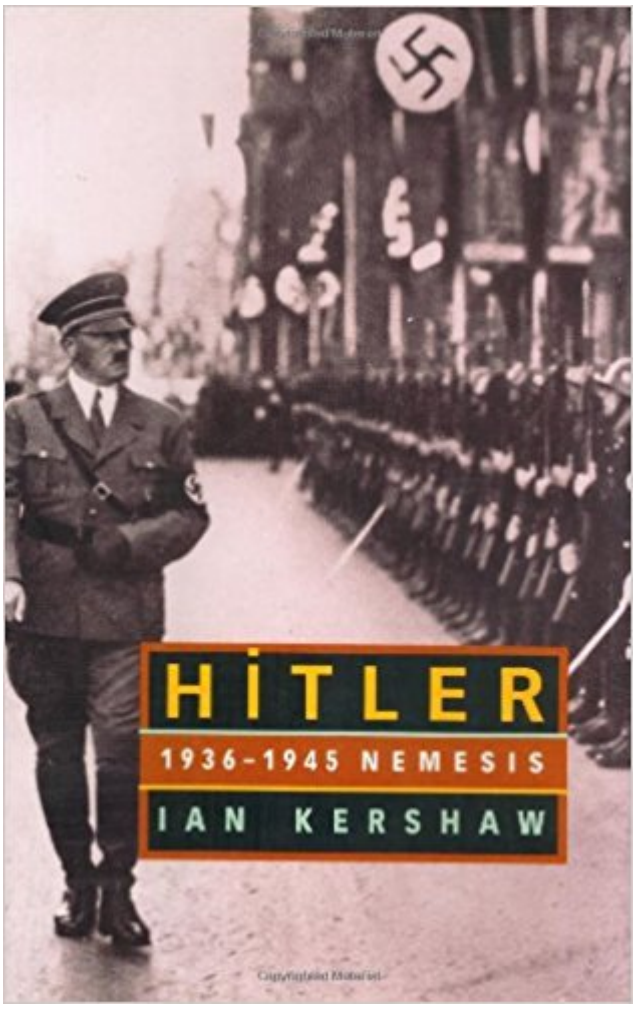
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Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis



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Synopsis

The climax and conclusion of one of the definitive biographies of our time. In this riveting account, drawing on many previously untapped sources--including Joseph Goebbel's diaries, recently discovered in Moscow--and incorporating numerous contemporaneous accounts of Nazi Germany, Ian Kershaw reveals a leader fanatically, ruinously convinced that he alone has the genius to conduct a war while his henchmen maintain the totalitarian state created in his name. As Nemesis opens, Adolf Hitler has achieved absolute power within Germany and triumphed in his first challenge to the European powers. Idolized by large segments of the population and firmly supported by four pillars of the Nazi regime--the Party, the armed forces, the industrial cartels, and the civil service--Hitler is poised to subjugate Europe. Nine years later, his vaunted war machine destroyed, Allied forces sweeping across Germany, Hitler will end his life with a pistol shot to his head. Kershaw's Hitler will be the final word on the most demonic figure of the twentieth century.

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Customer Reviews

George VI thought him a "damnable villain," and Neville Chamberlain found him not quite a gentleman; but, to the rest of the world, Adolf Hitler has come to personify modern evil to such an extent that his biographers always have faced an unenviable task. The two more renowned biographies of Hitler--by Joachim C. Fest (Hitler) and by Alan Bullock (Hitler: A Study in Tyranny)--painted a picture of individual tyranny which, in the words of A.J.P. Taylor, left Hitler guilty

and every other German innocent. Decades of scholarship on German society under the Nazis have made that verdict look dubious; so, the modern biographer of Hitler must account both for his terrible mindset and his charismatic appeal. In the second and final volume of his mammoth biography of Hitler--which covers the climax of Nazi power, the reclamation of German-speaking Europe, and the horrific unfolding of the final solution in Poland and Russia--Ian Kershaw manages to achieve both of these tasks. Continuing where Hitler: Hubris 1889-1936 left off, the epic Hitler: Nemesis 1937-1945 takes the reader from the adulation and hysteria of Hitler's electoral victory in 1936 to the obsessive and remote "bunker" mentality that enveloped the FÃƒÂ hrer as Operation Barbarossa (the attack on Russia in 1942) proved the beginning of the end. Chilling, yet objective. A definitive work. --Miles Taylor

At the conclusion of Kershaw's Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris (1999), the Rhineland had been remilitarized, domestic opposition crushed, and Jews virtually outlawed. What the genuinely popular leader of Germany would do with his unchallenged power, the world knows and recoils from. The historian's duty, superbly discharged by Kershaw, is to analyze how and why Hitler was able to ignite a world war, commit the most heinous crime in history, and throw his country into the abyss of total destruction. He didn't do it alone. Although Hitler's twin goals of expelling Jews and acquiring "living space" for other Germans were hardly secret, "achieving" them did not proceed according to a blueprint, as near as Kershaw can ascertain. However long Hitler had cherished launching an all-out war against the Jews and against Soviet Russia, as he did in 1941, it was only conceivable as reality following a tortuous series of events of increasing radicality, in both foreign and domestic politics. At each point, whether haranguing a mass audience or a small meeting of military officers, the demagogue had to and did persuade his listeners that his course of action was the only one possible. Acquiescence to aggression and genocide was further abetted by the narcotic effect of the "Hitler myth," the propagandized image of the infallible leader as national savior, which produced a force for radicalization parallel to Hitler's personal murderous fanaticism; the motto of the time called it "working towards the Fuhrer." Underlings in competition with each other would do what they thought Hitler wanted, as occurred with aspects of organizing the Final Solution. Kershaw's narrative connecting this analysis gives outstanding evidence that he commands and understands the source material, producing this magisterial scholarship that will endure for decades. Gilbert TaylorCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

The skill needed to transform events into a good read whilst maintaining perspective and providing a

balanced judgement from the evidence now available to scholars is clearly one of Professor Kershaw's strengths. This is an excellent biographical history to read in conjunction with social, economical and military histories of Germany in the 20th Century. I am a general reader and found this more than a worthy companion to the first, unfolding as it does, like some great Wagnerian Opera yet, full of telling detail to make the events sickenly vivid and memorable. In brief, I recommend it because:* it is brilliantly written* it had access to diaries previously unavailable* it provides perspective regarding the significance of events - Dunkirk was strategically much more important than I otherwise knew - the Battle of Britain less so - the Russian campaign seminally important* it provides strategic analysis* it provides vivid detail - a local enthusiast in Lithuania clubbed to death 50 Jews in 45 minutes then hopped up on to the pile of corpses and played his accordian (p.464)* it reminds us of events such as Babi-Yar where 33,771 (mainly)women and children were butchered* it shows why Hitler did not destroy Athens* it shows how Stalin's deportation East of one million German-Volgas helped to galvanize action regarding the final solution.

This two-volume work is perhaps the best current profile of Adolf Hitler. Kershaw provides a lucid, comprehensive, and convincing account of Hitler's origins, early unrequited search for respectability, commitment (with millions of others) to a WW1, disappointment in Versailles, utility in post war right wing politics, demagogic skills, opportunism, rise to power, ruthlessness, Darwinian authoritarian (ambiguous) rule, mystic cult and messianic attraction.The second volume (Nemesis 1936-45) traces the mature Hitlerian state, and the world catastrophe it engendered.Both volumes are most valuable to those who seek to find why, in the mid-20C, human civilisation seemed to be hijacked by a human virus that meant the death of 50+ million.Hitler seems a man aware but not satisfied with Machiavellian precepts: he cared little for love or hate. Fear was better, but (perhaps) he really wanted to be worshipped as a God (like post Augustus emperors).Kershaw's `The Hitler Myth' and `Making Friends with Hitler' are also useful.Also highly recommended: Bullock's classic `Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (published 1953);' and Fest's `Hitler' (published 1974).

Ian Kershaw is one of the top 3 Hitler authors and his books are recorded as historical reference by other authors. If you are searching for as close to the truth history as you can get, then his books are excellent.

Fascinating look at Hitler's rise. I did not realize how smart he was in addition to his oratory skills.

I’m anxious to read the second book of this series to see how he moved from a great leader to the worst monster in history.

I really enjoyed the book. The author has written the best bio on Hitler that I have read to date.

The best Hitler Bio I have ever read.

I think the book goes into amazing detail and completes the story started in the first volume. I know much more than I did when I began.

Most simply put, this, the second of two superb books by British historian Ian Kershaw on Hitler’s life and times, quite successfully draws the reader closer to an understanding of this historically enigmatic and often bizarre human being who so changed the world of the 20th century. Although there are a myriad of such books that have appeared in the half-century since Hitler’s demise in the dust and rubble of Berlin, this particular effort, which draws from hundreds of secondary sources, many of which have never before been cited, paints an authentic and masterful portrait of Hitler as an individual. This is an absolutely singular historical work; and it will almost come to occupy a central place on the shelves of serious World War Two historians. Most fascinating for me is the way in which Kershaw grows an incredibly fertile appreciation for Hitler’s personal characteristics into a sophisticated appreciation for what unfolded historically. A good example is his fetish for secrecy, which left both Hitler himself and those around him incredibly poorly informed of many of the details of what their policies were doing to the society around them.Author Ian Kershaw takes a quite different and novel approach, and it is one I enjoyed. Here, by carefully locating and fixing the individual in the context and welter of his times, it yields a much more enlightening approach toward painting a meaningful comprehensive picture of how this criminally twisted psychopath became such a fatefully placed politician and leader of post-World War One Germany. Thus, in Volume One we saw the boy grow and change in whatever fashion into a man, tracing the rise of this troubled malcontent from the anonymity of Viennese shelters to a fiery and meteoric rise into politics, culminating in his ascent to rule Germany. Kershaw memorably recreates the social, economic, and political circumstances that bent and twisted Hitler so fatefully for the history of the world. In this volume, Kershaw concentrates masterfully on how this single human being then fatefully pushes Nazi Germany, Europe, and the rest of the world into the most horrific bloodbath in modern history.Hitler was, in Kershaw’s estimation, a man most representative of his times, reflecting a

widespread disaffection with democratic politics, steeped in the virulent anti-Semitism of his Viennese environment, twisted and experienced in the cruelties and absurdities of the First World War, thrust by circumstance and disposition into the sectarian, dyspeptic, and rough & tumble politics of the 1920s, and rising by finding himself the most unlikely of politicians with an unusual ability to orate and emote. It is also interesting to discover that Hitler had an unusually acute (though uneven) intellect, is rumored to have possessed a 'photographic memory', and was said to have an amazing ability to discuss and quote facts and figures and then subsequently casually weave them into a conversation that witnesses found spellbinding and convincing. He was also unquestionably quite charismatic and charming. Kershaw argues masterfully that it is impossible to understand 'why' Hitler without understanding this extremely toxic and strange combination of social, economic, and cultural factors that characterized Germany.Thus, as Hitler begins his ineluctable rise to power, we better appreciate how and why such a seemingly unlikely cast of characters as the Nazis succeeded so wildly beyond what one would expect to be possible in a sane and sophisticated modern industrial state. This is fascinating stuff, as is his treatment of the concomitant rise of the slugs, thugs, and under-life accompanying him into the corridors of power and influence. Here is the world's greatest single collection of otherwise underachieving bullies, fanatics, pseudo-intellectuals, and fellow travelers, who clashed into an uneasy coalescence that formed the nucleus of the single greatest force for collective evil seen in the modern world. Finally, one's mind reels at the scene at the book's conclusion, as the fabulous evil empire created by the Nazis had been reduced by Soviet artillery and Allied bombing into dust and rubble, and Hitler becomes an almost comically eccentric figure, reduced by his own devices to settling for a self-inflicted gunshot to the brain rather than the worldwide domination he had struggled toward.

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