World Leaders: Adolf Hitler

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Synopsis: Adolf Hitler was born in Austria in 1889 and became leader of the Nazi political group. Hitler led Germany from 1933 to 1945. His decisions caused World War II and the Holocaust, when millions of Jews were killed. Hitler and his wife, Eva Braun, killed themselves on April 30, 1945.

Early Years

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria, on April 20, 1889. When he was 3 years old, his family moved to Germany.

During World War I, Hitler served in the German army, even though he was Austrian.

After World War I, Hitler joined a political group called the DAP in 1919. Hitler adopted many of the DAP's ideas. These included blaming Jewish people for Germany's problems.

The DAP changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, also known as the Nazis. Hitler designed the Nazi flag, a swastika in a white circle on a red background. Hitler became known for his hate-filled speeches. In 1921, he became leader of the Nazis.

Hitler's speeches began attracting followers.
In 1923, Hitler and his followers stormed a meeting of 3,000 people at a beer hall. Hitler announced that the national revolution had begun and declared a new government. Hitler's attempt to take over the government failed after a short struggle and 20 deaths. Hitler served less than a year in prison for betraying his country. During this time, Hitler wrote most of the first part of "Mein Kampf" ("My Struggle"). The book described his plans for changing German society into one based on race.

Rise To Power

In 1932, Hitler ran for president against Paul von Hindenburg. Hitler lost, but Hindenburg gave Hitler the powerful position of chancellor. Hitler formed a dictatorship. He took away people's rights and allowed imprisonment without trial. He gave the people working for him the right to make any law, even if the constitution forbade it.

The Nazis were declared the only legal political group in Germany. Hitler's enemies were rounded up and killed.

The day before Hindenburg's death in 1934, Hitler's government ended the job of president. Hitler was declared leader, and he began to prepare for war.

A main Nazi idea was that white, non-Jewish Germans were better. Everyone else was stripped of German citizenship. New laws outlawed marriage between non-Jewish and Jewish Germans. Nazis also believed people with disabilities were lesser. New laws forced people with disabilities to stop having children. Hitler later authorized a program to kill people with disabilities.

Between 1939 and 1945, Nazis caused the deaths of 11 million to 14 million people. This included about 6 million Jews, two-thirds of the Jews in Europe. Many deaths took place in concentration camps. Nazis also killed Poles, communists, homosexuals and many other groups.

World War II

On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. In response, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

In 1940, Hitler invaded Norway, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium. Hitler bombed the United Kingdom. Germany allied with Japan and Italy.

In 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. German troops seized an enormous area before they were stopped outside Moscow.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Hitler was now at war against the United States along with the other Western Allies of France, England and the Soviet Union.
Hitler’s health began to worsen and he made bad decisions. In late 1942, German forces were defeated in several important battles. On June 6, 1944, the Western Allied armies landed in northern France. They began to free Western Europe.

**Death And Legacy**

By early 1945, the Soviets had driven the German army back into Western Europe. The Allies were advancing into Germany. On April 29, 1945, Hitler married Eva Braun, and the couple killed themselves the next day, afraid of being captured. On May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies.

Hitler left behind a devastated Eastern and Central Europe. He inflicted great suffering and caused the death of an estimated 40 million people. Hitler’s defeat marked the end of a part of European history dominated by Germany.