

# ADOLF HITLER

Adolf Hitler, leader of Germany's Nazi Party, is known as the most horrific dictator of the twentieth century. Hitler was able to use the unhappiness of the German people about money and politics to take absolute control in Germany. Hitler's hatred of Jewish people and his desire to prove the Germans were better than the rest of the world led to the murder of over 6 million Jews. Many soldiers from many countries died because of Hitler's desire to own the world.



## Conditions Under Which Hitler Came to Power

Born in 1889, Hitler was a lonely boy whose struggles with school led to his dropping out completely before he finished his studies. When World War I broke out in 1913, he was 24 years old. He asked special permission to volunteer to fight. Hitler believed that Germany's terrible loss in the war was caused by the enemy's hatred of the Germans. His service in the army in 1918 convinced him that his life's goal was to drive all the Jews out of Germany. Because he was a great public speaker, he was able to convince the Germans to agree with him and that they were better than the rest of the world.

Hitler was described as someone who represented a model of perfect evil. He was responsible for killing over 19.3 million civilians and prisoners of war and an additional 28.7 million soldiers during the time he was in control. The number of civilians killed during WWII is the greatest number in any war anywhere. World War II is known as the deadliest conflict in history.

In 1919, Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, a group of people who believed that Germans were perfect humans. To identify themselves to the world as special, Hitler chose the ancient symbol of a hooked cross as its symbol. Printed on a white circle on a red background, the *swastika*, as the world came to know it, represented the incredible power and brutality of the Germans.

## Use of the Military

By the end of 1921, Hitler had gained control of the Nazi Party. He was busy making trouble throughout the entire country. Former army officers joined the Nazis. These men became known as Storm Troopers. Hitler used these men to force his way into places where people were gathered so he could talk about the supremacy of the Germans. In the Beer Hall Putsch, he and his Storm Troopers pushed their way into a beer hall to take over a meeting. Although he was responsible for several people getting shot, he became a hero for his actions. He was arrested and tried for treason. Although he was sentenced to five years in prison, he was there for only nine months. During his time in prison, he wrote his popular book, titled *Mein Kampf*, which means *My Struggle*. In this book, he bitterly criticized the Jews and said that they should all be removed from Germany. This book became a bible to the German people.

## Methods Used to Acquire Territory and Power

Over the next few years, Hitler stayed off the radar and worked to fix what was "not right" with the Nazi Party. He started a group for young Germans called Hitler Youth. He also created a special private army called the *Schutzstaffel*, which means "Protection Squadron." Members of this group, known as the "Brownshirts" wore brown uniforms and promised to die for Hitler. They were well known for violence and intimidation. Soon this army of some 200 men became a violent group that dominated Germany and created absolute fear throughout the rest of Europe.

# ADOLF HITLER

In 1930, a financial problem that swept Europe caused a great depression. Germany could no longer pay the war debts. Millions of Germans lost their jobs. Countries were failing, and new elections were held all the time. It seemed impossible to form a government that could survive. In 1932, Hitler ran for President against the war hero named Paul von Hindenburg. Hitler received only 36.8% of the votes, but he was named Chancellor anyway. He quickly assumed complete power.

Four years later, in March 1936, Hitler ordered German troops to take over a part of France along the banks of the Rhine River. At the same time, Germany took over Austria and Czechoslovakia. No other countries objected. In fact, Italy promised to help Hitler take over Europe. In 1939, Hitler gave a speech that started the war. In this speech, he told the citizens that the Germans needed to take over all of Europe and destroy all of the Jewish race. The people of Germany believed this and supported him.

In September 1939, German troops invaded Poland. Shortly after this, Britain and France declared war on Germany, but Germany was unstoppable, taking over Norway, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium. German troops eventually moved to the English Channel, forcing British and French forces to evacuate. In June 1940, France was forced to sign a peace treaty with Germany. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the U.S. declared war on Japan. Because Germany had made friends with Japan, Hitler declared war on the U.S.

## Methods Used to Maintain Control

Hitler managed to take over his weaker neighbors. In 1934, Hitler had hundreds of members of his own party murdered because they did not agree with him. Hitler was made Chancellor and took control of all the German armed forces.

The German leaders were young, and Hitler's image as a strong leader made people want to follow him, even though their civil rights were quickly taken away. People were no longer able to say what they believed. Police could search people's homes without their permission. Anyone who opposed them was arrested and executed.

By 1933, 10,000 communists had been arrested. Hitler opened concentration camps to hold them all. The camps were terrible. People were treated badly, starved, tortured, and often killed. In March 1933, the followers of Hitler met in Berlin. The main topic was a new law, the 'Enabling Act.' This act gave Hitler permission to make new laws without interference from anyone.

When the Nazis took over, their energy was mainly directed against people who opposed them politically. The German Jews were the exception. Although they were a quiet group, they were constantly harassed, beaten, and killed. As early as April 1933, Hitler's government identified the Jews as subhumans (*Untermenschen*). Hitler's men kept them in concentration camps, and instead of sending Jews out of Germany, the death squads executed entire Jewish communities. The Jews were used as guinea pigs in medical experiments and then killed. All Jews who were captured were branded with a number. All Jews, even children, were made to wear a bright yellow badge in the shape of a star so anyone who saw them knew they were Jewish. Over six million Jews were executed by the end of the war.

In June 1944, the Allies (United States, Great Britain, Russia, and France) freed cities all across Europe. The war ended in 1945 with an unconditional surrender of Germany. Hitler went into hiding, and at midnight on April 28, 1945, Hitler shot himself. He had ordered that his body be burned. Over 12 years, Hitler had brought destruction and devastation to Germany, Europe, and the world.