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THE BEGINNING

Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn, Austria, on April 20, 1889, the son of Alois Schicklgruber Hitler and Klara Pölzl, both from a remote area of lower Austria. Hitler's father had been born out of wedlock to a young peasant woman, Maria Anna Schicklgruber. It was not until Alois was in his thirties that his father returned to the village, married Maria Anna, and changed the young man's last name to Hitler. Had he not come forward to claim an inheritance, Johann Hitler's grandson would have grown up as Adolf Schicklgruber. One can't help but wonder if he would have had the same impact and garnered the same notoriety had he retained that name rather than the more familiar *Adolf Hitler*.

As a child, Adolf was said to have been angry and sullen, undependable, short-tempered, and indolent. He was antagonistic toward his father, who was a strict disciplinarian, and was intensely devoted

to his industrious mother. As a child, the young Hitler “took singing lessons, sang in the church choir, and even entertained thoughts of becoming a priest.”¹² He was devastated when his mother died during his teen years.

When he was sixteen, Adolf made his way to Vienna with dreams of becoming an artist. He applied to the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts but was roundly rejected, his artistic talents failing to measure up to the standards of that august body. He survived in the large, cosmopolitan city by doing odd jobs and selling his drawings in backstreet pubs. Between sketching patrons, he would spout political rants of his ostentatious dreams for a superior Germany to anyone too inebriated to walk away.

Adolf was enchanted with the manipulative methods of Vienna’s mayor, Karl Lueger, and quickly adopted his affinity for anti-Semitism, with its fanatical demand for “purity of blood.”

From the eccentric teaching of an excommunicated monk, Lanz von Liebenfels, to those of German Nationalist Georg von Schönerer, the impressionable young Hitler came to the incredibly twisted belief that the Jewish people were responsible for anarchy, dishonesty, and the ruin of civilization, government, and finance. According to those so-called “learned men,” the purpose of the Jew was to completely weaken Germany and dilute the superior Aryan race.

Hitler joined the Sixteenth Bavarian Infantry Regiment during

World War I, where he served as a dispatch runner. He was awarded the Iron Cross for bravery but was caught in a gas attack shortly before the end of the war. He spent months recovering from the effects, including temporary blindness. Afterward, he was delegated the job of spying on various political factions in Munich—among them the German Workers' Party—before being discharged from the army.

Hitler allied himself with forty members of that group in 1919 and the name was changed shortly thereafter to the “National Socialist German Workers' Party.” By 1921, he had claimed the chairmanship of the organization and began to dazzle crowds with his formidable gift of oratory. Soon thereafter, the party adopted a new logo—the swastika—which Hitler believed symbolized the triumph of the Aryan man. It also embraced a new greeting, “*Heil!*” and eventually “*Heil, Hitler!*” (This can be translated as “Hail Hitler,” or more ambiguously as “Salvation through Hitler.”)

The mustachioed little man mesmerized his listeners with his gravelly, impassioned voice—never mind that his speeches contained little of actual value. Near the end of 1921, he had come to be known as the Führer (leader or guide). He formed gangs to maintain control at his assemblies and to apply goon-squad tactics to disrupt those of his adversaries. Those gangs were the beginnings of the infamous storm troopers, the SS, Hitler's black-shirted and dreaded bodyguards.

In 1922 Hitler had outlined his grand plan fully in a conversation with a friend, appropriately named Joseph Hell:

If I am ever really in power, the destruction of the Jews will be my first and most important job. As soon as I have power, I shall have gallows after gallows erected, for example, in Munich on the Marienplatz—as many of them as traffic allows. Then the Jews will be hanged one after another, and they will stay hanging until they stink. They will stay hanging as long as hygienically possible. As soon as they are untied, then the next group will follow and that will continue until the last Jew in Munich is exterminated. Exactly the same procedure will be followed in other cities until Germany is cleansed of the last Jew!¹³

Hitler declared the Jewish people to be Germany's No. 1 enemy, the race accountable for the nation's internal problems. He strongly stressed what he saw as "the anti-Semitism of reason" that must lead "to the systematic combating and elimination of Jewish privileges. Its ultimate goal must implacably be the total removal of the Jews."¹⁴ He was so convinced Germany was near collapse that he joined forces with nationalist leader General Erich Friedrich Wilhelm Ludendorff in an attempted coup.

The ensuing riot that began in a Munich beer hall (later referred to as the "Beer Hall Putsch"—a rebellion or riot) resulted in (1) the

deaths of sixteen individuals, (2) the Nazi Party being outlawed, and (3) Hitler being tried and sentenced to five years in prison. His sentence was later commuted to nine months, but during his incarceration, he dictated the initial draft of *Mein Kampf* to Rudolf Hess, a devoted sycophant. The tome—filled with a coarse, ill-conceived jumble of anti-Semitism, fabrication, and fantasy—evolved into the literal bible of the emerging Nazi Party. By 1939, this hodgepodge of pretense had sold five million volumes, had been translated into eleven languages, and is still today widely distributed in some Middle Eastern countries.

British-born philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain disingenuously wrote to encourage Hitler in a letter dated October 7, 1923. He zealously advised the Führer that he was perceived as the “opposite of a politician . . . for the essence of all politics is membership of a party, whereas with you all parties disappear, consumed by the heat of your love for the fatherland.”¹⁵

A basic tenet of the Nazis was that of “Blut und Boden,” or blood and soil. Hitler and his dedicated division of the Nazi Party outlined the relationship between authentic Aryans and rural Germany. The future Führer was a devotee of the philosophy that true Germans had a farming background with an idyllic life in the countryside.

Writer C. N. Trueman wrote of how the slump in farming led to the punishment of the Jews:

The decline of rural communities was blamed on

the Jews. Schools taught how the countryside had been bought up by Jewish families and that rural families had been turned off the land and had to go to the cities to find work. Therefore, the Nazis blamed the Jews for the decline in what they considered to be the true German culture of rural life. In 1933 a law (the State Hereditary Farm Law) was passed that had the aim of preserving “the farming community as the blood source of the German people.”¹⁶

In his book *Hitler's Table Talk*, the future head of the Nazi Party wrote:

Without Christianity, we should not have had Islam. The Roman Empire, under Germanic influence, would have developed in the direction of world-domination, and humanity would not have extinguished fifteen centuries of civilisation at a single stroke.¹⁷

In a later missive to Hitler, Chamberlain asserted: “One cannot simultaneously embrace Jesus and those who crucified him. This is the splendid thing about Hitler—his courage. In this respect he reminds one of [Martin] Luther.”¹⁸

It is quite obvious from his writings that Chamberlain also viewed the Jewish industrialists as Germany’s “public enemy No. 1.”

The government made a disastrous error in judgment in 1925. It removed its prohibition against the Nazi Party and granted permission

for Hitler to address the public. Moreover, when he needed it most in order to expand the reach of the party, a worldwide economic crisis reached Germany.

In this one instance, Hitler was absolutely correct: The German nation was at the very brink of an economic collapse. The German mark had very little value. It was said that inflation following rapid devaluation following World War I forced the German populace to use wheelbarrows full of the near-useless money to buy a loaf of bread.

Ironically, the resulting magnitude of unemployment, panic, and anger afforded Hitler the opportunity to step forward and claim the role of redeemer and savior of the nation. On January 30, 1933, Weimar Republic of Germany president Paul von Hindenburg was persuaded to nominate the future Führer as Reich chancellor. Germany had lost its last chance to avoid a Second World War II and the Holocaust.

Hitler's determination to outfox his opponents and remove the conservatives from any role in the government took little time or effort. He abolished free-trade unions, removed Communists, Social Democrats, and Jews from any participation in politics. He further solidified his hold on Germany with the use of persuasive arguments, indoctrination, fear, and coercion. The façade was firmly in place, and the people of Germany were intimidated into total subjugation.

With the death of Hindenburg in August of 1934, the Third Reich had a determined dictator who held the reins both of Führer and chancellor, as well as all the powers of the state accorded to a leader

of that nation. He abandoned the Treaty of Versailles, conscripted a massive army, supplied it with war materiel, and in 1938 forced the British and French into signing the Munich Agreement. Soon to follow were laws against Jews, the destruction of the state of Czechoslovakia, the invasion of Poland, and a short-lived nonaggression pact with the USSR. Soon, the only obstacles standing between Hitler and the rest of the world were nations headed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, and the armies of Western civilization.

Just one week after President Roosevelt was sworn in for his initial term as the United States' chief executive, German laborers had completed Dachau, the first of many concentration camps. Within its confines an untold number of individuals would be murdered, most of them Jews. Camp records would list 32,000 documented cases, but estimates have placed the number of undocumented murders in the tens of thousands.¹⁹ Hitler would follow the opening of the camp by nationalizing the Gestapo and bringing it under his full control. Just three months later, he had successfully combined all commands under the aegis of the Nazi Party.