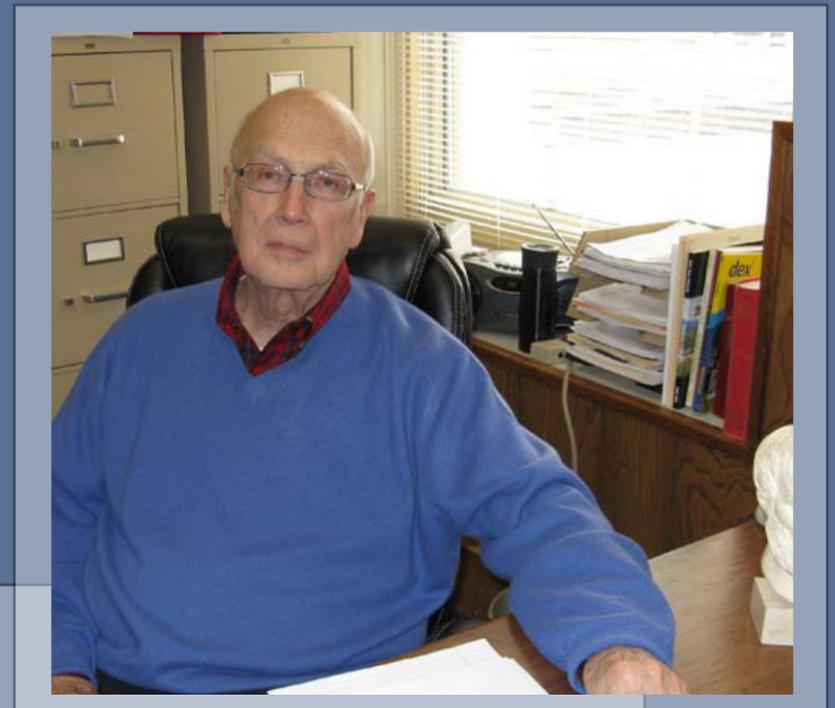


Charisma: The Key to Hitler's Rhetoric



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World War Two is the most cataclysmic event in history. According to British military historian John Keegan, “The Second World War is the largest single event in human history, fought across six of the world’s seven continents and all of its oceans. It killed 50 million human beings, left hundreds of millions of others wounded and materially devastated much of the heartland of civilization.”¹

Incredibly, one man – Adolf Hitler – caused this “carnage and ruin.”² Noted historian John Lukacs, in his insightful analysis of *The Legacy of the Second World War*, draws the cause and effect of Hitler and WWII succinctly, “No Hitler, no Second World War. The Second World War was Hitler’s war.”³

My purpose in this essay is to describe Hitler’s unquestioned skill as a public speaker by explaining how he projected himself as a charismatic leader.

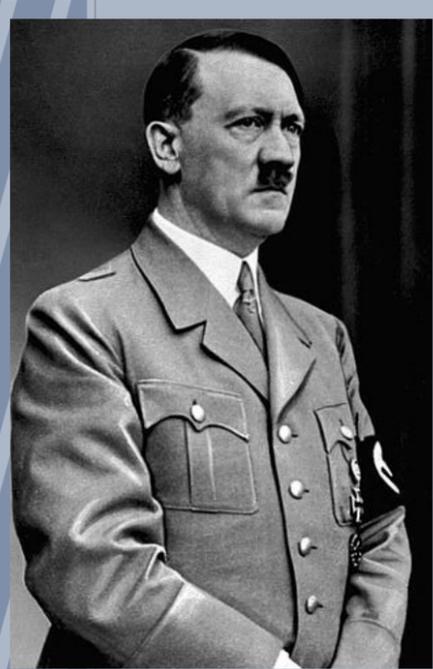
It is horrifying to contemplate the consequences of a German victory in WWII. Lukacs believes Hitler could have won. “Had the Germans invaded England during the summer [of 1940] he would have won his war.” Adds Lukacs, “in September and October 1941...Stalin was compelled to inform Churchill ‘the Soviet Union [is] in mortal danger’, on the verge of collapse.”⁴ H. Trevor Roper, premier historian of Hitler and Nazi Germany, agrees: “The fact is Hitler nearly won the war. It was by a whisker he didn’t. I think there were three or four moments when he really could have won it.”⁵ Defeating Hitler was arduous. Explains Lukacs, “It took almost six years for the greatest powers of the world to defeat him. It took an alliance of America, Russia, and the British Empire to defeat [Nazi Germany]. No one or even two of them sufficed to conquer Hitler’s Germany. Perhaps as many as five hundred million people ranged against a Germany of 80 million.”⁶

Hitler’s place in history is fixed as one of the humanity’s most influential and most evil figures. A proper epitaph for him is: Because Hitler lived millions died. British historian Ian Kershaw, one of Hitler’s main biographers, writes, “certainly no other individual has stamped a more profound imprint [on the 20th century] than Adolf Hitler. The 12 years of Hitler’s rule permanently changed Germany, Europe and the world. He is one of the few individuals of whom it can be said with absolute certainty, without him the course of history would be different.”⁷

Hitler’s prodigious impact is widely acknowledged. In 2000, to commemorate the passing century, 1,200 historians at U.S. colleges ranked Hitler first as the individual “with the most significant impact on 20th century life.”⁸ Because 2000 also began a new millennium Arts and Entertainment polled 360 journalists, scholars, and political leaders to rank the people who “had done the most to shape our world in the past 1000 years.” Hitler was placed sixteenth, the highest of any world leader. His great contemporaries were far behind: Churchill (52), Roosevelt (60), and Stalin (79).⁹



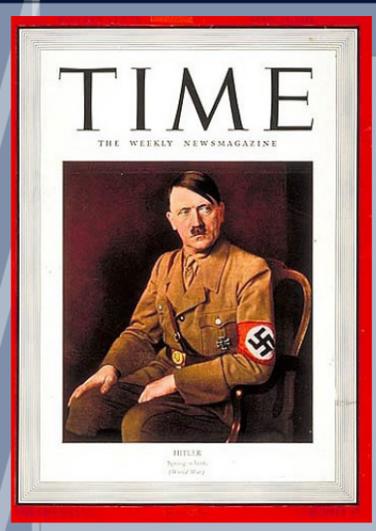
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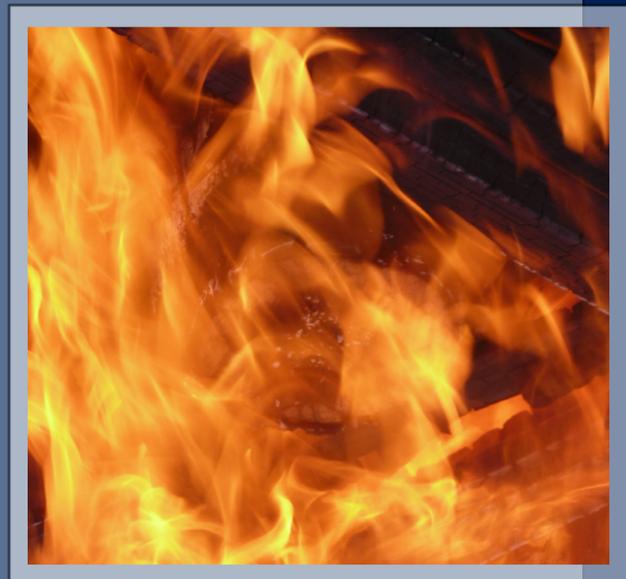


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Hitler's foremost enemy Joseph Stalin once acknowledged, "Hitler is a genius."¹⁰ Tragically he was an evil genius – perhaps history's ultimate villain. *TIME*, in its "Person of the Century" issue, writes, "Hitler redefined the meaning of evil forever."¹¹ Oxford historian Alan Bullock, author of two biographies of Hitler, observes, "if Hitler isn't evil then the word has no meaning."¹² Ron Rosenbaum of Columbia University, paraphrasing Emil Fackenheim (who Rosenbaum describes as "the preeminent theologian of the holocaust") attempts to fix Hitler's evil in an understandable context: "You cannot locate Hitler on the ordinary continuum of human nature. You cannot merely say he was a very, very, very bad man, perhaps the most wicked yet, but still explicable as the same product of the same human nature, the same psychological forces that produced, say, the next worst human being and the next and the next until we reach ourselves. No – Hitler is off the charts – off the grid – in another category of radical evil entirely."¹³

Hitler's slaughter of 21 million noncombatants ranks him behind only Stalin's 43 million and Mao's 38 million as history's supreme killer, according to the *Encyclopedia of Genocide*.¹⁴ Although Stalin's atrocity is, writes Bullock, "double the number put to death by the Nazis"¹⁵ Hitler's crime seems greater. Robert Conquest, historian of the German – Russian War, explains: "If forced to make a comparison between the two I'd have to say, however hesitatingly and subjectively, that Hitler's degree of evil 'just feels worse' than Stalin's."¹⁶



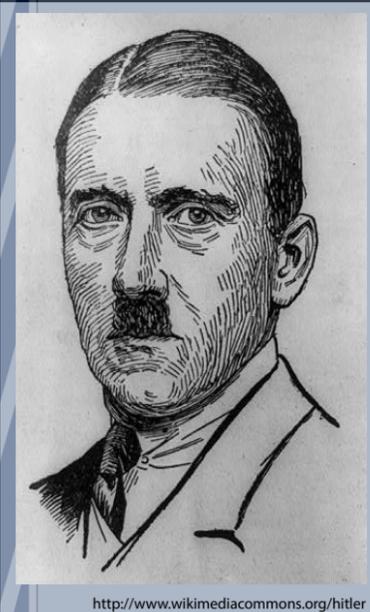
Hitler as a Charismatic Leader

Hitler once declared, "everything I have accomplished resulted from persuasion." Rhetoric was the key to Hitler's success. Charisma was the key to Hitler's rhetoric. I will describe several topics relevant to his ethos, illustrate Hitler's acknowledged skill as an orator, and, using German sociologist/economist Max Weber's definition and description of charisma, focus on four main characteristics of "the Hitler Myth":

- Hitler as a man of conviction
- Hitler as a successful leader
- Hitler as a man of destiny
- Hitler as Christ's disciple

Although more has been written about him than any individual Hitler remains an enigma. After researching and writing two biographies on Hitler, Bullock concedes, "I can't explain Hitler. I don't believe anybody can."¹⁷ Yehuda Bauer, holocaust historian at Hebrew University, acknowledges, "Hitler is explicable in principal, but that does not mean that he has been explained."¹⁸ Fackenheim concurs: "There will never be an adequate explanation. Nothing can make Hitler explicable."¹⁹

Even people who worked closely with Hitler admit their inability to understand him. Christa Schroder, Hitler's private secretary for 15 years, declares, "I never ceased trying to make sense of the man I thought I knew. In the end it was impossible to discover Hitler's true face. He had too many faces. There was no one Hitler."²⁰ Otto Dietrich, Hitler's press secretary for 12 years, describes the Hitler dichotomy: "In Hitler's soul, sincere warmth



<http://www.wikimediacommons.org/hitler>

and heartlessness, love of his fellow creatures and ruthless harshness dwelt side by side. I have seen him as a kindly person, the enthusiastic patron of artists, affectionate toward children, always considerate of his guests, and gallant toward women, sympathizing with the sufferings and sharing the joys of others. But there raged in that same person the primitive forces of inhumanity. His decisions were based on utter mercilessness.”²¹

90% were “Hitler supporters, Fuhrer believers”

Hitler’s rise to power was meteoric. In 12 years he built the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi) from a mere seven members in 1919 to the largest political party in Germany in 1932 when the Nazis won more than one-third of the seats in the Reichstag by competing against six established political parties in free parliamentary elections. Explains Kershaw, “Hitler was no tyrant imposed on Germany. Though he never received majority support in free elections [no party achieved a majority during the Weimar Republic] he was legally appointed to power as Reich Chancellor just like his predecessors had been, and became between 1933 and 1940 arguably the most popular head of state in the world.” Adds Kershaw, “it has been suggested that at the peak of his popularity nine Germans in ten were ‘Hitler-supporters,’ ‘Fuhrer believers.’ ”²²

Complicating the Hitler enigma is the fact that Hitler’s popular support came from millions of voters who were, according to Lukacs, “then perhaps the most educated people in the world.”²³, Germany was “a society,” explains Rosenbaum, “widely regarded as the most civilized, in the sense of ‘learned’ or ‘cultured’ and philosophically sophisticated.”²⁴ Elie Wiesel, holocaust survivor, Nobel Peace laureate, and professor of humanities at Boston University asks rhetorically, “How did this Austrian without title or position manage to get himself elected head of a

German nation renowned for its civilizing mission? How to explain the success of his cheap demagoguery in the heart of a people so proud of having inherited the genius of a Wolfgang von Goethe or an Immanuel Kant?”²⁵



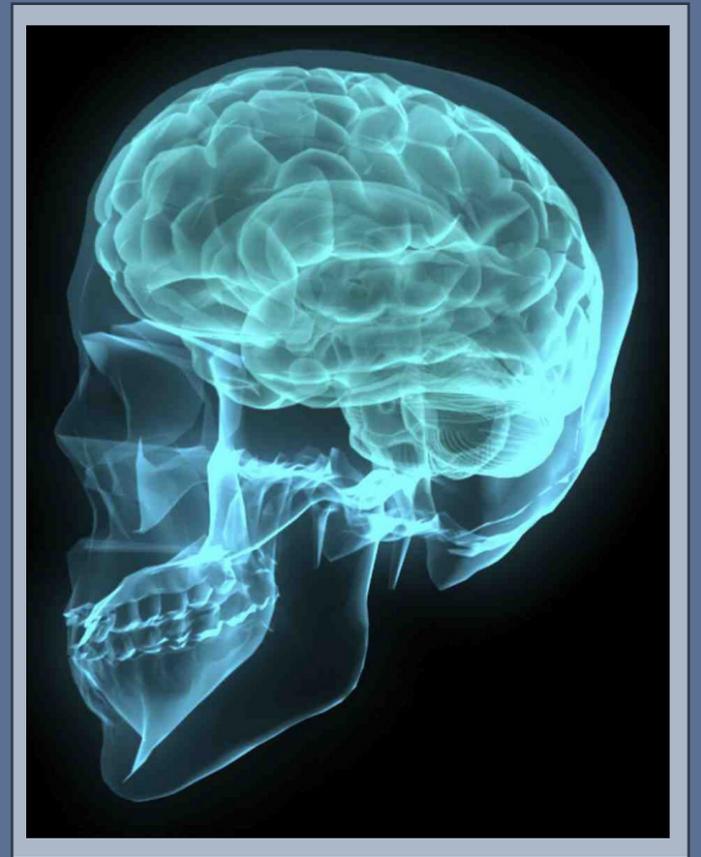
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Was Hitler Insane?

In addition to Hitler’s inexplicability and his popularity another factor essential for understanding Hitler’s charismatic leadership is his mental health. Was Hitler insane?

Like all features of Hitler’s life his mental condition has been examined assiduously. Common opinion is that he was a madman. How else to account for starting WWII, planning and prosecuting the holocaust, and, in his final days, ordering his munitions minister Albert Speer to destroy Germany and its people in a fiery *Gottterdammerung*? Robert Waite, history professor at Williams College in his biography *The Psychopathic God, Adolf Hitler* describes many commonly held views of Hitler’s mental health including megalomania and paranoid schizophrenia.²⁶

Nasser Ghaemi is a professor of psychiatry at Tufts University and Director of the Mood Disorders Program at Tufts Medical Center in Boston. In his 2011 book, *A First Rate Madness: Uncovering the Links Between Leadership and Mental Illness* Ghaemi describes Hitler as “outrageously insane and abominably evil” who was afflicted with bipolar disorder (manic depressive) and whose condition worsened after 1937 when “Hitler began using amphetamines.” Ghaemi believes that bipolar disorder can enhance leadership and describes, as examples, General William Sherman, Lincoln, Churchill, Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Hitler.



Regarding Hitler, Ghaemi asserts, “up to 1937, I think, his moderate bipolar disorder influenced his political career for the better – fueling his charisma, resilience, and political creativity. After that date, the harmful effects of daily intravenous amphetamine – to which he was especially susceptible because of his bipolar disorder – worsened his manic and depressive episodes, impairing his leadership skills with catastrophic effects.” Concludes Ghaemi, “Hitler’s story supports the basic view of this book that mental illness, especially in its mild to moderate forms, enhances crisis leadership.”²⁷

Some Hitler scholars believe that calling Hitler insane trivializes and rationalizes the Hitler issue. Writing in the *New Republic* columnist Stanley Kaufman argues, “if Hitler is seen only as a drooling maniac at the head of millions of other drooling maniacs the enormity of what happened is slighted.”²⁸ Lukacs agrees: “Categorizing him as mad, or even psychotic, absolves him of responsibility for what he did and ordered and said. It absolves us from thinking about him by sweeping the Hitler problem under the rug.”²⁹

“I Have No Equal” as a Speaker

Hitler’s personality may be inexplicable, his evil unfathomable, but his skill as an orator is unquestioned. Hitler was correct when he declared, “I have no equal in the art of persuading the masses.” Scholars of Hitler’s career uniformly attest to his rhetorical prowess:

Klaus Fisher: “Without his remarkable gift of persuasion Hitler would never have reached such heights of power.”³⁰

Trevor Roper: “Hitler, at the beginning, had only his voice. That was the sole instrument of his power.”³¹

Frederic Spotts: “Hitler’s speeches [were] the key to his rise to power.”³²

Kershaw writes matter-of-factly, Hitler’s “rhetorical talent was, of course, recognized even by his political enemies.”³³



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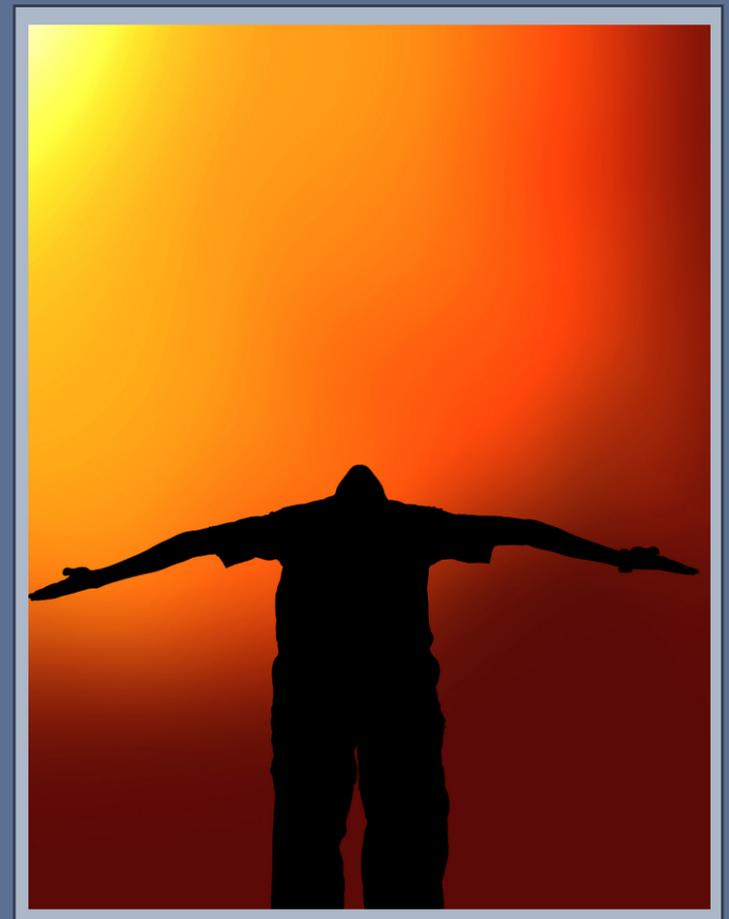
Rhetoric was the key to Hitler's success. Ethos/charisma was the key to Hitler's rhetoric. Aristotle describes ethos as one of three means of persuasion, along with emotional appeal (pathos) and logical argument (logos). Writes Aristotle, "the character of the speaker is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make the speaker worthy of belief." For Aristotle, "the speaker's character [as perceived by the audience] is the most potent of all the means of persuasion."³⁴

Weber's Definition of Charisma

German sociologist/economist Max Weber (1864-1920) emphasizes and expands the importance of ethos to persuasion in his tome *Economy and Society* by explaining the concept of charisma. According to Weber, charisma is one of the "three pure types of authority along with 'rational grounds' and 'traditional grounds.'" For Weber charisma is a "certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered *extraordinary* and treated as endowed with *supernatural, superhuman*, or at least specifically *exceptional* powers or qualities." Explains Weber, "these are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader' ".³⁵

Joseph Nyomarky, emeritus professor of political science at the University of Southern California, explains Weber's concept of charisma: "There has to be a measure of extraordinariness in the person of the charismatic leader in order to evoke the enthusiasm and devotion necessary for the establishment of charismatic authority."³⁶ Ann Ruth Willner of the University of Kansas names four properties of charismatic leadership:

1. The leader is perceived by the followers as somehow superhuman.
2. The followers blindly believe the leader's statements.
3. The followers unconditionally comply with the leader's directives for action.
4. The followers give the leader unqualified emotional commitment."³⁷



Several assumptions underlie charismatic leadership. First, it is based on perception not necessarily on reality. Weber explains, “what is alone important is how the individual is actually *regarded* by those subject to charismatic authority, by his ‘followers’ or ‘disciples’. The validity of charismatic authority rests entirely on recognition by the ruled, on ‘proof’ before their eyes.”³⁸ Adds Willner, “it is not what the leader *is* but what people see the leader *as* that counts in generating the charismatic relationship.”³⁹



Secondly, charismatic rhetoric is amoral. Aristotle explains, “If it is urged that an abuse of the rhetorical faculty can work great mischief, the same charge can be brought against all good things (save virtue itself), and especially against the most useful things such as strength, health, wealth, and military skill. Rightly employed, they work the greatest blessings; wrongly employed they work the utmost harm.”⁴⁰ Declares Willner, charismatic leadership is “inherently neither moral nor immoral, neither virtuous nor wicked. Such questions arise only when we wish to evaluate whether a particular charismatic leader has used the relationship in the service of good or evil.”⁴¹ Finally, because it rests in the eye of the beholder, charismatic leadership defies a standard profile. Nyomarky explains that confirmation to a “definable pattern of traits” is unnecessary for charismatic leadership.⁴²

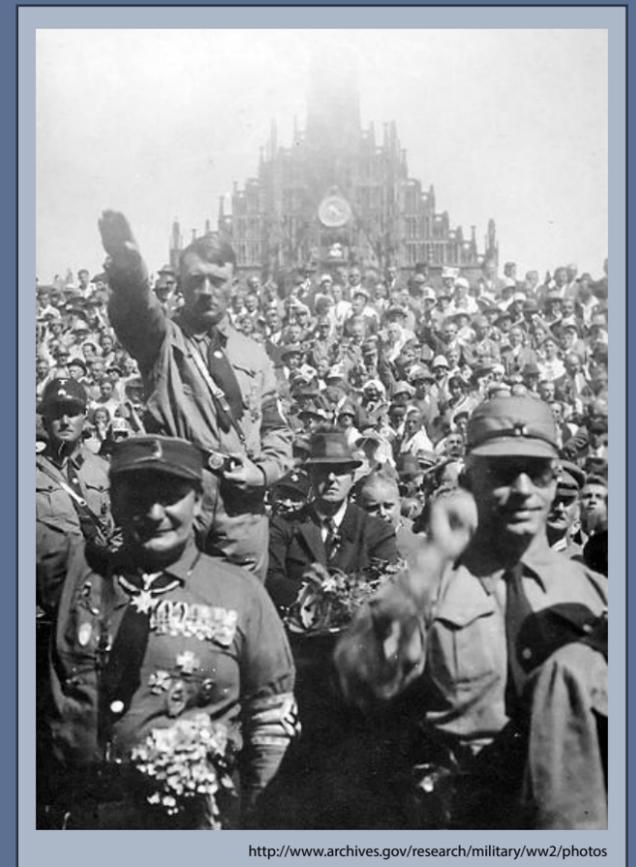
Charismatic political leaders are rare. Few individuals are perceived to possess, according to the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, “that special spiritual power or personal quality that gives an individual influence or authority over large numbers of people.”⁴³ Hitler exemplified Weber’s charismatic leader.

“Beloved by His People”

In his *TIME* essay at the close of the century/millennium Eli Wiesel laments, “The fact is, Hitler was beloved by his people... by the average German who pledged to him an affection, a tenderness, and a fidelity that bordered on the irrational. It was idolatry on national scale.”⁴⁴

Kershaw agrees: “Underpinning Hitler’s unchallenged authority was the adulation of the masses. Large sections of the population simply idolized him.”⁴⁵ A.J.P Taylor concedes, “no dictatorship has been so ardently desired or so firmly supported by so many people as Hitler’s was in Germany. The most evil system of modern times was also the most popular.”⁴⁶

Because Hitler believed “the broad mass of the population needs an idol” he systematically constructed “the Hitler Myth.” In his perceptive study, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, Kershaw writes, “Hitler himself paid the greatest attention to the building of his public image. He was evidently aware of how important his omnipotent image was to his leadership position. He transformed himself into a function – the function of the Fuhrer.”⁴⁷

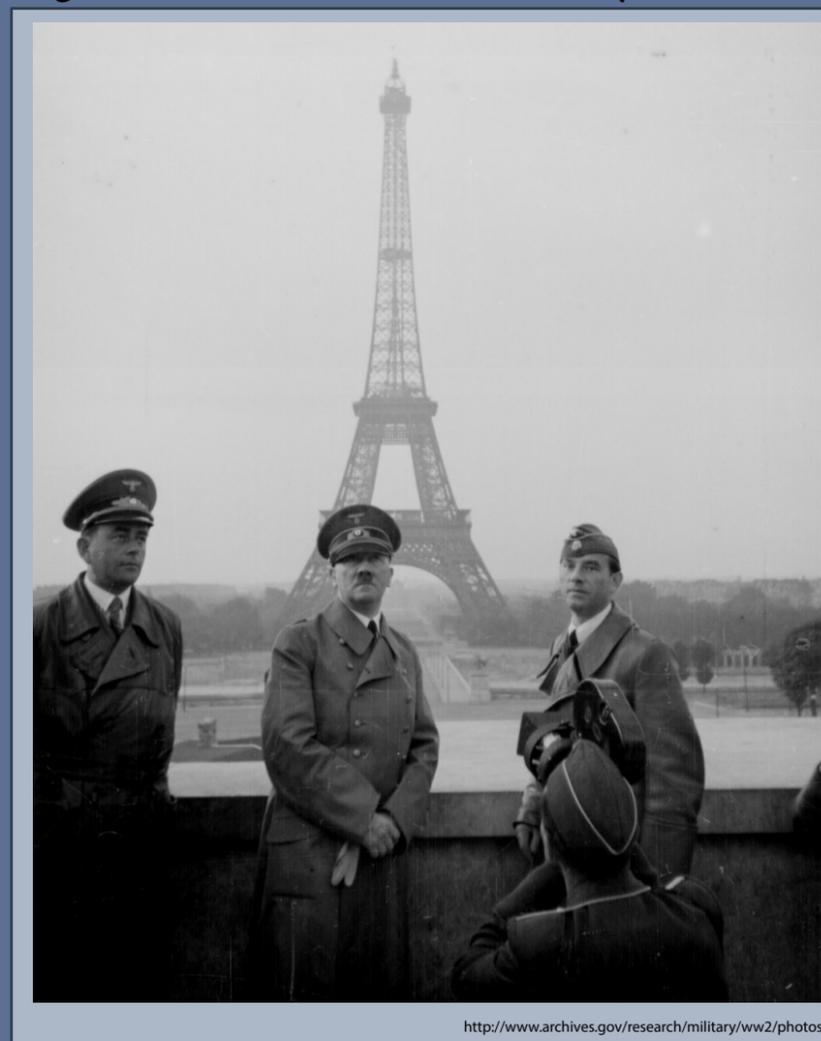


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Anecdotal examples of the German people's adulation of Hitler abound. A 17 year old girl declared, "the Fuhrer is a great man, a genius, a person sent to us by heaven."⁴⁸ A Berlin teacher remarked, "The entire thoughts and feelings of most Germans are dominated by the Fuhrer. He is the savior of a wicked, sad, German world."⁴⁹ CBS correspondent in Berlin William L. Shirer describes in his diary the reaction of Germans to Hitler during the 1934 Nuremberg Rally: "At about 10 o'clock tonight I got caught in a mob of about 10,000 hysterics who jammed the moat in front of Hitler's hotel shouting 'we want our Fuhrer.' They reminded me of the crazed expression I saw once in the back country of Louisiana on the faces of some Holy Rollers who were about to hit the trail. They looked up to him as if he were a messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman."⁵⁰

Six years later in December 1940, at the height of Hitler's popularity following the defeat of France, Shirer acknowledges, "It is the evil genius of Adolf Hitler that has aroused this basic feeling and given it tangible expression. Today, as far as the vast majority of his fellow countrymen are concerned, he has reached a pinnacle never before achieved by a German leader. He has become, even before his death, a legend, almost a god. To many Germans he is a figure remote, unreal, hardly human. For them he has become infallible."⁵¹

Hitler's charismatic appeal was not limited to the German public. Close associates also succumbed to his ethos. Hitler's secretary, Christa Schroder, writes in her memoirs, "He possessed a gift of a rare magnetic power to reach people, a sixth sense and a clairvoyant intuition. He could in some mysterious way foretell the subconscious reactions of the masses and in some inexplicable manner mesmerize his audience."⁵² Erwin Rommel, Hitler's greatest general who was involved in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler, wrote to his wife in 1943, "what power he radiates. What faith and confidence he inspires in his people."⁵³ Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and munitions minister asks rhetorically in his memoirs, "How is it possible that he captivated me so – and for more than a decade."⁵⁴ Leni Reifenstahl, an award winning film director/producer and actress before Hitler came to power in 1933, recalls hearing Hitler speak for the first time in 1932: "It seemed as if the earth's surface was spreading out in front of me, like a hemisphere that suddenly splits apart in the middle, spewing out an enormous jet of water so powerful that it shook the earth. I felt quite paralyzed."⁵⁵ After this experience Reifenstahl wrote to Hitler offering to produce movies for the Third Reich.



Success Vital to Charisma

"The Hitler Myth" portrayed a leader who possessed numerous charismatic characteristics including: courage, intelligence, goodwill, aloofness, benevolence, asceticism, even sex appeal. Most importantly "the Hitler Myth" projected Hitler's "exceptional, supernatural, and extraordinary powers" by emphasizing his *success* and strength of *character*. He was perceived by millions of Germans to be *providential* – even *messianic*.



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Weber believes success is crucial for charismatic leadership: “If proof of success eludes the leader for long, if he appears deserted by his god or his magical or heroic powers, above all, if his leadership fails to benefit his followers, it is likely that his charismatic authority will disappear. Failure, certainly a chain of failures, means a fatal undermining of charisma. Charismatic leadership cannot survive lack of success.”⁵⁶

Hitler’s early success as Chancellor is undisputed. After defeat in WWI Germany was compelled by the allies to sign the punitive Treaty of Versailles, described by Winston Churchill as “malignant” and “insane”, “a sad story of complicated idiocy.” Churchill writes, “Germany was condemned to pay reparations on a fabulous scale.”⁵⁸

Churchill as “malignant” and “insane”, “a sad story of complicated idiocy.” Churchill writes, “Germany was condemned to pay reparations on a fabulous scale.”⁵⁸

After the Great War Germany sank into a severe economic depression. According to Bullock, Germany had “a higher unemployment rate percentage than any of the other industrialized countries.”⁵⁹ Kershaw explains, “close to half of the work force was either fully or partially unemployed.”⁶⁰ Inflation was rampant. In 1923 the German mark – pound sterling rate was, writes Churchill, “43 million millions to the pound sterling”⁶¹, roughly an incredible 130 million dollars to one German mark. In 1933 Hitler initiated huge public works and rearmament projects. By 1936, writes Kershaw, “unemployment was practically wiped out. Living standards were beginning to improve. More consumer goods were becoming more available... these were the good times. In a mere three years Hitler appeared to have rescued Germany.”⁶²

Before coming to power Hitler called Germany “a groveling nation of beggars.” He vowed to “tear to pieces the ‘diktat’ of Versailles” and restore German pride and honor. Waite says he succeeded: “In a series of brilliant and bloodless coups he created a triumphant greater Germany proud and strong. He remilitarized the Rhineland and annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia.”⁶³ The nation cheered their Fuhrer’s successes. Peter Fritzsche of the University of Illinois writes that after Germany’s annexation of Austria in March 1938, “Hitler’s popularity reached new heights.”⁶⁴ When Hitler faced down the British and French in Czechoslovakia in October 1938 Kershaw believes Hitler’s charisma reached “a new dimension of legendary infallibility” exceeded only in June 1940 when the defeat of France “raised Hitler’s standing to unsurpassed heights.”⁶⁶





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Germans were not alone in lauding Hitler. One of his strongest admirers was Winston Churchill. In 1936 Churchill writes, “Hitler is the greatest German of the age... he has restored Germany’s honor.”⁶⁷ In 1937 Churchill describes Hitler’s achievements as “among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world.”⁶⁸ In 1938 Churchill’s admiration for Hitler was almost ecstatic: “I have always said that if Great Britain were defeated in war I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful position among nations.”⁶⁹

Supreme Self-Confidence

German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche expressed a quality indispensable for charismatic leadership: “Men believe in the truth of all that is seen to be strongly believed.”⁷⁰ Hitler projected unbounded self-confidence. Walter Langer, a Harvard psychologist, prepared a profile of Hitler for the Office of Strategic Services (predecessor of the CIA) in 1943. Langer listed Hitler’s 20 strongest qualities, emphasizing that “Hitler’s strongest point is perhaps his firm belief in his mission. It is the spectacle of a man whose convictions are so strong that he sacrifices himself for the cause that appeals to others and induces them to follow his example.”⁷¹ Otto Dietrich, who saw Hitler regularly for 12 years as his press secretary, avows, “Hitler’s dominant characteristic was his extraordinary will power. He considered himself one of the very great men of history.”⁷²



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Historians recognize Hitler’s supreme self-confidence. Kershaw writes, “he was the most ardent believer in his own infallibility and destiny.”⁷³ Fest asserts, “His courage in voicing forbidden opinions was extraordinary. Precisely that gave him the aura of manliness, fierceness, and sovereign power.”⁷⁴ Before entering Prague to consolidate control of all Czechoslovakia in 1939 Hitler told his secretaries, “I will go down in history as the greatest German.”⁷⁵ Hitler told his generals in a final strategy session before attacking Poland in September 1939, “Essentially, all depends on me, on my existence, my political talents. Probably no one will ever again have the confidence of

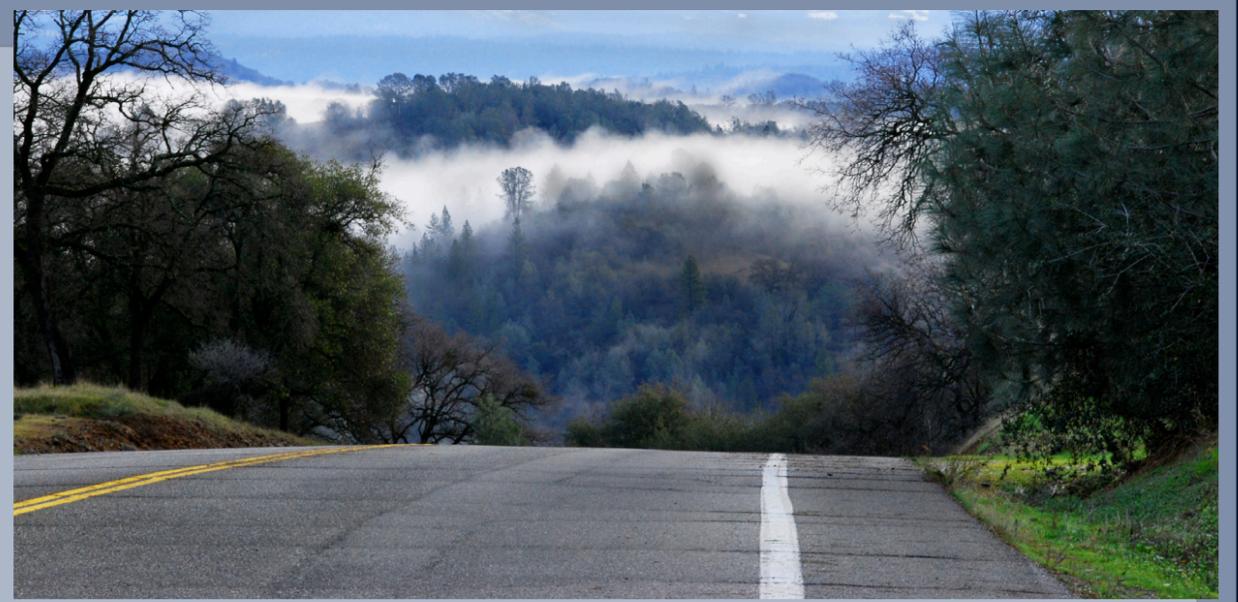
the whole German people as I have. There will probably never again in the future be a man with more authority than I have. My existence is therefore a factor of great value.”⁷⁶

Driven by Destiny

Weber believes charismatic leaders project supernatural, extraordinary, and “providential powers.” The “Hitler Myth” describes Hitler as a leader driven by destiny on a messianic mission to restore Germany.

Hitler said this vision first appeared in 1918 when he was recovering in a hospital from a gas attack in

WWI: “As I lay there it came over me that I would liberate the German people and make Germany great.”⁷⁷ This premonition became an indispensable part of “the Hitler Myth”; he repeated this omen often. Ernst Hanestaengl, a frequent social companion, recalls that Hitler told him that “he received a command from another world above to save his unhappy country. This vocation reached Hitler in the form of a supernatural vision. He felt that his mission was to save Germany.”⁷⁸



Portraying himself as a man of destiny became common in Hitler’s speeches. In Munich in 1936 he declared, “I go the way providence dictates for me with the assurance of a sleepwalker.”⁷⁹ In Linz, Austria, where he lived as a young man, he exclaimed, “If providence once called me out of this city then providence must thereby have given me a mission.”⁸⁰ Hitler told more than a million cheering Berliners in 1937, “I did not issue from some



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palace, I came from the worksite. Neither was I a general; I was a soldier like millions of others. It is a miraculous thing that an unknown man was able to step forth from the army of millions of German people, German workers and soldiers to stand at the fore of the Reich and the nation.”⁸¹ Speaking to a huge audience at the Nuremberg rally in 1936 Hitler boasted: “that you have found me among so many millions is the miracle of our time. And that I have found you, that is Germany’s fortune.”⁸²

Hitler believed he was protected by providence. After a bomb plot failed to kill him in July 1944 he told his officers, “The almighty has stayed [the assassin’s] hands once more. Don’t you agree that I should consider it as a nod of fate that it intends to preserve me for my assigned task?”⁸³ Shortly before

he committed suicide Hitler told his doctor, “Providence has guided me safely until now, and I shall continue unerringly on my appointed way whatever the circumstances.”⁸⁴

Christ’s Disciple

If portraying himself as chosen by providence to lead Germany was extreme, even more excessive was Hitler’s shameless attempt to identify with Jesus Christ. Hitler claimed to be Christ’s disciple. He writes in *Mein Kampf*, “I am convinced that I am acting as the agent of our creator by fighting off the Jews – I am doing the Lord’s work.”⁸⁵ Hitler’s blasphemy was unbounded: “Christ was the greatest fighter in the battle against the world enemy, the Jews. The work that Christ started but could not finish, I – Adolf Hitler – will conclude.”⁸⁶ Kershaw describes Hitler’s portrayal of a kinship with Christ: “The religious dimension was a powerful component of

the Fuhrer myth. Once he became Chancellor Hitler's language became pronouncedly 'messianic' in tone, and his public addresses were frequently replete with religious symbolism... often concluding with 'amen.'⁸⁷

Hitler exploited the strong Christian tradition of the German people. (Approximately 75% were Lutheran and 15-20% Catholic.) However, he realized that it would take 30 or 40 years to convert the German people to Nazi ideology, thus he focused on proselytizing the German children.⁸⁸

In 1939 membership in the Hitler Youth became mandatory. More than 90% of German children age 10-18 were members. German schools became the focus of Nazi indoctrination. Children recited:

*We love our Fuhrer
We honor our Fuhrer
We follow our Fuhrer until we are men
We believe in our Fuhrer
We live for our Fuhrer
We die for our Fuhrer until we are heroes.*⁸⁹

School children opened the day with a prayer that simulated the Lord's Prayer:

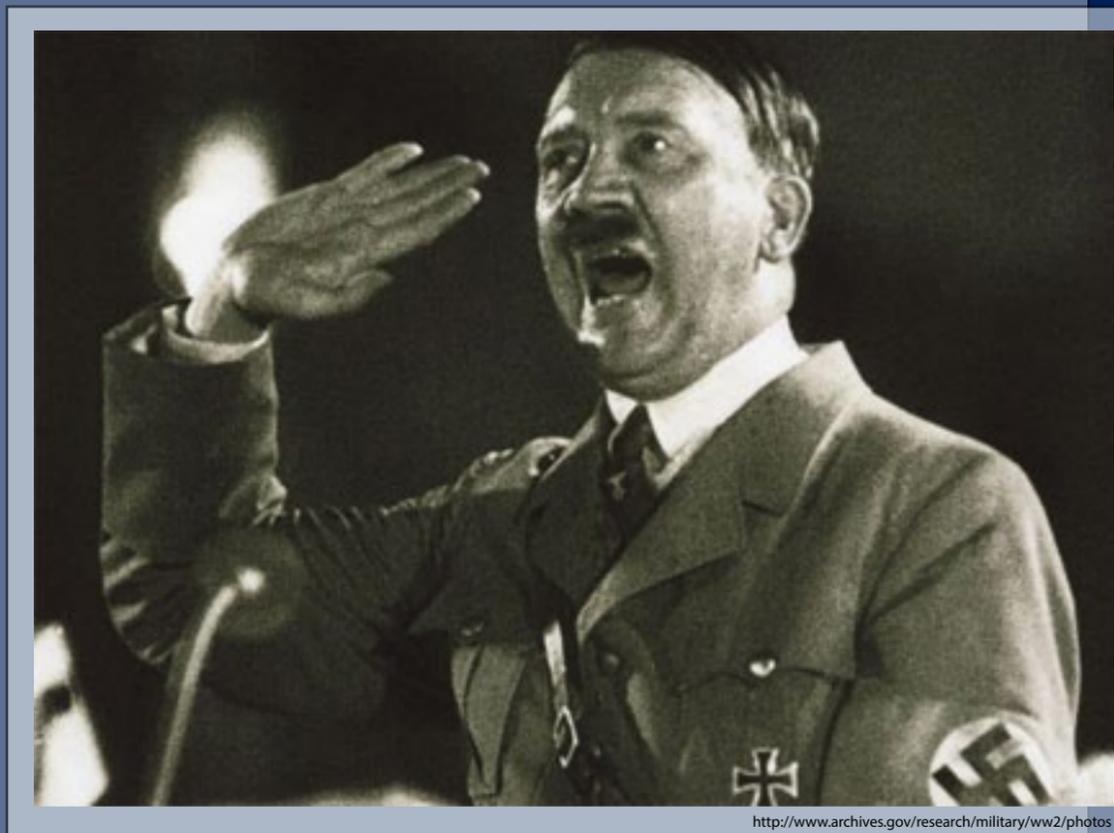
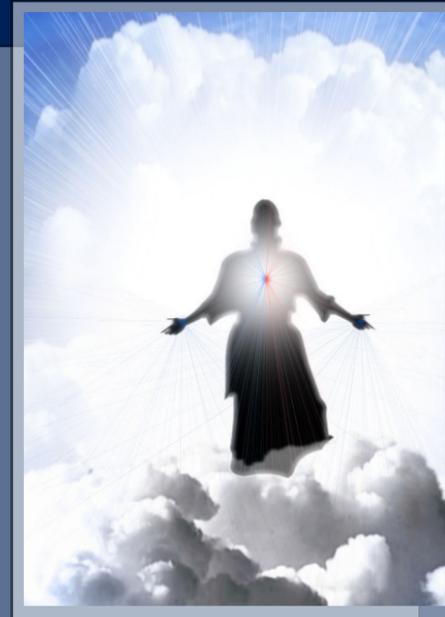
*Fuhrer, my Fuhrer, bequeathed to me by the Lord,
Protect and preserve me as long as I live!
Thou has rescued Germany from deepest distress,
I thank thee today for my daily bread
Abide thou long with me, forsake me not,
Fuhrer, my Fuhrer, my faith and my light!
Heil, my Fuhrer.*

School children sang:

*Adolf Hitler is our Savior, our hero
He is the noblest being in the whole wide world
For Hitler we live,
For Hitler we die,
Our Hitler is our Lord*

At age 15 boys in the Hitler Youth took an oath to the Fuhrer:

*I consecrate my life to Adolf Hitler. I am ready to sacrifice my life for Hitler. I am ready to die for Hitler my savior the Fuhrer.*⁹⁰



<http://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/photos>

Perhaps the pinnacle of blasphemy was a Nazi version of Christian Christmas carols titled *Christmas in the Third Reich*, published in 1934, in which the words of sacred carols were changed to replace Christ with Hitler. According to *The Living Age*, April 1934, quoting the *Manchester Guardian*, “A little volume of carols has just been published in Berlin under the title *Christmas in the Third Reich*. On the cover is a Christmas tree with lit candles and two chubby angels flying round like plump midges. Above is the swastika, the all-dominating symbol of the Third Reich.” The volume of hymns includes Silent Night, perhaps the most sacred carol, but “in the new Nazi version it is not the Holy Family that watches over mankind but Adolf Hitler who watches over the German people. The first two verses run:

*Quiet night, holy night, all are sleeping.
Only the Chancellor watches alone with sole guardianship
Watches well that Germany may prosper
He is always thinking of us.
Quiet night, holy night, all are sleeping
Only Adolf Hitler watches over Germany's fate
He leads us to greatness, to fame, and to
Happiness, he gives Germans the power.”*⁹¹



Archetypal Charismatic Leader

Although they were implacable enemies Hitler and Churchill agreed on the importance of rhetoric. Declared Churchill, “of all the talents bestowed upon men, none is so precious as the gift of oratory.”⁹² Affirmed Hitler, “everything I have accomplished resulted from persuasion.”

Hitler was the archetype of Max Weber’s charismatic leader. He was believed by millions of Germans to possess “extraordinary, super natural, superhuman exceptional powers and qualities.” Hitler methodically constructed “the Hitler Myth”. He emphasized his successes, exuded self-confidence, and portrayed himself as a man of destiny with Christ-like qualities.



<http://www.wikimediacommons.org/hitler>

Oxford historian Alan Bullock declares that Germans were willing “to accept whatever he said because he said it; just as they were prepared to carry out his orders simply because he gave them.”⁹³ Williams College historian Robert Waite laments, “the horror of Hitler was this: he meant what he said, he lived by his ideals, he practiced what he preached.”⁹⁴

The world is still recovering from what Churchill rues as “the worst tragedy in mankind’s tumultuous history.”⁹⁵

End Notes

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