

# Analysis of hitler biographies



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In Ian Kershaw's chapter titled The Making of the Dictator, he takes a look at Hitler's time from being appointed chancellor on January 30th, 1933 to the early days after the election of March 5th 1933.

When Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30th, there was much support and hope for his cabinet, but there were also millions of people against him. Julius Leber, SPD Reichstag deputy at the time, questioned Hitler's government, he said " We know their aims. Nobody knows what their next measures will be. The dangers are enormous" (331). Nobody knew just how dangerous Hitler could be at that time. When Hitler became chancellor many ordinary people did not react, because of the struggle they had experienced through the Depression. Others did not think that Hitler had any staying power in German politics, because they thought that Hitler would lose popularity when the emptiness of his promises was revealed. Even the critics could see that if Hitler was able to tackle mass unemployment he would gain a lot of support. On February 27th Marinus an der Lubbe set fire to the Reichstag. Nazi propaganda went to work and rallied support against the communists for what the Nazi's made out to be their plot. Hitler called an emergency decree for the protection of people and state. With one paragraph Hitler had effectively taken away personal liberties that had been defined in the Weimar Constitution including freedom of speech, of association and of the press, and of privacy of postal and telephone communications. Within four months of Hitler being in power trade unions were dissolved and within six months all opposition parties had been suppressed or had been liquated and the most active political leaders had fled the country. The growing threats within the Nazi party were eliminated

in the “ Night of the Long Knives” on June 30th 1934. When Hitler was just starting as chancellor, he knew that he could not rule without the support of the military. Hitler was able to win support with promises of major military support. In the first cabinet meeting Hitler portrayed a very different side. He was open to suggestions, ready to take advice, and listened to other view points. Hitler’s first cabinet meeting took place on January 30th 1933 and it was at this meeting that Hitler stated that he wanted to have the Reichstag dissolved and win a majority in a new election in March. Hitler was able to convince Hindenburg to dissolve parliament and the campaign went in full swing. “ Appeal of the Reich Government to the German People” was the first time that Hitler spoke to the German people on the radio. “ Within four years the German peasant must be saved from impoverishment. Within four years unemployment must be overcome...Now, German people give us four years and then judge and sentence us” (440-441), though he had addressed the economy, he never specified how he was going to fix it. During the campaign Hitler also had not yet made a plan for war, but he made sure that military spending was going to be a priority, “ the next five years must be devoted to the restoration of the defence capacity of the German people” (444). Once again Hitler offered no concrete measures on how he was going to do this, but the National defence was soon given 35 billion R M over an 8 year period. Hitler painted this upcoming election as the last chance to reject communism in Germany, and hinted that if they didn’t, force would be used. Hitler was really ignorant of the principles of economics and received a lot of credit for things that he should not have. Though Hitler at one point made a speech about a gradual tax relief for the automobile industry and road building program, he actually had not mentioned a specific program, but

rather the prospect of one. Any tax relief that was given to the automobile industry was part of a larger framework. Hitler also had communists beaten, tortured and wounded, but for some reason the violence and repression of rights were wildly popular. When the election results were announced on March 5th, the Nazis had won 43.9% of the vote and their coalition partners gained 8%. Hitler was now in place to become the dictator of Germany.

This chapter in the book really showed how Hitler was really a master of politics. He absolutely disregarded the specifics of any important situation and continually used his rhetoric to make people believe that things were being or would be done. It's incredible that he was able to make something like the taking away of personal liberties popular among the people. This chapter is very informative and Kershaw has an easy to read writing style. My problem with his writing is that he tends to jump in time a lot and that is not helpful when people are trying to do their research in chronological order. Kershaw does do an excellent job of emphasizing just how effective Hitler was at achieving his goals, like when Hitler first became chancellor and portrayed himself as a man who was trying to learn and cared about the opinions of others. Or how Hitler said that the violence against communists was committed by people who were disobeying his orders, thus effectively removing himself from the situation. This information will be especially useful to me in the body of my essay as I try to justify my choice of Hitler as the most important person of the twentieth century.

Kershaw, Ian. *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000: pp 129-159

In Ian Kershaw's chapter titled Marks of Genocidal Mentality a close look is taken at the build-up towards the genocide against the Jews and the vital role that Kristallnacht played in that.

The day before Kristallnacht, Himmler gave a speech in which he said " In Germany the Jew cannot hold out. This is a question of years. We will drive them out more and more with an unprecedented ruthlessness" (131). On the night of November 9-10 Germany exploded in a display of violence against its Jewish community. This was a nationwide pogrom and it was the third wave of anti-Semitic violence, which the previous ones took place in 1933 and 1935. At the beginning of 1933 there had been some 50, 000 Jewish businesses in Germany. By July 1938 there were only 9000 left. In Munich, there were 1, 690 Jewish owned businesses and this number fell to 666 by October 1938. There was a flood of legislative measures that imposing discriminatory restrictions and occupational bans on Jewish doctors and lawyers, Jews weren't even allowed to be pedlars. A decree made on August 17 had made it mandatory for males to add the forename Israel and for females to add the forename Sara; these names were to be used in all official matters. On October 5th Jews were made to have a " J" stamped on their passports. A few days after that, Göring declared that " the Jewish Question must now be tackled with all means available, for they must get out of the economy" (144). Make no mistake, Hitler had never deviated from the fact that Germany's salvation could only come through the destruction of Europe's Jews. During a visit to Munich, Hitler took objection to the location of the city's largest synagogue and the Jewish community was only given a few hours of notice before its destruction. Hitler did not want to be publicly

associated with the anti-Jewish movement during 1938. He did this to preserve his image at home and abroad. For example, the press was not allowed to ask him about the “ Jewish question” when he was travelling over Germany and the legislation that ousted Jewish lawyers was not publicized, since it took place during the Sudeten crisis and would draw bad publicity. “ Aryan” businesses looked for every opportunity to profit off of their Jewish counter parts. Jewish businesses were bought out by “ Aryan” businesses. Doctors and lawyers wanted to take advantage of the economic opportunities available if the Jews were ousted. There is no doubt that Hitler supported the action against Jew’s even if he wasn’t in the limelight at this time. Hitler was moving away from the assumption that emigration would remove the “ Jewish problem” as only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Jews had left Germany by October 1938. The Evian Conference had a major role in this as 32 countries refused to increase their Jewish immigration quotas. “ Crystal Night” had a huge effect on Hitler, and after the pogrom Hitler agreed with Goebbels that the time to unleash the fury of the Nazi movement on the Jews had come. In his speech to the Reichstag on January 30th 1939, Hitler revealed his intentions of genocide.

The information from these pages might contain some of the most influential points in my essay. The reason for this is as I try to portray Hitler as the most important man in twentieth century showing his influence over the people will be crucial. Hitler influenced the masses to violence without even being involved. He made Germany become an anti-Semitic nation in the matter of years. This chapter discussed the steps to largest genocide in history of

which Hitler was the catalyst. Once again Kershaw's writing is good and very informative, but tends to be jumpy.

Redlich, Fritz. *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. [http://www. questiaschool. com/PM. qst? a= o&d= 78810661](http://www.questiaschool.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=78810661): pp. 151-171.

Chapter 7 of Redlich's work is entitled Warlord. In this chapter he discusses numerous topics pertaining to Hitler's work as the warlord of Germany. He starts of the chapter by discussing the invasion of Poland. On September 1st 1939, fifty seven German divisions invaded Poland, and Hitler knew that he had attacked a weaker opponent. The invasion of Poland worked out to the success of the German army. Hitler wasn't only making attacks internationally, but he was also responsible for a lot of deaths in his own country. On October 18th, Hitler signed a secret decree regarding euthanasia, part of it read " Reichsleiter Bouhler and Dr. Brandt are charged with the responsibility of enlarging the authority of certain physicians to be designated by name, in such a manner that persons who, according to human judgment, are incurable, can, upon a most careful diagnosis of their position of sickness, be accorded a mercy death" (Pg 154). This policy soon became an open secret in the country, and the family members of those who had suffered from these mercy deaths soon began to rebel and protest. After invading Poland, Hitler gave Britain and France a peace offer. When it was rejected Hitler wanted a quick start to the western campaign. In spite of Hitler's excitement the campaigns did not start until the spring of 1940. With out any formal declarations of war, Hitler overran Holland, Belgium and conducted a Blitzkrieg on France. On May 24th, Hitler had the BEF trapped

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against the sea, but he stopped his tanks. To this day there is not enough evidence to find out why Hitler had the tanks stopped, but as a result the British were able to make a sea escape. Hitler had successfully erased the “Shame of Versailles.” Hitler had become the most powerful man in Europe, but Germany still had problems. While the Russians provided Germany with food and raw materials, Hitler wanted economic self-sufficiency. The “Jewish problem” had gotten bigger in Hitler’s eyes, and needed to be dealt with and Hitler also needed to figure out how to beat Britain. Hitler organized Operation Sea Lion, which involved his air force attacking Britain as a prelude to a sea invasion, but the operation was a failure. In regard to the Italians, Mussolini surprised Hitler when he decided to invade Albania, even though Italy already had control of Albania. This move was done just to show that Italy could conquer a country as well. Hitler then asked Mussolini to not invade Greece, but Mussolini did it anyways, the result of this was a delay in the Russian campaign. Hitler showed a great development during these early years of the war. Hitler had basically listened to everything his generals had said during the Polish campaign, but he began to differ with them when it came to the western campaign as he favoured more modern strategies. The success of the western campaign really enhanced his supremacy and thus a war lord was born.

This excellent chapter by Mr. Fritz provides great information about Hitler as a warlord and provides information about how Hitler progressed from being a subservient leader (when it came to the military) to the man who was in total control of the army. This information is going to be invaluable to my essay, as part of the reason to think of Hitler as the most important person during



the 20th century is the way he affected lives through war. He was an absolutely brutal leader as evidenced when he discussed the Russian campaign and said “ The natives? We’ll sieve them. The Jews we’ll take out completely [setzen sie ganz heraus]. We won’t go into the Russian cities, they have to perish completely. We don’t need to have any pangs of conscience” (164). Hitler’s rise to the most powerful man in Europe is absolutely incredible and it is hard to think of man who had experience the amount of success that Hitler did in his early years as the Führer.

Waite, Robert G. L. *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993. [http://www. questiaschool. com/PM. qst? a= o&d= 58048406](http://www.questiaschool.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=58048406): pp. 3-33.

Robert Waite’s chapter titled *The Image and the Man* might have the most shocking I have read for this essay. He delves into the characteristics of Hitler and provides some shocking personal details of his life.

Part of Hitler’s genius lies in the way he set-up his government. He created a political system that could not survive without him. Hitler utilized the emotional and irrational factors of politics like no other person in history. Former British PM David Lloyd George once said of Hitler “ The old trust him; the young idolize him. It is not the admiration accorded to a popular Leader. It is the worship of a national hero who has saved his country from utter despondency and degradation. . . . He is as immune from criticism as a king in a monarchical country. He is something more. He is the George Washington of Germany—the man who won for his country independence from all her oppressors” (4). Winston Churchill also admired the Hitler’s

accomplishments and called them “ among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world” (4). This praise was deserved, as within 5 years he had revived Germany, given the people hope and wiped away the “ Shame of Versailles.” While in propaganda media, Hitler looked the part of a great leader, but this is not necessarily true. Hitler was 5’9” and weighed 150 lbs, and as his time in office increased, his posture wasted away. Hitler was apparently fascinated with hands and he had collected numerous books that were dedicated to this topic and dedicated his time to finding whether great leaders of the past had hands like him. We have heard of many famous people who are dedicated to reliving their childhood and Hitler can be grouped into this category as well. Hitler believed that there was an elixir of youth and almost sent an expedition to India to look for it. He ate candies like a child and in moments of agitation the great Führer would suck on his little finger. Every evening Hitler would watch a movie, his favourites were Snow White and the Seven Dwarves and King Kong. Another interesting thing about Hitler was that he hated the passage of time. He constantly sought to confuse day and night and in his office he only had one clock, which was a family heirloom and was never wound. Death fascinated Hitler and he thought that with his death his fame would only increase, as he said “ I know how to keep my hold on people after I have passed on. I shall be the Führer they look up at and go home to talk of and remember. My life shall not end in the mere form of death. It will, on the contrary, begin then” (22). The idea of suicide was constantly on Hitler’s mind; even as a child he had made a suicide pact with a girl who had rejected him. Coincident or not, it is fitting that Hitler died of suicide.

As I said above this chapter was quite shocking, actually after I read the chapter I doubted the legitimacy of its claims. I couldn't believe that one of Hitler's favourite movies was Snow White and the Seven Dwarves or that he would suck on his little figure. This is really not what I expected of one of the most ruthless leaders in history, a man who said " I shall become the greatest man in history. I have to gain immortality even if the whole German nation perishes in the process" (24). The information in this book will be useful in portraying another side of Hitler that the public never saw. Another piece of information I found interesting, was Hitler's hate of the passage of time. Was it because he feared old age? Or maybe he knew that is judgement day was coming? Hitler strived to be a great leader and while he was a very evil man, there is no denying the impact he had on the 20th century.

Fischel, Jack R. The Holocaust. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

[http://www. questiaschool. com/PM. qst? a= o&d= 98665227](http://www.questiaschool.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=98665227): pp 31-51

Any paper on Hitler would be incomplete with out detailing the Holocaust, which we all know to be as the most horrific genocide in human history. In chapter 3 of his book, Fischel takes a detailed look at the road to genocide.

At the time World War II had started, the average German was unaware of the Holocaust. This genocide began with the institution of euthanasia programs. Under these programs " categories" of people were determined to be unfit to breed and unfit for Germany. At the headquarters of the euthanasia program, victims were gassed in rooms that were disguised as showers and then have their bodies cremated. Over 100, 000 people became

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victims of the euthanasia program, before the families of the deceased began to protest. After the capture of Poland a “ process of ethnic cleansing occurred” (40). Polish people were being displaced from their homes to have Germans move instead. Himmler wasn’t a huge supporter of the initial treatment of the Poles, because he felt that many of them were of mixed German blood or were actually German, so instead he proposed that after the war that the Polish population be inspected. Initially, Hitler’s regime wanted to move the Jews to Madagascar, this was called the Madagascar Plan. The Madagascar Plan fell through after Germany was unable to defeat Britain and this is when the idea of genocide began to firmly develop and it was after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, that the Nazis decided to eradicate the Jewish people. A bureaucracy was created to organize the murder of Jews. Mobile killing squads called the Einsatzgruppen were first seen during Anschluss. During the invasion of Poland 16, 000 Poles and Jews were murdered by the German Army and the Einsatzgruppen. After the invasion of the Soviet Union the Nazi had 1 million Jews under their control. On July 31, 1941 Goering sent a letter to Heydrich that read “ send me, as soon as possible, a draft setting up details of the preliminary measures taken in the organizational, technical and material needs for the achievement of the ‘ final solution’ which we seek,” (49) it is clear from reading this quotation that the seeds for genocide had been planted.

This chapter provided good information about how the Holocaust began and transformed, from the euthanasia program to the Madagascar Plan. I wonder how the German people were not alarmed at the euthanasia program, if the families were truly making enough problems to bring the end of the

program. Were the German people really that enamoured with Hitler that they paid the program no notice? After the deaths of 100, 000 people, it is really hard not to see the evil that Hitler's government was capable of. It's sad to read about the shift from the Madagascar Plan to the eradication of Jews, because even though the Madagascar Plan is not ideal, it would have spared the lives of millions of people. All of these things were done under Hitler's watch, and no doubt that Hitler was aware of the draft of final solution that was requested in the letter quoted above, further showing his impact as a person in the 20th century.

Erwin Leiser. *Mein Kampf*. Edited by Erwin Leiser. Los Angeles, CA: Columbia Pictures Industries Inc., 1960. 00: 00 – 29: 34

The first 30 minutes of the documentary entitled *Mein Kampf* detail Hitler's early life and his rise to Chancellor. As a child Adolf is a bad student and often argues with his father over his future, because Hitler wants to become an artist. At the age of 16, Hitler falls ill with tuberculosis, and never returns to school. In 1907, Hitler moved to Vienna and tries to gain acceptance into the academy of art, which he fails to do in two tries. After failing the second time, Hitler becomes a labourer and sells post cards for a living, this isn't very profitable and he loses his apartment and lives in a flop house, but considers himself superior to the other tramps there. It is during this time that Hitler spends his money on his first anti-Semitic pamphlets. He is so interested in the writings that he looks up the author to find pieces that are no longer being circulated. He is filled with ideas that about the blonde man who is superior to the dark man and that the Jew is the devil. Hitler moves to Munich and lives the same lifestyle that he lived in Vienna and it is during

this time that he is rejected from the Austrian army. On August 1st, 1914 Hitler listens to the proclamation of the declaration of war and is inspired enough to join the German army and become an infantry soldier. During his time in service he is wounded at the western front in 1916, but returns to the front in 1917 as a vice corporal. In 1918, his eyes are injured in a gas attack and he is in the hospital when the war is ended. Hitler is again left unemployed and decides to become a politician. Hitler's next big move is the Beer Hall putsch and is arrested after its conclusion. He is sent to jail, but lives in favourable conditions. During his time in prison he writes a book called Mein Kampf which turns into a political platform. In the book he describes a united Austria and Germany and mentions that in World War I, gas should have been used on thousands of Jews. At first the book is treated as a joke, but later gains a lot of respect. When Hitler gets out of prison he tries to re-organize the party and realizes that he should only make his revolution when he comes to power. During this time Nazi registration grows, and Hitler is appointed to the Chancellorship on January 30th, 1933.

Watching this documentary was as beneficial as reading books for numerous reasons. I think what stood out to me most was the clip that was featured of Hitler's first speech as chancellor. I was captivated; I couldn't take my eyes off the screen. Seeing the raw emotion with which he spoke made me understand how the masses could have been swayed to let such an evil man be let into office. That is where the true value of this source lies, because I have already seen all the information that was presented before, but now that I was able to see Hitler and some of his assistants in action it is much easier for me to understand Germany during Hitler's rise to power.