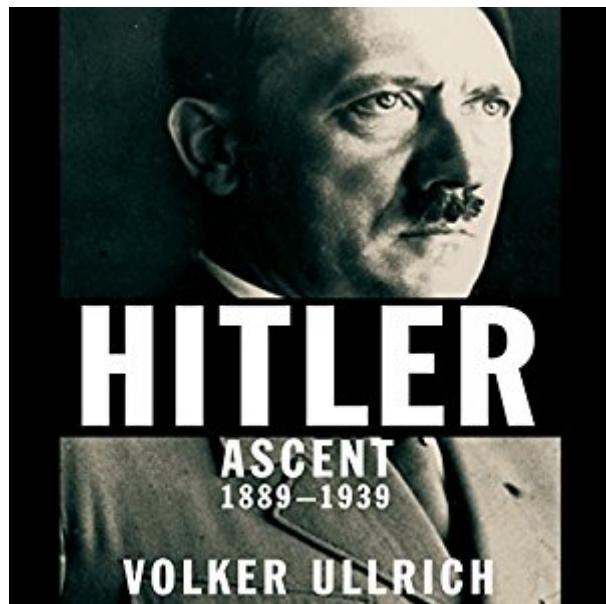


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Hitler: Ascent 1889-1939



Synopsis

A major new biography - an extraordinary, penetrating study of the man who has become the personification of evil. For all the literature about Adolf Hitler, there have been just four seminal biographies; this is the fifth, a landmark work that sheds important new light on Hitler himself. Drawing on previously unseen papers and a wealth of recent scholarly research, Volker Ullrich reveals the man behind the public persona, from Hitler's childhood, to his failures as a young man in Vienna, to his experiences during the First World War, to his rise as a far-right party leader. Ullrich deftly captures Hitler's intelligence, instinctive grasp of politics, and gift for oratory as well as his megalomania, deep insecurity, and repulsive worldview. Many previous biographies have focused on the larger social conditions that explain the rise of the Third Reich. Ullrich gives us a comprehensive portrait of a postwar Germany humiliated by defeat, wracked by political crisis, and starved by an economic depression - but his real gift is to show vividly how Hitler used his ruthlessness and political talent to shape the Nazi party and lead it to power. For decades the world has tried to grasp how Hitler was possible. By focusing on the man at the center of it all, on how he experienced his world, formed his political beliefs, and wielded power, this riveting biography brings us closer than ever to the answer. Translated from the German by Jefferson Chase.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The best source for Hitler's life up to the outbreak of WW2. Clear, level-headed. Absorbing. Best source for Hitler's life: Kershaw's classic two-volume biography is the obvious comparison. Ullrich

has 15 years of subsequent research to draw on. As well, Kershaw presents a Life and Times, while Ullrich focuses on the life. Ullrich can seem plodding in comparison with Kershaw's brilliance, and subsequent research doesn't overturn Kershaw's analysis, so you may still prefer him. If you've already read Kershaw and you want to go deeper, Ullrich is for you. Clear: Straightforward, fairly concise, readable. Excellent translation, livelier than the original. Level-headed: Ullrich disposes of much of the nonsense written about Hitler -- that he was a shirker in WW1, or gay, or lazy. He doesn't swallow Speer's self-serving lies. Absorbing: Ullrich's method is to give the facts with a minimum of analysis. It's dry, but the events are so powerful that the result is absorbing. I didn't find the book too long. Yes, it's 1,000 pages, but 232 of them are source notes, and there is a lot to cover. Book or Kindle? Buy the Kindle version. The book is workmanlike rather than attractive.

First published in Germany in 2013, HITLER: ASCENT 1889-1939 is a dense, scholarly work that looks at the dictator of the Third Reich from many perspectives, offering perhaps the most "human" view available in our times. Volker Ullrich states that writing about Adolf Hitler is "without a doubt the most difficult task for a historian." Hitler was, by the time of his suicide at the end of World War II, considered by all but a handful of his most fanatical followers to be a monster, and since then has been almost universally depicted as such. Thus a chapter entitled "Hitler as Human Being" reveals the author's notable determination to present a responsible view of his complex protagonist. Ullrich chronicles Hitler's early childhood, his adolescence as a rather dreamy school dropout and his service in World War I, up to the moment when he became the occupant of the German Chancellery, pivoting his country to the brink of all-out war. Contrary to other accounts that suggest Hitler was the product of abuse, Ullrich asserts that the boy experienced an unremarkable childhood for the time and place. The young Hitler showed early academic promise but wound up with slipping grades, contempt for teachers and an autodidact's love of solitary reading. Eschewing the intimacy of most romantic relationships, but not a sexual deviant, he purposely developed an uncommon ability to stifle personal sentiment and morph into an iron-willed leader with near superhuman charisma. His pale violet eyes were variously described as intense, hypnotic, unforgettable and unwavering. Though he had only average talent as a painter, his hands were cited as those of an artist, and he used them memorably in his highly dramatic speeches. Admirably intent on presenting Hitler in an unbiased manner, Ullrich cannot help but paint a picture of an aberrant character devising and achieving an unprecedented rise to glorification. Hitler could cry at will, hide feelings of contempt behind a gracious persona, and had a prodigious memory --- but only for the facts he considered important. He could be both warm

and cold, so extremely so that even his closest confidantes were perplexed when they thought back on it. And though anti-Semitism was rife in Germany after World War I, it was Hitler alone, in his distant and nuanced manner, who would cold-bloodedly predict, in 1939, the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe. Ullrich's thoughtful first volume of the Hitler biography immediately made the bestseller list in his native land. No stranger to exploration of the megalomaniacal personality, having written previously about Bismarck and Napoleon, Ullrich expresses his belief that by allowing Hitler some traces of normality, the deeds of the future Führer will emerge as even more horrific. •Reviewed by Barbara Bamberger Scott

This is one of the best biographies I have ever read. You get a strong sense of Hitler the man, Hitler the politician, Hitler the great orator, Hitler the village idiot always afraid someone would see through the complicated and deep personae he had created. Germany is also given a full and deep look. I have always wondered why more German Jews failed to emigrate near the end of the thirties and Ullrich clearly answers, their assets were stolen and they were financially unable to meet the high taxes placed upon them to leave and not enough countries cared enough to let them in. Readable, enjoyable, and intensely topical for today and our many "small" but all too nuclear powered demigods around the globe. Hitler did not have our communication technologies and our weapons of mass destruction and our highly vulnerable "liberal democracies" seemingly doomed by a singularly mad and ravenous religiously powered hunger for converts and the absolute annihilation of anyone who deems to disagree with either their means or their methods. Hitler would be appalled at their crudeness and astonished at their achievements.

This is an intelligent, carefully researched and above all beautifully written biography. It should remain at the top of the pack for years to come.

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