

A Nation and a Man

To fully understand the rise of the Nazis' to power, we must first take a look back at the history of land we now know as Germany. By looking back, we will discover themes and trends that have run through the centuries, creating the perfect scenario for the Nazis to come into existence, and eventually to power.

German history is broken down into three major periods or phases: the First Reich, the Second Reich and the Third Reich. Reich is the German word for Empire. In this reading we will examine the First and Second Reich, along with looking at Germany after WWI.

The First Reich

In 800 AD, Charlemagne formed what would be known as the First Reich. After the Roman Empire had collapsed, there had been a long period of violence and chaos. Charlemagne was the leader of the Germanic tribe called the Franks. He led a military effort to re-unify the old Roman Empire. He conquered from the Mediterranean Sea to modern day Poland, and down into Italy. The Pope crowned him as the Holy Roman Emperor. When he died, Charlemagne's empire was divided. The part we now know as Germany was called the Holy Roman Empire and lasted for a thousand years. The Holy Roman Empire was conquered by Napoleon in 1806.



The Second Reich



After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, the Holy Roman Empire was left as fragmented pieces. In 1864, Otto von Bismarck, the leader of the Germanic state called Prussia, led his military in a series of wars to unify all German people under one king. In 1871, all the states were unified as one German nation... and the rest of the world trembled in fear. This was called the Second Reich.

The Second Reich developed a Constitutional Monarchy, which means that there was both a King (Kaiser) and an elected Parliament (law making group). They did many wonderful things in this newly unified Germany. Every man got to vote, with no restrictions on race or class. Women received equal rights as men. By 1900, Germany had developed into the world's greatest economy.

They were also on the cutting edge of many social issues as well as leading the way in the arts.

Unfortunately, there were many problems in the Second Reich as well. The government declared whole categories/groups of people as "enemies of the state," severely persecuting them. There were parts of the population that believed the unification of the German people was not complete because Austria and other Eastern European countries had large German populations. They wanted to see these countries become a part of Germany. There was a growing anger toward the Jews in Germany. Even though the Jews made up 1% of the population, many people felt that all of the countries problems could be traced back to the Jewish people. They felt that restrictions needed to be placed upon the Jews for the "Safety of the German people." Finally, there were groups that argued for a stronger "German Race" based on Social Darwinism. These people argued for the killing of the physically weak/handicapped, the lazy, the criminals, and the mentally unstable. Each of these radical groups were a small part of the German population, and these issues were on the fringe of society. That is, however, until after WWI, which brought an end to the Second Reich.

Germany After WWI

After the Germans had lost WWI, they were forced to sign the harsh and embarrassing Versailles Treaty. The treaty demanded that Germany accept all guilt for the war, pay the war debts to the winners, have their military limited in numbers and technology, and finally a loss of territory to both France and Poland. The results of this treaty crushed the German spirit, sent millions of Germans into unemployment, and sunk the German economy.

With the economy in shambles, Germany was unable to keep up with the war debt payments. They were also unwilling to raise taxes in order to pay off the debt. What happened next was a period of rapid inflation, where it takes more money to buy the same item.

- Before the war in 1913, it would take 4 German Marks to buy 1 US dollar.
- After the war in 1919, it took 493 German Marks to buy 1 US Dollar.
- By winter of 1923, it took 4,000,000,000,000 German Marks to buy 1 US dollar.

The German economy had collapsed.

With the end of the war, Kaiser Wilhelm II was run out of the country, and a new republic was put into place with an elected president. This was a good step for Germany as they pushed forward with good social issues. However, there was a clause in the German Constitution: Article 48. This stated that the President may call a "state of emergency" and take full control of the country if he feels the country is in serious trouble. This article was used often and would cause serious problems later on.

Finally, WWI had caused a culture of violence in Germany. With the end of the war and the shrinking of the army, there were millions of soldiers now without work. Violent political groups were formed. On the "left wing" were the Communists, who tried to start a revolution just like the Russians. Opposed to the Communists were the "right wing" groups, among who were the Steel Helmets and the Nazis. The 1920s and early 1930s were filled with violent political groups waging war on the streets of Germany.

This is the situation when a young man and former soldier named Adolf Hitler arrives on the streets of Munich, Germany...



The Rise of Hitler

Over the course of the 20th Century, no person is more famous or more vilified than Adolf Hitler. This looks at the life and times of Adolf that shaped him into the leader of the Nazis party, putting him into position to take charge of Germany.

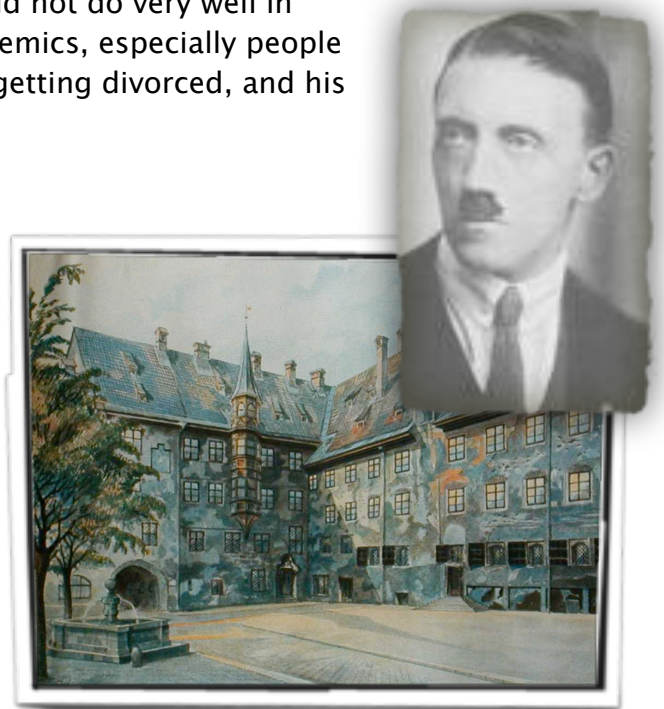


Early Life

Adolf Hitler was born to a middle-to-upper class family in Austria in 1889 (note: he was not German and no, he was not Jewish. That was a lie his half-brother told when Adolf refused to give him a posh position within the

government). Adolf was a strong headed child who did not do very well in school. Growing up, He had a strong dislike for academics, especially people with college degrees. This, coupled with his parents getting divorced, and his father remarrying made for a difficult childhood.

As a teenager, Adolf was an aspiring artist who tried to get into the famous Vienna School of the Arts, where anyone who was anyone went to be an artist. They rejected his work and he did not get in. He was also fascinated with designing buildings and architecture, but could not get into school for that either. During his late teenage years his father died, leaving Adolf a small fortune. Adolf left Vienna, moved to Munich, Germany, and lived a care free life style. Unfortunately, the costs of that lifestyle soon caught up with him, as his father's fortune got spent on going to the theater and on eating fine food. Adolf soon found himself broke, living in a boys' homeless shelter, painting buildings on post cards, selling them for \$.01 each. Needless to say in 1914, Adolf Hitler was broke and broken, with few hopes.



WWI



Like many others in Europe, WWI changed everything for Adolf Hitler. He enlisted into the German army to be a common soldier. His task was to be a messenger, running information from the front lines to those in the back. He was wounded twice in battle and received a medal of valor. The war ended almost as suddenly as it started, with the German troops still fighting on French soil. Hitler was one of the millions of soldiers who returned to Germany angry and confused, feeling this new Republic had stabbed the German people in the back by signing the Versailles Treaty. As the harsh requirements of the Treaty sunk Germany into a deeper and deeper hole, the millions of angry soldiers began to stir restlessly.

After the War

Back in his beloved Munich, Adolf was once again broke and out of work, with little hope for the future. During this time, many political groups began to form; encouraging the young soldiers to join. Hitler talked with a few of these groups before getting involved with a newer, vibrant group: the National Socialists (aka, the Nazis). While not the most intellectual man, Adolf discovered his true gift: public speaking. Hitler could move and sway crowds with his words and with



his passion. Hitler quickly moved through the ranks of the Nazis party, with the numbers expanding daily. In the early 1920s, Hitler became the leader of the Nazis party, guiding its passions and its interests.

The Nazis were one of the most extreme and violent groups in Germany at the time. This attracted a large number of WWI veterans to join. They embodied all of the negative threads of the Second Reich: a passion for a Monarchy style government, Anti-Semitism (blaming all their problems on the Jews), a desire to expand Germany to all the places Germans lived in Europe, wanting racial purity, and finally, wanting to undo and pay back its enemies for the Versailles Treaty. It was with these principles that Adolf Hitler organized plans to become the leader of Germany and change the world... a desire for a Third Reich that would last a thousand years.

Questions

- 1) Create a timeline of key events of the first two Reiches and Hitler's life.
- 2) What is a Reich? Who established the First Reich? Who established the Second Reich? In what ways were the first two Reichs similar?
- 3) Define constitutional monarchy?
- 4) List 3 good things and 3 bad things about the Second Reich.
- 5) The Treaty of Versailles had an enormous impact on Germany. Write a paragraph describing three ways the Treaty of Versailles effected Germany after WWI.
- 6) What is inflation? In what ways could inflation be a bad thing?
- 7) Complete a Photo Analysis (observe/infer/question) on the German Inflation picture.
- 8) What hardships did Hitler face as a young child? How do you think they shaped him as he grew up?
- 9) Create a Logic Tree & Paragraph: What beliefs did the Nazi Party get from previous Reichs?
- 10) Choose 3 words that you feel best describe each time period of Hitler's life (Early Life, during WWI, After WWI)
- 11) Pretend that Hitler had a Twitter account during his lifetime and was tweeting during the major moments in his life. Create a Twitter Timeline of at least 7 Tweets that encompass his early life, time during WWI, and post-WWI life.
 - a. A "tweet" cannot be more then 140 characters, including punctuation and spaces.
 - b. Example:

August 25, 1913– Enjoyed Wagner's Opera for the 23rd straight night.
#LivingTheMunichGoodLife
(This is 76 characters, including spaces)