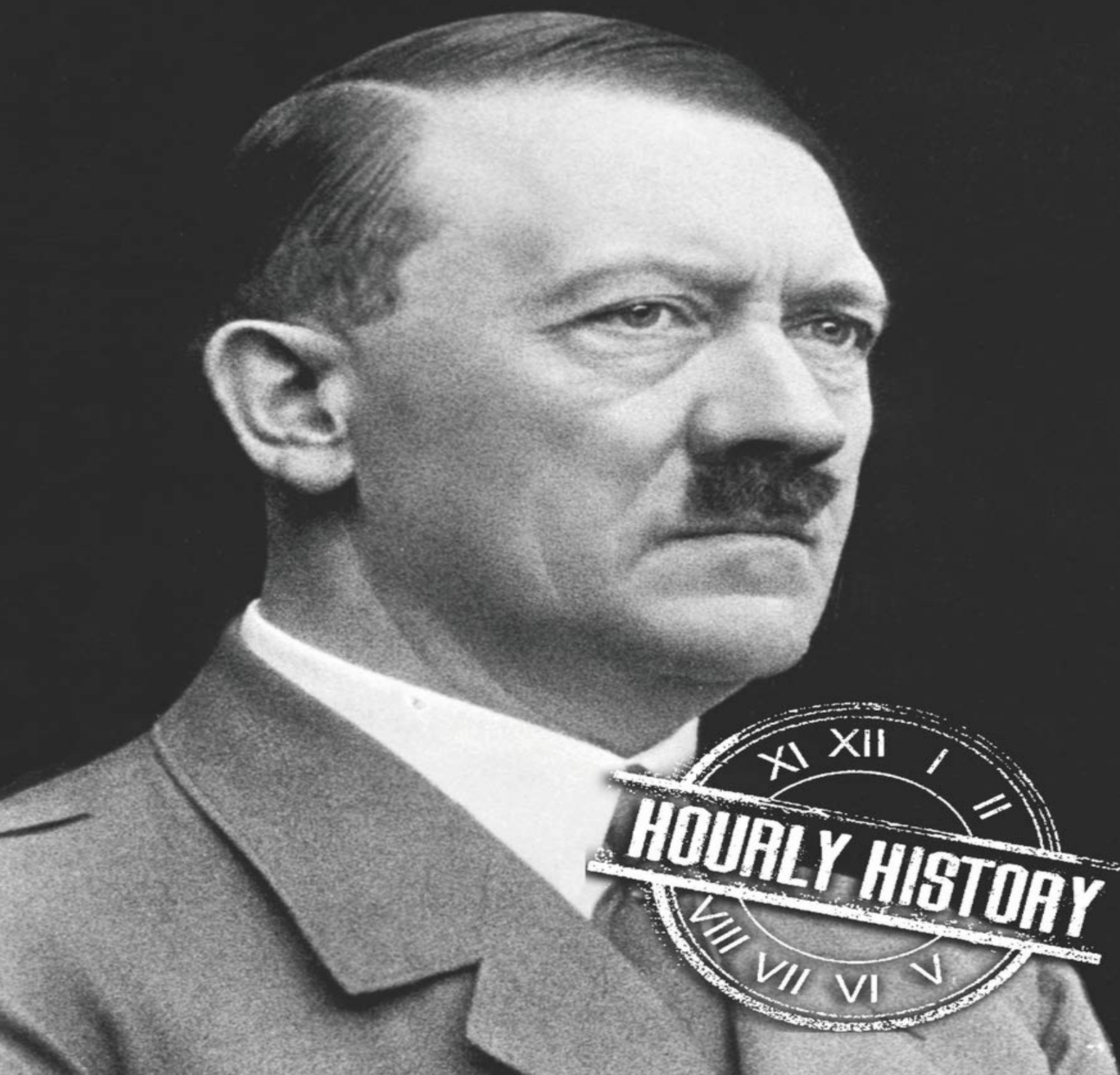


— ADOLF —  
**HITLER**  
A LIFE FROM BEGINNING TO END



Adolf Hitler: A Life From Beginning to End  
Hourly History

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# Introduction

Adolf Hitler - he is arguably the most notorious person in the history of the world. There are few people alive who don't know something about him and the horrors he perpetrated on millions during the Second World War. Fewer people, however, likely know the story of his life beyond the role he played in the war. Just who was the man behind the monster?

Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau am Inn, a town in what is now Austria, on April 20, 1889. His father was Alois Hitler, Sr. and his mother was Klara Pölzl. He had 5 full siblings, three of whom died in infancy, and two half-siblings. During his childhood, Hitler's family frequently moved, first to Passau, Germany when Hitler was 3 years old, then back to Austria when he was 5, and at 6, the family moved to Hafeld near Lambach after Alois retired. The family then moved into Lambach after Alois' efforts to farm bees failed. Hitler was 8 years old at the time, and he was active in the church there. He sang in the choir and considered becoming a priest. Only a year later, however, the family returned to Austria and settled permanently in Linz, the capital of Upper Austria. When Hitler was 11 years old, his 6-year-old brother, Edmund, died from measles. This greatly affected Hitler, who was formerly an outgoing, confident, and conscientious young man; after Edmund's death, he became a morose, detached child who fought with his father and teachers regularly <sup>11,13</sup>.

After Hitler's father died suddenly in 1903, his performance in school deteriorated even further, and his mother allowed him to leave. He then enrolled in a secondary school, or Realschule, in Steyr. There his performance and behavior improved, but in 1905, Hitler left the school without plans for more education or a career. After the death of his mother in 1907, he then went to live a Bohemian lifestyle in Vienna, working as a casual laborer, and on occasion, as a painter. He even sought a formal education in art, applying twice to the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, but he was rejected on both occasions. Because he had never finished secondary school, he lacked the academic credentials to pursue architecture, another

interest of his and one which the director of the art school in Vienna suggested he should pursue. He subsequently ran out of money and was forced to live in homeless shelters and men's hostels. In the winter of 1909, he received help from an aunt and began to work as a painter. He painted watercolor scenes of Vienna and made enough to live on until he left the city<sup>11,13</sup>.

Early on in his life, Hitler, like many Austrian Germans, had developed strong German nationalist ideas. He had expressed his loyalty only to Germany, used the German greeting *Heil*, and sang the German national anthem, *Deutschlandlied*, instead of the Austrian Imperial anthem. His ideals may have been further shaped by the political climate in Vienna when he lived there. At the time, spurred on by fears of being overrun by immigrants, Vienna mayor Karl Luegerspouted virulent anti-Semitic rhetoric to great political effect. Additionally, the district in which Hitler lived was steeped in German nationalism, and the local newspapers promoted prejudice and fanned Christian fears of the area being swamped with an influx of eastern Jews. Still, despite the anti-Semitic attitudes of Vienna at that time, there is strong evidence that Hitler had Jewish friends in his hostel as well as in Vienna in general. While he would later state in his book, *Mein Kampf*, that he first became an anti-Semite in Vienna, most historians now agree that Hitler's murderous anti-Semitism didn't develop until after Germany's defeat in World War I<sup>1,11,13</sup>.

In 1913, Hitler received the final part of his father's estate, and he then moved to Munich after failing a physical exam required to enter service into the Austro-Hungarian Army. He would later claim that he hadn't wished to serve because of the mixture of races in the armed forces there. Hitler was living in Munich when World War I broke out. He volunteered for the Bavarian Army, and although historians now believe he served in the army by error, he reportedly served with honor and was praised by his commanders for his bravery. He was, however, bitterly disappointed by the collapse of the war effort and Germany's capitulation in 1918. He believed that the German army had been "stabbed in the back" by civilian leaders and Marxists, who were later described as the "November criminals"<sup>1,8,13</sup>.

Following the war, Hitler returned to Munich, where he remained in the army. He served as an intelligence agent, and his assignment was to infiltrate and monitor the German Workers' Party, the DAP. He became enthralled with founder Anton Drexler's ideas, which were nationalist, anti-

Semitic, anti-capitalist, and anti-Marxist, and he became increasingly involved with the party, finally joining in 1919. He was discharged from the army in 1920, and he began working full-time for the DAP, which had, by that time, become known as the National Socialist Germany Workers Party or NSDAP. The shortened version of the name was the Nazi Party. Hitler had designed their banner, which consisted of a swastika in a white circle with a red background. Hitler's involvement with the group grew, and he began to play a more prominent role. Despite the conflict, his hypnotic effect on audiences propelled him to the leadership of the party. During this period, he was heavily influenced by the Aufbau Vereinigung, a group of white Russian exiles who introduced Hitler to the idea of a Jewish conspiracy<sup>8</sup>.

On November 8, 1923, Hitler and the NSDAP attempted a coup known as the Beer Hall Putsch. The revolutionaries initially succeeded in occupying the police headquarters and the local army unit, the Reichswehr, but key supporters withdrew from the effort, and neither the police nor the army joined forces with the group. The police were successful in dispersing the revolutionaries the following day. Hitler was arrested for his role in the coup on November 11, 1923. His trial began the following year, and after a verdict of guilty, he was sentenced to five years in prison. He served his time at the Landsberg Prison, where he received friendly treatment from the guards and was allowed frequent visitors as well as mail from supporters. He was pardoned by the Bavarian Supreme Court on December 20, 1924, after having served just nine months of his sentence. It was in prison where Hitler dictated the majority of the first volume of *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). The book was originally titled, *Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity, and Cowardice*<sup>8</sup>.

Upon his release, Hitler began the task of rebuilding the NSDAP. Though he had been banned from public speaking, he was eventually able to get the NSDAP officially recognized as a political party in Germany. He took advantage of the dire consequences in Germany as a result of the US stock market crash on October 24, 1929. He and the NSDAP promised to strengthen the economy and provide jobs. The Great Depression that followed the stock market crash would provide Hitler with political opportunities he may not have had otherwise. With moderate political parties in Germany increasingly unable to control extremist elements, the NSDAP was able to rise from obscurity to win 107 parliamentary seats in

the 1930 election. Though he played a prominent role in reviving the group, Hitler himself, was unable to hold public office; although he had renounced his Austrian citizenship, he had not yet become a German citizen. In 1932, he was appointed as administrator for the state's delegation to a legislative body in Berlin by the interior minister of Brunswick, Dietrich Klagges. This act made Hitler a citizen of Brunswick, and consequently, a citizen of Germany. After this, Hitler was able to gain support from many quarters and eventually gained full power over Germany in March of 1933<sup>8,12</sup>.

After assuming power, Hitler proceeded systematically to remove any and all opposition to his rule. He assumed the role of Commander-in-Chief in 1938, which gave him full control of Germany's armed forces. It was then that he began to prepare for war, a war which he saw as a struggle between Judeo-Bolshevism and German National Socialism. He was prepared to do whatever it took to win. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and the war began. It would last until 1945, and it would end in the deaths of millions, including Hitler, himself. With the atrocities he committed, he secured his legacy as the most brutal dictator history has ever seen, prompting one historian to write, "Never in history has such ruination – physical and moral – been associated with the name of one man"<sup>5</sup>.

# Chapter One

## Hitler's Early Years

*“Society wants to believe it can identify evil people, or bad or harmful people, but it's not practical. There are no stereotypes.”*

—Ted Bundy

Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889, at 6:30 in the evening on Easter Sunday, to Alois Hitler and Klara Pölzl, Alois' third wife. His father, Alois, was a mid-level customs official who was the illegitimate child of Maria Anna Shickelgruber. He took the name Hitler in 1876, as it was the name of the man his mother had married five years after he was born, Johann Georg Hiedler (or Hitler). There is evidence that this man may have been his biological father, though neither parent claimed that as the fact after they were married. Another possibility for his biological father was his step-uncle, Johann's brother, Johann Nepomuk. Some scholars argue Nepomuk couldn't admit paternity because of his marriage to another woman. Nepomuk took Alois in when he was in need and left him a considerable sum of money after his death, actions which spurred the speculation regarding paternity. Some have also speculated that Alois' biological father may have been Jewish, although there is no credible evidence to support this claim, and Johann Georg Heidler remains the most plausible choice as Alois' father. Alois was a conceited man and had a terrible temper. He often took his problems out on his wife and children. Klara, his wife, was just the opposite, but she had no power in the household, and of course, at the time, women had virtually no power outside of the household either. Thus, despite her more agreeable nature, she was not able to stop her husband from mistreating the children whenever he was in a bad mood<sup>11,13</sup>.

Hitler was one of six children that Alois and Klara had, but only Hitler and one other full sibling survived past childhood. Hitler also had a half-sister and a half-brother who were born to Alois and his second wife, Franziska Matzelsberger. Both of these children, Alois, Jr., and Angela, were raised by Alois and Klara. Hitler's full brother, Gustav, died at 2 years old in 1887. His full sister, Ida, died at the same age as Gustav a year later



in 1888. Another full brother, Otto, died before he was a year old in 1887, and his other full brother, Edmund, died at the age of six in 1900. Edmund's death from measles had a particularly devastating effect on Hitler, as his other siblings had died before he was born. After Edmund's death, Hitler became much more detached and took on a darker, brooding attitude, where before he was a confident, outgoing young man<sup>11,13</sup>.

Paula was the only one of Hitler's full siblings to survive childhood. She died in 1960. She characterized her childhood relationship with her now infamous brother as one of "constant bickering and strong affection." While there is evidence she shared her brother's strong German nationalist beliefs, she never joined the Nazi Party, and after the war, she refused to comment any further on her political beliefs except to say that she knew nothing of the Holocaust perpetrated by her brother. She worked as a secretary in a military hospital for much of World War II. At the end of the war, she was debriefed by American forces but was later released from custody, after which she returned to Vienna. In 1952, she returned to Germany and continued to live under the pseudonym Wolff. She had lived under this name during the war at her brother's request, and during which time, she received financial support from him until his suicide in 1945. Hitler apparently thought little of her intelligence as he often referred to her and his half-sister Angela as "stupid geese." Paula only gave one post-war interview, which was broadcast as part of a program called *Tyranny: The Years of Adolf Hitler*. In the interview, she refused to answer political questions and spoke mainly about Hitler's childhood. Paula died in June of 1960 at the age of 64<sup>11,13</sup>.

Hitler's half-sister, Angela, was reportedly very close to her brother, though she too denied any knowledge of the Holocaust following the war. Angela was the only one of Hitler's siblings that he mentioned in *Mein Kampf*. She was married twice in her life and widowed both times. Her first husband died in 1910 and her second husband committed suicide after World War II. During the war, she acted as a liaison between Hitler and the rest of the family, with whom he desired no contact. She died of a stroke in 1949. Prior to her death, she continued to speak highly of her infamous brother and claimed she also knew nothing of the Holocaust. Hitler's half-brother, Alois Jr., left home at 14 years old after a violent argument with his father. He later met and married an Irish woman, and settled down in Liverpool, England. After several failed attempts to start a business there,

he left his family and returned to Germany in 1914. During World War I, he became stranded in Germany and subsequently married another woman. After the war, a third party told his first wife, Bridget, that he was dead<sup>11,13</sup>.

Hitler himself was a sickly child whose mother fretted over him constantly. His father, Alois, had little interest in helping raise his children. He left most of that to his wife, preferring instead to pass his time at the local tavern or attend to his hobby, which was keeping bees. Various accounts note that Alois made long visits to the tavern and almost continuously yelled at his children. Even a close friend stated that he was rough with his wife and rarely spoke to her at home. It was not uncommon that he would pick on the older children or his wife in front of the rest of his family. The result was that he alienated his children, as evidenced by the fact that he became estranged from his older son, and his relationship with Adolf was so strained that the young Hitler was reportedly repulsed by anything Alois suggested. Alois tried to browbeat Adolf into submission, but his efforts were ineffective<sup>11,13</sup>.

Adolf and his father fought bitterly over young Hitler's future. Alois wanted his son to pursue a career in the Habsburg civil service, but Hitler scoffed at the thought of a life spent enforcing what he considered petty rules and instead wanted a career in the visual arts. The tension between them increased after Alois enrolled Adolf in a Realschule, a secondary school, which had a curriculum that focused more on science and technology. Up until that time, Hitler had received stellar marks in school, but at this school, he ended up having to repeat a semester, and his grades were never again good. For the remainder of his days there, his grades bounced back and forth between poor and average. After his father's sudden death from a lung hemorrhage in 1903, Adolf convinced his mother to allow him to leave the Realschule in which his father had enrolled him and join another in Steyr. There his performance improved, but his grades were never again at the level they had been earlier in his life, and when he left formal education in 1905, he never returned<sup>11,13</sup>.

Hitler's religious beliefs have been the focus of some debate. His father, though nominally Catholic, was anticlerical and skeptical of religion; his mother, with whom he was particularly close, was a practicing, devout Catholic. Hitler was confirmed in the Catholic Church in May of 1904. He regularly attended services throughout his childhood and even sang in the choir at the Benedictine Monastery when the family lived in Lambach. It is

also said he dreamed of becoming a priest at that time. Some historians, however, dispute even his childhood piety, instead believing that he began to reject religion early on after being heavily influenced by Pan-Germanism, the ideology of which emphasized political unity and downplayed religion<sup>11,13</sup>.

Questions of childhood piety aside, by the time Hitler left home, a childhood friend noted he never again attended mass or received the sacraments. Some scholars argue that though he continued to espouse a belief in Christianity throughout his life, he did so mainly for political reasons. They cite as evidence the fact that when he rose to power, he allowed persecution of the Catholic Church and promoted what was called Positive Christianity, a movement which rejected several traditional Christian doctrines, including the Apostles' Creed, as well as several Jewish elements of Christianity including the Old Testament. Hitler is also said to have made many anti-Christian remarks to his confidants, at least one of whom, Goebbels, later described him as hating Christianity. His biographer, Alan Bullock, also wrote that he did not believe in God, but rather was a rationalist who objected to Christianity on the basis that it rebelled against the Darwinian concept of survival of the fittest. Bullock added that Hitler only espoused divine providence in order to defend his own myth<sup>11,13</sup>.

Hitler's mother, Klara, died in 1907 from breast cancer. Both Adolf and Paula were at her side when she died. Hitler had been very close to his mother and was devastated by her death. Her doctor, Eduard Bloch, later recalled that he had never seen so much pain and suffering in one young man (Wistrich 1997). By the time she died, Hitler had suffered several losses in his life, and some historians believe these losses affected his belief system and shaped his ideological development. It certainly wouldn't be the first time that personal loss caused individuals to question their religious faith and even their worldview. After his mother's death, Hitler left for Vienna, where he hoped to pursue his dream of becoming a painter<sup>11,13</sup>.

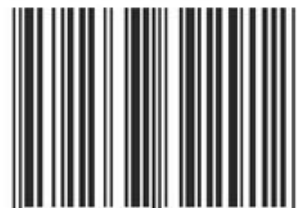
*“If you win, you need not have to explain...If you lose,  
you should not be there to explain!”*

*— Adolf Hitler*

The most notorious man in history, Adolf Hitler, is best known for having perpetrated crimes against humanity over the six-year course of World War II. His brutal extermination policies are responsible for the deaths of close to 30 million people he considered inferior, and added to that, the military casualties suffered by all parties, yields a grand total of approximately 60 million people dead by the end of the war. That number equates to 3% of the world's population at the time. But, who was this man? What made him into the monster he became? Can his childhood explain the formation of such a brutal dictator? This book tells the story of the man behind the monster in concise yet thorough detail. Hitler's childhood, his early life and dreams of becoming an artist, his military career in World War I, his subsequent rise to power as the leader of the Nazi Party, and his rule during the war are presented in succinct, compelling detail packed with historical information that makes for an entertaining and informative read.



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