so fast they risked running out of fuel. The amazing American and British-Canadian success continued with the liberation of Verdun, Dieppe, Artois, Rouen, Abbeville, Brussels and Antwerp. At the same time, Allied troops staged Operation Dragoon, a seaborne invasion of southern France, then pushed northward to link up with Patton. By mid-September, American troops had reached the Siegfried Line, a series of defensive fortifications stretching along Germany's western border.

By now, Hitler had lost over 500,000 soldiers in the West. It seemed the Western Allies were unstoppable and German commanders braced themselves for the inevitable invasion of the Fatherland. However, they were astounded when the entire Allied advance unexpectedly slowed down and then halted completely.

Despite appearances, the Western Allies needed to regroup. Supply lines had become dangerously overstretched, hampering the delivery of vital war materials including Patton's gasoline. Field Marshal Montgomery also needed to recover following Operation Market Garden, a daring airborne attack he had launched in September, intending to pierce the German front lines in southern Holland at Arnhem, seize a key bridge, and cross the Rhine River into Germany's industrial heartland. Unfortunately, British and American troops involved in the assault parachuted into the midst of 2nd SS Panzer Corps which had gathered there by coincidence to refit and resupply its tank troops. The result was a costly failure with nearly eight thousand casualties.

At this point, rather than sit back and allow the Western Allies to regroup, Hitler decided to act. Although weary in mind and body, the old gambling instincts were still there. And so he picked a spot on the map and decided to place all of his chips. To the great surprise of his generals, he ordered a stunning new

offensive reminiscent of the brilliant Blitzkrieg assault four years earlier that had overwhelmed the French Army. His idea was to take advantage of the foggy weather, typical for mid-December, to plunge a force of 250,000 men through the lightly defended Ardennes Forest, cross the Meuse River, and then push northward to Antwerp, capturing it within a week.

But the plan came with a big price tag. To fill out the ranks, Hitler would need to draw thousands of men from the Russian Front where some 300 Soviet divisions were presently massing for their own invasion of Germany. Nevertheless, to Hitler it was worth the risk. It offered a chance to split apart the all-powerful American 1st and 3rd Armies, and in the accompanying confusion, crush British and Canadian positions along the Belgian-Dutch border. Additionally, the capture of Antwerp would rob the Allies of their only forward supply port.

The political fallout of this shocking victory, Hitler calculated, would be a rift between the British and Americans, thereby collapsing the Western Alliance, thus allowing him to transfer all of his forces to the Russian Front in time to thwart the Soviet invasion.

The two men chosen to command the offensive, Field Marshals Model and Rundstedt, listened in disbelief to the fantastical plan, knowing they had insufficient manpower and equipment to pull it off. But Hitler explained it yet another way. He cited the historical exploits of Frederick the Great, who had been in a similar bind two centuries earlier, only to launch a surprise attack against a vastly superior force, causing the alliance against him to dissolve, resulting in a spectacular victory.

Now, as then, the element of surprise would be the key. And in this regard nothing was left to chance. To keep the Allies from detecting their plans the Germans used a clever variety of deceptive tactics including a flurry of fake radio messages sent to non-existing frontline command posts, false rumors spread in public places for anyone to overhear, and relied primarily on secretive face-to-face conversations to relay the actual battle plans. At the same time, three whole armies, including twelve Panzer tank divisions, were quietly rolled into position for the offensive using a piecemeal approach to avoid detection.

Along with the element of surprise, the Germans needed to sow confusion to succeed. Here one of the more interesting exploits of the war unfolded, the brain child of Hitler himself. A special "School for Americans" was set up by SS spy master Otto Skorzeny to train 2,000 German commandos to speak and behave like American soldiers. Using captured uniforms and Jeeps, the commandos intended to confuse U.S. troops in the zone of attack by giving bad directions,

mixing up road signs, killing dispatch riders, cutting phone wires, and would try to generate panic by depicting a hopeless situation to anyone who would listen.

At 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 16, 1944, it all began. The offensive, which Hitler code named Operation Autumn Fog, erupted with an hour-long artillery barrage along an eighty-five mile front in the Ardennes which was thinly defended by six American divisions. Three of the divisions were new and had no battle experience while the remainder were experienced but tired-out men sent to recuperate in what had been the quietest sector of the Western Front. Now they watched in amazement, peering through the morning mist as 2,500 tanks and self-propelled guns, accompanied by 18 infantry divisions, rumbled toward them over ground lightly covered with new-fallen snow.

Outnumbered three-to-one, and with no air support due to the heavy fog, the Americans knew they were in a terrible jam. Some yielded to a frenzied survival instinct and fell into a disorderly retreat. Others dug in their heels, aimed their rifles and held their ground, falling back only at the very last moment. An American eyewitness recalled the turmoil: "Aid stations overflowing, wounded men being evacuated by Jeep, truck, ambulance, anything that could roll, walking wounded...vehicles off the road, mired in mud or slush or damaged by gunfire...signal men trying to string wire to elements to cut off or repair [communication] lines which were being shot out as fast as they were put in."

The German success continued unhindered for five foggy days, creating a 50-mile westward bulge in the lines, which gave the battle its popular name. American losses included a mass surrender of 7,500 soldiers, the single worst defeat for U.S. troops during the entire war in Europe. At Malmedy, in the northern part of the front, 81 unarmed American POWs were shot dead by Waffen-SS troops.

Meanwhile, several jeeploads of Skorzeny's imposters penetrated the lines and caused disruption as planned. Given the vastness of the front, their overall impact was rather limited. However, one team had a huge impact, chiefly resulting from their capture by suspicious Americans. During interrogation, they revealed details of the whole commando mission. As a result, the news flashed all along the front that German saboteurs were masquerading as Americans. This was a psychological blow to the beleaguered Americans, creating an atmosphere of widespread mistrust. Americans who didn't know each other beforehand now demanded answers to off-the-cuff trivia questions such as who had won the last World Series in baseball.

At his headquarters in Versailles, Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, was genuinely surprised Hitler had managed to scrape together enough resources to launch an offensive of this magnitude. His top aide, General

Omar Bradley, Commander of U.S. troops in Europe, immediately sent in reinforcements. As they arrived, the German advance slowed, resulting in uneven progress all along the front.

By Thursday, December 21st, the Germans had hit a significant roadblock in the middle of the front at Bastogne in southern Belgium. To prevent this key city from falling into German hands, the 101st Airborne Division had been rushed in and formed defensive lines around the city, keeping the Germans at bay despite withering artillery fire. Inside the city were Americans from all corners of the battlefield who wound up there for one reason or another. When a German military delegation finally approached the heavily-surrounded Americans and demanded surrender, General Anthony McAuliffe's surprise response was "Nuts."

News of this spread and Americans with nothing to smile about till now were amused. Morale began to improve, along with the weather. On the morning of December 22nd, the fog finally lifted and hundreds of Allied planes took to the skies, dropping parachuted supplies into Bastogne, and machine-gunning all things German.

Hitler's commanders knew they were in trouble. The original plan called for a sweeping northward movement across the Meuse River onto Antwerp to trap the Allied armies within a week. Along the way, they were supposed to capture Allied fuel depots to keep the tanks rolling. But after a week they had barely reached the Meuse, failed to capture any fuel, and were facing increasing counter-attacks from a numerically superior Allied force that had caught its breath and regrouped. Now, like so many times in the past, the generals asked Hitler for permission to scrap the original plan and improvise due to the changed conditions. Once more, and for the last time in his life, Hitler said no.

It would be, as always, the frontline German who would pay for Hitler's stubbornness. Some of the troops were actually sixteen-year-olds pressed into military service by the Nazis. Raised according to the tenets of the Hitler Youth program, which emphasized the glory of a heroic death for the Fatherland, the emboldened teens were prone to behave recklessly on the battlefield and died by the hundreds for no reason. Allied soldiers who shot them, seeing only anonymous grey-clad figures in the distance, were both saddened and angered when they viewed the bodies up close, realizing Hitler was now gambling with the lives of boys in the West.

On Christmas Day 1944, Hitler took a little time off to celebrate the holiday with his staff, even sipping a glass of wine, a rarity for him. The next day, the wrath of the entire Western Alliance was loosed upon his troops, from the air

and on the ground. Bastogne, which had been cut off for a week, was relieved as a column of Patton's tanks broke through from the south.

Operation Autumn Fog was doomed. The gamble had failed. Shouting matches and arguments erupted at Hitler's headquarters. Even his oldest comrade, Hermann Göring, pleaded with Hitler to consider seeking an armistice to end the war. But the Supreme Commander would have none of it. Instead he ordered 25,000 relief troops rushed to the Ardennes and also threatened to have Göring shot if he tried to make his own peace agreement.

Autumn Fog would continue, the Führer insisted. Remarkably, he now ordered a second smaller offensive further southward to begin on New Year's Day to draw Allied troops away from the Ardennes. Once this succeeded, he declared, the northward drive to the Meuse would resume and the troops would achieve victory by relying on their fanatical zeal as Nazis to simply outlast the Allies.

By this time, however, with regular radio communications resumed, the British were deciphering the whole German strategy via Enigma, a duplicate of the Wehrmacht's top-secret cryptographic machine. They relayed each of the Führer's military directives directly to General Eisenhower. As a result, the New Year's offensive lasted just one day and the drive to the Meuse never resumed. Two days later, January 3, 1945, the Americans began an intensive two-pronged attack designed to break apart the original bulge the Germans had forged. Here the Germans caught a break as foggy weather dominated once more and all roads became very icy. American progress was hampered by the weather along with the skillful defensive tactics employed by German field commanders.

However, the Americans kept up the pressure, aided by the addition of British forces led by Field Marshal Montgomery, who was also given temporary command of the American 1st and 9th Armies in his area north of the bulge. Montgomery's combined force closed in from the north while Patton's 3rd Army came up from the south, forming a giant noose around the German position. Hitler was left with no alternative but to turn his tanks and soldiers around and send them all back toward Germany. Some units didn't escape in time, including over 20,000 men captured by the Americans east of Bastogne on January 16th. On that day, the American 1st and 3rd Armies also linked up after a month-long separation, effectively tying the noose.

For General Eisenhower, along with the touchy weather, he was now hampered by another nagging issue – the touchy egos of his top commanders. The rivalry between highly esteemed men such as Patton and Montgomery, and others, could get a bit ugly at times. Surrounded by members of the press, these once-obscure soldiers had become world famous. Every comment, every inflection of their voices was duly noted – and the temptation to play for the history books at

this great hour was enormous. Thus Montgomery's comments about his role in the Battle of the Bulge had unintended consequences. American generals were dismayed by Montgomery's implication that he had rescued them. Montgomery apologized to Eisenhower and the controversy soon subsided.

For the Germans, the Battle of the Ardennes, as they called it, had been costly. They lost 120,000 soldiers and 600 tanks which at this late date simply could not be replaced. Surviving Germans rushed home to take up defensive positions in western Germany. In all, they had accomplished nothing other than to postpone certain invasion by about six weeks.

For Adolf Hitler, the battle marked the end of eight years of offensive maneuvers in the West, large and small, dating back to his occupation of the Rhineland. More ominously, the battle marked the beginning of the final military phase for Hitler, emphasizing Nazi fanaticism over battlefield logic as the way to overcome shortages of men and equipment. Such fanaticism would soon cost many Germans, young and old, their lives.

After mopping up in the Ardennes, the Americans and British began to position themselves for the great thrust into Germany. Meanwhile, in the East, the Russians had launched an earth-shattering attack involving 300 divisions. Within weeks they would be a hundred miles from Berlin and closing in Adolf Hitler.



November 1944--Working out the details of Operation Autumn Fog, as ordered by Hitler, are (from left) Field Marshals Walter Model, Gerd von Rundstedt, and General Hans Krebs. Below: During the offensive, German infantry advance through a forest in Luxembourg.



Americans become prisoners of the Waffen-SS. Below: At Bastogne, members of the 101st Airborne Division watch as C-47 planes drop supplies.



Enter the Bunker

The German people were about to learn the harshest lesson of all. The Führer's contempt for human life was not exclusive to the Slavic peoples or the Jews, but would soon be visited upon the Germans themselves, because of their inability to achieve the things he had set out for them.

Throughout his life, Adolf Hitler had never been able to admit a single mistake or accept responsibility for any failure. And as the thousand-year Reich he founded teetered on the brink of collapse in early 1945, he blamed it on the weakness of the German people and a military organization riddled with timid, disloyal and incompetent officers. If only they had really listened to him and let themselves be inspired. If only they had possessed the same will and determination as him – certainly everything would have turned out differently.

After the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler had fallen into a state of deep despair and wearily returned to Berlin from his headquarters on the Western Front, setting up new headquarters inside the Reich Chancellery building, already partially damaged by Allied bombing. During his daily military briefings he listened to gloomy reports concerning the unstoppable advance of largest combined military force the world had ever seen, now roaring into the Fatherland from East and West.

In the East, the Russian advance of 300 divisions had begun in mid-January. German positions all along the Russian Front collapsed "like a house of cards" just as General Guderian had warned Hitler they would due to the depletion of reserves for his now-failed Ardennes offensive. Russian troops led by Marshal Zhukov had crossed the Vistula River and then took Warsaw. Ten days later,

East and West Prussia, the ancient lands of German princes and military aristocrats, were completely cut off from Germany. This was followed by the seizure of the vast mining operations in Upper Silesia which supplied over half of Germany's coal, thus crippling the coal-dependent steel factories and railroads.

And as they roared into Germany, Russian soldiers unleashed their pent-up fury upon German soldiers and civilians alike, exacting a revenge without limits upon Hitler's people for all that the Nazis had done in Russia. One such town caught up in the maelstrom was Demmin in northeastern Germany where women tried to stave off Russian sexual assaults. Waltraud Reski, a schoolgirl at the time, recalled: "The women were disguised, but you can tell if a woman has a good figure, and they found my mother again and again, and treated her terribly. You can't imagine what it was like for her to be raped ten or twenty times a day. You're hardly human anymore. My mother became an entirely different person for the rest of her life."

News of the rapes, random murders and out-of-control plundering quickly spread, causing German civilians to become hysterical as the Red Army approached their locale. Whole families committed suicide rather than allow themselves to be subjected to Russian rule. At Demmin alone, some 900 persons killed themselves upon the Russian occupation, mainly by plunging into the nearby river and drowning along with their children.

Elsewhere, as the Russians approached, families hurriedly grabbed a few belongings and joined the throngs of Germans already on the road, all heading westward toward the advancing Americans, amid the hope of better treatment. Thus began one of the largest mass migrations ever seen on the European continent as millions of Germans abandoned town after town and entire cities as well. And with each passing day, they had less distance to travel to meet up with the steadily advancing Americans.

In the West, eighty-five American and British divisions had invaded Germany in early February, heading for the Rhine River, the natural north-south barrier protecting western Germany. Unwisely, Hitler ignored advice from Field Marshal Rundstedt to position his troops on the right bank of the river, thereby forcing the Allies to cross the water to attack. Instead, he left them as-is on the left bank, nearer the invaders, resulting in the loss of 350,000 soldiers and their equipment by the end of the month. For this, Hitler blamed Rundstedt and sacked him.

The Allies crossed the Rhine River into the heartland of Germany in early March, twenty-five miles south of Koblenz at the town of Remagen. Here the Germans had failed to destroy a huge railroad bridge spanning the river in time

to prevent American troops and tanks from seizing it. A furious Hitler ordered the execution of the eight Army officers who had bungled the bridge's defense. This marked the beginning of a do-or-die phase for German troops at the hands of their vengeful Führer. Mishaps and mistakes were now punishable by death.

The growing problem of desertion was similarly addressed. The hopelessness of the overall military situation tempted many a German soldier in the West to surrender to the Americans, considered less hostile than the British, whose cities the Germans had been bombing for five years. To counter this trend, drastic orders were issued by the High Command in the name of the Führer decreeing the punishment of death for anyone traveling on unauthorized leave, or anyone claiming to be lost or separated from their unit. Roving squads of Himmler's SS men also patrolled rear areas looking for stragglers. They were summarily shot or in some cases hanged from a nearby lamp post, left there as a warning with a hand-lettered sign pinned on them saying "I deserted." Himmler also made it known the SS would track down and shoot the entire family of any deserter.

Such drastic measures could not forestall the military outcome however. And as his troops withered in the face of the awesome might of the Russian, American, and British-Canadian armies, Hitler scraped together new units composed of old men and young boys to save what remained of Nazi Germany. Universities, high schools, and even grade schools were emptied as all able-bodied males were grabbed for service in the *Volkssturm* – the People's Home Guard. In Berlin and elsewhere, elderly World War I veterans now marched off to the east alongside junior Hitler Youth boys to fend off battle-hardened Russians outnumbering them twenty to one. Armed only with rifles and anti-tank grenade launchers, they would lose their lives, blown to bits while serving as human barricades, accomplishing nothing other than to buy a little more time for their Führer.

While they bled, the Führer decided he had time to do one more big thing before the end. On March 19, 1945, he ordered a massive scorched-earth campaign throughout Germany so that absolutely nothing of value would be left for the victors. This included the complete destruction of all German industry, communications, agriculture, mines, food stuffs, railways, ships, roads, bridges, stores, shops and utility plants.

"If the war is lost," Hitler told his Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, "the nation will also perish. This fate is inevitable. There is no necessity to take into consideration the basis which the people will need to continue even a most primitive existence. On the contrary, it will be better to destroy these things ourselves, because this nation will have proved to be the weaker one and the future will belong solely to the stronger eastern nation. Besides, those who will remain after the battle are only the inferior ones, for the good ones have all been killed."

It amounted to a virtual death sentence for the entire German population who would lack even bread and water after the war. Fortunately for them, the mad directive was never fully obeyed. Using his considerable authority as a Nazi Minister, Speer rushed from place to place, preventing its enactment, aided by sympathetic Army officers, along with the blazing speed of the Allied advance.

By the end of March, tank troops led by Patton and Montgomery had fully crossed the Rhine River and were roaring eastward, shrinking the borders of Hitler's Germany by several miles each day.

Meanwhile, in the East, Zhukov's troops were massing for their final attack on Berlin, a city already 90-percent destroyed by the continuing thousand-bomber air raids. Among the bombing victims was People's Court Judge, Roland Freisler, killed by a direct hit. Also hit again was the Reich Chancellery building, which had been serving as Hitler's military headquarters. By this time, Hitler had abandoned it for the safety of an underground bunker complex fifty feet below the adjacent garden.

And there he would remain for the final month of his life, protected by a reinforced concrete ceiling thirty feet thick. The bunker had an upper level with twelve small rooms for Hitler's staff, with a middle hallway functioning as a common dining area. The lower level, or Führerbunker, was larger with twenty rooms on either side of a center sitting room and conference area, with an adjacent map room. In the far left corner were six sparsely furnished private rooms for Hitler and Eva Braun, his longtime companion, who had traveled from Berchtesgaden to join him, determined to stay by his side, come what may.

But the man she loved was only a shadow of his former self. Presently he had trouble walking, needing to balance himself by grabbing hold of furniture or the wall for support. He was very pale, with cloudy blue eyes and stooped shoulders, while his left hand now trembled uncontrollably. At times he was absent minded, repeating himself without ever knowing it.

However, none of this diminished the rage he demonstrated during his daily military conferences when confronted with grim reality. These days there were insufficient soldiers and equipment to carry out just about any of his orders.

Regardless, even at this late stage, Hitler insisted there was still good reason to fight on, despite the heavy cost in German lives. He now believed the Western democracies, America and Britain, would soon see the light and join with Nazi Germany to fight the Russians in order to prevent Stalin from expanding the Soviet Union, and thereby Communism, into Europe. Therefore, the Führer had

convinced himself, the solution to Germany's dire predicament would be a political one after all – if his troops could just hold out.

In reality, the Allies had seen the light already and it only concerned the magnitude of Nazi barbarism and its tragic human toll. This became apparent when American, British and Russian soldiers liberated concentration camps and saw gas chambers, ovens, piles of ashes, and stacks of dead bodies along with starved survivors who looked like walking corpses.

After a visit to Ohrdruf Camp near Buchenwald, General Eisenhower himself would comment, “I never dreamed that such cruelty, bestiality, and savagery could really exist in this world!”

Nevertheless, Hitler and those around him in the bunker clung to the hope of a falling out among the Allies, buoyed in part by the memory of Frederick the Great, the German military leader who had heroically held out against overwhelming odds, until the alliance against him abruptly dissolved back in 1761. A painting of Frederick the Great was fondly kept by Hitler in his private quarters in the bunker and he liked to gaze at it, finding inspiration – one great leader to another.

A further hope those in the bunker clutched onto as everything fell apart was astrology. Encouraged by his Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, the Führer requested to see the two horoscopes that Himmler, who dabbled deeply in such things, had stored away for him. And according to the star charts, Hitler would experience victory through 1941, then a series of setbacks through the first half of April 1945, when something great would happen to bring him unexpected success.

Coincidentally, on Thursday, April 12, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt fell ill and died from a cerebral hemorrhage while visiting Warm Springs, Georgia. Upon hearing the news, Goebbels telephoned Hitler and congratulated him. This had to be the turning point. Without Roosevelt, the delicate British-American-Russian alliance would surely disintegrate. After this, the less hostile Harry Truman would be open to the possibility of talks with Nazi Germany.

But nothing happened. President Truman continued all of Roosevelt's war policies and alliances. When this became apparent, Hitler's elation over Roosevelt's death evaporated, followed by the darkest mood of his life as he listened to the worst-ever military reports. By now, all of his armies in the Ruhr industrial area had collapsed upon the capture of 325,000 men, following their encirclement by the American 1st and 9th Armies.

Berlin itself was now endangered. American advance units were about 50 miles west of the city while the Russians were already on the outskirts. In response to it all, Hitler issued frantic orders to reposition armies that were either already wiped out or presently surrounded. And as his orders went unheeded, the Führer became increasingly enraged.

Everything came to head on Sunday, April 22nd. During a three-hour military conference in the Führerbunker, Hitler let loose a shrieking denunciation of the German Army and the "universal treason, corruption, lies and failures" of all those who had let him down.

"The war is lost!" shouted the exasperated Führer. The Third Reich was a failure. And, he said, there was nothing left for him to do, but stay in Berlin and die.



Hitler during a briefing at the headquarters of Army Group Vistula in March 1945. Below:
German refugees and Army soldiers are seen in motion on a forest road in East Prussia as the
Russians approach.



Below: A light moment during an impromptu conference in March 1945 involving Generals Eisenhower (left), Patton (arm raised) Bradley and Hodges--on the verge of victory.





Volkssturm soldiers with anti-tank (Panzerfaust) rocket grenades ready to take their posts at a railway underpass. Below: A 12-year-old junior Hitler Youth member awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class for bravery under fire during fighting involving the Russians in Upper Silesia.





The inferno of Berlin during one of numerous air raids. Below: Soviet artillery of the 1st Byelorussian and 1st Ukrainian Armies in position outside Berlin in April 1945.



Downfall of Adolf Hitler

All of his life, Adolf Hitler had been obsessed with the musical works of German composer Richard Wagner. As a teenager living in Austria, Hitler was deeply inspired by Wagner's operas and their pagan, mythical tales of struggles against hated enemies. One time, back in 1905, after seeing Wagner's opera *Rienzi*, young Hitler professed he would someday embark on a great mission, leading his people to freedom, similar to the opera's story.

Now, some 40 years later, after failing in his mission as Führer of the German People and Reich, another of Wagner's operas hearkened, and it was Hitler's favorite – *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. It concerns a magic Ring granting its possessor the power to rule the world. In the last part of this opera, entitled *Götterdämmerung*, or "Twilight of the gods," the hero Siegfried, betrayed by

those around him, loses the Ring and winds up on a funeral pyre while the fortress of Valhalla burns and the kingdom of the gods is destroyed.

This essentially was the ending Hitler inflicted upon himself, his People and his Reich.

Piece by piece, it all came together over the last ten days of his life, beginning on Friday, April 20, 1945. That day Hitler met for the last time with his top Nazis. The occasion was Hitler's 56th birthday, a dreary celebration inside the Führerbunker in Berlin. Present were Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, Joachim Ribbentrop, Albert Speer and Martin Bormann, along with military leaders Wilhelm Keitel, Alfred Jodl, Karl Dönitz, and Hans Krebs, the new Chief of the General Staff.

At first, those present tried to convince the Führer to leave doomed Berlin for the relative safety of Berchtesgaden, the mountain area along the German-Austrian border where he had his villa. From there he could continue the fight, supported by troops positioned throughout the impenetrable Alpine mountains of western Austria and southern Bavaria. Such a move might prolong the war indefinitely and improve the odds of a favorable outcome for Germany, one way or another.

But Hitler brushed aside this suggestion, knowing that any journey outside the bunker brought great risk of capture. And above all, the Führer did not want himself, alive or dead, to wind up prominently displayed by his enemies, particularly the Russians. However, he did give his bunker personnel permission to leave. Most of his staff therefore departed for Berchtesgaden via a convoy of trucks and planes, still hoping the Führer would follow. Only a handful of Hitler's personal staff remained with him, including his top aide Martin Bormann, a few SS and military aides, two private secretaries, and his longtime companion, Eva Braun.

Hitler's choice to remain in the Führerbunker to the very end amounted to his final decision of the war. It was made known to the German people via a special radio announcement in the hope that his presence in the Nazi capital would inspire all remaining Wehrmacht, SS, Volkssturm and Hitler Youth units in Berlin to hold out to the end as well.

Although the war was lost, Hitler nevertheless took pride in the knowledge that he had not allowed another repeat of November 1918, when the German Army had meekly asked the Allies for armistice terms to conclude the First World War. This was all Hitler had left. Just a few years earlier, the Führer had been regarded by most German's as their greatest-ever military leader. Now, all that

remained of his military legacy was the fact he had refused to give up no matter what.

The Führer's stubborn pride insured that thousands of German soldiers, Hitler Youths and civilians would needlessly lose their lives in the streets of Berlin, where advance units of the Red Army were already probing. Inside the bunker, Hitler told General Jodl, "I will fight as long as I have a single soldier. When the last soldier deserts me. I will shoot myself."

However, the Führer's fatalism was not shared by his two oldest comrades, Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler, who had both scooted away from Berlin just hours after Hitler's birthday gathering. Göring made it safely to Berchtesgaden where he had his own villa, bringing along truckloads of artworks looted from museums all over occupied Europe. For his part, Himmler headed in the opposite direction, staying for the moment in a small town northwest of Berlin.

Both men were spurred to act on their own in the aftermath of the Führer's shocking behavior during the military conference held in the bunker on Sunday, April 22nd. To everyone there that day, it seemed the Führer had suffered a total mental and physical breakdown, completely losing control while letting loose a shrieking denunciation of the Army, then collapsing into a chair. News of the Führer's appalling condition spread like wildfire among the top Nazis outside Berlin, including Göring and Himmler.

Göring, the Führer's designated successor, now pondered whether or not to announce he was the new leader of the Reich, since Hitler was presently cut off from the rest of Germany in besieged Berlin, and apparently incapacitated. But the inherent danger of such a move, even at this late stage, gave him pause for concern. And so Göring put off a decision and instead sent Hitler a carefully worded telegram the next day, Monday, April 23rd, trying to feel him out:

"My Führer! In view of your decision to remain in the fortress of Berlin, do you agree that I take over at once the total leadership of the Reich, with full freedom of action at home and abroad as your deputy, in accordance with your decree of June 29, 1941? If no reply is received by 10 o'clock tonight, I shall take it for granted that you have lost your freedom of action, and shall consider the conditions of your decree as fulfilled, and shall act for the best interests of our country and our people..."

Göring didn't know that Hitler had since rebounded from his meltdown and regained a measure of composure. Therefore, Hitler's response to Göring's telegram, prompted by Martin Bormann, was that the Reich Marshal had committed "high treason." Although this carried the death penalty, Göring

would be spared if he immediately resigned all of his titles and offices – which Göring promptly did. Next, Bormann, a longtime behind-the-scenes foe of Göring, transmitted an order to the SS near Berchtesgaden to arrest Göring and his staff. As a result, just before dawn on Tuesday, April 24, Göring was put under house arrest. Thus ended the long career of the man who would be Führer.

In contrast to Göring's cautiousness, Himmler took a much bolder approach. At the very moment that Hitler was reading Göring's telegram, Himmler was secretly proposing the surrender all German troops in the West to General Eisenhower.

Himmler had traveled to the city of Lübeck in northern Germany to meet with Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross. Himmler's idea was to have Bernadotte contact Eisenhower regarding the surrender in the West, while at the same time Germany would continue fighting the Russians in the East, soon to be joined by the Americans and British. Playing a key role in this new German-American-British alliance would be the leader of post-Hitler Germany, Heinrich Himmler himself.

His proposal got nowhere. By now, Himmler's name, and that of the SS organization he headed, was already synonymous with mass murder.

Meanwhile, the military situation continued to deteriorate. On Wednesday, April 25th, Russian and American soldiers greeted each other face-to-face at Torgau on the Elbe River, seventy-five miles south of Berlin, effectively severing Nazi Germany in two. The next day, Russian artillery fire made the first direct hits upon the Reich Chancellery buildings in Berlin and the grounds directly above the Führerbunker.

A German tank officer described the scene in his diary: “We retreat again under heavy Russian air attacks. Inscriptions [I see] on house walls [say]: ‘The hour before sunrise is darkest’ and ‘We retreat but we are winning.’...The night is fiery red. Heavy shelling. Otherwise a terrible silence...Women and children huddling in niches and corners and listening for the sounds of battle...Nervous breakdowns.”

By Friday, April 27, Russian bombardment of the Reich Chancellery buildings had reached its peak with numerous direct hits, causing Hitler to send frantic telegrams to Field Marshal Keitel demanding that Berlin be relieved by now non-existent armies.

For Hitler, the worst blow of all came the next day when BBC news radio reports concerning Himmler's surrender negotiations were broadcast from London and picked up by Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. According to

eyewitnesses in the bunker, Hitler "raged like a madman" with a ferocity never seen before when informed of the betrayal. Himmler had been at his side since the beginning, earning the fond nickname *Der Treue Heinrich* (Faithful Heinrich) through years of murderous, fanatical service to his Führer. Now, Hitler wanted to have him shot.

Since Himmler was nowhere to be found, Hitler ordered his personal liaison in the bunker, SS-General Hermann Fegelein, shot instead. Fegelein was already under suspicion, having been nabbed the day before trying to sneak out of Berlin in civilian clothing. After some brief questioning, he was taken up to the Chancellery garden above the bunker and summarily executed.

In the meantime, advance units of the Red Army had smashed through the German defenses in Berlin and were only a few miles away from the bunker. Hitler was informed there was perhaps a day or two left before the Russians arrived at his doorstep.

Now, at long last, Hitler reconciled himself to defeat, and began preparations for his own death.

First, he married Eva Braun, as a reward for her ceaseless devotion, during a relationship in which she had spent nearly all of her time at Berchtesgaden waiting for him to show up. They were married in a brief ceremony about an hour past midnight, early Sunday, April 29, with Goebbels and Bormann in attendance. Everyone was then invited into the Führer's private quarters for a wedding breakfast featuring champagne and fond reminisces by Hitler of better days gone by, followed by a bitter accounting of the recent betrayal by his two oldest comrades. Those who listened were moved to tears. Shortly thereafter, Hitler excused himself, bringing along his staff secretary, Traudl Junge, to whom he dictated his last will along with a two-part political testament.

In his will he left his possessions to the Nazi Party and also revealed his fate: "I myself and my wife – in order to escape the disgrace of deposition or capitulation – choose death. It is our wish to be burnt immediately on the spot where I have carried out the greatest part of my daily work in the course of twelve years' of service to my people."

His political testament recited familiar themes first stated in his book *Mein Kampf* back in 1925. In addition, he blamed the Jews for everything, including the war. He cited the extermination threat he had made on January 30, 1939, followed by a veiled reference to the gas chambers, labeling them a "humane means" of making the Jews atone for the guilt of causing the war.

In the second part of his political testament, he expelled both Göring and Himmler from the Nazi Party and appointed Admiral Karl Dönitz as his successor, not as Führer, but as President of the Reich. Dönitz was to preside over a government with Goebbels as Chancellor and Bormann as Party Minister. After completing his dictations, Hitler went off to bed, having been up all night.

While the Führer slept, the Battle of Berlin raged in the streets above him, with the Germans fighting fanatically to defend every inch, just as Hitler hoped they would. Above all, they tried to knock out the Russian T34 tanks now rolling toward Hitler. A Russian tank driver recalled: "There were a lot of Panzerfausts [anti-tank grenade launchers] in Berlin. They were lying in every basement. Mostly the operators were old men or boys."

Casualties on both sides were high. But the Russians pressed forward relentlessly, blasting through anything in their way. The Red Army under Marshal Zhukov, after a journey of some 1500 miles that had begun back in Stalingrad, was now close to victory. When the Führer awoke about noontime, he was told that Russian troops were only a mile from the bunker.

Realizing their Führer intended to self-destruct, four of his remaining military adjutants asked for permission to leave the bunker, on the excuse that they wanted to check on the status of a relief column supposedly being led by General Wenck. Hitler granted their requests. He also took this opportunity to give his Luftwaffe adjutant, Colonel Below, one last Führer message to be hand delivered to the Army High Command:

"The people and the armed forces have given their all in this long and hard struggle. The sacrifice has been enormous. But my trust has been misused by many people. Disloyalty and betrayal have undermined resistance throughout the war. It was therefore not granted to me to lead the people to victory. The Army General Staff cannot be compared with the General Staff in the First World War. Its achievements were far behind those of the fighting front. The efforts and sacrifices of the German people in this war have been so great that I cannot believe that they have been in vain. The aim must still be to win territory in the East for the German people."

Thus the last official words of the Führer contained both a final insult of the Army leadership along with a repetition of the Lebensraum theme for the East.

Shortly thereafter, the final bit of news from the outside world ever to reach Hitler told of the death of his oldest political ally, Benito Mussolini. The one-time dictator of Italy had tried to flee along with his mistress, but had been captured by Italian partisans, executed, hung upside down and then thrown into

the gutter. Hitler's only reaction was an expressed determination not to suffer a similar fate.

Hitler never heard the other news that day from Italy. SS-General Karl Wolff, formerly Himmler's chief aide, had successfully negotiated the unconditional surrender of all German forces in Italy to the Western Allies.

Hitler's sole concern right now was to ready himself for the moment of death. He had in his possession several small glass capsules containing liquid cyanide poison. All one had to do was bite down on the glass and painless death would follow in seconds. But since the capsules had been supplied by the now-traitorous Himmler, the Führer worried they might not be the real thing. Hitler therefore ordered one tested on his favorite dog, Blondi, which killed the animal instantly. After this, he handed out the cyanide capsules to his female secretaries, apologizing that he did not have better parting gifts for them. The capsules, he told them, were theirs to use when the Russians stormed the bunker.

As Sunday evening wore on, Hitler asked everyone to stay up. They waited for hours, for what they sensed would be a final goodbye. It came about 2:30 a.m., early in the morning of Monday, April 30th, when Hitler came out of his private quarters into the dining area. The remaining members of his staff lined up to receive him. With glazed eyes, Hitler shook each hand, muttering a few inaudible words quietly, then retired back into his quarters. His secretary, Traudl Junge, recalled the moment: "He looked like a shadow. He looked emotionless, and very gray and pale, like a broken old man...his movements were very slow. He was not the dictator anymore, and the impressive, fascinating man he was earlier."

Following the Führer's departure, his staff mulled over the significance of what they had just experienced. Strangely, the tremendous tension of preceding days seemed to suddenly evaporate upon their realization that the end was near. A lighthearted mood surfaced, followed by spontaneous displays of merry-making even including dancing. At one point, they had to be told to keep the noise down.

At noontime on April 30th, Hitler attended his last-ever military conference and was told the Russians were a block away. Two hours later, Hitler sat down for his final meal, a vegetarian lunch. His wife had no appetite. In the meantime, his chauffeur was ordered to deliver 200 liters of gasoline to the Chancellery garden.

Hitler, accompanied by his wife Eva, now bid a last farewell to Bormann, Goebbels, Generals Krebs and Burgdorf. Hitler and his wife went back into their private quarters while Bormann and Goebbels stood quietly nearby. A few

moments later, about 3:30 p.m., a gunshot was heard. Bormann and Goebbels hesitated at first, then entered the room. They saw the body of Hitler sprawled on the sofa, dripping with blood from a gunshot to his right temple. He had killed himself with the same small revolver he once used to fire a warning shot into the ceiling back during the Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923 – a gun he had kept ever since. His wife, Eva, had died from biting into one of the cyanide capsules.

As Russian artillery shells exploded nearby, the bodies were carried up the stairs to the Reich Chancellery garden, placed in a shell crater, doused heavily with gasoline and burned while Bormann and Goebbels stood by silently, with arms extended in a final Nazi salute. Over the next three hours, the bodies were repeatedly doused until there were only charred remains, which were swept into a canvas, laid in a different shell crater and buried anonymously.

Back inside the bunker, with the Führer now gone, people lit cigarettes, a practice Hitler had forbidden in his presence. Next, they began to organize themselves into groups to flee the bunker and hopefully escape the Russians.

For Joseph Goebbels, life without Hitler was not worth living for himself, his wife and their six young children. On Tuesday, May 1st, Goebbels and his wife therefore poisoned their six children, aged 12 and younger, whom they had brought into the bunker. Next they went up into the Chancellery garden and each bit into a cyanide capsule. After collapsing and dying, they were shot in the head by an SS man as Goebbels had requested. Their bodies were then burned, but only partially, and were not buried. The macabre remains were discovered by the Russians the next day and filmed, with the grotesquely charred body of Goebbels becoming an enduring symbol of the legacy of Hitler's twelve-year Reich.

At 10 p.m. on May 1st, a special radio announcement told the German people their Führer had died "fighting with his last breath for Germany against Bolshevism," and also announced Dönitz as his designated successor. By now, the Russians were already combing through the wreckage of the Reich Chancellery looking for any sign of Hitler's body.

With the Führer dead and the German nation in ruins, Dönitz and surviving leaders of the Wehrmacht had just one thing in mind – stall for time to allow as many troops and civilians as possible to flee from the Russians and make it into western zones occupied by the Americans and British.

Thus it wasn't until Saturday, May 5th, when a military representative, Admiral Hans von Friedeburg, was sent by Dönitz to General Eisenhower's headquarters at Reims, France. He was then joined by General Jodl. Even now, the Germans

tried to stall the proceedings by suggesting a piecemeal surrender limited to the West, thereby allowing even more troops to flee the Russians. But Eisenhower saw through this ploy and demanded the Germans quit stalling and sign an unconditional surrender for all fronts.

And so, in the early morning hours of Monday, May 7th, with authorization from Dönitz, General Jodl signed the unconditional surrender document. The signing was, as Winston Churchill put it, “the signal for the greatest outburst of joy in the history of mankind.” Huge crowds gathered to rejoice in London, Paris, New York and Moscow.

The guns across Europe were silent. Nazi Germany was finished.

The German people, who had once cheered mightily for Hitler and enthusiastically embraced Nazism, now faced a stark and uncertain future. A German woman summed up the dilemma: "There won't be any more dying, any more raids. It's over. But then the fear set in of what would happen afterwards. We were spiritually and emotionally drained. Hitler's doctrines were discredited. And then the desperation set in of realizing that it had all been for nothing, and that was a terrible feeling. Surviving, finding something to eat and drink, was less difficult for me than the psychological emptiness. It was incomprehensible that all this was supposed to be over, and that it had all been for nothing."

For Jews and others, who had been targeted by Nazis, a great sense of relief was felt at outlasting Hitler. One woman who survived the Final Solution reflected: “During the five terrible war years, we could not indulge in simple pleasures that life offers to normal people. All our efforts were directed towards fighting the enemy and surviving. Now, for the first time since September 1, 1939, we could unwind and be normal again – to walk the streets without the fear of hearing the hated “*Halt!*” without the fear of being rounded up by the Germans and pushed into military trucks. No more “*Achtung, Achtung!*” coming down from the street loud-speakers. No more ghettos, no more starvation, typhus, gas chambers, *Einsatzgruppen* [killing squads]. The intense fear and persecution were over.”

The Germans themselves had paid dearly for Hitler's war, suffering four million civilian and three million military deaths. Hitler's nemesis, Soviet Russia, had suffered staggering losses including seven million soldiers and an estimated 16 million civilian deaths. Throughout Europe and Russia, six million Jews had been systematically murdered by Nazis.

For the victorious Allies, with images of recently liberated concentration camps still fresh in their minds, the question of justice now arose. Fortunately for the Allies, the rapid demise of Nazi Germany had resulted in the wholesale capture

of gigantic document archives from all branches of Hitler's government along with secret papers, conference reports and private diaries.

The Nazis had kept meticulous written records of their activities, from mass murder of the Jews, to Hitler's private talks. In addition, captured Nazi officials and high ranking military officers underwent lengthy interrogations. With all of the evidence at hand, the Allies decided to prosecute. The place chosen for the trial was Nuremberg, the now-ruined city that had once hosted annual rallies glorifying Hitler and Nazism.



Hermann Göring (center) with Hitler in early April 1945, mingling with German troops during one of their last public appearances together. Below: SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler (left) visits an SS Panzer Corps on the Western Front in 1944.



Below: The United States Army arm-in-arm with the Soviet Red Army at Torgau, Germany.



Below: Russian Shturmoviks in action over Berlin in April 1945 as the Red Army's main attack commences.





The Chancellery garden with entrance to the Führerbunker on left and adjacent ventilation tower as seen in 1947. Below: Portrait from 1942 of Eva Braun and Hitler with his dog Blondi.



Russian soldiers in Berlin gaze upon a Nazi eagle fallen from the Reich Chancellery building. Below: Germans POWs from Berlin are escorted by Russians



Below: Hitler's successor, Karl Dönitz, now a prisoner of the British along with Albert Speer and General Alfred Jodl.



Aftermath: Nuremberg and Beyond

Germany, much of Europe and Russia lay in ruins following Hitler's war, the most destructive conflict in the history of humanity, in which 54 million persons had perished – with more civilians killed than combatants – while another 60 million civilians had been uprooted from their homes or seen them destroyed.

The immediate postwar problem for the victorious Allies in Germany was coping with the eleven million displaced persons (DPs) now wandering around. This included people from all over Europe and Russia who had been slave

laborers, military conscripts, prisoners of war, and concentration camp inmates, including about 100,000 Jews who had survived the Final Solution.

Upon regaining their health, many of the Jews returned home, trying in vain to locate family members. In some cases, they found former neighbors now inhabiting their homes and shops. The new occupants soon made it clear they wished the Jews had never returned. Elsewhere, particularly in Eastern Europe, people lashed out at the returning Jews and hundreds were killed. As a result, the displaced Jews headed back to Germany and took refuge in American DP Camps, while they considered leaving Europe altogether and relocating to the historic Jewish homeland in the Middle East, an epic saga that would eventually lead to the founding of Israel.

Along with the DP problem, another great concern for the victors in Germany was that Hitlerism, in some form or other, would linger among the German population, with resulting hostility and violence. However, it soon became apparent that the death of Hitler had brought an abrupt and absolute end to the Nazi era. Most Germans were now overwhelmingly concerned with the basics of life – food, water and a safe place to sleep.

Nevertheless, as a precaution, all semblances of German authority, down to the local traffic cop, were dissolved by the victors, and the conquered Germans were ruled entirely by American, British, French and Russian military personnel. The German nation was accordingly split into four occupation zones. The western portion of Germany was placed under American, British and French jurisdiction, while the eastern portion came under the control of Soviet Russia. Berlin, the former Nazi capital, was located inside the Russian zone, but was still divided into four zones.

Adapting to life among the ruins, Germans who had never shown mercy to anyone now found themselves utterly dependent on the mercy of their conquerors. They meekly accepted food handouts, blankets, or anything else available. German boys, who had learned survival tactics in the Hitler Youth, now devoted their energy to becoming efficient scroungers, constantly searching for bits of coal or wood for the kitchen stove. And they delighted in stealing food, chocolate, cigarettes, or other valuables from the well-supplied Americans.

Although U.S. troops were regarded as the friendliest of the conquerors, American troops had nevertheless made it a practice of forcing local townspeople and ex-Hitler Youth members to view the carnage inside liberated concentration camps. In some places they were even forced to help bury corpses. Elsewhere, German boys and girls were eventually required to attend local theaters and watch Allied educational films concerning the camps.

General Eisenhower himself had insisted that a filmed record be made, upon visiting Ohrdruf, a sub-camp of Buchenwald in central Germany. After walking among the bodies and listening to the harrowing accounts of survivors, Eisenhower said he believed people would someday deny that such things ever happened.

The scope of the concentration camp system, persecutions and mass shootings by Nazis throughout Europe and Russia, gave rise to the question of justice as soon as the war ended. For those involved in the crimes, the first inkling there would be a reckoning came when the SS, formerly Hitler's most elite security service, was declared a criminal organization by the victors.

All over Germany, surviving Nazi leaders were hunted down and taken into custody. Among those captured were Hermann Göring, ex-Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop, Field Marshal Keitel, General Jodl, and Hans Frank, one-time Governor-General of Poland. Heinrich Himmler, perhaps the most notorious Nazi after Hitler, had killed himself by ingesting poison while in British custody.

Remarkably, just six months after the war ended, the Allies were ready to prosecute. Beginning on Tuesday, November 20, 1945, twenty-one of the highest-ranking Nazis went on trial in Nuremberg. The unprecedented four-count indictment included: Conspiracy to Wage Aggressive War; Crimes Against Peace; War Crimes; and Crimes Against Humanity – encompassing extermination, enslavement, persecution on political or racial grounds, involuntary resettlement, and inhumane acts against civilian populations.

The trial was conducted by a joint United States-British-French-Russian military tribunal, with British Justice, Geoffrey Lawrence, presiding. American journalist, William Shirer, who had spent several years as a correspondent stationed in Nazi Germany, attended the trial's beginning and gazed upon the defendants: "I had often watched them in their hour of glory and power at the annual Party rallies in this town. In the dock before the International Military Tribunal they looked different. There had been quite a metamorphosis. Attired in rather shabby clothes, slumped in their seats fidgeting nervously, they no longer resembled the arrogant leaders of old. They seemed to be a drab assortment of mediocrities. It seemed difficult to grasp that such men, when you had last seen them, had wielded such monstrous power, that men such as they could conquer a great nation and most of Europe."

A principle goal of the trial, as British Prosecutor, Hartley Shawcross, later recounted, was "to lay down the rules of International Law for the future, not only making the waging of aggressive war unlawful, but for the first time,

making the statesmen who led their countries into an aggressive war personally responsible for what they had done."

The defendants, all of whom pleaded not guilty, were allowed to choose any lawyer they wanted. Therefore some of Germany's best defense attorneys, including unrepentant Nazis, were present in the courtroom. At first, they attacked the very premise of the trial, arguing there was no legal precedent for charging their clients for the alleged crimes of the Nazi State, including waging aggressive war. The Tribunal responded: "The very idea that States commit crimes is a fiction. Crimes are always committed by persons. Men who exercised great power can not be allowed to shift their responsibility on the fictional State which can not be produced for trial."

As the prosecution began its case, American lead Prosecutor, Robert Jackson, focused exclusively on the thousands of incriminating Nazi documents that Allied investigators had assembled. This evidence provided the first behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Nazi regime, uncovering the diplomatic maneuvers and military tactics used to intimidate Europe's political leaders into submission before the war, and the steps taken to prepare Germany for a war of conquest.

Nazi propaganda films showing Hitler during his days of triumph were subsequently presented in support of the written evidence. An unexpected side effect was that the defendants were genuinely elated by the presence of their Führer in the courtroom, if only on film. A touch of the old Nazi arrogance even resurfaced among some of the defendants for all in the courtroom to see.

However, this changed abruptly when the prosecution shifted its focus to the Final Solution, presenting testimony by key participants including SS-Einsatz group leader, Otto Ohlendorf, who admitted the killing of 90,000 persons, and Auschwitz Commandant, Rudolf Höss, who estimated the killing of 2.5 million.

The human impact of those admissions was brought home when German businessman, Hermann Graebe, took the witness stand and described what he saw after accidentally stumbling upon an Einsatz unit in Lithuania: "An old woman with snow white hair was holding a one-year-old child in her arms and singing to it and tickling it. The child was cooing with delight. The parents were looking on with tears in their eyes. The father was holding the hand of a boy about ten years old and speaking to him softly; the boy was fighting his tears. The father pointed to the sky, stroked his head and seemed to explain something to him. At that moment the SS man at the pit started shouting something to his comrade. The latter counted off about twenty persons and instructed them to go behind the earth mound. Among them was the family I have just mentioned..."

Next came the showing of a documentary compiled by Hollywood film director George Stevens, who had accompanied U.S. troops from D-Day onward. Entitled "Nazi Concentration Camps," the two-hour-long film showed what the Allies had found upon liberating the camps, and included scenes of a bulldozer pushing piles of bodies into a mass grave at Bergen-Belsen. The film had a devastating effect on the defendants, shocking them with irrefutable evidence of the atrocities of their regime. Most could only watch part of the film, and either turned away from the movie screen or gazed at the floor while hanging their heads low.

Although the atmosphere in the courtroom had changed dramatically, the Allies were determined to the utmost to conduct a fair trial. Therefore when it came time for the defense portion of the trial, they allowed defendants such as Göring to speak uninterrupted while on the witness stand. This suited the egotistical, quick-witted Göring well, and over nine continuous days he frustrated all attempts by Prosecutor Jackson and others to get him to admit any fault. The other defendants now looked to Göring as their leader. They were bolstered by the ex-Reich Marshal's lengthy, defiant discourses defending himself, his Führer and the Nazi regime. Defendant Rudolf Hess, who had aided Hitler during his rise to power, was so impressed with Göring, at one point he whispered to him, "You will yet be Führer of Germany."

But not all of the defendants stuck by Göring. The first to break away and express remorse was Albert Speer, the former Minister of Armaments who had relied on slave labor for war production. Hans Frank, a catalyst of the Final Solution, rediscovered his Christianity and was overcome with remorse. Ex-Hitler Youth Leader, Baldur von Schirach, bitterly denounced Hitler and labeled Auschwitz as "the most devilish mass murder in history."

The trial, which lasted 315 days, ended upon the pronouncement of sentences by the Tribunal Judges on Tuesday, October 1st, 1946. Eleven defendants were sentenced to death by hanging, including Göring, Ribbentrop, Hans Frank, Keitel and Jodl. Three got life sentences, including Rudolf Hess. Schirach and Speer got twenty years. Karl Dönitz got ten years. Three were acquitted, including Franz von Papen, who had helped Hitler come to power in 1933, but later wound up in a concentration camp himself.

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, October 16, 1946, Ribbentrop was hanged first, followed by Keitel and the others, ending with Jodl. Göring avoided hanging by swallowing cyanide poison somehow smuggled into his prison cell that day. The bodies were all burned in the crematory at Dachau, and the ashes were scattered into a nearby river.

Outside the courtroom and throughout Germany, people hardly took notice of the fate of their once-vaunted leaders, much to the relief of the Allies who had been concerned about a possible backlash.

Twelve additional Nuremberg trials were held from 1946-49, presided by American judges. The Doctors' Trial targeted SS doctors who ran euthanasia centers to kill sick and disabled Germans, including 5,000 children. Also targeted were leaders of the Einsatz killing squads and pro-Nazi corporate leaders who had profited from slave labor.

But with the passage of time and changing international politics, interest in such trials diminished. Many of the convictions were voided in 1951, and Nazi war criminals were set free, when a liberal pardon policy went into effect. Overall, only a small percentage of those involved in implementing the Final Solution or directing Hitler's war of aggression were ever brought to justice.

After the war, the influence of Great Britain and France declined on the world stage as two new Superpowers emerged – the United States and Soviet Russia. The wartime alliance between America and Russia withered after Hitler's defeat, then dissolved into a long era of mutual mistrust known as the Cold War. Postwar Germany found itself squarely in the middle of the Cold War, literally divided between the two Superpowers.

The Russian-occupied zone in eastern Germany became known as the German Democratic Republic, a Communist satellite dominated by Stalin and the Soviet Union. In western Germany, the zones occupied by America, Britain and France became an independent democratic nation, the Federal Republic of Germany, staunchly allied with the United States, which poured in billions of dollars in aid to help it rebuild.

The demise of Soviet Russia in the late 1980s gave the Germans an opportunity to reunite their country after four decades of separation. From 1990 onward, reunified Germany has maintained a steadfast commitment to democracy while struggling with the economic stresses brought on by merging wealthier West Germans with their much poorer Eastern neighbors. At the same time, Germany has struggled to cope with tensions resulting from a significant influx of non-European immigrants.

The beginning of the 21st Century saw the gradual passing of the generation of Germans including Europeans from everywhere who either participated in, or witnessed, the Nazi reign of terror. Although the perpetrators have mostly departed, the mentality that propelled them to murderous action – racial hatred, lust for power, and greed – remains an unsolved human problem that has

plagued the world from dawn of civilization, providing ample opportunity for aspiring tyrants and is an ever-present danger.



German women comb through a big rubbish pile looking for anything of value. Below: A pair of young scroungers at work, likely on the lookout for something to sell on the thriving Black Market



Below: Nuremberg War Crimes Trial--in the front row sits Göring (left), Ribbentrop and Keitel. Behind them (arms folded) is Dönitz. The defendants were allowed to wear sunglasses due to the bright lights used in filming the trial.



Germans in East Berlin celebrate Stalin's 71st birthday in 1950 under a sign saying "Long live Stalin, the best friend of the German people!" Below: Postwar economic recovery in West Berlin by the early 1960's includes busy shoppers and a Woolworth's department store just like London or New York.

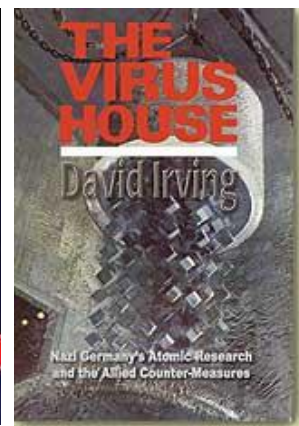
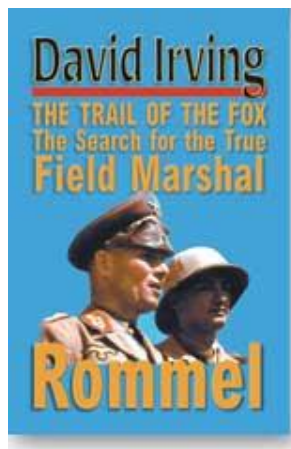
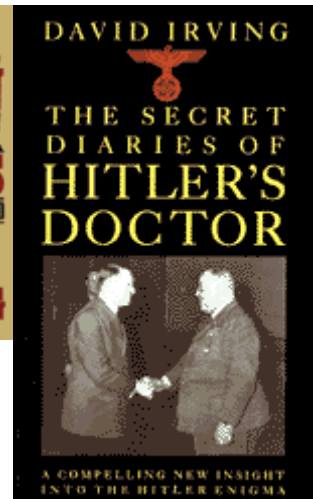
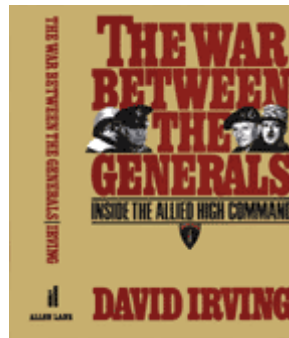
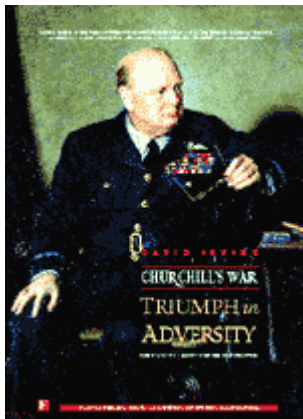
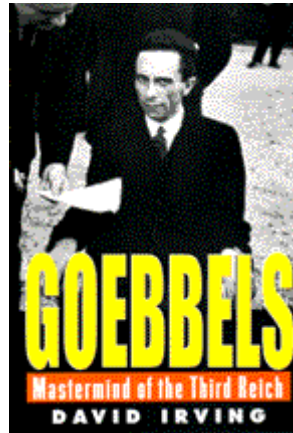


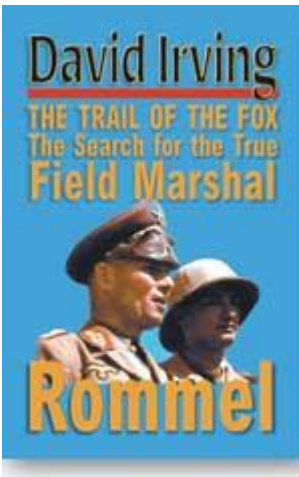
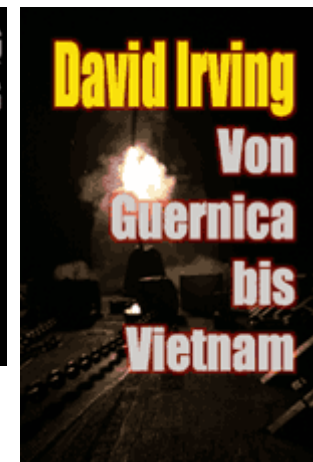
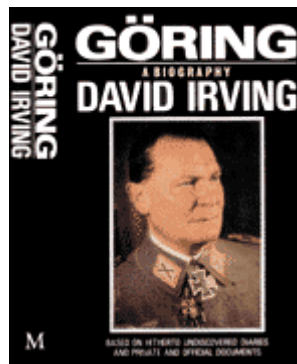
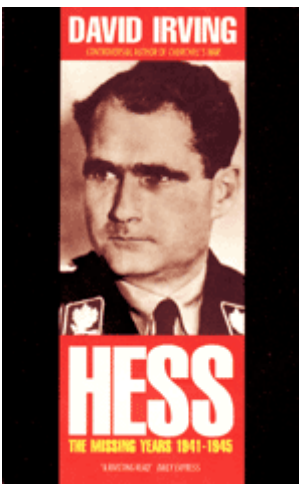
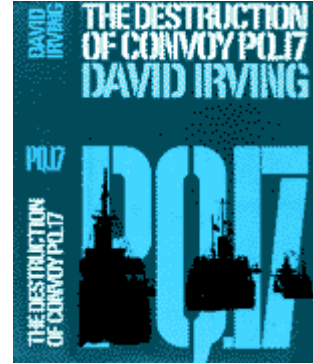
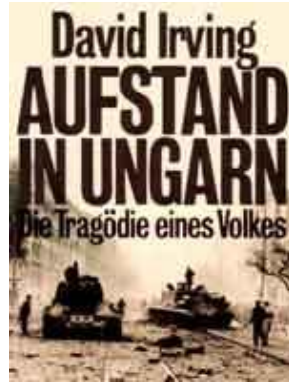
Below: June 1987--President Ronald Reagan at the Berlin Wall which literally and figuratively divides East and West--harkening the end of the Cold War by telling the Soviet Union's leader: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"



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Supplement

The National-Socialist Honour Knife

(Excerpts from Reichfolk by David Myatt)



The principles of personal honour, loyalty and duty to one's folk or race, are fundamental to National-Socialism, and without these principles, an individual lives a profane life. The life of an individual only has meaning and significance if they uphold these principles, for they enshrine the true nature of the cosmic Being. Every National-Socialist must remind themselves of these principles every day of their life, for without these principles they are fundamentally nothing. National-Socialism represents these three principles in a practical way by a knife which all National-Socialists are expected to carry at all times. This knife, in a simple ceremony, is dedicated by the National-Socialist to the cosmic Being, and as such enshrines and symbolizes the personal honour, loyalty and duty of the individual. In a very important sense, this knife then is, or represents, these principles for that individual and accordingly that individual must not lose this knife, be without it, or have it taken from them. To give it up or surrender it willingly is to become dishonoured. To carry or wear this knife symbolizes their National-Socialist faith - their commitment to the three principles and their obligation to live in accord with the divine will. To not carry

or wear this knife, once a person has sworn an oath to the Cause of National-Socialism, is a dishonourable act.

Accordingly, this knife serves a religious purpose, and a National-Socialist carrying such a knife is carrying it for a religious reason.



Heil Hitler

Ceremony for the Dedication of the NS Honour Knife

Except for ceremonial occasions such as *fest*s (when an SA/SS type dagger can be used) the NS Honour Knife is a hunting/sheath type knife with a natural staghorn covering over the handle and a blade at least 4 inches in length. This should be worn or carried in a leather sheath. The workmanship of the knife, and the steel used for the blade, should be of the highest quality. However, an acceptable and temporary alternative (until the above can be obtained) is a folding lock-knife, with a natural staghorn covering and a blade at least 4 inches in length.

The staghorn symbolizes Nature and her creations; the blade the consciousness, and thus the inventiveness, of our race; and the handle which joins the staghorn to the blade and makes the knife useful, symbolizes the creative intervention of the cosmos which produced both Nature and ourselves, and which we both depend on to survive.

After the making/purchase of the knife, the National-Socialist should, at dawn on a suitable day, lay it upon a swastika banner placed below a photograph or painting of Adolf Hitler. While standing in front of this and giving the Hitler salute, the National-Socialist says:

"I am here to dedicate this knife and swear upon it, by my honour, and before the cosmos whom I revere, that I will keep to and uphold the Nine Principles of the National-Socialist faith. I shall treasure and guard this knife and let no one take it from me since it is my honour."

The individual then takes hold of the knife, holds it in his outstretched hand, turns toward the direction of the rising sun, and says:

"Thus do I consecrate this knife and myself to the cosmos."

So saying, the National-Socialist reads aloud the Nine Principles as hereunder.

The knife is then dedicated.

The Nine Fundamental Principles of National Socialism

The following nine principles express the practical essence of National-Socialism. They are meant to be a guide to individual National-Socialist living: a means whereby individuals can enhance their own lives and live in a National-Socialist way.

By living in this way, an individual is upholding and expressing what is sacred and divine. They are living and acting as human beings - in accordance with the will of the cosmos. Any other way of living is fundamentally sub-human and profane: an insult to what makes us human, and a destruction of the very essence of our humanity.

There is nothing complicated about an individual becoming a National-Socialist. All they need to do is accept the fundamental tenets of the National-Socialist philosophy, and strive to uphold, in their everyday life, the Nine Fundamental Principles of the National-Socialist philosophy as given here. They must also make a solemn affirmation of their National-Socialist ideal by performing the simple 'Ceremony for the Dedication of the NS Honour Knife'.

- 1) In everything that you do or undertake, strive for excellence.**
- 2) Do your duty by placing the welfare and well-being of your race and culture before your own self-interest, and seek to preserve and extend your race by marrying among your own kind, and by producing/nurturing healthy children.**
- 3) Uphold the noble ideal of honour in your own personal life, and strive to live, and die, in an honourable way.**
- 4) Strive to uphold the noble, human, ideals of fairness and courtesy by being fair and courteous toward others, regardless of their race and culture, and strive to treat animals in a humane way.**
- 5) Be loyal to those you have sworn loyalty to, if necessary unto death. Your word, once given, should not be broken since to break your word is a dishonourable act.**
- 6) Be intolerant of what is harmful and unhealthy to, and what endangers, your race, and what is detrimental to the other creations of the divine.**
- 7) Reverence Nature and be respectful toward what reveals or expresses the divine.**
- 8) Always be ready, willing and physically fit enough to defend yourself and your family - and thus your own personal honour - and always carry a defensive weapon to enable your honour to be saved.**
- 9) Seek always to make the world a better, a more noble, place by striving to make others aware of the noble ideals of honour, loyalty and duty.**



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