

ENGLISH LEARNING  
FOR CURIOUS  
MINDS



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**Episode #344**  
**Adolf Hitler | Der Führer**  
**24th Feb, 2023**

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today it is part three of our three-part mini-series on European dictators.

[00:00:29] In part one it was the Grey Blur, Joseph Stalin. In part two, it was Il Duce, Benito Mussolini.

[00:00:37] And in part three, well you could probably guess, it is the most infamous of them all.

[00:00:42] The man most [synonymous](#)<sup>1</sup> with fascism, and the fascist with the most [warped](#)<sup>2</sup> of all the worldviews.

[00:00:49] A man who almost conquered Europe, and whose [genocidal](#)<sup>3</sup> [rage](#)<sup>4</sup> left millions dead.

[00:00:55] The Führer - Adolf Hitler, a man whose name alone is enough to [send shudders down the spines](#)<sup>5</sup> of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

[00:01:05] Now, obviously it would be incredibly difficult to give a thorough account of Hitler's entire life, and it certainly wouldn't be possible in this episode.

[00:01:15] So today, I'm not going to be going into detail with a [blow-by-blow](#)<sup>6</sup> account of the Second World War, or the horrors of the [Holocaust](#)<sup>7</sup>.

[00:01:23] I'll give a broad overview of Hitler, focusing on his rise and the key events in his life, but also some insight into the lesser known stuff - who Hitler really was as a man, and some of the more unusual things about him.

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<sup>1</sup> closely connected to

<sup>2</sup> not normal, twisted

<sup>3</sup> involving the killing of a large number of people from a particular nation

<sup>4</sup> extreme, violent anger

<sup>5</sup> make them feel very frightened

<sup>6</sup> giving all the details in the order in which they happened

<sup>7</sup> the mass murder of Jewish people under the German Nazi rule during the period 1941-5

[00:01:38] OK then, let's get right into it and talk about Adolf Hitler.

[00:01:44] On the 30th of April, 1945, the Third Reich was in its final hours.

[00:01:50] Gunfire and explosions filled the air.

[00:01:54] Berlin was burning, the streets a battlezone.

[00:01:59] **Waves**<sup>8</sup> of Soviet Red Army soldiers **poured into**<sup>9</sup> the city.

[00:02:04] But they weren't hoping just to deliver the decisive **blow**<sup>10</sup> and finally end the war that had destroyed Europe for five years - they were looking for someone.

[00:02:15] Nazi Germany's leader, the Führer, Adolf Hitler, hid in a secret underground **bunker**<sup>11</sup> 16 metres beneath the German **chancellery**<sup>12</sup>.

[00:02:26] The Führerbunker, as it was known in German.

[00:02:29] Actually, it wasn't a **bunker** so much as it was a **complex**<sup>13</sup> that contained 18 rooms and was fully self-sufficient, with its own water and electrical supply.

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<sup>8</sup> large groups one after the other

<sup>9</sup> entered fast and in large numbers

<sup>10</sup> hit, stroke

<sup>11</sup> an underground safe structure

<sup>12</sup> the main government building

<sup>13</sup> a structure consisting of many different and connected parts

[00:02:41] As the Soviets advanced through Berlin street by street, getting closer to the Führerbunker, Hitler continued to give orders and hold meetings with high-ranking Nazis.

[00:02:53] The day before, on April the 29th, he had married his long-time [mistress<sup>14</sup>](#), Eva Braun, and put together his [will<sup>15</sup>](#) and political testament [outlining<sup>16</sup>](#) who he wanted to take over when he died.

[00:03:07] But when, and how, would that be?

[00:03:10] Was he sure that the Soviets would capture, and likely [torture<sup>17</sup>](#) and kill him?

[00:03:14] Or was it the news of his [ally<sup>18</sup>](#) Benito Mussolini's [gruesome<sup>19</sup>](#) death just hours before that convinced him to do something else?

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<sup>14</sup> the woman he had a sexual relation with

<sup>15</sup> a legal document containing instructions as to what should be done with his money and property after his death

<sup>16</sup> defining, explaining

<sup>17</sup> make him suffer

<sup>18</sup> person who had agreed to help and support him

<sup>19</sup> very unpleasant, shocking

[00:03:24] After putting his affairs in order, on the afternoon of the 30th, Hitler enjoyed his last lunch, shook hands with his staff, and [retired](#)<sup>20</sup> to his private quarters of the [complex](#) with Eva Braun.

[00:03:38] Sometime that afternoon, Adolf Hitler, the man who destroyed mainland Europe and organised the [slaughter](#)<sup>21</sup> of millions of Jews, sat down on his sofa with his new wife and swallowed a [cyanide](#)<sup>22</sup> [capsule](#)<sup>23</sup>.

[00:03:52] To make sure, he shot himself in the head.

[00:03:56] The Führer was dead.

[00:03:58] As the Red Army closed in, Hitler and Braun's bodies were quickly [cremated](#)<sup>24</sup>, or burned, in the garden.

[00:04:05] And just eight days later, on the 8th of May, 1945, the Germans surrendered.

[00:04:12] Much like the subjects of part one and two of this mini-series, it didn't have to be this way.

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<sup>20</sup> went away, withdrew

<sup>21</sup> killing of a large amount of people

<sup>22</sup> a powerful poison

<sup>23</sup> small container

<sup>24</sup> burned

[00:04:19] Adolf Hitler was born on the 20th of April, 1889, in Braunau am Inn, a small town in modern day Austria, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

[00:04:31] He was the fourth of six children born to Alois Hitler and Klara Pölzl, though three of his siblings died in [infancy](#)<sup>25</sup>.

[00:04:40] Both his parents came from poor [peasant](#)<sup>26</sup> backgrounds, but by the time they were married and had started a family, they lived a comfortable middle class existence. His father Alois was a customs official, a civil servant, and his mother, Klara, a housewife and [devout](#)<sup>27</sup> Catholic.

[00:05:00] His father was said to be [harsh](#)<sup>28</sup> and [distant](#)<sup>29</sup> with the children, but his mother was more loving towards them.

[00:05:08] When Hitler was just three years old, the family moved to Passau, in Germany, and it is thought that Hitler picked up his distinctive Bavarian [dialect](#)<sup>30</sup> there.

[00:05:19] The family returned to Austria in 1894, and Hitler attended Volksschule, a state-funded primary school.

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<sup>25</sup> the time when they were babies

<sup>26</sup> simple farmer

<sup>27</sup> having deep religious feelings

<sup>28</sup> strict, unkind

<sup>29</sup> cold, remote

<sup>30</sup> the form of language that people spoke in that particular part of the country

[00:05:27] Though the young Hitler was clearly able, or intelligent, he showed little interest in education and left school with a poor academic record.

[00:05:38] He had a [tense<sup>31</sup>](#), difficult, relationship with his father, who wanted him to follow in his footsteps and become a civil servant.

[00:05:47] In fact, Alois Hitler was a violent man who beat his children, and Hitler's mother often [intervened<sup>32</sup>](#) to try and protect them.

[00:05:57] In 1900 his younger brother Edmund died from [measles<sup>33</sup>](#), and his brother, the 11-year-old Adolf, became an increasingly quiet, [detached<sup>34</sup>](#) boy who got into conflicts with his father and teachers.

[00:06:11] But when his father died suddenly on the 3rd of January in 1903, when Hitler was 13 years old, his mother allowed him to change schools and forget about a career in the civil service.

[00:06:25] The young Hitler was able to study what he really wanted to, art, and he moved to art school and began to think of himself as a bit of an artist.

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<sup>31</sup> stressed, not easy

<sup>32</sup> got involved

<sup>33</sup> a dangerous disease

<sup>34</sup> separated, lonely

[00:06:35] In 1907, when he was 18 years old, he moved to Vienna, filled with dreams of winning a place at the Vienna Academy of Art, but he was rejected.

[00:06:47] Traditionally, historical accounts of Hitler's time in Vienna [depict him<sup>35</sup>](#) as a struggling artist with no income that moved from hostel to hostel.

[00:06:57] But the truth wasn't quite as simple as that.

[00:07:00] After all, his father had been a civil servant, he came from a middle-class family, and so he was [by no means<sup>36</sup>](#) poor.

[00:07:09] It's thought that he [blew through<sup>37</sup>](#), he got through, quite a large [inheritance<sup>38</sup>](#) while he tried to [make it<sup>39</sup>](#) as an artist.

[00:07:17] By the end of 1909, however, he was genuinely running out of money.

[00:07:22] He sold postcards and drawings to survive, but even then, one of his aunts introduced him to a wealthy business partner and he was paid to paint watercolour scenes.

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<sup>35</sup> describe him

<sup>36</sup> not at all

<sup>37</sup> got through

<sup>38</sup> money or property that was given to him when his father died

<sup>39</sup> be successful

[00:07:34] Now, believe it or not, one of Hitler's watercolours sold for €130,000 at an auction in Nuremberg back in 2014.

[00:07:45] The price tag, it has to be said, comes from the subsequent reputation of the man who held the [paintbrush](#)<sup>40</sup> rather than the artistic quality of the [canvas](#)<sup>41</sup>.

[00:07:56] And back in Vienna his paintings weren't worth quite that much, but the [watercolours](#)<sup>42</sup> earned Hitler enough money to live, to survive.

[00:08:06] Like many young Austrians at the time, Hitler identified strongly with a sense of German identity and he likely shared the "casual" [anti-semitism](#)<sup>43</sup> that was common to middle-class German nationalism.

[00:08:18] However, Hitler probably had business and personal relationships with Jews in Vienna, and his [anti-semitism](#) in those early days was likely a reflection of the general [anti-semitism](#) common in society at the time - that is to say, still completely unacceptable by any standards, but nothing like the [genocidal anti-semitic](#)<sup>44</sup> ideology he developed after the First World War.

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<sup>40</sup> a brush used for painting

<sup>41</sup> a strong type of cloth used as a surface for painting

<sup>42</sup> paintings drawn with paint mixed with water

<sup>43</sup> hate against Jewish people

<sup>44</sup> involving hate against Jewish people

[00:08:45] And in 1913 he moved to Munich, in southern Germany, to avoid military service for the Habsburg Empire.

[00:08:53] This was made possible due to another [inheritance](#) from his father's [estate](#)<sup>45</sup>, and in Munich Hitler's life largely continued as it had in Vienna - [drifting around](#)<sup>46</sup>, surviving on paintings and postcards.

[00:09:08] That is, of course, until the following year, 1914, when world events changed not only Hitler's life but the direction of European history forever.

[00:09:18] When the First World War began, Hitler volunteered for service in the German army and joined the 16th Bavarian Infantry Regiment.

[00:09:28] He served as a [runner](#)<sup>47</sup> on the Western Front - a particularly dangerous job that involved passing messages between different army units on the front line - and he was awarded an Iron Cross.

[00:09:41] At the time of the [armistice](#)<sup>48</sup>, when the First World War officially ended, Hitler was in hospital with temporary [blindness](#)<sup>49</sup> caused by a British gas attack.

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<sup>45</sup> his money and property at the time of his death

<sup>46</sup> going from place to place

<sup>47</sup> a job that involved passing messages between different army units on the front line

<sup>48</sup> formal agreement between the countries at war to stop fighting for a particular time

<sup>49</sup> inability to see

[00:09:52] Keen to stay in the army even after the war had ended, Hitler joined the Intelligence and [Propaganda](#)<sup>50</sup> section where he had his first political training, and became an army [informer](#)<sup>51</sup>, [spying](#)<sup>52</sup> on smaller political parties.

[00:10:08] He made speeches to the [troops](#)<sup>53</sup> [championing](#)<sup>54</sup> German nationalism and anti-Socialism, and developed his [oratory](#)<sup>55</sup>, his public speaking skills.

[00:10:19] In 1919 he also joined the German Workers' Party, a far-right, [anti-semitic](#), anti-communist organisation.

[00:10:28] When he left the army in 1920, he took over the publicity and [propaganda](#) for the German Workers' Party and he changed the party's name to the National Socialist German Workers Party - Nazi for short.

[00:10:44] A year later, in 1921, he challenged Anton Drexler for the leadership of the Nazi party, and eventually Drexler agreed.

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<sup>50</sup> information arranged in a way that could affect people's opinions

<sup>51</sup> a person who gave information in secret

<sup>52</sup> secretly collecting and reporting information

<sup>53</sup> soldiers

<sup>54</sup> strongly supporting

<sup>55</sup> public speaking skills

[00:10:53] A couple of years later, on the 8th of November 1923, Hitler and the Nazis attempted to [overthrow](#)<sup>56</sup> the Bavarian government in a [coup d'état](#)<sup>57</sup> that became known as the Beer Hall Putsch.

[00:11:07] After being inspired by Benito Mussolini's 'March on Rome' the year before, Hitler and 2,000 Nazis marched through Munich to the Beer Hall, determined to take over a meeting [chaired](#)<sup>58</sup> by important figures in Bavarian politics and ultimately to [overthrow](#) the government.

[00:11:25] However, unlike Mussolini, who was one of his early political heroes and the man many consider to be the father of fascism, Hitler's [coup](#)<sup>59</sup> didn't work.

[00:11:37] The next day as Nazis marched in the streets, police [open fire](#)<sup>60</sup>.

[00:11:42] Hitler managed to escape but was captured and served 9 months in Landsberg prison.

[00:11:49] Now, while in prison, he wrote his famous autobiographical book of political ideology, Mein Kampf - or my [struggle](#)<sup>61</sup>, in English.

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<sup>56</sup> remove

<sup>57</sup> a sudden and violent removal of a government in order to take its position

<sup>58</sup> having them in charge, presided

<sup>59</sup> a sudden and violent removal of a government in order to take its position

<sup>60</sup> start to shoot

<sup>61</sup> my difficult work or effort

[00:11:59] But what many people don't know is that Hitler didn't actually write the book himself, or at least he wasn't sitting down at a desk writing it down on [endless](#)<sup>62</sup> sheets of paper.

[00:12:11] Rather, he [paced around](#)<sup>63</sup> his cell and dictated it - meaning, he said it out loud - to Rudolf Hess, the man who would later rise the Nazi [ranks](#)<sup>64</sup> to become the [Deputy](#)<sup>65</sup> Führer.

[00:12:25] As you probably know, in Mein Kampf Hitler expanded on, or explained, his [twisted](#)<sup>66</sup> theories on race and ethnic "purity" - that there was a racial hierarchy and the so-called "Aryan race" was superior.

[00:12:42] In order for the Aryan race to fulfil its destiny, Hitler's logic went, they would need Lebensraum [or living space].

[00:12:51] Germany must, he wrote, invade the land to the east occupied by the "inferior" Slavic peoples including the Sudetenland [or the Czech Republic as it's now called], Poland and Russia.

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<sup>62</sup> seeming never to finish

<sup>63</sup> walked around

<sup>64</sup> positions, levels

<sup>65</sup> second in command

<sup>66</sup> strange in an unpleasant way

[00:13:04] By the time Hitler was released from prison, the German economy had [picked up](#)<sup>67</sup>, or improved a little, after a period of terrible economic growth and [hyperinflation](#)<sup>68</sup>, and support for more extreme right-wing groups like the Nazis began to [die down](#)<sup>69</sup>.

[00:13:22] As Germans began to trust the Weimar Republic again, Hitler got to work reorganising the Nazi Party.

[00:13:30] In 1925 he established the Hitler Youth to organise youngsters, and created the Schutzstaffel - known as the SS, his own [paramilitary](#)<sup>70</sup> organisation.

[00:13:44] Members of the SS wore black uniforms - which was likely inspired by Mussolini's blackshirts - and they swore a personal [oath](#)<sup>71</sup> of loyalty to Hitler.

[00:13:55] Over the next couple of years the Nazi party was [banned](#)<sup>72</sup> several times, but continued to [ramp up](#)<sup>73</sup>, to increase its anti-semitic and anti-communist [rhetoric](#)<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> improved

<sup>68</sup> fast and out-of-control general price increases in the economy

<sup>69</sup> become less strong

<sup>70</sup> not officially or legally armed

<sup>71</sup> promise, vow

<sup>72</sup> legally not allowed, prohibited

<sup>73</sup> increase its activity

<sup>74</sup> language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect

[00:14:07] After the failed Beer Hall Putsch, the Nazi party would, Hitler promised, win power through democratic means, and in the late-1920s the Nazi party began building up its [propaganda](#) machine and tried to establish a base in northern Germany.

[00:14:24] Now, it's around this time that things start to get a little strange in Hitler's personal life, and there's even a [hint](#)<sup>75</sup> of murder mystery.

[00:14:34] In 1928, Hitler's half-sister, Angela Raubal, and her daughter Geli, moved into Hitler's home.

[00:14:43] Hitler, who was 19 years older than his half-niece, developed something of an [obsessive](#)<sup>76</sup> relationship with Geli.

[00:14:51] He was so [obsessive](#) that historians have debated for decades, and it has been strongly [implied](#)<sup>77</sup>, or suggested, that their relationship was a romantic one.

[00:15:03] Whatever the truth, historians have described Geli as “the only true deep love affair of his life.”

[00:15:10] And as if that wasn't strange enough, Hitler's [obsessiveness](#)<sup>78</sup> had tragic, and deadly consequences.

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<sup>75</sup> small piece of information that suggested it

<sup>76</sup> unable to stop thinking about it

<sup>77</sup> suggested

<sup>78</sup> the fact that he was extremely interested in her

[00:15:18] On the 18th of September, 1931, at the age of 23, Geli was found dead in the apartment she shared with Hitler in Munich.

[00:15:28] By her side was Hitler's [pistol](#)<sup>79</sup>.

[00:15:31] But what had happened?

[00:15:33] Well, the official version of events was that Hitler and Geli had argued over her plans to go to Vienna, and that after Hitler had refused to let her leave, she committed [suicide](#)<sup>80</sup>.

[00:15:46] But it's a little more mysterious than that.

[00:15:50] At the time, the Munich press reported that Geli's nose was [shattered](#)<sup>81</sup>, and that she had other injuries to her body.

[00:15:58] Had he killed the young girl?

[00:16:00] Now, we must remember that in 1931 Hitler was [on the cusp of](#)<sup>82</sup> political power.

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<sup>79</sup> a small gun

<sup>80</sup> the act of killing herself

<sup>81</sup> badly broken

<sup>82</sup> at the point when he was about to have it

[00:16:07] The 1929 Wall St. Crash had [plunged](#)<sup>83</sup> the Weimar economy back into crisis, and the political landscape was [ripe](#)<sup>84</sup>, it was ready, for extreme views.

[00:16:19] Hitler wanted to take advantage of this, and a murder [scandal](#)<sup>85</sup> would have likely [ruined](#)<sup>86</sup> his career and rise to power.

[00:16:28] In fact, we now know that Nazi officials even discussed a replacement for Hitler, should the [scandal](#) get out of hand.

[00:16:37] So it's little surprise, therefore, that the Nazi party pressured the public prosecutor not to investigate, and that Geli's body was given a very quick [post-mortem](#)<sup>87</sup>.

[00:16:49] The incident was quickly ruled [suicide](#), and Geli's body was taken down the back stairs of the police station and taken to Vienna to be buried before the press even [got wind of it](#)<sup>88</sup>, before they heard the news.

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<sup>83</sup> caused to fall

<sup>84</sup> ready

<sup>85</sup> an action that would cause public feelings of shock and anger

<sup>86</sup> ended, destroyed

<sup>87</sup> medical examination of her body

<sup>88</sup> heard something about it

[00:17:02] Very mysterious indeed - and one can't help but wonder how different Hitler's career and German and European history would have been if there had been a proper investigation into Geli Raubal's death.

[00:17:15] Now, regardless of what happened, the incident sent Hitler into a depression so bad that one historian believes that "With the exception of his mother's death... no other event in his personal life had hit him so hard."

[00:17:30] Clearly, it's hard to have any [compassion](#)<sup>89</sup> for the man, when one knows what he would go on to do, and this event wouldn't have any effect on his political career, as his Nazi party continued its rise to power.

[00:17:44] Around a year before Geli's death, in September of 1930, the Nazi party had enjoyed large electoral gains and increased its number of representatives in parliament from 14 to 107, making Hitler the leader of the second biggest political party in Germany.

[00:18:03] In 1932 Hitler came second in the presidential elections, and the Nazis were firmly established in the political [mainstream](#)<sup>90</sup> - benefitting from political instability and another [spike](#)<sup>91</sup>, or increase, in unemployment.

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<sup>89</sup> sympathy, pity

<sup>90</sup> established or accepted reality

<sup>91</sup> increase

[00:18:18] In July of that year the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag, and after political negotiating and [maneuvering](#)<sup>92</sup> throughout the rest of 1932, Hitler emerged as Chancellor in January of 1933.

[00:18:34] The Nazis now had a third of the seats in the Reichstag, and with more elections coming up in February of 1933, the German Reichstag was destroyed by a fire.

[00:18:46] Now, historians are almost certain that the Nazis organised the [blaze](#)<sup>93</sup>, but the fire allowed them to blame the Communists and tighten their [grip](#)<sup>94</sup> on power.

[00:18:57] And Hitler wasted no time.

[00:19:00] The Enabling Act, which was passed in March 1933, effectively made Hitler a dictator, and all other political parties and trade unions were banned.

[00:19:11] Adolf Hitler, the [shy](#)<sup>95</sup> Austrian boy who painted [watercolours](#), had risen to the very top of German politics and stolen power.

[00:19:21] And he had [ambitious](#)<sup>96</sup>, deadly plans.

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<sup>92</sup> moving skillfully or carefully

<sup>93</sup> very large fire

<sup>94</sup> hold, control

<sup>95</sup> nervous and uncomfortable with other people

<sup>96</sup> having a strong wish to be successful

[00:19:25] Now, clearly the 1930s and [lead up](#)<sup>97</sup> to the Second World War was a period of intense activity, far too much to do justice to here, so we are going to skip over the key events.

[00:19:38] Instead, we'll deal with a couple of interesting points about Hitler the man from this period.

[00:19:44] One is an assassination attempt, and the other a theory about Hitler's drug use.

[00:19:51] The most important thing to underline about Hitler's foreign policy during the 1930s was that he was immediately [on a war footing](#)<sup>98</sup> - that is to say, he was preparing Germany for war.

[00:20:04] In October of 1933 Hitler [withdrew](#)<sup>99</sup> Germany from the League of Nations and [cast aside](#)<sup>100</sup>, or ignored, the restrictions placed on the German military by the Treaty of Versailles and he tripled the size of the army.

[00:20:19] In June of 1934, he further tightened his [grip](#) on the Nazi party and eliminated his remaining enemies with a move that became known as the Night of the Long Knives.

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<sup>97</sup> the events that led to

<sup>98</sup> preparing for war

<sup>99</sup> removed

<sup>100</sup> ignored

[00:20:32] In 1935 he began rearming Germany and military [conscription](#)<sup>101</sup> was introduced.

[00:20:39] Hitler, it became clear to everyone across Europe, was ready for war.

[00:20:44] Domestically, he was also [setting the wheels in motion](#)<sup>102</sup> for his mass-persecution of Jews, homosexuals, Roma, and anyone who didn't fit into his idea of the perfect "Aryan" society.

[00:20:58] In November of 1938, the infamous Kristallnacht took place across Germany.

[00:21:05] Jewish shops and [synagogues](#)<sup>103</sup> were burnt down, and 30,000 Jewish men were [rounded up](#)<sup>104</sup> and taken to concentration camps.

[00:21:15] This was just the start of what would have become known as the the [Holocaust](#), which is clearly far too important a subject to try to [do justice to](#)<sup>105</sup> in a short section of this episode.

[00:21:27] Internationally, he was [itching for](#)<sup>106</sup> war.

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<sup>101</sup> the process of forcing people by law to join the army

<sup>102</sup> beginning the process of

<sup>103</sup> buildings in which Jewish people practised their religion

<sup>104</sup> gathered or collected in one place

<sup>105</sup> treat it in an appropriate, deserving way

<sup>106</sup> feeling very impatient for

[00:21:30] Despite signing agreements not to, he sent his army abroad.

[00:21:35] Nazi forces occupied part of modern day Czech Republic called the Sudetenland, in 1938.

[00:21:42] And then in September 1939 Germany invaded Poland, which resulted in a full declaration of war between the UK and France on Germany.

[00:21:53] The Nazis went on to occupy Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Romania and Yugoslavia, and in 1941 they invaded Russia - a mistake that would prove to be the beginning of the end for the Nazis, and Hitler.

[00:22:11] Now, as we heard in part one, on Stalin, after [sacrificing<sup>107</sup>](#) as many as a million men at the Battle of Stalingrad, the Soviets pushed the Germans all the way back to Berlin and the Führerbunker in 1945.

[00:22:26] Now, the details of the war and the [Holocaust](#) are well-known, but I want to [touch on<sup>108</sup>](#) two elements of life within Hitler's personal circle.

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<sup>107</sup> killing for the sake of something he considered more important

<sup>108</sup> mention quickly

[00:22:36] As Hitler's **genocidal rage wreaked**<sup>109</sup> havoc across Europe, killing millions and **slaughtering**<sup>110</sup> Jews, some in the Nazi party thought things - and Hitler specifically - were getting a bit out of control.

[00:22:50] That's why, in July of 1944, a German Army officer named Claus Von Stauffenberg placed a bomb in a **briefcase**<sup>111</sup> under a table in Hitler's headquarters, with the aim of **blowing the man to smithereens**<sup>112</sup>.

[00:23:06] During a meeting between Hitler and top Nazis, the bomb exploded, killing one person, but Hitler survived.

[00:23:15] As you might expect, Hitler **purged**<sup>113</sup> the party of anyone even remotely suspected of being involved.

[00:23:22] Though the assassination attempt, which became known as Operation Valkyrie, wasn't successful, it **highlights**<sup>114</sup> the fact that there were those in the Nazi party that felt Hitler had lost control.

[00:23:35] Now, why might that be?

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<sup>109</sup> caused, created

<sup>110</sup> killing (for a large amount of people)

<sup>111</sup> a flat bag used for carrying documents

<sup>112</sup> blowing the man to pieces

<sup>113</sup> got rid of, cleared

<sup>114</sup> shows, emphasises

[00:23:38] Well, the obvious answer is that he was clearly a [brutal<sup>115</sup> genocidal maniac<sup>116</sup>](#), but in recent years another interesting theory about Hitler has emerged, and it concerns his drug use.

[00:23:50] Was the Führer a drug addict?

[00:23:53] In autumn of 1941 as the war began to turn against the Nazis, Hitler had fallen ill.

[00:24:01] He was so ill, in fact, that he couldn't go to a military [briefing<sup>117</sup>](#) - this was something that never happened.

[00:24:09] That day, his doctor gave him an [opiate<sup>118</sup>](#) and a [hormone<sup>119</sup>](#) injection for the first time.

[00:24:15] Unsurprisingly, Hitler felt much better and he was able to attend the [briefing](#).

[00:24:21] And he was very impressed by this magical recovery drug, which was an [opiate](#) called Dolantin.

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<sup>115</sup> very violent, cruel

<sup>116</sup> crazy person

<sup>117</sup> meeting

<sup>118</sup> a kind of drug

<sup>119</sup> a synthetic substance

[00:24:28] From then on, Hitler asked his doctor for more and more of it, and between 1941 and the winter of 1944 Hitler's drug abuse increased massively, with him reportedly relying on a [cocktail](#)<sup>120</sup> of [opiates](#)<sup>121</sup> and [cocaine](#)<sup>122</sup>.

[00:24:46] His [dependence](#)<sup>123</sup> got so bad, in fact, that he developed a severe [tremor](#)<sup>124</sup>, or [shake](#)<sup>125</sup>.

[00:24:53] You can actually see this if you look at footage of Hitler in the latter stages of the war, where his hands and entire body are [shaking](#)<sup>126</sup> so violently that even the Nazi [propaganda](#) machine couldn't hide it.

[00:25:08] Some historians believe that Hitler could have been suffering from Parkinson's disease, but severe [tremors](#)<sup>127</sup> are also a symptom of drug withdrawal.

[00:25:18] We already know that some Nazis felt Hitler was out of control, but was this partly down to drug addiction?

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<sup>120</sup> mix of substances

<sup>121</sup> a kind of drug

<sup>122</sup> a dangerous type of drug

<sup>123</sup> a situation in which he needed it all the time, addiction

<sup>124</sup> uncontrollable movement of the body

<sup>125</sup> uncontrollable movement of the body

<sup>126</sup> moving in an uncontrollable way

<sup>127</sup> uncontrollable movements of the body

[00:25:25] Was he making war decisions while [high<sup>128</sup>](#) on cocaine and [opiates](#)?

[00:25:30] It's certainly an interesting theory, and could partly explain Hitler's [manic<sup>129</sup>](#) behaviour and refusal to stop the war until the last moment, preferring to destroy Europe than make peace.

[00:25:43] There are clearly many other reasons for his behaviour and downfall, and one that I should mention is his extreme paranoia and his refusal to trust his generals to make military decisions without consulting him first.

[00:25:57] When you are fighting literally a world war, you can't do everything yourself, and this is believed to be a major reason why the German army was eventually defeated.

[00:26:07] So, all of this takes us back to Berlin, in 1945.

[00:26:13] In January the Soviets began their [assault<sup>130</sup>](#) on Germany, and by April they reached Berlin.

[00:26:21] As we know from the start of this episode, Hitler stayed in the Führerbunker until the very end.

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<sup>128</sup> affected by drugs

<sup>129</sup> showing wild excitement and energy

<sup>130</sup> attack

[00:26:28] After hearing of Mussolini's **gruesome** end, with the Soviets just streets away, Hitler **committed suicide**<sup>131</sup> on the 30th of April, 1945.

[00:26:38] Adolf Hitler, the man whose name has become **synonymous** with evil, was dead.

[00:26:45] Unlike the subjects of parts one and two of this mini-series, Stalin and Mussolini, the death of Hitler offered more of a clean break with the past, an acknowledgment of the horrors that had been committed under his command, and a shared **resolve**<sup>132</sup> to never allow them to happen again.

[00:27:06] Clearly, as with any **warped** belief, there are still those who look back on this man's life with some form of admiration, but for the vast majority of mankind, the life of Adolf Hitler is looked back on with **utter**<sup>133</sup> **repulsion**<sup>134</sup>, hate and disgust.

[00:27:25] He is a man who organised the industrial **slaughter** of at least six million Jews, oversaw the deaths of millions of soldiers and civilians across Europe, and left a deep **scar**<sup>135</sup> on world history.

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<sup>131</sup> killed himself

<sup>132</sup> strong purpose or decision

<sup>133</sup> complete, total

<sup>134</sup> extreme dislike

<sup>135</sup> ugly mark

[00:27:39] It is a truly [vile](#)<sup>136</sup> legacy indeed.

[00:27:45] Ok then, that is it for today's episode on Adolf Hitler, and with that comes the end of our mini-series on European dictators.

[00:27:53] I hope it was an interesting one, and whether you knew a lot about Hitler, Stalin or Mussolini, or this was the first time you'd really dived into their [backstories](#)<sup>137</sup>, well I hope you learned something new

[00:28:05] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:28:09] What particular set of circumstances allowed Hitler to come to power?

[00:28:13] Do you think a Hitler-like figure could ever come to power again?

[00:28:17] Of the three dictators we've discussed in our mini-series, who would you say was the 'worst' or most [consequential](#)<sup>138</sup>?

[00:28:25] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:28:29] You can head right into our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](http://community.leonardoenglish.com) and get chatting away to other curious minds.

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<sup>136</sup> horrible, morally bad

<sup>137</sup> history, background

<sup>138</sup> having the biggest effect or impact

**English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #344**

**Adolf Hitler | Der Führer**

[00:28:36] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:28:41] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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## Key vocabulary

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Synonymous</b>	closely connected to
<b>Warped</b>	not normal, twisted
<b>Genocidal</b>	involving the killing of a large number of people from a particular nation
<b>Rage</b>	extreme, violent anger
<b>Send shudders down the spines</b>	make them feel very frightened
<b>Blow-by-blow</b>	giving all the details in the order in which they happened
<b>Holocaust</b>	the mass murder of Jewish people under the German Nazi rule during the period 1941–5
<b>Waves</b>	large groups one after the other
<b>Poured into</b>	entered fast and in large numbers
<b>Blow</b>	hit, stroke
<b>Bunker</b>	an underground safe structure

<b>Chancellery</b>	the main government building
<b>Complex</b>	a structure consisting of many different and connected parts
<b>Mistress</b>	the woman he had a sexual relation with
<b>Will</b>	a legal document containing instructions as to what should be done with his money and property after his death
<b>Outlining</b>	defining, explaining
<b>Torture</b>	make him suffer
<b>Ally</b>	person who had agreed to help and support him
<b>Gruesome</b>	very unpleasant, shocking
<b>Retired</b>	went away, withdrew
<b>Slaughter</b>	killing of a large amount of people
<b>Cyanide</b>	a powerful poison
<b>Capsule</b>	small container
<b>Cremated</b>	burned
<b>Infancy</b>	the time when they were babies
<b>Peasant</b>	simple farmer

<b>Devout</b>	having deep religious feelings
<b>Harsh</b>	strict, unkind
<b>Distant</b>	cold, remote
<b>Dialect</b>	the form of language that people spoke in that particular part of the country
<b>Tense</b>	stressed, not easy
<b>Intervened</b>	got involved
<b>Measles</b>	a dangerous disease
<b>Detached</b>	separated, lonely
<b>Depict him</b>	describe him
<b>By no means</b>	not at all
<b>Blew through</b>	got through
<b>Inheritance</b>	money or property that was given to him when his father died
<b>Make it</b>	be successful
<b>Paintbrush</b>	a brush used for painting
<b>Canvas</b>	a strong type of cloth used as a surface for painting

<b>Watercolours</b>	paintings drawn with paint mixed with water
<b>Anti-semitism</b>	hate against Jewish people
<b>Anti-semitic</b>	involving hate against Jewish people
<b>Estate</b>	his money and property at the time of his death
<b>Drifting around</b>	going from place to place
<b>Runner</b>	a job that involved passing messages between different army units on the front line
<b>Armistice</b>	formal agreement between the countries at war to stop fighting for a particular time
<b>Blindness</b>	inability to see
<b>Propaganda</b>	information arranged in a way that could affect people's opinions
<b>Informer</b>	a person who gave information in secret
<b>Spying</b>	secretly collecting and reporting information
<b>Troops</b>	soldiers
<b>Championing</b>	strongly supporting
<b>Oratory</b>	public speaking skills

<b>Overthrow</b>	remove
<b>Coup d'état</b>	a sudden and violent removal of a government in order to take its position
<b>Chaired</b>	having them in charge, presided
<b>Coup</b>	a sudden and violent removal of a government in order to take its position
<b>Open fire</b>	start to shoot
<b>Struggle</b>	my difficult work or effort
<b>Endless</b>	seeming never to finish
<b>Paced around</b>	walked around
<b>Ranks</b>	positions, levels
<b>Deputy</b>	second in command
<b>Twisted</b>	strange in an unpleasant way
<b>Picked up</b>	improved
<b>Hyperinflation</b>	fast and out-of-control general price increases in the economy
<b>Die down</b>	become less strong

<b>Paramilitary</b>	not officially or legally armed
<b>Oath</b>	promise, vow
<b>Banned</b>	legally not allowed, prohibited
<b>Ramp up</b>	increase its activity
<b>Rhetoric</b>	language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect
<b>Hint</b>	small piece of information that suggested it
<b>Obsessive</b>	unable to stop thinking about it
<b>Implied</b>	suggested
<b>Obsessiveness</b>	the fact that he was extremely interested in her
<b>Pistol</b>	a small gun
<b>Suicide</b>	the act of killing herself
<b>Shattered</b>	badly broken
<b>On the cusp of</b>	at the point when he was about to have it
<b>Plunged</b>	caused to fall
<b>Ripe</b>	ready

<b>Scandal</b>	an action that would cause public feelings of shock and anger
<b>Ruined</b>	ended, destroyed
<b>Post-mortem</b>	medical examination of her body
<b>Got wind of it</b>	heard something about it
<b>Compassion</b>	sympathy, pity
<b>Mainstream</b>	established or accepted reality
<b>Spike</b>	increase
<b>Maneuvering</b>	moving skillfully or carefully
<b>Blaze</b>	very large fire
<b>Grip</b>	hold, control
<b>Shy</b>	nervous and uncomfortable with other people
<b>Ambitious</b>	having a strong wish to be successful
<b>Lead up</b>	the events that led to
<b>On a war footing</b>	preparing for war
<b>Withdrew</b>	removed

**Cast aside** ignored

**Conscription** the process of forcing people by law to join the army

**Setting the wheels in motion** beginning the process of

**Synagogues** buildings in which Jewish people practised their religion

**Rounded up** gathered or collected in one place

**Do justice to** treat it in an appropriate, deserving way

**Itching for** feeling very impatient for

**Sacrificing** killing for the sake of something he considered more important

**Touch on** mention quickly

**Wreaked** caused, created

**Slaughtering** killing (for a large amount of people)

**Briefcase** a flat bag used for carrying documents

**Blowing the man to smithereens** blowing the man to pieces

**Purged** got rid of, cleared

<b>Highlights</b>	shows, emphasises
<b>Brutal</b>	very violent, cruel
<b>Maniac</b>	crazy person
<b>Briefing</b>	meeting
<b>Opiate</b>	a kind of drug
<b>Hormone</b>	a synthetic substance
<b>Cocktail</b>	mix of substances
<b>Opiates</b>	a kind of drug
<b>Cocaine</b>	a dangerous type of drug
<b>Dependence</b>	a situation in which he needed it all the time, addiction
<b>Tremor</b>	uncontrollable movement of the body
<b>Shake</b>	uncontrollable movement of the body
<b>Shaking</b>	moving in an uncontrollable way
<b>Tremors</b>	uncontrollable movements of the body
<b>High</b>	affected by drugs

**Manic** showing wild excitement and energy

**Assault** attack

**Committed suicide** killed himself

**Resolve** strong purpose or decision

**Utter** complete, total

**Repulsion** extreme dislike

**Scar** ugly mark

**Vile** horrible, morally bad

**Backstories** history, background

**Consequential** having the biggest effect or impact

*We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.*

*What did you like? What could we do better?*

*What did you struggle to understand?*

*Let us know in the forum [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com)*