

The Life History of Hitler – A Review

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ABSTRACT

Adolf Hitler (German: [ˈadɔlf ˈhɪtlɐ] (listen); 20 April 1889 – 30 April 1945) was a German politician who was the leader of the Nazi Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei; NSDAP), Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945 and Führer ("Leader") of Nazi Germany from 1934 to 1945.^[a] As dictator, Hitler initiated World War II in Europe with the invasion of Poland in September 1939, and was central to the Holocaust.

Hitler was born in Austria—then part of Austria-Hungary—and was raised near Linz. He moved to Germany in 1913 and was decorated during his service in the German Army in World War I. In 1919, he joined the German Workers' Party (DAP), the precursor of the NSDAP, and was appointed leader of the NSDAP in 1921. In 1923, he attempted to seize power in a failed coup in Munich and was imprisoned. While in jail he dictated the first volume of his autobiography and political manifesto *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"). After his release from prison in 1924, Hitler gained popular support by attacking the Treaty of Versailles and promoting Pan-Germanism, anti-semitism and anti-communism with charismatic oratory and Nazi propaganda. He frequently denounced international capitalism and communism as being part of a Jewish conspiracy.

By 1933, the Nazi Party was the largest elected party in the German Reichstag, but did not have a majority, and no party was able to form a majority parliamentary coalition in support of a candidate for chancellor. This led to former chancellor Franz von Papen and other conservative leaders persuading President Paul von Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as Chancellor on 30 January 1933. Shortly after, the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act of 1933, which began the process of transforming the Weimar Republic into Nazi Germany, a one-party dictatorship based on the totalitarian and autocratic ideology of National Socialism. Hitler aimed to eliminate Jews from Germany and establish a New Order to counter what he saw as the injustice of the post-World War I international order dominated by Britain and France. His first six years in power resulted in rapid economic recovery from the Great Depression, the abrogation of restrictions imposed on Germany after World War I and the annexation of territories that were home to millions of ethnic Germans which gave him significant popular support.

Hitler sought *Lebensraum* ("living space") for the German people in Eastern Europe and his aggressive foreign policy is considered to be the primary cause of the outbreak of World War II in Europe. He directed large-scale rearmament and on 1 September 1939 invaded Poland, resulting in Britain and France declaring war on Germany. In June 1941, Hitler ordered an invasion of the Soviet Union. By the end of 1941, German forces and the European Axis powers occupied most of Europe and North Africa. In December 1941, he formally declared war on the United States, bringing them directly into the conflict. Failure to defeat the Soviets and the entry of the United States into the war forced Germany onto the defensive and it suffered a series of escalating defeats. In the final days of the war during the Battle of Berlin in 1945, he married his long-time lover Eva Braun. Less than two days later on 30 April 1945, the two committed suicide to avoid capture by the Soviet Red Army and their corpses were burned.

INTRODUCTION

Under Hitler's leadership and racially motivated ideology, the Nazi regime was responsible for the genocide of at least 5.5 million Jews and millions of other victims whom he and his followers deemed Untermenschen (sub-humans) or socially undesirable. Hitler and the Nazi regime were also responsible for the killing of an estimated 19.3 million civilians and prisoners of war. In addition, 29 million soldiers and civilians died as a result of military action in the European theatre. The number of civilians killed during the Second World War was unprecedented in warfare and the casualties constituted the deadliest conflict in human history.

Hitler's father Alois Hitler Sr. (1837–1903) was the illegitimate child of Maria Anna Schicklgruber.^[3] The baptismal register did not show the name of his father, and Alois initially bore his mother's surname Schicklgruber. In 1842, Johann Georg Hiedler married Alois's mother Maria Anna. Alois was brought up in the family of Hiedler's brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler.^[4] In 1876, Alois was legitimated and the baptismal register changed by a priest to register Johann Georg Hiedler as Alois's father (recorded as "Georg Hitler").^{[5][6]} Alois then assumed the surname "Hitler",^[6] also spelled Hiedler, Hüttler, or Huettler. The Hitler surname is probably based on "one who lives in a hut" (German Hütte for "hut").^[7]

Nazi official Hans Frank suggested that Alois's mother had been employed as a housekeeper by a Jewish family in Graz, and that the family's 19-year-old son Leopold Frankenberger had fathered Alois.^[8] No Frankenberger was registered in Graz during that period, and no record has been produced of Leopold Frankenberger's existence,^[9] so historians dismiss the claim that Alois's father was Jewish.

Adolf Hitler was born on 20 April 1889 in Braunau am Inn, a town in Austria-Hungary (in present-day Austria), close to the border with the German Empire.^[12] He was christened as "Adolphus Hitler".^[13] He was the fourth of six children born to Alois Hitler and his third wife, Klara Pözl. Three of Hitler's siblings—Gustav, Ida, and Otto—died in infancy.^[14] Also living in the household were Alois's children from his second marriage: Alois Jr. (born 1882) and Angela (born 1883).^[15] When Hitler was three, the family moved to Passau, Germany.^[16] There he acquired the distinctive lower Bavarian dialect, rather than Austrian German, which marked his speech throughout his life.^{[17][18][19]} The family returned to Austria and settled in Leonding in 1894, and in June 1895 Alois retired to Hafeld, near Lambach, where he farmed and kept bees. Hitler attended Volksschule (a state-owned school) in nearby Fischlham.^{[20][21]}

The move to Hafeld coincided with the onset of intense father-son conflicts caused by Hitler's refusal to conform to the strict discipline of his school.^[22] Alois Hitler's farming efforts at Hafeld ended in failure, and in 1897 the family moved to Lambach. The eight-year-old Hitler took singing lessons, sang in the church choir, and even considered becoming a priest.^[23] In 1898 the family returned permanently to Leonding. Hitler was deeply affected by the death of his younger brother Edmund, who died in 1900 from measles. Hitler changed from a confident, outgoing, conscientious student to a morose, detached boy who constantly fought with his father and teachers.

In August 1914, at the outbreak of World War I, Hitler was living in Munich and voluntarily enlisted in the Bavarian Army.^[61] According to a 1924 report by the Bavarian authorities, allowing Hitler to serve was almost certainly an administrative error, since as an Austrian citizen, he should have been returned to Austria.^[61] Posted to the Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment 16 (1st Company of the List Regiment),^{[62][61]} he served as a dispatch runner on the Western Front in France and Belgium,^[63] spending nearly half his time at the regimental headquarters in Fournes-en-Weppes, well behind the front lines.^{[64][65]} He was present at the First Battle of Ypres, the Battle of the Somme,

the Battle of Arras, and the Battle of Passchendaele, and was wounded at the Somme.^[66] He was decorated for bravery, receiving the Iron Cross, Second Class, in 1914.^[66] On a recommendation by Lieutenant Hugo Gutmann, Hitler's Jewish superior, he received the Iron Cross, First Class on 4 August 1918, a decoration rarely awarded to one of Hitler's *Gefreiterrank*.^{[67][68]} He received the Black Wound Badge on 18 May 1918.^[69]

HITLER AS A SOLDIER

During his service at headquarters, Hitler pursued his artwork, drawing cartoons and instructions for an army newspaper. During the Battle of the Somme in October 1916, he was wounded in the left thigh when a shell exploded in the dispatch runners' dugout.^[70] Hitler spent almost two months in hospital at Beelitz, returning to his regiment on 5 March 1917.^[71] On 15 October 1918, he was temporarily blinded in a mustard gas attack and was hospitalised in Pasewalk.^[72] While there, Hitler learned of Germany's defeat, and—by his own account—upon receiving this news, he suffered a second bout of blindness.^[73]

Hitler described the war as "the greatest of all experiences", and was praised by his commanding officers for his bravery.^[74] His wartime experience reinforced his German patriotism and he was shocked by Germany's capitulation in November 1918.^[75] His bitterness over the collapse of the war effort began to shape his ideology.^[76] Like other German nationalists, he believed the *Dolchstoßlegende* (stab-in-the-back myth), which claimed that the German army, "undefeated in the field", had been "stabbed in the back" on the home front by civilian leaders, Jews, and Marxists, later dubbed the "November criminals".^[77]

The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that Germany must relinquish several of its territories and demilitarise the Rhineland. The treaty imposed economic sanctions and levied heavy reparations on the country. Many Germans saw the treaty as an unjust humiliation—they especially objected to Article 231, which they interpreted as declaring Germany responsible for the war.^[78] The Versailles Treaty and the economic, social, and political conditions in Germany after the war were later exploited by Hitler for political gain.^[79]

The absence of an effective government prompted two influential politicians, Franz von Papen and Alfred Hugenberg, along with several other industrialists and businessmen, to write a letter to Hindenburg. The signers urged Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as leader of a government "independent from parliamentary parties", which could turn into a movement that would "enrapture millions of people".^{[147][148]}

Hindenburg reluctantly agreed to appoint Hitler as chancellor after two further parliamentary elections—in July and November 1932—had not resulted in the formation of a majority government. Hitler headed a short-lived coalition government formed by the NSDAP and Hugenberg's party, the German National People's Party (DNVP). On 30 January 1933, the new cabinet was sworn in during a brief ceremony in Hindenburg's office. The NSDAP gained three posts: Hitler was named chancellor, Wilhelm Frick Minister of the Interior, and Hermann Göring Minister of the Interior for Prussia.^[149] Hitler had insisted on the ministerial positions as a way to gain control over the police in much of Germany.^[150]

At the risk of appearing to talk nonsense I tell you that the National Socialist movement will go on for 1,000 years! ... Don't forget how people laughed at me 15 years ago when I declared that one day I would govern Germany. They laugh now, just as foolishly, when I declare that I shall remain in power!^[165]

— Adolf Hitler to a British correspondent in Berlin, June 1934

Having achieved full control over the legislative and executive branches of government, Hitler and his allies began to suppress the remaining opposition. The Social Democratic Party was banned and its assets seized.^[166] While many trade union delegates were in Berlin for May Day activities, SA storm troopers demolished union offices around the country. On 2 May 1933 all trade unions were forced to dissolve and their leaders were arrested. Some were sent to concentration camps.^[167] The German Labour Front was formed as an umbrella organisation to represent all workers, administrators, and company owners, thus reflecting the concept of national socialism in the spirit of Hitler's Volksgemeinschaft ("people's community").^[168]

HITLER AS HEAD OF STATE

By the end of June, the other parties had been intimidated into disbanding. This included the Nazis' nominal coalition partner, the DNVP; with the SA's help, Hitler forced its leader, Hugenberg, to resign on 29 June. On 14 July 1933, the NSDAP was declared the only legal political party in Germany.^{[168][166]} The demands of the SA for more political and military power caused anxiety among military, industrial, and political leaders. In response, Hitler purged the entire SA leadership in the Night of the Long Knives, which took place from 30 June to 2 July 1934.^[169] Hitler targeted Ernst Röhm and other SA leaders who, along with a number of Hitler's political adversaries (such as Gregor Strasser and former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher), were rounded up, arrested, and shot.^[170] While the international community and some Germans were shocked by the murders, many in Germany believed Hitler was restoring order.^[171]

On 2 August 1934, Hindenburg died. The previous day, the cabinet had enacted the "Law Concerning the Highest State Office of the Reich".^[2] This law stated that upon Hindenburg's death, the office of president would be abolished and its powers merged with those of the chancellor. Hitler thus became head of state as well as head of government, and was formally named as Führer und Reichskanzler (leader and chancellor).^[1] With this action, Hitler eliminated the last legal remedy by which he could be removed from office.^[172]

As head of state, Hitler became supreme commander of the armed forces. Immediately after Hindenberg's death, at the instigation of the leadership of the Reichswehr, the traditional loyalty oath of soldiers was altered to affirm loyalty to Hitler personally, by name, rather than to the office of supreme commander or the state.^[173] On 19 August, the merger of the presidency with the chancellorship was approved by 88 per cent of the electorate voting in a plebiscite.^[174]

HITLER PERSONAL STANDARDS

In early 1938, Hitler used blackmail to consolidate his hold over the military by instigating the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair. Hitler forced his War Minister, Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg, to resign by using a police dossier that showed that Blomberg's new wife had a record for prostitution.^{[175][176]} Army commander Colonel-General Werner von Fritsch was removed after the Schutzstaffel (SS) produced allegations that he had engaged in a homosexual relationship.^[177] Both men had fallen into disfavour because they objected to Hitler's demand to make the Wehrmacht ready for war as early as 1938.^[178] Hitler assumed Blomberg's title of Commander-in-Chief, thus taking personal command of the armed forces. He replaced the Ministry of War with the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (Armed Forces High Command: OKW), headed by General Wilhelm Keitel. On the same day, sixteen generals were stripped of their commands and 44 more were transferred; all were suspected of not being sufficiently pro-Nazi.^[179] By early February 1938, twelve more generals had been removed.^[180]

Hitler took care to give his dictatorship the appearance of legality. Many of his decrees were explicitly based on the Reichstag Fire Decree and hence on Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. The

Reichstag renewed the Enabling Act twice, each time for a four-year period.^[181] While elections to the Reichstag were still held (in 1933, 1936, and 1938), voters were presented with a single list of Nazis and pro-Nazi "guests" which carried with well over 90 percent of the vote.^[182] These elections were held in far-from-secret conditions; the Nazis threatened severe reprisals against anyone who didn't vote or dared to vote no.^[183]

In private discussions in 1939, Hitler declared Britain the main enemy to be defeated and that Poland's obliteration was a necessary prelude for that goal.^[232] The eastern flank would be secured and land would be added to Germany's Lebensraum.^[233] Offended by the British "guarantee" on 31 March 1939 of Polish independence, he said, "I shall brew them a devil's drink".^[234] In a speech in Wilhelmshaven for the launch of the battleship Tirpitz on 1 April, he threatened to denounce the Anglo-German Naval Agreement if the British continued to guarantee Polish independence, which he perceived as an "encirclement" policy.^[234] Poland was to either become a German satellite state or it would be neutralised in order to secure the Reich's eastern flank and prevent a possible British blockade.^[235] Hitler initially favoured the idea of a satellite state, but upon its rejection by the Polish government, he decided to invade and made this the main foreign policy goal of 1939.^[236] On 3 April, Hitler ordered the military to prepare for Fall Weiss ("Case White"), the plan for invading Poland on 25 August.^[236] In a Reichstag speech on 28 April, he renounced both the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact.^[237] Historians such as William Carr, Gerhard Weinberg, and Ian Kershaw have argued that one reason for Hitler's rush to war was his fear of an early death. He had repeatedly claimed that he must lead Germany into war before he got too old, as his successors might lack his strength of will.^{[238][239][240]}

WORLD WARS

Hitler was concerned that a military attack against Poland could result in a premature war with Britain.^{[235][241]} Hitler's foreign minister and former Ambassador to London, Joachim von Ribbentrop, assured him that neither Britain nor France would honour their commitments to Poland.^{[242][243]} Accordingly, on 22 August 1939 Hitler ordered a military mobilisation against Poland.^[244]

This plan required tacit Soviet support,^[245] and the non-aggression pact (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) between Germany and the Soviet Union, led by Joseph Stalin, included a secret agreement to partition Poland between the two countries.^[246] Contrary to Ribbentrop's prediction that Britain would sever Anglo-Polish ties, Britain and Poland signed the Anglo-Polish alliance on 25 August 1939. This, along with news from Italy that Mussolini would not honour the Pact of Steel, prompted Hitler to postpone the attack on Poland from 25 August to 1 September.^[247] Hitler unsuccessfully tried to manoeuvre the British into neutrality by offering them a non-aggression guarantee on 25 August; he then instructed Ribbentrop to present a last-minute peace plan with an impossibly short time limit in an effort to blame the imminent war on British and Polish inaction.^{[248][249]}

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded western Poland under the pretext of having been denied claims to the Free City of Danzig and the right to extraterritorial roads across the Polish Corridor, which Germany had ceded under the Versailles Treaty.^[250] In response, Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September, surprising Hitler and prompting him to angrily ask Ribbentrop, "Now what?"^[251] France and Britain did not act on their declarations immediately, and on 17 September, Soviet forces invaded eastern Poland.^[252]

The fall of Poland was followed by what contemporary journalists dubbed the "Phoney War" or Sitzkrieg ("sitting war"). Hitler instructed the two newly appointed Gauleiters of north-western Poland, Albert Forster of Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia and Arthur Greiser of Reichsgau

Wartheland, to Germanise their areas, with "no questions asked" about how this was accomplished.^[253] In Forster's area, ethnic Poles merely had to sign forms stating that they had German blood.^[254] In contrast, Greiser agreed with Himmler and carried out an ethnic cleansing campaign towards Poles. Greiser soon complained that Forster was allowing thousands of Poles to be accepted as "racial" Germans and thus endangered German "racial purity".^[253] Hitler refrained from getting involved. This inaction has been advanced as an example of the theory of "working towards the Führer", in which Hitler issued vague instructions and expected his subordinates to work out policies on their own.^{[253][255]}

Another dispute pitched one side represented by Heinrich Himmler and Greiser, who championed ethnic cleansing in Poland, against another represented by Göring and Hans Frank (governor-general of occupied Poland), who called for turning Poland into the "granary" of the Reich.^[256] On 12 February 1940, the dispute was initially settled in favour of the Göring–Frank view, which ended the economically disruptive mass expulsions.^[256] On 15 May 1940, Himmler issued a memo entitled "Some Thoughts on the Treatment of Alien Population in the East", calling for the expulsion of the entire Jewish population of Europe into Africa and the reduction of the Polish population to a "leaderless class of labourers".^[256] Hitler called Himmler's memo "good and correct",^[256] and, ignoring Göring and Frank, implemented the Himmler–Greiser policy in Poland.

On 9 April, German forces invaded Denmark and Norway. On the same day Hitler proclaimed the birth of the Greater Germanic Reich, his vision of a united empire of Germanic nations of Europe in which the Dutch, Flemish, and Scandinavians were joined into a "racially pure" polity under German leadership.^[257] In May 1940, Germany attacked France, and conquered Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium. These victories prompted Mussolini to have Italy join forces with Hitler on 10 June. France and Germany signed an armistice on 22 June.^[258] Kershaw notes that Hitler's popularity within Germany – and German support for the war – reached its peak when he returned to Berlin on 6 July from his tour of Paris.^[259] Following the unexpected swift victory, Hitler promoted twelve generals to the rank of field marshal during the 1940 Field Marshal Ceremony.^{[260][261]}

Britain, whose troops were forced to evacuate France by sea from Dunkirk,^[262] continued to fight alongside other British dominions in the Battle of the Atlantic. Hitler made peace overtures to the new British leader, Winston Churchill, and upon their rejection he ordered a series of aerial attacks on Royal Air Force airbases and radar stations in south-east England. On 7 September the systematic nightly bombing of London began. The German Luftwaffe failed to defeat the Royal Air Force in what became known as the Battle of Britain.^[263] By the end of September, Hitler realised that air superiority for the invasion of Britain (in Operation Sea Lion) could not be achieved, and ordered the operation postponed. The nightly air raids on British cities intensified and continued for months, including London, Plymouth, and Coventry.^[264]

On 27 September 1940, the Tripartite Pact was signed in Berlin by Saburō Kurusu of Imperial Japan, Hitler, and Italian foreign minister Ciano,^[265] and later expanded to include Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, thus yielding the Axis powers. Hitler's attempt to integrate the Soviet Union into the anti-British bloc failed after inconclusive talks between Hitler and Molotov in Berlin in November, and he ordered preparations for the invasion of the Soviet Union.^[266]

In early 1941, German forces were deployed to North Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East. In February, German forces arrived in Libya to bolster the Italian presence. In April, Hitler launched the invasion of Yugoslavia, quickly followed by the invasion of Greece.^[267] In May, German forces were sent to support Iraqi rebel forces fighting against the British and to invade Crete.^[268]

By late 1944, both the Red Army and the Western Allies were advancing into Germany. Recognising

the strength and determination of the Red Army, Hitler decided to use his remaining mobile reserves against the American and British troops, which he perceived as far weaker.^[288] On 16 December, he launched the Ardennes Offensive to incite disunity among the Western Allies and perhaps convince them to join his fight against the Soviets.^[289] The offensive failed after some temporary successes.^[290] With much of Germany in ruins in January 1945, Hitler spoke on the radio: "However grave as the crisis may be at this moment, it will, despite everything, be mastered by our unalterable will."^[291] Hitler's hope to negotiate peace with the United States and Britain was encouraged by the death of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 12 April 1945, but contrary to his expectations, this caused no rift among the Allies.^{[289][292]} Acting on his view that Germany's military failures meant it had forfeited its right to survive as a nation, Hitler ordered the destruction of all German industrial infrastructure before it could fall into Allied hands.^[293] Minister for Armaments Albert Speer was entrusted with executing this scorched earth policy, but he secretly disobeyed the order.^{[293][294]}

On 20 April, his 56th birthday, Hitler made his last trip from the Führerbunker (Führer's shelter) to the surface. In the ruined garden of the Reich Chancellery, he awarded Iron Crosses to boy soldiers of the Hitler Youth, who were now fighting the Red Army at the front near Berlin.^[295] By 21 April, Georgy Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front had broken through the defences of General Gotthard Heinrici's Army Group Vistula during the Battle of the Seelow Heights and advanced to the outskirts of Berlin.^[296] In denial about the dire situation, Hitler placed his hopes on the undermanned and under-equipped *Armeeabteilung Steiner* (Army Detachment Steiner), commanded by *Waffen SS* General Felix Steiner. Hitler ordered Steiner to attack the northern flank of the salient, while the German Ninth Army was ordered to attack northward in a pincer attack.^[297]

HITLER'S DEATH AND DEFEAT

During a military conference on 22 April, Hitler asked about Steiner's offensive. He was told that the attack had not been launched and that the Soviets had entered Berlin. Hitler asked everyone except Wilhelm Keitel, Alfred Jodl, Hans Krebs, and Wilhelm Burgdorf to leave the room,^[298] then launched into a tirade against the treachery and incompetence of his commanders, culminating in his declaration—for the first time—that "everything was lost".^[269] He announced that he would stay in Berlin until the end and then shoot himself.^[299]

By 23 April the Red Army had surrounded Berlin,^[300] and Goebbels made a proclamation urging its citizens to defend the city.^[298] That same day, Göring sent a telegram from Berchtesgaden, arguing that since Hitler was isolated in Berlin, Göring should assume leadership of Germany. Göring set a deadline, after which he would consider Hitler incapacitated.^[301] Hitler responded by having Göring arrested, and in his last will and testament, written on 29 April, he removed Göring from all government positions.^{[302][303]} On 28 April Hitler discovered that Himmler, who had left Berlin on 20 April, was trying to negotiate a surrender to the Western Allies.^{[304][305]} He ordered Himmler's arrest and had Hermann Fegelein (Himmler's SS representative at Hitler's HQ in Berlin) shot.^[306]

After midnight on 29 April, Hitler married Eva Braun in a small civil ceremony in the Führerbunker. After a wedding breakfast with his new wife, Hitler dictated his will to his secretary Traudl Junge.^{[307][d]} The event was witnessed and documents signed by Krebs, Burgdorf, Goebbels, and Bormann.^[308] Later that afternoon, Hitler was informed of the execution of Mussolini, which presumably increased his determination to avoid capture.^[309]

On 30 April 1945, when Soviet troops were within a block or two of the Reich Chancellery, Hitler shot himself in the head and Braun bit into a cyanide capsule.^{[310][311]} Their bodies were carried outside to the bombed-out garden behind the Reich Chancellery, where they were placed in a bomb crater and doused with petrol.^[312] The corpses were set on fire as the Red Army shelling

continued.^{[313][314]} Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz and Joseph Goebbels assumed Hitler's roles as head of state and chancellor respectively.^[315]

Berlin surrendered on 2 May. Records in the Soviet archives obtained after the fall of the Soviet Union state that the remains of Hitler, Braun, Joseph and Magda Goebbels, the six Goebbels children, General Hans Krebs, and Hitler's dogs were repeatedly buried and exhumed.^[316] On 4 April 1970, a Soviet KGB team used detailed burial charts to exhume five wooden boxes at the SMERSH facility in Magdeburg. The remains from the boxes were burned, crushed, and scattered into the Biederitz river, a tributary of the Elbe.^[317] According to Kershaw, the corpses of Braun and Hitler were fully burned when the Red Army found them, and only a lower jaw with dental work could be identified as Hitler's remains.

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