Hitler Essay, Research Paper

Adolf Hitler

1. At 6:30 p.m. on the evening of April 20, 1889, he was born in the small Austrian village of Braunau Am Inn just across the border from German Bavaria.

2. In 1895, at age six, two important events happened in the life of young Adolf Hitler. First, the unrestrained, carefree days he had enjoyed up to now came to an end as he entered primary school. Secondly, his father retired on a pension from the Austrian civil service. He found school easy and got good grades with little effort. He also discovered he had considerable talent for drawing, especially sketching buildings. He had the ability to look at a building, memorize the architectural details, and accurately reproduce it on paper, entirely from memory. , young Hitler had dreams of one day becoming an artist. He wanted to go to the classical school. But his father wanted him to follow in his footsteps and become a civil servant and sent him to the technical high school in the city of Linz, in September 1900.

Hitler, the country boy, was lost in the city and its big school. City kids also looked down on country kids who went to the school. He was very lonely and extremely unhappy. He did quite poorly his first year, getting kept back. He would later claim he wanted to show his father he was unsuited for technical education with its emphasis on mathematics and science and thus should have been allowed to become an artist. Hitler began his second year at the high school as the oldest boy in his class since he had been kept back. This gave him the advantage over the other boys.

Once again he became a little ringleader and even led the boys in afterschool games of cowboys and Indians, becoming Old Shatterhand. He managed to get better grades in his second year, but still failed mathematics. There was also a history teacher at school, Dr. Leopold P?tsch, who touched Hitler’s imagination with exciting tales of the glory of German figures such as Bismark and Frederick the Great. For young Hitler, German Nationalism quickly became an obsession. for young Hitler, the struggle with his father was about to come to a sudden end.

In January 1903, Hitler’s father died suddenly of a lung hemorrhage, leaving his thirteen-year-old son as head of the Hitler household. For convenience, young Hitler went to live at a boys’ boarding house in Linz where he was attending the technical high school. This saved him the long daily commute from Leonding. On weekends, he went back home to his mother. In autumn 1903, when he returned to school after summer vacation, things got worse. Along with his poor grades in mathematics and French, Hitler behaved badly, knowing he was likely to fail. With no threat of discipline at home and disinterest shown by his school teachers, Hitler performed pranks and practical jokes aimed at the teachers he now disliked so much.

Among Hitler’s antics – giving contrary, insulting, argumentative answers to questions, which upset the teacher and delighted the other boys who sometimes applauded him. With those boys, he also released cockroaches in the classroom, rearranged the furniture, and organized confusion in the classroom by doing the opposite of what the teacher said.

In May of 1904, at age 15, Adolf Hitler received the Catholic Sacrament of Confirmation in the Linz Cathedral. As a young boy he once entertained the idea of becoming a priest. But by the time he was confirmed he was bored and uninterested in his faith and hardly bothered to make the appropriate responses during the religious ceremony.

Shortly after this, Hitler left the high school at Linz. He had been given a passing mark in French on a make-up exam on the condition that he not return to the school. In September 1904, he entered another high school, at Steyr, a small town 25 miles from Linz. He lived in a boarding house there, sharing a room with another boy. They sometimes amused themselves by shooting rats.

Hitler got terrible marks his first semester at the new school, failing math, German, French, and even got a poor grade for handwriting. He improved during his second semester and was told he might even graduate if he first took a special make-up exam in the fall. During the summer, however, Hitler suffered from a bleeding lung ailment, an inherited medical problem.

He regained his health and passed the exam in September 1905, and celebrated with fellow students by getting drunk. He wound up the next morning lying on the side of the road, awakened by a milkman. After that experience he swore off alcohol and never drank again.

But Hitler could not bring himself to take the final exam for his diploma. Using poor health as his excuse, he left school at age sixteen never to return. From now on he would be self taught, continuing his heavy reading habits and interpreting what he read on his own, living in his own dreamy reality and creating his own sense of truth.

3. Corporal Adolf Hitler was ordered in September 1919 to investigate a small group in Munich known as the German Workers’ Party. On September 12 He listened to a speech on economics by Gottfried Feder entitled, “How and by what means is capitalism to be eliminated?”

After the speech, Hitler began to leave when a man rose up and spoke in favor of the German State of Bavaria breaking away from Germany and forming a new South German nation with Austria.

This enraged Hitler and he spoke out forcefully against the man for the next fifteen minutes uninterrupted, to the astonishment of everyone. One of the founders of the German Workers’ Party, Anton Drexler, reportedly whispered: “…he’s got the gift of the gab. We could use him.”

After Hitler’s outburst ended, Drexler hurried to Hitler and gave him a forty-page pamphlet entitled: “My Political Awakening.” He urged Hitler to read it and also invited Hitler to come back again

He spent two days thinking it over then decided.

“…I finally came to the conviction that I had to take this step…It was the most decisive resolve of my life. From here there was and could be no turning back.”

Adolf Hitler joined the committee of the German Workers’ Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or DAP) and thus entered politics.

4. When Hitler got up to speak, The German Workers’ Party meeting he astounded everyone with a highly emotional, at times near hysterical manner of speech making. For Hitler, it was an important moment in his young political career. He described the scene in Mein Kampf:

“I spoke for thirty minutes, and what before I had simply felt within me, without in any way knowing it, was now proved by reality: I could speak! After thirty minutes the people in the small room were electrified and the enthusiasm was first expressed by the fact that my appeal to the self-sacrifice of those present led to the donation of three hundred marks.”

Hitler took charge of party propaganda in early 1920, and also recruited young men he had known in the Army. Army Captain Ernst R?hm, a new party member, who would play a vital role in Hitler’s eventual rise to power, aided him in his recruiting efforts.

He also understood how a political party directly opposed to a possible Communist revolution could play on the fears of so many Germans and gain support.

In February of 1920, Hitler urged the German Workers’ Party to hold its first mass meeting. He met strong opposition from leading party members who thought it was premature and feared it might be disrupted by Marxists. Hitler had no fear of disruption. In fact he welcomed it, knowing it would bring his party anti-Marxist notoriety. He even had the hall decorated in red to aggravate the Marxists.

On February 24, 1920, Hitler was thrilled when he entered the large meeting hall in Munich and saw two thousand people waiting, including a large number of Communists.

A few minutes into his speech, shouting followed by open brawling between German Workers’ Party associates and disruptive Communists drowned him out. He proceeded to outline the rest of the German Workers’ Party political platform, which included; the union of all Germans in a greater German Reich. The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, the demand for additional territories for the German people (Lebensraum), and citizenship determined by race with no Jew to be considered a German. It also covered all income not earned by work to be confiscated, a thorough reconstruction of the national education system, religious freedom except for religions which endanger the German race, and a strong central government for the execution of effective legislation.

Hitler realized one thing the movement lacked was a recognizable symbol or flag. In the summer of 1920, Hitler chose the symbol which to this day remains perhaps the most infamous in history, the swastika.

It was not something Hitler invented, but is found even in the ruins of ancient times. Hitler had seen it each day as a boy when he attended the Benedictine monastery school in Lambach, Austria. The ancient monastery was decorated with carved stones and woodwork that included several swastikas.

Hitler described the symbolism involved: “In the red we see the social idea of the movement, in the white the national idea, in the swastika the mission to struggle for the victory of Aryan man and at the same time the victory of the idea of creative work, which is eternally anti-Semitic and will always be anti-Semitic.”

The German Workers’ Party name was changed by Hitler to include the term National Socialist. Thus the full name was the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or NSDAP) called for short, Nazi. The executive committee of the Nazi Party eventually backed down and Hitler’s demands were put to a vote of the party members. Hitler received 543 votes for, and only one against.

At the next gathering, July 29, 1921, Adolf Hitler was introduced as F?hrer of the Nazi Party, marking the first time that title was publicly used to address him.

The trial of Adolf Hitler for high treason after the Beer Hall Putsch was not the end of Hitler’s political career as many had expected. In many ways marked the true beginning.

Overnight, Hitler became a nationally and internationally known figure due to massive press coverage. A Nazi sympathizer in the Bavarian government chose the judges in this sensational trial. They allowed Hitler to use the courtroom as a propaganda platform from which he could speak at any length on his own behalf, interrupt others at any time and even cross examine witnesses.

Rather than deny the charges, Hitler admitted wanting to overthrow the government and outlined his reasons, portraying himself as a German patriot and the democratic government itself, its founders and leaders, as the real criminals.

The court’s verdict – guilty. Possible sentence – life. Hitler’s sentence – five years, eligible for parole in six months.

On April 1, 1924, Hitler was taken to the old fortress at Landsberg and given a spacious private cell with a fine view. He got gifts, was allowed to receive visitors whenever he liked and had his own private secretary, Rudolph Hess.

The Nazi Party after the Putsch became fragmented and disorganized, but Hitler had gained national influence by taking advantage of the press to make his ideas known. Now, although behind bars, Hitler was not about to stop communicating.

Pacing back and forth in his cell, he continued expressing his ideas, while Hess took down every word. The result would be the first volume of a book, Mein Kampf, outlining Hitler’s political and racial ideas in brutally intricate detail, serving both as a blueprint for future actions and as a warning to the world. (The original title Hitler chose was “Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice.” His Nazi publisher knew better and shortened it to “Mein Kampf,” simply My Struggle, or My Battle.)

Throughout Mein Kampf, Hitler refers to Jews as parasites, liars, dirty, crafty, sly, wily, clever, without any true culture, a sponger, a middleman, a maggot, eternal blood suckers, repulsive, unscrupulous, monsters, foreign, menace, bloodthirsty, avaricious, the destroyer of Aryan humanity, and the mortal enemy of Aryan humanity…

This conspiracy idea and the notion of ‘competition’ for world domination between Jews and Aryans would become widespread beliefs in Nazi Germany and would even be taught to school children.

This, combined with Hitler’s racial attitude toward the Jews, would be shared to varying degrees by millions of Germans and people from occupied countries, so that they either remained silent or actively participated in the Nazi effort to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.

When Mein Kampf was first released in 1925 it sold poorly. People had been hoping for a juicy autobiography or a behind-the-scenes story of the Beer Hall Putsch. What they got were hundreds of pages of long, hard to follow sentences and wandering paragraphs composed by a self-educated man.

However, after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, millions of copies were sold. It was considered proper to own a copy and to give one to newlyweds, high school graduates, or to celebrate any similar occasion. But few Germans ever read it cover to cover. Although it made him rich, Hitler would later express regret that he produced Mein Kampf, considering the extent of its revelations.

A few days before Christmas, 1924, Adolf Hitler emerged a free man after nine months in prison, having learned from his mistakes. In addition to creating the book, Mein Kampf, Hitler had given considerable thought to the failed Nazi revolution (Beer Hall Putsch) of November 1923, and its implications for the future.

On February 27, the Nazis held their first big meeting since the Beer Hall Putsch at which Hitler reclaimed his position as absolute leader of the Nazi Party and patched up some of the ongoing feuds. But during his two-hour speech before four thousand cheering Nazis, Hitler got carried away and started spewing out the same old threats against the democratic republic, Marxists, and Jews.

The Nazi party itself was divided into two major political organizations.

PO I – Dedicated to undermining and overthrowing the German democratic republic.

PO II – Designed to create a government in waiting, a highly organized Nazi government within the republic that would some day replace it. PO II even had its own departments of Agriculture, Economy, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Propaganda, and Justice, along with Race and Culture.

The Nazis into thirty-four districts, or Gaue divided Germany up, with each one having a Gauleiter, or leader. The Gau itself was divided into circles, Kreise, and each one had a Kreisleiter, or circle leader. The circles were divided into Ortsgruppen, or local groups. And in the big cities, the local groups were divided along streets and blocks.

For young people, the Hitler Jugend, or Hitler Youth was formed. It was for boy’s aged 15 to 18, and was modeled after the popular Boy Scout programs. Younger boys aged 10 to 15 could join the Deutsche Jungvolk. There was an organization for girls called Bund Duetscher Maedel and for women, the Frauenschaften.

Amid all this, Adolf Hitler new it was going to be slow going for his party which had counted so many unhappy, disgruntled men among its early members. But Hitler also had a sense that the good times would not last. The German republic was living on borrowed money and borrowed time. The underlying political and racial tensions he was so keen to exploit were still there, only dormant. And when the good times were over, they would once again come looking for him. But for now he just had to wait.

above the village of Berchtesgaden in the German State of Bavaria, he found an ideal home. He spent his days gazing at inspiring, majestic mountain views and dreaming of future glory for himself and his German Reich.

Those dreams centered around asserting the supremacy of the Germanic race, acquiring more living space (Lebensraum) for the German people, and dealing harshly with Jews and Marxists.

By May of 1926, Hitler had overcome any remaining rivals within the Nazi Party and assumed the title of supreme leader (F?hrer). Ideological differences and infighting between factions of the Nazi Party were resolved by Hitler through his considerable powers of personal persuasion during closed door meetings with embattled leaders.

During these quiet years, Joseph Goebbels first came to Hitler’s attention and experienced a quick rise in the Nazi hierarchy.

He was a rarity among the Nazis, a highly educated man, with a Ph.D. in literature from Heidelberg

Hitler sent Goebbels in October 1926, to the German capital, Berlin, to be its Gauleiter. Once there, he faced the huge task of reorganizing and publicizing the largely ignored Nazi Party.

Berlin proved to be a training ground for the future Propaganda Minister.

But problems arose after Nazi storm troopers badly beat up an old pastor who heckled Goebbels during a Nazi rally. The police declared the party illegal in Berlin and eventually banned Nazi speech making throughout the entire German State of Prussia.

The ban was short-lived however. It was lifted in the spring of 1927. Hitler then came to Berlin and gave a speech before a crowd of about 5000 supporters.

On May 20, national elections were held in Germany. The Nazis had a poor showing, although Goebbels won a seat in the Reichstag. For the average German, the Nazis at this time had little appeal. Things seemed to be just fine without them. The economy was strong, inflation was under control, and people were working again.

Adolf Hitler was simply biding his time, knowing it would not last. At Berchtesgaden, Hitler finished dictating the second volume of Mein Kampf to Rudolph Hess. In the summer of 1928, Hitler rented a small country house with a magnificent view of the Bavarian Mountains. Years later this would be the site of his sprawling villa.

Now, at age 39, Hitler had a place he could finally call home. He settled into the little country house and invited his stepsister, Angela, to leave Vienna and come to take over the daily chores. Angela arrived along with her two daughters, Friedl and Geli.

Geli was a lively twenty-year-old with dark blond hair and Viennese charm, qualities that were hugely appealing to a man nearly twice her age. Hitler quickly fell in love with her. He fawned over her like a teenager in love for the first time. He went shopping with her and patiently stood by as she tried on clothes. He took her to theaters, cafes, concerts, and even to party meetings.

This relationship between Hitler and his niece was for the most part socially acceptable according to local customs since she was the daughter of his half sister.

It was a relationship that would ultimately end in tragedy a few years later with her suicide. But for now, in late 1929, she existed as the object of Hitler’s affection.

Germany was a nation that in its history had little experience or interest in democracy. In January 1933, Adolf Hitler took the reins of a 14-year-old German democratic republic that in the minds of many had long outlived its usefulness. By this time, the economic pressures of the Great Depression combined with the indecisive, self-serving nature of its elected politicians had brought government in Germany to a complete standstill. The people were without jobs, without food, quite afraid and desperate for relief.

Now, the man who had spent his entire political career denouncing and attempting to destroy the republic, was its leader. Around noon on January 30 1933, Hitler was sworn in as the Chancellor of Germany.

Even before he was sworn in, he was at work to accomplish that goal by demanding new elections. While Hindenburg waited impatiently in another room, Hitler argued with conservative leader Hugenberg, who vehemently opposed the idea. Hitler’s plan was to establish a majority of elected Nazis in the Reichstag which would become a rubber stamp, passing whatever laws he desired while making it all perfectly legal.

On his first day as chancellor, Hitler manipulated Hindenburg into dissolving the Reichstag and calling for the new elections he had wanted – to be held on March 5, 1933.

By a weird coincidence, there was also in Berlin a deranged Communist conducting a one-man uprising. An arsonist named Marinus van der Lubbe, 24, from Holland, had been wandering around Berlin for a week attempting to burn government buildings to protest capitalism and start a revolt. On February 27, he decided to burn the Reichstag building.

Carrying incendiary devices, he spent all day lurking around the building, before breaking in around 9 p.m. He took off his shirt, lit it on fire, and then went to work using it as his torch.

“You are now witnessing the beginning of a great epoch in German history…This fire is the beginning,” Hitler told a news reporter at the scene.

Nazi newspapers continued to print false evidence of Communist conspiracies, claiming that only Hitler and the Nazis could prevent a Communist takeover. Joseph Goebbels now had control of the State-run radio and broadcast Nazi propaganda and Hitler’s speeches all across the nation.

The Nazis now turned their attention to Election Day, March 5.

On March 5, the last free elections were held. But the people denied Hitler his majority, giving the Nazis only 44 per cent of the total vote, 17, 277,180. Despite massive propaganda and the brutal crackdown, the other parties held their own. The Center Party got over four million and the Social Democrats over seven million. The Communists lost votes but still got over four million.

The goal of a legally established dictatorship was now within reach. But the lack of the necessary two-thirds majority in the Reichstag was an obstacle. For Hitler and his ruthless inner circle, it was obstacle that was soon to be overcome.

As for Van der Lubbe, the Communist arsonist, he was tried and convicted, then beheaded.

For Adolf Hitler, the goal of a legally established dictatorship was now within reach. On March 15, 1933, a cabinet meeting was held during which Hitler and G?ring discussed how to obstruct what was left of the democratic process to get an Enabling Act passed by the Reichstag. This law would hand over the constitutional functions of the Reichstag to Hitler, including the power to make laws, control the budget and approve treaties with foreign governments.

On March 21, in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, the burial place of Frederick the Great, an elaborate ceremony took place designed to ease public concern over Hitler and his gangster-like new regime.

President Hindenburg, foreign diplomats, the General Staff and all the old guard going back to the days of the Kaiser attended it. Dressed in their handsome uniforms sprinkled with medals, they watched a most reverent Adolf Hitler give a speech paying respect to Hindenburg and celebrating the union of old Prussian military traditions and the new Nazi Reich. As a symbol of this, the old Imperial flags would soon add swastikas.

Finishing his speech, Hitler walked over to Hindenburg and respectfully bowed before him while taking hold of the old man’s hand. The scene was recorded on film and by press photographers from around the world. This was precisely the impression Hitler and Goebbels wanted to give to the world, all the while plotting to toss aside Hindenburg and the elected Reichstag.

Later that same day, Hindenburg signed two decrees put before him by Hitler. The first offered full pardons to all Nazis currently in prison. The prison doors sprang open and out came an assortment of Nazi thugs and murderers.

The second decree signed by the befuddled old man allowed for the arrest of anyone suspected of maliciously criticizing the government and the Nazi party.

A third decree signed only by Hitler and Papen allowed for the establishment of special courts to try political offenders. These courts were conducted in the military style of a court-martial without a jury and usually with no counsel for the defense.

On March 23, the newly elected Reichstag met in the Kroll Opera House in Berlin to consider passing Hitler’s Enabling Act. It was officially called the “Law for Removing the Distress of the People and the Reich.” If passed, it would in effect vote democracy out of existence in Germany and establish the legal dictatorship of Adolf Hitler.

Brown-shirted Nazi storm troopers swarmed over the fancy old building in a show of force and as a visible threat. They stood outside, in the hallways and even lined the aisles inside, glaring ominously at anyone who might oppose Hitler’s will.

Before the vote, Hitler made a speech in which he pledged to use restraint.

The vote was taken – 441 for, and only 84, the Social Democrats, against. The Nazis leapt to their feet clapping, stamping and shouting, then broke into the Nazi anthem, the H?rst Wessel song.

Democracy was ended. They had brought down the German Democratic Republic legally. From this day onward, the Reichstag would be just a sounding board, a cheering section for Hitler’s pronouncements.

Now, for the first time as dictator, Adolf Hitler turned his attention to the driving force, which had propelled him into politics in the first place, his hatred of the Jews. It began with a simple boycott on April 1, 1933, and would end years later in the greatest tragedy in all of human history.

5. On October 29 1929, the Wall Street stock market crashed with disastrous worldwide effects. First in America, then the rest of the world, companies went bankrupt, banks failed and people instantly lost their life savings.

Unemployment soon soared and poverty and starvation became real possibilities for everyone.

The people panicked. Governments seemed powerless against the worldwide economic collapse. Fear ruled. Governments stood on the brink. The Great Depression had begun.

A series of financial events unfolded in the years 1921 though 1923 that would propel the Nazis to new heights of daring and would even prompt Hitler into attempting to take over Germany.

In April of 1921, the victorious European Allies of World War One, notably France and England, presented a bill to Germany demanding payment for damages caused in the war which Germany had started. This bill (33 billion dollars) for war reparations had the immediate effect of causing ruinous inflation in Germany.

The German currency, the mark, slipped drastically in value. It had been four marks to the U.S. dollar until the war reparations were announced. Then it became 75 to the dollar and in 1922 sank to 400 to the dollar. The German government asked for a postponement of payments. The French refused. The Germans defied them by defaulting on their payments. In response to this, in January 1923, the French Army occupied the industrial part of Germany known as the Ruhr.

The German mark fell to 18,000 to the dollar. By July 1923, it sank to 160,000. By August, 1,000,000. And by November 1923, it took 4,000,000,000 marks to obtain a dollar.

Germans lost their life savings. Salaries were paid in worthless money. Groceries cost billions. Hunger riots broke out

When the stock market collapsed on Wall Street on Tuesday, October 29, 1929, it sent financial markets worldwide into a tailspin with disastrous effects.

The German economy was especially vulnerable since it was built out of foreign capital, mostly loans from America and was very dependent on foreign trade. When those loans suddenly came due and when the world market for German exports dried up, the well-oiled German industrial machine quickly ground to a halt.

Overnight, the middle class standard of living so many German families enjoyed was ruined by events outside of Germany, beyond their control. The Great Depression began and they were cast into poverty and deep misery and began looking for a solution, any solution.

Adolf Hitler knew his opportunity had arrived

In the presidential election held on March 13, 1932, Hitler got over eleven million votes (11,339,446) or 30% of the total. Hindenburg got 18,651,497 votes or 49%.

6. Germany had been the site of an increasing number of measures taken in the name of “racial purity” since the Nazis assumed power in 1933. Including forced sterilization of those with physical and/or mental handicaps, and the murder of infants with similar handicaps (in both cases, the primary targets were not Jews, but so-called “Aryans,” or non-Jewish Germans). Now in 1939, under the cover of war, the program was to be expanded to include murdering handicapped adults. Since Hitler would issue no law legalizing such forced “euthanasia,” and since physicians would hesitate or refuse to take part in the killing unless they had written protection from later prosecution, Hitler was persuaded to sign this document on his personal stationery. He instructed his assistants Philipp Bouhler and Dr. Karl Brandt to initiate the program. The document was signed in October 1939, but backdated to 1 September, the date of the beginning of World War II.

Hitler’s domestic policy was one of thorough nazification of all aspects of German life, enforced by the Secret State Police. Amid the swirling mess in Berlin of political intrigue, rumors, and disorder, the SA, the Nazi storm troopers, stood out as an ominous presence. In the spring of 1932, many in the German democratic government came to believe the Brownshirts were about to take over by force. There were now over 400,000 storm troopers under the leadership of SA Chief Ernst R?hm. In April of 1932, Heinrich Bruening, Chancellor of Germany, invoked Article 48 of the constitution and issued a decree banning the SA and SS all across Germany. The Nazis were outraged and wanted Hitler to fight the ban.

7. As Germany’s economic situation got worse, with nearly six million unemployed, Bruening was labeled “The Hunger Chancellor.”

Bruening had also continued the dangerous precedent of ruling by decree. He invoked Article 48 of the German constitution several times to break the political stalemate in Berlin.

To Schleicher and Hitler, he was simply in the way and had to go. Schleicher went to work on him by undermining the support of Hindenburg. Bruening was already in trouble with Hindenburg, who blamed him for the political turmoil that had made it necessary to run for re-election at age 85 against the ‘Bohemian Corporal’ Adolf Hitler.

The Nazis, sensing total victory, campaigned with fanatical energy. Hitler was now speaking to adoring German audiences of up to 100,000 at a time. The phenomenon of large scale ‘F?hrer worship’ had begun. On July 31, the people voted and gave the Nazis 13,745,000 votes, 37% of the total, granting them 230 seats in the Reichstag. The Nazi party was now the largest and most powerful in Germany.

8. Hitler’s much celebrated “Third Reich,” which was to have endured for eternity, ended after twelve years of unparalleled barbarity, in which 30 million people lost their lives. Twelve million of theses souls lost their lives far from the battlefield, by mass shootings, forced labor camps, and in gas ovens at Belsen, Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbr?ck in accordance with Nazi racial theories and the “New Order.” To these atrocities we could add the indiscriminate torture and murder of prisoners of war, or the uprooting and destruction of entire villages in Poland, France and Russia. Such horror prompted the international trial at Nuremberg (1945-46), at which twenty-one leading Nazis were tried and eleven executed for carrying out the orders of

9. Hitler ordered the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938. Hitler’s army invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, sparking France and England to declare war on Germany. A Blitzkrieg (lightning war) of German tanks and infantry swept through most of Western Europe as nation after nation fell to the German war machine.

In 1941, Hitler ignored a non-aggression pact he had signed with the Soviet Union in August 1939. Several early victories after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, were reversed with crushing defeats at Moscow (December 1941) and Stalingrad (winter, 1942-43). The United States entered the war in December 1941. By 1944, the Allies invaded occupied Europe at Normandy Beach on the French coast, German cities were being destroyed by bombing, and Italy, Germany’s major ally under the leadership of Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, had fallen.

Several attempts were made on Hitler’s life during the war, but none was successful. As the war appeared to be inevitably lost and his handpicked lieutenants, seeing the futility, defied his orders, he killed himself on April 30, 1945. His long-term mistress and new bride, Eva Braun, joined him in suicide. By that time, one of his chief objectives was achieved with the annihilation of two-thirds of European Jewry.