

ADOLF HITLER, Part 1 {by Dean Becknese}

Adolf Hitler was born at six o'clock in the evening on April 20, 1889. He was born in the tiny Austrian village of Braunau, just across the border from Germany. Maybe because Adolf was the first born of 52-year-old Alois and his 29-year-old wife to survive, he received special attention. His father hoped Adolf would follow his example and become a customs agent in the Austrian civil service. Stern, strict, and given to outbursts of violent rage, Alois demanded respect and complete obedience from his family. He rarely beat Adolf, but he often threatened to do so. Adolf was afraid of any kind of pain and kept a respectable distance from his powerfully built, severe father.

Hitler's earliest teachers remembered him as bright, lively, good-natured and intelligent. However, Adolf's personality changed dramatically when his younger brother, Edmund, died of measles. From that time on, Adolf lost interest in school. He spent hours at a time daydreaming or walking by himself. Gloomy and bad-tempered, he snapped at his friends and his teachers.

When Adolf was eleven, Alois placed him in a private high school in the neighboring town of Linz, Austria. The expense of tuition, he thought, was a small price to pay to prepare his son for a safe, rewarding civil service career.

Still, young Adolf did poorly in school. His teachers recalled that he was gifted but hard to handle, gloomy, arrogant and lazy. Even in his favorite subjects, history, geography and freehand drawing, his grades were low. He resented any criticism from his teachers.

It was at this time that Hitler began reading the series of books about American cowboys and Indians written by Karl May, a German ex-convict who had never been outside of his own country. "Old Shatterhand," May's main character, took pleasure in brutally killing off the "Redskins." The storybooks considered Indians an inferior race and justified exterminating them by quoting from *The Bible*. For the rest of his life, Hitler would speak of his enemies as "Redskins."

By the time Adolf Hitler was 19 years old, he had lost both his mother and father. His father died when he was 13, leaving the young man without the authority figure that he hated and feared, but whom he had also respected. In the year 1907 his mother died. It was, he later wrote, "a dreadful blow . . . I had honored my father, but my mother I had loved." After all the other relatives had left the funeral, Adolf remained by the grave for more than an hour, weeping. Later, he solemnly thanked Dr. Bloch, the Jewish doctor who had treated his mother. "In all my career," Dr. Bloch later wrote, "I have never seen anyone so deep in grief as Adolf Hitler."

With neither a formal education nor a trade, Hitler now left for Vienna, the capital of Austria. He vowed not to return to Linz until he was a success. The years from 1908 (19 years old) to 1913 (24 years old), Hitler declared, were the saddest period of his life. Those were the years he spent living in severe poverty, in Vienna. To pay the bills he did odd jobs such as: shoveling snow, carrying baggage at the railroad station, even working as a construction worker (a job he hated because he considered it below his class). After a few months, he discovered that he could hastily paint watercolor pictures of famous places in Vienna and sell them to tourists. He also drew postcards and made posters to advertise soaps and deodorants.

What he gained from his lifestyle was freedom. Whenever he sold enough of his crude art to support himself for a while, he stopped working. Then he would go to operas, or to coffeehouses where he would eat cream cakes, read newspapers, or talk politics, often angrily shouting and waving his fist at those who disagreed with him. He frequently went to the public library for books on a topic that interested him. Moody, sluggish, usually lazy, he was energetic and productive when dealing with books and ideas. He read constantly – books on hypnotism, yoga, Oriental religions, history and politics.

In Vienna, between the ages of 19 - 24, Hitler's ideas were created. From his reading and daily experiences among the dregs (most poverty-stricken and desperate) of Viennese society he was learning about human nature and politics. As he later declared:

“Vienna was and remains for me the hardest, though most thorough school of my life. In this period I developed a philosophy which became the basis for all of my actions. In addition to what I then created, I have had to learn little, and I have had to change nothing.”

In his years of “study,” Hitler came to believe that Germans were a “master race - - a nation of superior people who deserved to rule the world. He thought that as a first step toward that goal, all German-speaking people should be immediately united, by war if necessary. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which Vienna was the capital, was breaking up. Hitler was glad. He hated the non-German minorities that made up the Empire - - - Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, and Magyars.

Most of all, Hitler hated the Jews. Anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) did not begin with Hitler. As a young man in Vienna, Hitler read about the violent attacks on Jews in newspapers and pamphlets. All of the problems of the Germans - - in fact all of the problems of the entire world - - he blamed on the Jews.

Jews, were generally for peace. Hitler hated peace. He glorified war. In his mind, all life was a struggle. As he put it:

“In this struggle, the stronger and the more able win, while the less able and the weak lose . . . it is not by principles of humanity that man lives or is able to preserve himself above the animal world, but solely by means of the most brutal struggle.”

How then, did Hitler plan to achieve his goals? The tactics to be used came from his view of mankind. Hitler thought most people had only limited intelligence, and it was possible to lie to them. “But the lies should be big lies” - - - the bigger the lie, the more likely people would believe at least some of it.

A simple idea should be repeated again and again in the form of slogans that could be remembered and acted upon. All the hatred of the masses should be focused on one enemy, an enemy who could be blamed for everything that bothered people in their private lives. Hitler chose the Jews for that enemy and constantly blamed them for everything.

Along with lies it was also important to use force - - terror - - on both individuals and the masses. He observed in the streets of Vienna that those who used force became convinced by victory that their cause was right and just; their victims, on the other hand, lost faith that resistance would make any difference. Terror, he said, would always succeed unless met by equal terror.

In the summer of 1914 World War I began. Hitler, then 25 years old, had no friends, family, or money. He crossed the border into Germany, the land he claimed to love more than any other. Later he claimed his reason for leaving Vienna was that he could no longer stand seeing Jews everywhere.

Although he found many in Munich who agreed with his ideas, his personal fortunes were still low; he could barely afford to pay for food or housing. An outcast, he saw the war (WW I) as a golden opportunity to make a new start in life.

In the German Army, for the first time in his life Hitler felt that he had a secure place. He “belonged” somewhere. He was a good soldier, desperately eager for a German victory in the war. He did not seem to mind the danger of combat or the discipline of army life. Hitler was a dispatch runner - - one who carried messages from point to point at the front (where fighting was active). Even under heavy enemy fire he performed his duties well. His reward was a medal, the Iron Cross, Second Class.

By 1918, Hitler could not accept the fact that German troops really had lost on the battlefield. He, along with thousands of other Germans cried out that the nation had been betrayed, “stabbed in the back,” by the traitorous politicians that wrote the Versailles Treaty. It was at this time that Hitler decided he would personally get revenge for the “betrayal.” To do it, he would enter politics.

ADOLF HITLER, Part 2 {by Dean Becknese}

After World War I ended (1918), Adolf Hitler returned to Munich. Once again he was faced with the possibility of fading into the city's underworld, unnoticed. He would have no money, no place to live, and nothing to eat. Thousands of other veterans were in exactly the same situation. Like Hitler, too many Germans looked forward to the day when they could get revenge on the "wretched November Criminals" {truce to start WWI peace talks started on November 11, 1918}, the Jews and Communists who they said had stabbed Germany in the back by surrendering.

Still unwilling to take a job, Hitler asked permission to stay at an Army barracks in Munich. His Army superiors, knowing his hatred of communists and socialists, gave him a job as a spy. One assignment took him to a meeting of a small group known as the German Workers' Party. Despite its communist-sounding name, it turned out to be one of many shabby Nationalistic, Anti-Semitic groups operating in Munich at the time. Unable to keep silent at the meeting, Hitler made a ringing speech against Germany's enemies. The next day he received a letter in the mail inviting him to join the German Workers' Party. He became the seventh member of the party's executive committee. Hitler later remembered the decision as "the most important in my life." From here, he said, "There can be no turning back."

First he took charge of recruiting. Within a month more than 200 members were attending meetings of the party. A mass meeting in a Munich beer hall drew a crowd of 2,000.

Next, he changed the party's name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party - - or "Nazis" for short. Hitler and two other members drew up a 25 point program summarizing the party's beliefs. The program attacked the Versailles Treaty, the Weimar Republic, and it promised to take German citizenship away from the Jews.

By the end of 1920, more than 6,000 Germans were registered Nazis; thousands of others openly favored the party's ideas. As his reward, Hitler insisted on becoming the undisputed dictator of the group. The others knew that without the driving force of his personality there would be no Nazi Party. They agreed to obey him. He took the title of "der Führer" or leader. Now he had succeeded in becoming the master of a rising political party.

Hitler moved swiftly to remake the party the way he wanted it. He organized a large group of uniformed street fighters known as Stormtroopers (SA). Then he sent them out to break up the meetings of opposing political parties and to terrorize and beat his enemies. The brown-shirted SA took pleasure in attacking Jewish shop owners and setting fire to their stores. Soon the red, white, and black Nazi flag became a familiar sight over all of Southern Germany, as did the party logo, the twisted cross or swastika.

By 1923, the German nation was in desperate trouble (Great Depression). Germany's suffering and poverty played right into Hitler's hands. If conditions became too desperate then large numbers of Germans would gladly leave their democracy and turn to the Nazis for help.

So, by 1923 Hitler thought that the time was ripe to strike. The Nazi leader planned first to take control of the city of Munich and then take control of Berlin, the national capital. In a brief exchange of shots in Munich, on November 9, 1923, the Bavarian (name of the German province where Munich is located = Bavaria) police killed 16 Nazi Stormtroopers. Other Nazis fled in panic. Hitler fell to the pavement when the shooting began and then managed to escape in his car. A few days later Hitler was captured at the home of a friend and it appeared that his political career was over.

Instead, Hitler turned his trial for treason (a crime against your own country) into a personal triumph! Always an effective speaker, he poured insults on the German government, the communists, the Jews, and all those who opposed him. Overnight his name became known throughout Germany! This fame allowed him to run for higher political offices.

The Bavarian trial judge, sympathetic to the Nazi leaders, imposed the lightest jail sentence permitted by law - - five years. Hitler was forced to serve only nine months of the sentence. Landsburg prison, where he was confined,

was more like a modest hotel than a jail. While in jail Hitler wrote his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). The book told, with complete honesty, what Hitler planned to do when he became the most powerful man in the world.

After his release from prison Hitler quickly won back personal control of the Nazi Party. Through constant hard work he increased membership to 100,000 by 1928. In that year's election, however, the Nazis were able to win only 12 of the 491 seats in the Reichstag, Germany's representative government. In the years from 1924 to 1929, Germany was economically successful, there were plenty of jobs, and life was pleasant. Many Nazis became discouraged, but Hitler remained supremely confident. He was sure that hard times would come again to Germany. Then the people, unhappy and confused, would turn to him for leadership. He waited a long time for his chance and he was willing to be patient a little longer.

The election of 1932 was a smashing success for the Nazis! Now the men who held the real power in Germany, the leaders of big business and the army, had no choice but to deal with Hitler. Hitler wasted little time establishing total control over Germany.

Just a month after his rule began, the Reichstag building (capital) went up in flames. A retarded Dutch communist by the name of *Marinus van der Lubbe* was overheard talking loudly in a Berlin beer hall. *Van der Lubbe* was drunk and he was talking about burning the Reichstag building down. Nazi soldiers reported this to Hitler and he told them to pour gasoline on the building to make the fire grow faster. The constitution for the Weimar Republic (Germany's government) had a clause called "The Enabling Act." The Enabling Act said that, in an emergency, the Chancellor (Hitler's title) could take complete control of the government and make all decisions himself. Hitler used the fire in the Reichstag as proof of a communist attempt to overthrow the German government. This allowed him to declare a "National Emergency!" He then used the Enabling Act to get total political power. Hitler could now deprive German citizens of their constitutional rights. This meant that ANY German could be arrested and sent to prison without a trial. (** Flip to page 3 page and read, "A Befuddled Fall Guy For An Inside Job.")

Step by step, Hitler took over the country and its government. He made all political parties illegal except his own. He eliminated nuisances such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Hitler took control of local governments and allowed only loyal Nazi Party members to hold public office.

In July of 1934, President von Hindenburg died. Hitler then combined the president's power with his own. He became *der Führer* (the leader) and the Chancellor (leader of the majority party). This gave him complete control over Germany's military. In the special election of that year, 84% of the German people supported Hitler and his actions so far.

Now no person or group in Germany was strong enough to stop Hitler from achieving his two principle goals - - destroying the Jews and preparing for the conquest of Europe. The German people had willingly given up their freedom for economic security and social order. In exchange for the confusion and messy nature of democracy, Hitler promised the Germans national order and national glory. He delivered on a surprising number of his promises. Now he prepared to prove to his followers that with the strength of one will, one discipline, one obedience, one race, and one leader, the ENTIRE WORLD WOULD BE THEIRS!