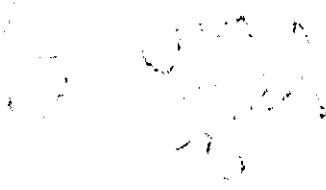


Aaqib Javaid

Nazi Holocaust - History 44

Professor Richard Tomback



### The Rise of the Führer

"When all this is over, people will try to blame the Germans alone, and the Germans will try to blame the Nazis alone, and the Nazis will try to blame Hitler alone. They will make him bear the sins of the world. But it's not true. You suspected what was happening, and so did I." Adolf Hitler was one of the greatest monsters history has ever produced. A tyrant who baptized a continent with fire and blood, and almost brought about the complete and utter destruction of a millennia old people. Unlike the long line of remorseless leaders who brought death and despair throughout history, what makes Hitler's reign so extraordinary is the contemporary—still in living memory—nature of his rule. His victims still live. The Nazi leader ordered a systematic annihilation of the collective European Jewry, plunged the world into war, and ultimately caused one of the biggest mass dyings in human history; 80 million lives were expunged in this madman's quest for delusion. But the Führer of the Third German Reich wasn't an outsider who seized power upon an unwilling populace, no, he rose through the ranks, built his base, and eventually a cheering public carried him to the halls of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. Hitler was elected. And his rise is just as unbelievably astounding as the crimes he will go on to commit.

The seeds of Hitler's rise to power were planted following the outcome of the First World War. With Germany's defeat, many German men returned to Germany feeling betrayed by their country and government. The Treaty of Versailles was seen as the ultimate insult to German pride, and sacrifice. Not only was Germany forced to accept the blame for the breakout of war, but they had to limit their nation's borders to satisfy France's commands and wishes to expand their country's borders, pay the war reparations of all the countries impacted and restrict their own military from power (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica). This created a hostile environment in the newly formed German Weimar Republic, where left and right winged parties blamed one another for the loss, while the depressed economy, and the rampant lawlessness, created disorder and instability. In the backdrop of this political and economic turmoil, a meeting of just six people was held on September 12th, 1919, and a new party, The German Workers' Party was created. After giving a charismatic speech for 45 minutes, a young Adolf Hitler was invited as the seventh member of this fledgling party (25). The German Workers' Party began to hold rallies, started to court the German public opinion. Hitler's strong anti Semitic views served as the party's platform, and his passionate speech making skills drew hundreds to his rallies. This was the beginning of the Nazi party, as evident, in less than an year the name German Workers' Party was abolished, and the party was renamed National Socialist German Workers' Party.

This new party, emboldened by its ever growing support, decided on an ambitious undertaking, something to showcase its growing strength. In 1923, the Nazis, along with other right wing factions attempted to overthrow the government of the Free State of Bavaria with an armed uprising. The event became known as The Beer Hall Putsch (John Simkin). Hitler marched with

2000 Nazis through Munich and attempted to take the most important individuals in Bavarian politics as political hostages. This event would lead to Hitler's eventual arrest, and a highly publicized 24 day trial, which gave him a platform to publicize his nationalist sentiment to the nation. These were some of the most defining events of Hitler's early rise. After Bavaria, the Nazi leader understood that he wouldn't gain power through revolution, but by working through the system. His publicity during the media commotion made him understand the power of propaganda, something he would go on to make a liberal use of. Even the 9 months he served in Landsberg prison for treason ended up being useful in the long run, because it was in Landsberg where Hitler wrote the first pages of his book, *Mein Kampf* (my struggle), a mixture of autobiography, political ideology and an examination of the techniques of propaganda.

Over the next five or so years, the Nazi party, reformed by Hitler in 1925, would continue to grow, and expand its membership base. But this new influx was from sympathetic ideological Germans. To truly become a competing party, the Nazis needed to gain traction in the German mainstream. They needed to prove that they were a compelling alternative to the establishment. In 1929 they got their chance. The American Stock market crash reverberated throughout the developed world, destroying economies and sinking businesses, alike. Six million Germans lost their jobs, as well as life savings (Germany during the Great Depression). President Paul von Hindenberg tried to implement economic reform, but all attempts failed. The government's decisions actually made unemployment worse. This resulted in the German population to turn away from the mainstream government and instead turn over to Hitler and the Nazi Party. The party's membership skyrocketed during the depression, as German's flocked to the charismatic

Hitler and his promises for a better future for the German people. The Great Depression was a blessing in disguise for the Nazi Party. In the general election of In the General Election of 1930, the Nazi Party increases its representatives in parliament from 14 to 107. Hitler was now the leader of the second largest party in Germany.

The Nazis upward trend continued, despite initial setbacks, such as Hitler's failed attempt to defeat Hindenburg in the 1931 presidential election. In January, 1933, Adolf Hitler was officially named Chancellor by President Paul von Hindenburg. The president was very reluctant to make this decision, because he feared Hitler's popularity, and what that might lead to, but because of political pressure, and the rising Nazi popularity, he was forced to make this decision. Hitler used his title to increase his political clout, and expanded his power. The powerful Chancellor wanted to re-militarize Germany, so that the nation could regain its former glory. To do so, he ordered the burning of the Reichstag parliament building (The Reichstag Fire). The plan was a success, and the gleeful Nazis blamed the Communists for the fire. Hitler ordered the arrest of all Communist party members, and had police raid their homes. Liberals, democrats, left leaning individuals, they were all made scapegoats, and politically ostracized. The fire was also used as an excuse to call for a new election. A decade of plotting, a failed coup in Bavaria, a massive propaganda campaign, it all eventually cumulated into this 1933 election, where the Nazis gained 43.9 percent of the vote. Hitler didn't get the majority he wanted, but this election, the last contested one before the war, it was the final piece in Hitler's long-term strategy. It would transform Adolf Hitler from a mere Chancellor, to a dictator.

On March 24, 1933, Hitler called on Reichstag members to vote for the Enabling Act. This act abolished most civil liberties and transferred state powers to the Reich government. The combined effect of the law was to transform Hitler's government into a legal dictatorship. The Reichstag Fire, and national security were used as excuses to get the act passed through parliament (C N Trueman). Within three months of the passage of the Enabling Act, all parties except the Nazi Party were banned or pressured into dissolving themselves, followed by a law that made the Nazi Party the only legally permitted party in the country. With this, Hitler had fulfilled what he had promised in earlier campaign speeches: "I set for myself one aim ... to sweep these thirty parties out of Germany!" Hitler's ultimate rise to power began with a small gathering of the German Workers' Party, but through cunning, deceit, threats, violence, propaganda, and even the perfect alignment of chance, he did the impossible, and took over Germany. The Enabling Act was the conclusion of a 14 year campaign for dominance. It certified Nazi rule over Germany, and brought about the death of the Weimar Republic, and the subsequent birth of the Third Reich.

"For peace, freedom  
and democracy  
never again fascism  
millions of dead remind [us] "

These are the words carved into stone in Braunau am Inn, Austria, Hitler's birthplace. Adolf Hitler rose to power because the people were willing to surrender to his madness. He was

enabled by rampant nationalism, and runaway bigotry. The defining factor in his rise was hate, hate against the Jewish people, and the fertile ground this notion had on the German soil. Hitler wasn't the cause of the German hatred of the Jews, he was the end result. We must learn from history, we must understand Hitler's rise, because Nazi Germany wasn't the end result of Hitler's hate, it was the Führer who was the creation of Germany's hate. Hindsight is twenty-twenty. We should look at the rise of the Third Reich, and contemplate all the mistakes that were made, things that could have been done to stop the madness which eventually consumed six million Jews. Only by evaluating the past can we fix the present. Anti-Semitism is a poison, a poison that corrupts and corrodes the mind, body, and the soul alike. By looking at Hitler's rise, and his actions, we can stop future tyrants. Because make no mistake, there are Hitlers amongst us, and only by learning history, and expunging the poison of anti-Semitism from our system, can we defeat them. Keep them at bay. Because—never again.

Citation:

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### Holocaust Museum

"Thou shalt not be a victim, thou shalt not be a perpetrator, but, above all, thou shall not be a bystander," says, Bauer, in "The Legacy of the Holocaust." And with his words in my heart, I journey to the southern tip of Manhattan, because right on the South Cove, in the middle of Robert F. Wagner Jr Park, on the Hudson, lies a building that encompasses the core meaning of Bauer's words. It's the Museum of Jewish Heritage. A living memorial to the Holocaust. The Nazi Holocaust is the single biggest genocide in human history. A madman's hate destroyed six million innocent lives. Hitler wanted to destroy the Jewish people, his reason being nothing more than pure unfiltered hate. The Nazis gathered Jews from across the territories they conquered, and through a cold systematic method, murdered every man, woman, and child. There was a Holocaust by bullets, a Holocaust by suffocation on trains, a Holocaust by starvation in the ghettos, a Holocaust perpetrated by friends and neighbors who gave away the Jews to the Nazi, and a Holocaust by gassing in the death camps. The methods were different, but the end result sought by the Nazis was the same; the destruction of the Jewish race on the European continent. So I enter the Museum of Jewish Heritage, but this time with the words of Holocaust survivor, Wiesel, in my heart, "To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time."



1- On the far side wall, I see "Invasion of Poland" in big bold letters. There's a giant picture that encompasses the entire wall, a picture of Nazi soldiers, marching through a street. They're holding Nazi flags, while stores can be seen in the background. The people watching the Nazi army march look scared. Frightened.

Before the Nazi invasion, there were 3,474,000 Jews in Poland, today, there are only 7,500. For centuries, Poland had the largest and most significant Jewish community in the world. The Jews were an integral part of Polish society, having integrated with the host country. Because of this relatively giant Jewish community, the Nazis set up most of their concentration camps in occupied Poland, especially the dreaded Auschwitz concentration camp.

After the invasion, 61.2% of Polish Jews found themselves under the German occupation, while 38.8% were trapped in the Polish areas annexed by the Soviet Union. The Soviet communists seized Jewish property, and many nationalist Jews were sent to the Gulag slave labor camps, and others exiled to Siberia.

The picture on the wall shows the beginning of the end for the Polish Jewry.

2- On the other side of the room is glass case. Inside it is a concentration camp uniform. It's a collared shirt with white and blue horizontal stripes. There are five golden buttons on the front, but none on the long sleeves. The uniform bottom is similarly designed as the top, with identical white and black horizontal stripes.

The plaque says, "on arrival at concentration camps prisoners had their clothing taken away, often to be replaced by a striped uniform (now known as striped pyjamas). Men would wear a vest, trousers, hat and coat. Women would be supplied a smock type dress. On their feet prisoners wore wooden or leather clogs. Clothes would be changed approximately every six weeks. As prisoners would have to work and sleep in the same clothes, they would be very dirty.

Prisoners were identified by a number printed on their clothing and also an inverted triangle with lettering to signify the reason for imprisonment.

Criminals were marked with a green triangle, political prisoners with red, homosexuals with pink, whilst Jehovah's Witnesses wore a purple triangle and asocials (including Roma) wore a black triangle. In some camps, Jews were usually marked by a yellow triangle over a red triangle to form the Star of David. However, in others a yellow star identified them as being Jewish."

3- Next I enter a gallery. The sign reads "French Jewish Holocaust Victims." From floor to roof, from wall to wall, there are thousands of pictures. I see smiling families, dashing young men, beautiful young women, adorable children, grinning elderly couples, people eating, people bathing, people walking the streets, just normal everyday Frenchmen and women. There's no sign that says these are Jews, it isn't written on their faces, nor are they wearing traditional Jewish attire. For all intents and purposes, these are French citizens.

But they were still killed. They were still Jewish.

When France surrendered to the Nazis, and the French citizens of the German occupied north, willingly, and quite happily, gave up their Jewish neighbors. These people on the wall, they weren't explicitly demanded by the Germans, but their own countrymen, the French, they betrayed them, they sold them out, and now we have this wall of faces.

This wall is a tribute to French atrocities during the war. This wall is a testimonial to French collaboration during the Holocaust. Lest we forget.

4-The adjacent room adorns a plaque with big golden letters, "The Surviving Remnants: Meeting Violence at Home." Right underneath the plaque is a haunting portrait. There's a crowd encircling a wailing Jewish woman. She is looking at two empty coffins, and has a look of absolute heartbreak on her face. Those are empty boxes, they're all that is left of her relatives. Not even bones survived the Nazi purge. The solemn crowd watches on in silence, as the weeping, broken woman looks to the heavens with her tear stained face, as if asking God, "Why! Why!"

When the survivors of the Holocaust returned home, they found their properties either confiscated by the local governments, seized by their neighbors, or just destroyed. Their relatives dead. The Holocaust continued for these survivors, the only difference being that they were not allowed to die, they would have to live with the pain and suffering for the rest of their lives. They would experience the brute betrayal of their fellow countrymen, a fate spared to their kin who perished in the gas chambers. Eventually, many of these homeless, broken Jews will make Aliyah to Israel. Their faith forever shattered in their fellow men.

"My number is 174517; we have been baptized, we will carry the tattoo on our left arm until we die." Quote from Holocaust survivor Levi's book "Survival in Auschwitz."

5- Next I see a glass case filled with necklaces, rings, earrings, bracelets, kippahs, and other ornaments worn by those who perished in the concentration camps.

The Nazis stripped their victims naked, and confiscated all of their worldly possessions. The stolen jewelry and everyday items were distributed as loot by the wardens, while valuable gold was melted and added to the Nazi war chest. The victims met their maker naked as the day they were born. I like to believe that while those monsters in human flesh, the Nazis, took everything from their victims, they could never take their dignity. The Jewish people were marched to the gates of hell, to the brink of destruction, but for a people who have faced condemnation for a millennia, they knew they would persevere, because they have done so for three thousand years.

I've managed to hold back tears until now, but the dolls in the glass case make my eyes tear up. I wish I knew prayer in Hebrew, so I could send my heart's wishes to the owner, the little girl, but I don't. So I pray in Arabic.

This museum has taken an emotional toll on me. I feel as if I stand amidst giants. People who have seen the worst of humanity. Studying the Nazi Holocaust this semester made me think that I've learned all I've needed to know about this human tragedy, but standing in this museum, I know that to be wrong. I'm one man, a student, I can't change the past, but after visiting this site—this holy site, I'm a changed person. I will try to expunge the poison of anti-semitism wherever I might find it, I would try to fight hatred with love, I would try to make Jewish

friends, I would do everything in my power to make sure this travesty is never repeated. When my relatives, or friends, shout "Yahood! Yahood!" as a curse, I will stand up and stop them. This is the least I could do. Perhaps all I can do. But I will try to make the world just a little gentler place, so no little girl will ever have her doll taken away, her life taken away.

I look at the Museum of Jewish Heritage one last time in solemn silence. Bow my head in gratitude and tribute, and leave.

"Those who are worn out and crushed by this mourning, let your hearts consider this:

this is the path that has existed from the time of creation and will exist forever.

Many have drunk from it and many will yet drink.

As was the first meal, so shall be the last.

May the master of comfort comfort you.

Blessed are those who comforts the mourners."