

HITLER'S FAMILY: IN THE SHADOW OF THE DICTATOR -- ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY

Written and directed by Oliver Halmburger, Thomas Staehler

Created by Guido Knopp

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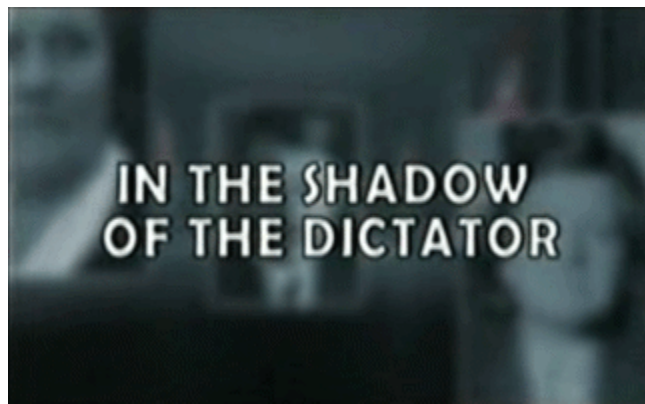
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[Transcribed from the movie by Tara Carreon]

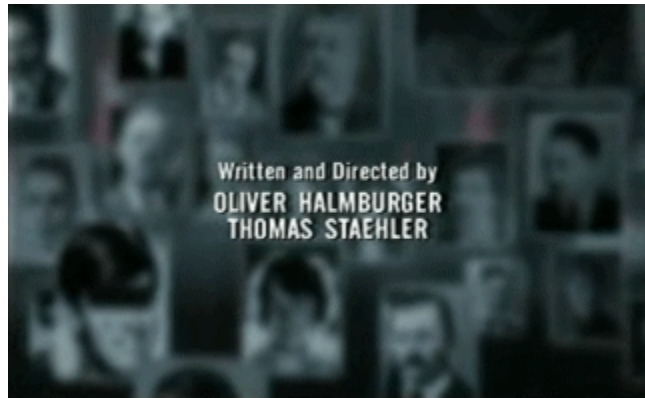


HITLER'S FAMILY





IN THE SHADOW OF THE DICTATOR



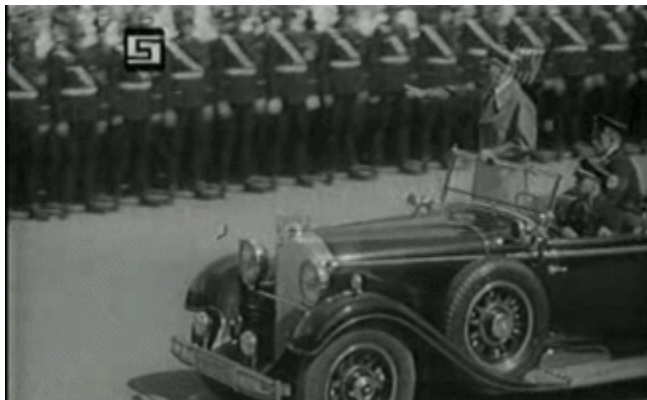
Written and Directed by
OLIVER HALMBURGER
THOMAS STAEHLER

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GUIDO KNOPP





[Narrator] The myth of Hitler.

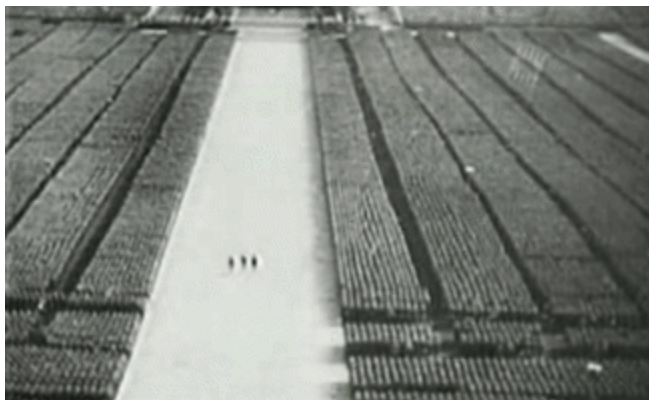
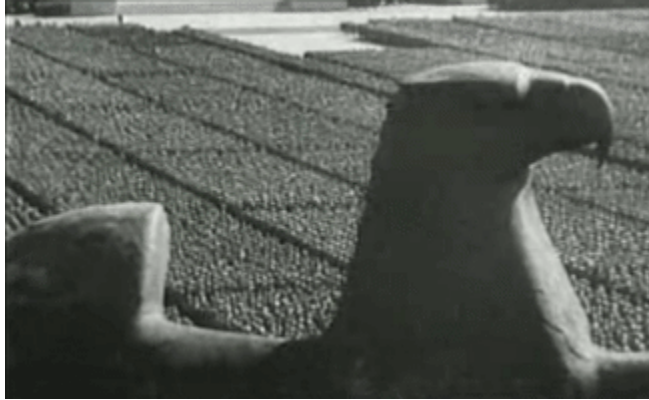


The propaganda portrayed him as a man who stepped into history from nowhere.





A man who wanted to be above everything, without ties, without ancestry.



There was no place in this myth for a family. No one was to know about them.



Half-brother Alois owned a bar in Berlin.



Half sister Angela ran his household.



His sister Paula was engaged to a mass murderer.



One nephew went to fight for his uncle, another nephew took up arms against him.



[William Patrick "Willy" Stuart-Houston] I hope to take an active part in the liquidation of this man, my uncle, who has unleashed such misery upon the world.



[Narrator] A family with skeletons in the closet.



Recent research has shown just why the dictator denied his origins.



He was afraid that his family left him open to attack.



But who were his relatives?



What did the dictator think about them? And they about him?



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] He wouldn't have argued with calling Hitler the most vicious anti-semite who ever lived. A megalomaniacal military leader who was willing to risk or sacrifice millions of lives in incredible military gambles. Hitler wouldn't have argued with any of that. But the one thing he wouldn't want to be known as is the family man.



[Narrator] To this day, we know little about Hitler's relatives.



Many tracks have been covered.



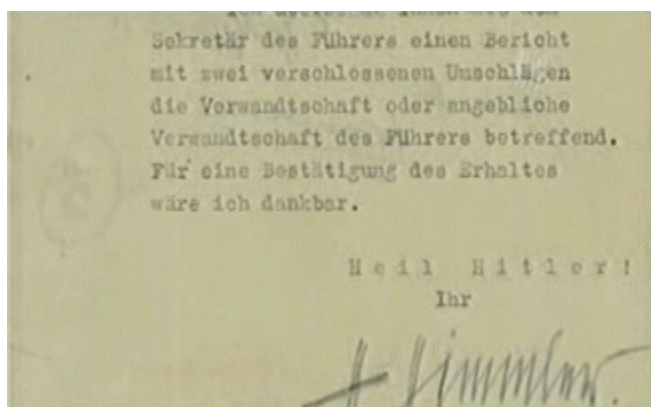
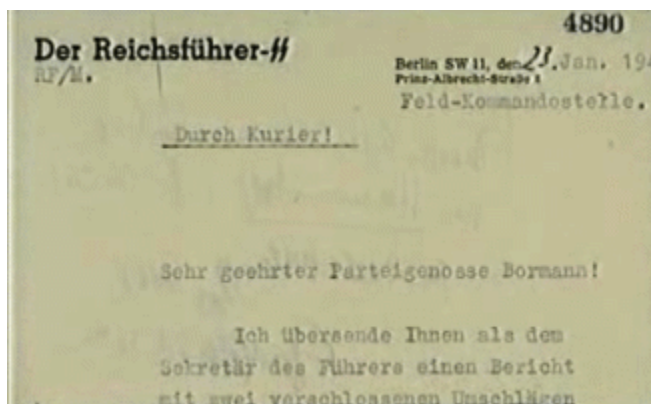
Historians Timothy Ryback and Florian Beierl are trying to get to the bottom of the mystery.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] When you start looking at the family history, it really is quite remarkable how much there was that could be unpacked, and I think Hitler, the only way he could deal with this was to put a lid on top of all of it, and keep it hidden from public.



[Narrator] One of the Hitler family's darkest chapters has only recently come to light.



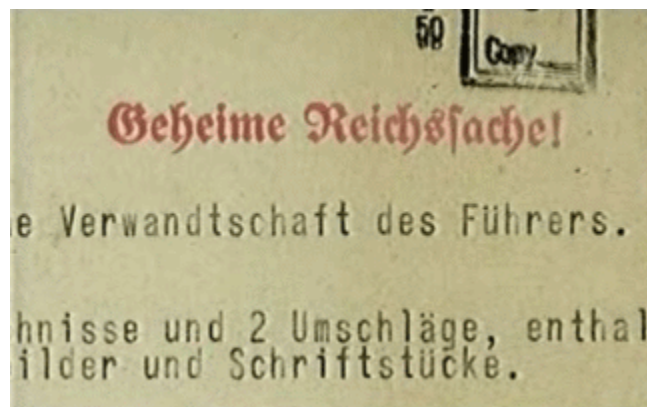
In January, 1944, Hitler's secretary, Martin Bormann, received a secret dossier from Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS.



It contained some highly explosive material on Hitler's family.



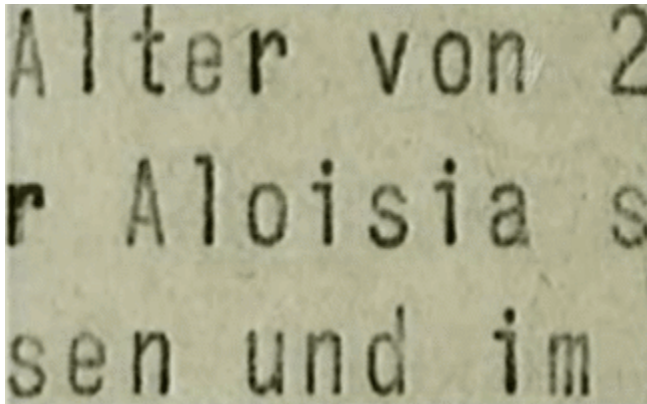
Himmler had sent gestapo agents to the Austrian city of Graz to investigate certain rumors.



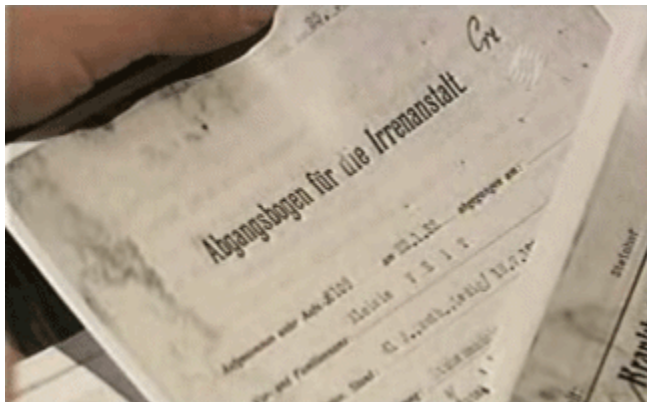
The Fuhrer was said to have relatives there who were, in the words of the report, "half-wits and imbeciles" -- a scandalous allegation.



An SS unit tracked down the man who started the rumor, and found *"The Veit family is indeed directly related to Adolf Hitler, and does have cases of genetically inherited mental illness."*



One was Aloisia Veit, Hitler's second cousin.



Her medical file has only recently been discovered. The head of the Institute for Forensic Medicine at the University of Munich is helping to evaluate it.

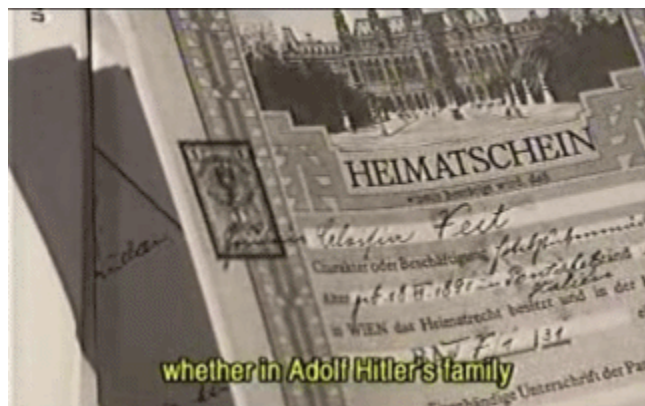
[Prof. Wolfgang Eisenmenger, Head of the Institute for Forensic Medicine, University of Munich] In the case of the Veit family, the siblings clearly had mental health problems.



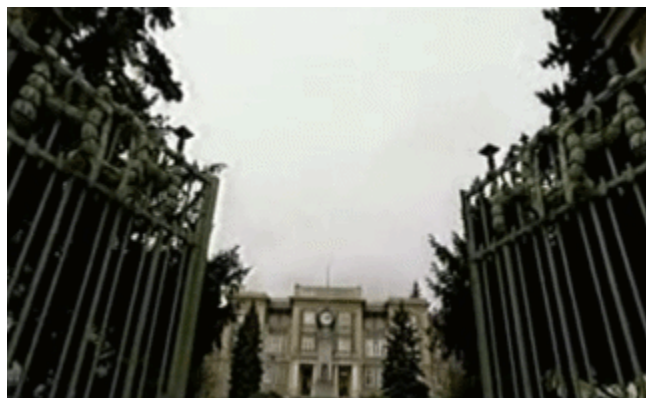
To put it colloquially, the family had a screw loose.



If you trace it back in the family line, you find a number of psychiatric disorders.



So you have to wonder whether in Adolf Hitler's family there was something in the genes that triggered outbreaks of mental illness.



[Narrator] Hitler's second cousin, Aloisia Veit, suffered from schizophrenia.



For nine years, she was locked up in Vienna's Am Steinhof Psychiatric Institution.

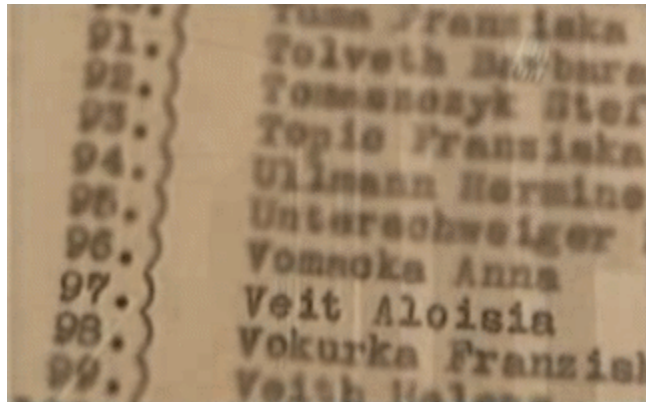


In those days, the Nazi Youth [inaudible] Program branded thousands as "unworthy of life."





Aloisia was transferred to the Hartheim Lunatic Asylum. It was a death sentence.



Over 18,500 mentally ill patients were murdered in Hartheim.



Aloisia Veit died in the Hartheim gas chamber in December, 1940, a victim of the mass murder engineered by her great-uncle, Adolf Hitler.



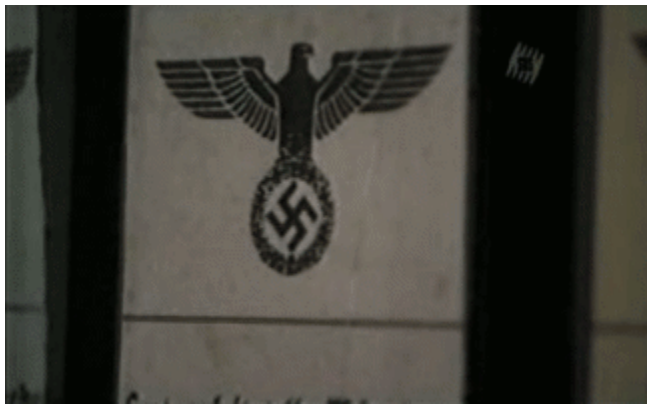
April, 1945. With the final battle raging in Berlin, Hitler was thinking about the survival of his own legend.



None of his personal effects were to be left behind.



He gave his adjutant, Julius Schaub a final order -- a personal one.



Schaub was to empty the safes holding the dictator's private correspondence, and destroy anything that could shed light on Hitler the private citizen.

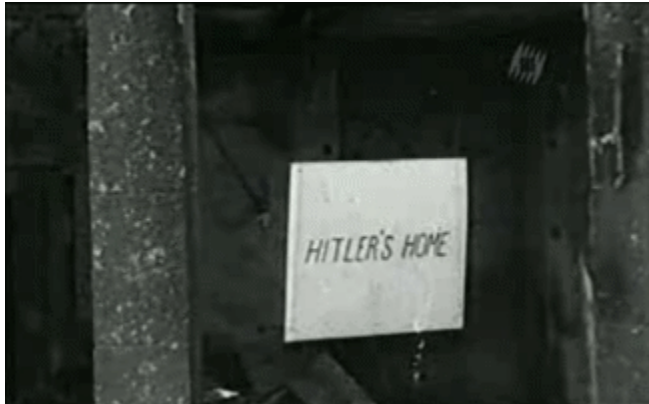


There were more letters, files and photos at the Berghof, Hitler's home in the Alps. Here, too, Schaub burned all evidence relating to Hitler's family.





On the 5th of May, troops of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division reached the Berghof.



After the war and the holocaust, the victors wanted to find out all they could about the chief perpetrator.



U.S. Intelligence combed the region for information and for any of the Dictator's relatives.



In a hotel cellar, counter-intelligence officer George Allen found a suitcase belonging to Hitler's younger sister, Paula.



A photograph of the Dictator's mother gave the owner away.



The Americans picked up her trail.



Hitler had arranged for his sister Paula to be evacuated during the last days of the war to a remote cabin on the Obersalzberg.



Paula Hitler was arrested. It was hoped she could help unravel the Dictator's psyche.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] Then they begin to ask her about her brother, and how she feels about him. And tears begin to well up in her eyes. And when the man presses her about, here she is crying for Adolf Hitler, and she says to him, "You can't forget. He was my brother." And I think that sentence says it all about Paula's relationship to him.



[Narrator] At her brother's request, Paula Hitler had lived for years under an assumed name: Paula Wolf.



A few years after the war she wrote her memoirs. For years they were thought to be lost.



What did she think of her brother after everything that had happened?



[Elfriede Pundt] She had a table next to the window with an old typewriter on it. She used to write essays in which she compared her brother with Napoleon.



Napoleon is now seen as a hero in France, and she was firmly convinced that her brother would experience the same. That is, in retrospect he would be seen as the hero of the Germany of the time.



[Narrator] Paula's memoirs focus on her childhood in Linz, Austria, just after the turn of the century.



She writes how after their father died, her brother assumed their father's role. Already she looked up to him, even though he constantly bullied her.

Gesicht und im selben Augenblick war das Mädel vergessen, wie
ausgelöscht aus meinem Bewusstsein, ich machte flugs kehrt und
rannte im gleichen Tempo wie bisher, nachhause. -
Als mein Bruder abends heimkam, erhielt ich von ihm eine wohlge-
zielte Ohrfeige und meine arme Mutter erhielt eine personbe-
schreibung meiner verflochtenen Spielgefährtin bis in die kleins-
ten Einzelheiten und gleichzeitig wieder einmal meine alltäglichen
Untugenden serviert als bekömmliche Vorspeise zum Abendessen. -
Die arme Mutter !
Immer wieder einmal verspürte ich die lockere Hand meines Bru-
ders im Gesicht, es gab dazu verschiedene Gelegenheiten - einmal
sag ich mir seine Ungnade durch mangelhaften Lerneifer, ein ande-
res Mal durch übertriebene Höflichkeit zu - so wie damals, als
ich seinen Freund, in Erinnerung an Mutters unermüdliche Ermah-
nungen, alle " grossen " Leute mit einem Knicks und einem lauten,
vernehmlichen 'Klax die Hand 'freundlich zu begrüssen - auf Grund
seiner respektablen Länge in der gleichen Weise meine Kherbie-

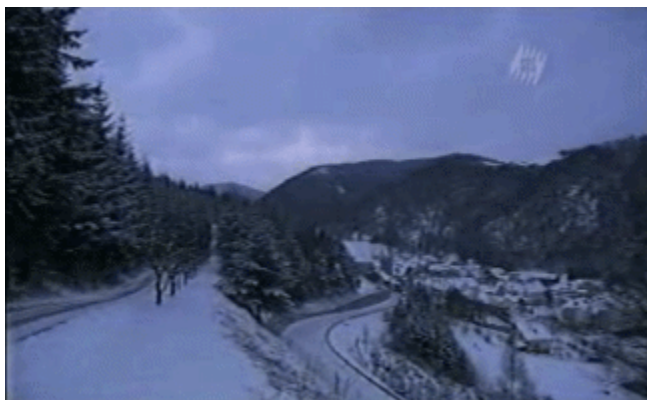
[Paola Hitler] Time and again I felt the back of my brother's hand across my face. He found plenty of opportunities for it.



[Narrator] Even then, Paula's big brother thought her an embarrassment, and too weak-willed.



In Paula's memoirs, there isn't a word about her own involvement in Hitler's Reich. There were good reasons for her silence.



After Nazi Germany annexed Austria, Paula wanted to settle in the village of Weiten.



On her brother's orders, she had to live incognito.



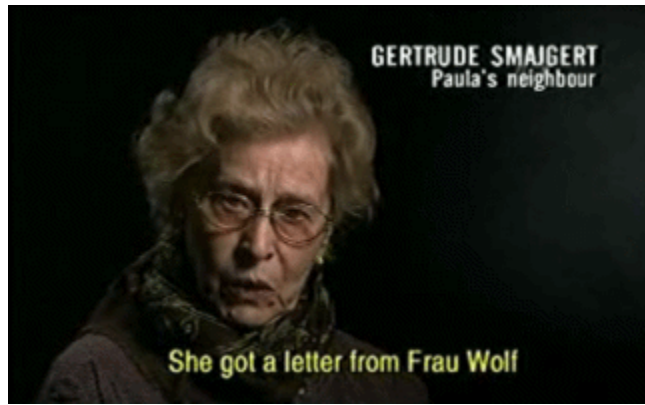
She introduced herself as Paula Wolf.



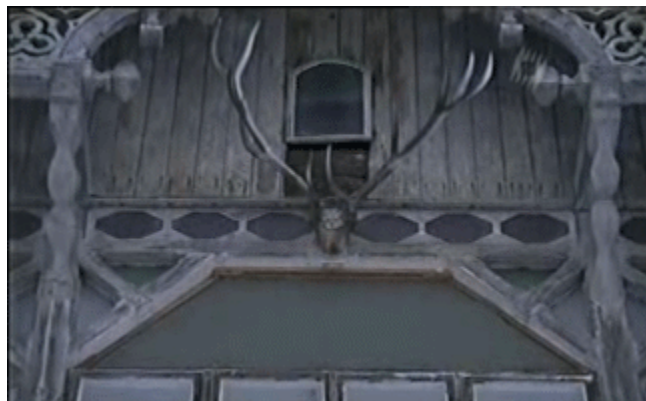
[Gertrude Smajgert, Paula's neighbour] The truth leaked out although she didn't want it to. But it leaked out that she was Hitler's sister.



[Narrator] She liked this house. She wanted to have it. But the owner didn't want to sell.



[Gertrude Smajgert, Paula's neighbour] She got a letter from Frau Wolf saying that if she didn't sell the house she would find ways and means of getting hold of it.



[Narrator] The threat worked. Paula got the house as a present. Her brother paid. She lived here from 1940 on ...



and she got engaged to Dr. Erwin Jekelius.



[Gertrude Smajgert, Paula's neighbour] I heard some rumours about her fiance. I heard he disposed of people who were disabled.



[Narrator] Dr. Jekelius was head of the Am Steinhof Psychiatric Institution in Vienna [Psychiayrisches Krankenraus Der Stadt Wiem] where Aloisia Veit, Hitler's second cousin, was confined for nine years.



Paula's fiance was a willing executioner in the program of mass murder they called "euthanasia."





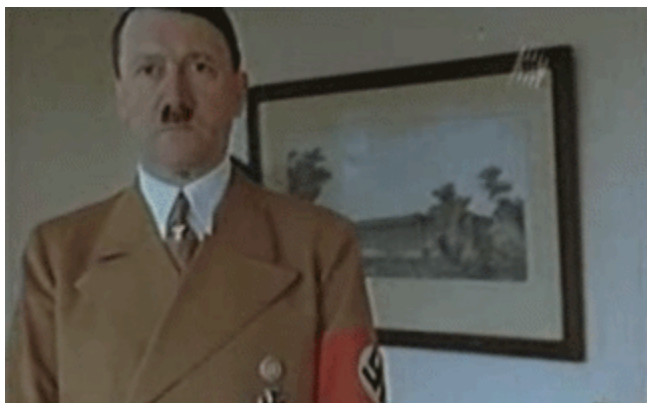
He sent over 4,000 patients to the gas chambers.



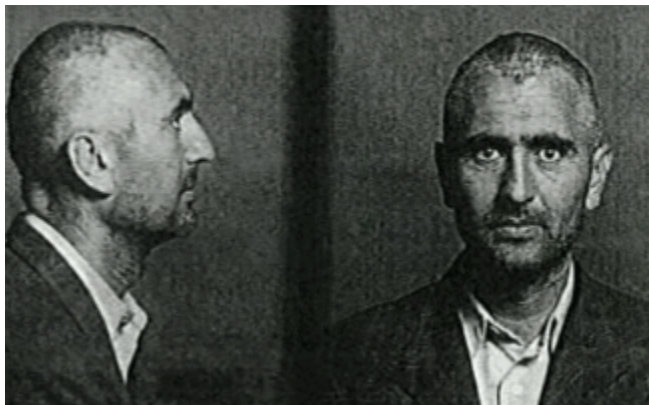
Hitler's sister knew about it.



Yet she still wanted to marry the doctor. She asked her brother's permission.



But only Hitler would decide who was part of the family. He had Paula's fiance arrested, and sent to the Eastern front.



Erwin Jekelius was taken prisoner by the Soviets. He died in captivity in 1952.



Berchtesgaden, 1958.



Hidden camera footage of Paula Hitler, alias Paula Wolf. She lived on social security on her own. Only a few locals knew who she really was.



That same year, director Peter Morley made a documentary about the Nazi dictatorship.



He interviewed people who had been close to Hitler.



Tyranny, the Years of Adolf Hitler.





It was the first and last television interview with Paula Hitler.



[Peter Morley, Director] I was intrigued by the fact that here was the sister of the most evil person you can ever imagine, ...



and here was this very demure, simple, quiet lady -- a total and complete contrast.



I could not believe that this foul creature had this little woman as a sister. I mean, it was the absolute opposite of everything you ever heard about Hitler. And she was, basically, I would say, a nothing in comparison.



[Narrator] Miss Hitler refused to answer any political questions. The original interview in German was lost long ago. Only the English voice-over version survives.



[Paula Hitler, 1958] When my brother Adolf was about two years old, he once climbed up a ladder to the top rung. Mother heard that he was up there on the ladder, and was frightened to death.



[Peter Morley, Director] She was using a bit of hindsight, I think when she talked about him when as children they played Red Indians, and he always insisted on being the leader of the group. She felt rather proud of that.

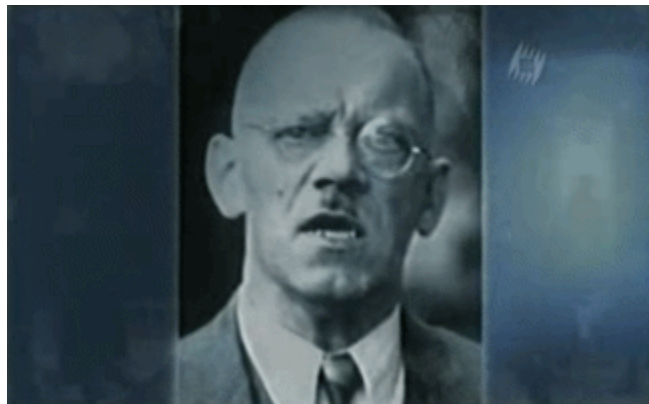


[Paula Hitler] When we children played Red Indian, my brother Adolf was always the leader. All the others did what he told them. They must have had an instinct that his will was stronger than theirs.

[Narrator] Paula saw herself as just the little sister and the criminal of the century as just her big brother.



[Peter Morley, Director] She had great respect for him. And I think had I asked her about anything that might have been critical about him, I think she would have protected him. That's the feeling I got. She would have felt it her duty to protect him.



[Narrator] Like Paula, Hitler's older half-brother Alois also survived the war.



In 1945, he and his wife, Hedwig, fled from Berlin to Hamburg.



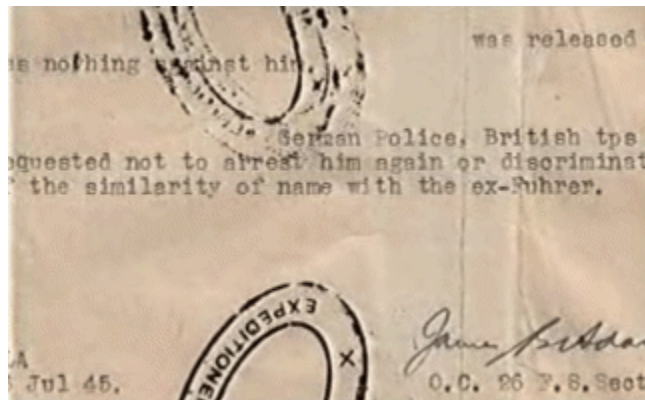
Only now is one witness prepared to talk. A foster daughter of Alois Hitler and his wife, she still wishes to remain anonymous. For the first time, she talks about the Dictator's brother.



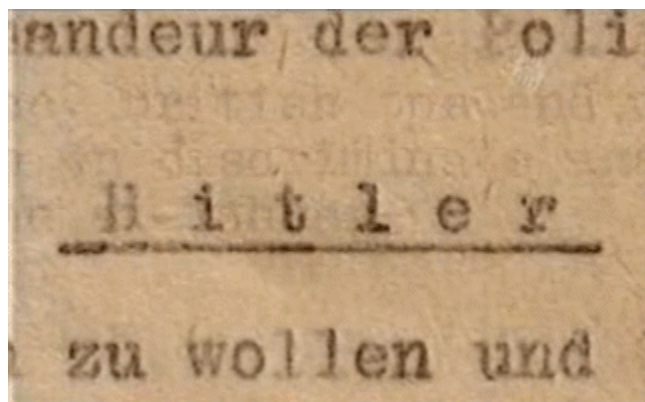
[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] We were told that he was Adolf's stepbrother. We were told about it, but it wasn't discussed at length.



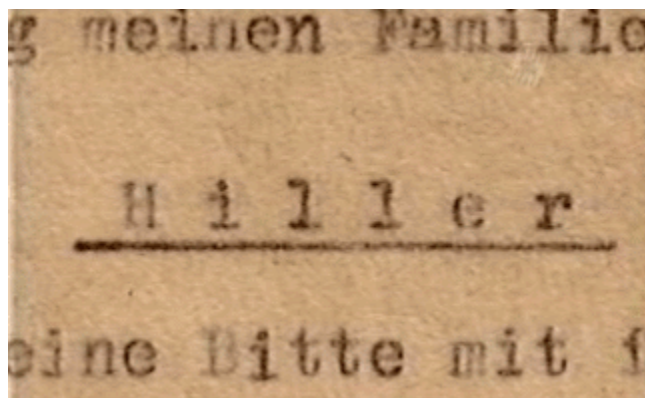
We were told never to mention it publicly. I remember him as a grey-haired, slim man with a moustache. It was funny that he had the same moustache as Adolf.



[Narrator] Being Adolf's brother was no small liability.



With every routine check of his papers, the surname "Hitler" leapt from the page.



That was easily fixed. "Hitler" became "Hiller."



But Alois couldn't cast off his past. He had done well during the Nazi era. What did he think of his brother?



[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] He felt love-hate, not pride. Otherwise he wouldn't have lain low in Hamburg. He wasn't proud of him.



[Narrator] The once-wealthy bar owner was now a hired laborer. His de-nazification trial found him "incriminated to a lesser degree."

[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] He lost everything. His son. He couldn't just brush off the past either. In the end he was a broken man.



[Narrator] In 1945, two more relatives joined Hedwig and Alois Hitler in the Hamburg district of Fuhlsbuttel.

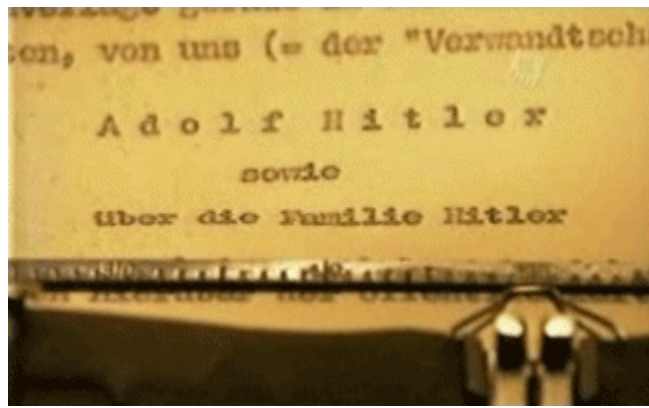


Hans Hitler, a distant cousin of the Dictator, and his wife, Erna, who had worked for Alois. Auntie Erna wanted to write a book about the family.

[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] She was shrewd enough to quiz him and to ask him details which she soaked up and probably used in her manuscript.



[Narrator] Erna Hitler wrote a 400-page family history.



It was never published.

[Erna Hitler] A considerable part of what I know comes from the recollections of Adolf Hitler's half-brother, and I shall start with the family history as it really happened.



[Narrator] The manuscript starts with Hitler's childhood in Braunau am Inn.



His father, a custom's officer in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was proud of his work, but tyrannized over his family.



[Erna Hitler] The father's loud curses accompanied the howls of his son. His mother shuddered at every blow, and tears accompanied her physical pain. She went up to the attic and with her body shielded Adolf, who was lying on the floor. But she was unable to ward off his father's final blow.



[Narrator] This difficult childhood forged a close bond between the boy and his mother. His father died in 1903 after a visit to the pub.





Four years later his mother Klara died too of cancer.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] The thing that summarizes Hitler's relationship to his parents best is the one sentence in Mein Kampf where he says, "I respected my father, but I loved my mother." In fact, the word "respect" is the key element there, because that is what ultimately shaped Adolf Hitler's character and made him who he was.



[Narrator] After Klara's death, Hitler went to Vienna where he tried, unsuccessfully, to become an artist.



He felt misunderstood even by his brother and his sisters. They thought he was deluding himself.



When the First World War broke out, he volunteered -- not for the Austrian, but for the German army.



For the first time, he denied his family.



An excerpt from Erna Hitler's Chronicle:



[Erna Hitler] When his fellow soldiers asked him about his wife, children, parents or fiancée, he dodged the question, or just said he had no one left.



[Narrator] After the war, he tried his luck in politics as an agitator for the radical right, stirring up hatred against Jews and against Democracy.

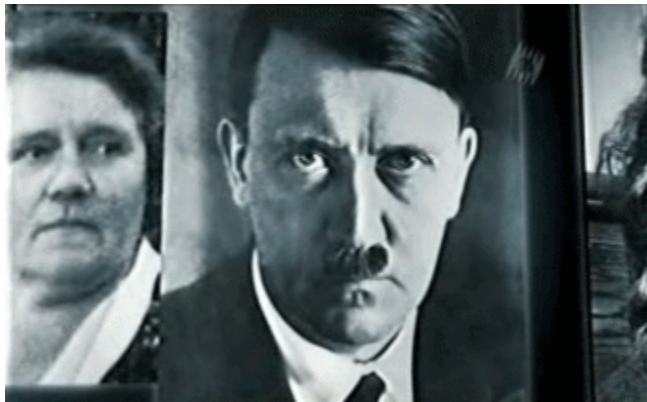




In October, 1920, he went back to Vienna, so the family could see what had become of "The Dreamer."



For the first time in 10 years, he visited his sisters.



Angela Raubal, his elder half-sister, and Paula, his younger sister, were both impressed. Paula later said, "His face bore the expression of a man who knew just what he wanted."





[Narrator] What Hitler wanted, above all else, was power. The putsch that he engineered in 1923 ended in a hail of police gunfire.



Hitler was put on trial.



A close relation came to his defense.



His half-sister Angela gave mitigating evidence on his behalf.



Partly thanks to Angela he got a light sentence: five years in Landsberg Prison. And after only 7 months, he was free.



While in prison, Hitler wrote his manifesto, Mein Kampf.



This treatise, full of hatred, refers briefly to his parents, but doesn't mention Alois, Angela or Paula at all.



A Nazi rally party in Nuremberg. Sister Angela went along.



She devoted herself entirely to her brother's political advancement.



In a letter to relatives, she wrote: "May God grant victory to his cause."



In 1927, Hitler rented a chalet in his sister's name,



"The Haus Wachenfeld" on the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden.



Angela did not only take care of the household,



she brought her daughter, Geli, with her.



A fateful relationship developed. Hitler felt drawn to his young niece.



While he was away campaigning all over Germany, he kept Geli a virtual prisoner.



[Margarethe Hansen, Hitler's housekeeper] He loved her as his niece. Afterwards people said he'd had a relationship with her, but I can't confirm that. She was a nice young girl, but she had to do what he wanted. That didn't always suit her.



[Narrator] Only rarely was Geli allowed to accompany him. But the whole family came to see him on the 16th of November, 1928. Angela had secured good seats, Alois took the day off and brought his wife and child along.



Erna wrote in her Chronicle: "Alois had difficulty believing that the man receiving these huge ovations was his brother.



[Narrator] Geli, on the other hand, was impressed by her uncle's popularity. She was totally in his thrall.



But Erna later wrote: "He placed such restrictions on her personal life that she could no longer break free.



She didn't even trust her own mother."



[Narrator] Her uncle's apartment on Prinz Regenten Platz in Munich -- her gilded cage.



Calling Hitler, "My Jailer," Geli plunged into a severe depression.



On the 28th of September, 1931, Geli Raubal shot herself in Hitler's flat.



Her uncle was appalled. He scoured the room for a suicide note in vain.



[Margarethe Hansen, Hitler's housekeeper] It really upset him. He locked himself up all day. He didn't appear, didn't eat. That was in Munich.



[Narrator] A week later, the beloved niece was laid to rest in Vienna's central cemetery.



Hitler, full of self pity, made a grotesque cult of their disastrous relationship. Geli's room remained untouched for years.



On no account was the public to know anything.



Angela stayed on with her brother even though he admitted being partly to blame for Geli's death.





With Hitler's rise to power, the Obersalzberg became a place of pilgrimage.



The Cult of the Fuhrer began to annoy the other residents.

[Gertrud Straniak, Neighbour] You couldn't get through, and it was so noisy with people milling everywhere.



My father got angry and said, "You can't live here any more. It's full of black and brown shirts."

CHAPTER 15: Making an Obedient Mass

The Germans are vigorously submissive. They employ philosophical reasonings to explain what is the least philosophic thing in the world, respect for force and the fear which transforms that respect into admiration.

-- Madame de Stael

It is too easy to say that the German soul was predisposed to totalitarianism. Even if the people were inured to submissiveness through iron discipline for generations, they were never, before Hitler, genocidal maniacs.

Since World War II, several books have appeared which, while not dealing directly with the Nazis, are of invaluable aid in explaining how ordinary people can be transformed into automata, devoid of conscience or reason. They help us to understand, not only the Nazis, but millions of disciples of movements in Western countries today who, almost overnight, are weaned from their customary behavior and attachments and indoctrinated with irrational beliefs. They are *The True Believer* by Eric Hoffer, *The Mind Possessed* by William Sargant, and *The Rape of the Mind* by Joost Meerloo.

What is the formula for producing pliant followers?

Take people, not wholly preoccupied with subsistence, who despair of being happy either in the present or in the future. They feel the sharp cutting edge of frustration. Either through some personal defect or because external conditions do not permit growth, they are eager to renounce themselves, since the self is insupportable.

Many German men were in this position at the end of World War I. They came home to a civilian life without purpose, in which they had no part. In the chaos and collapse, vast armies of uprooted people felt threatened by the war's economic and social aftermath. National Socialism gave them a chance for a fresh start. As Eric Hoffer points out:

People who see their lives as irremediably spoiled cannot find a worthwhile purpose in self-advancement. The prospect of an individual career cannot stir them to a mighty effort, nor can it evoke in them faith and a single-minded dedication. They look on self-interest as on something tainted and evil; something unclean and unlucky. Anything undertaken under the auspices of the self seems to them foredoomed. Nothing that has its roots and reasons in the self can be good and noble. Their innermost craving is for a new life -- a rebirth -- or, failing this, a chance to acquire new elements of pride, confidence, hope, a sense of purpose and

worth by an identification with a holy cause. An active mass movement offers them opportunities for both. If they join the movement as full converts they are reborn to a new life in its close-knit collective body, or if attracted as sympathizers they find elements of pride, confidence and purpose by identifying themselves with the efforts, achievements and prospects of the movement.

To the frustrated a mass movement offers substitutes either for the whole self or for the elements which make life bearable and which they cannot evoke out of their individual resources.

The movement, in turn, encourages self-renunciation. It does not attract the individual who believes in himself, nor does it care to; on the contrary, he is precisely the individual whom it ridicules. It popularizes the idea that the private person who finds his own satisfactions is halting the progress of civilization. But to the person with the unwanted self, unable to believe in himself, the movement provides something larger to believe in. As Hitler pointed out: "Monkeys put to death any members of their community who show a desire to live apart. And what the apes do, men do too, in their own manner."

The movement also provides justification. To those who find no meaning or purpose in life, it says: "The world is out of joint, not you" or "The world that most people inhabit is an illusion... No longer alone in its misery, the frustrated mind now has company, which includes even those who protest that they are happy, because it is taught to see through that so-called happiness.

As one Nazi, Karl-Heinz Schwenke, a tailor, described it:

I had ten suits of my own when I married. Twenty-five years later, when their "democracies" got through with me in 1918, I had none, not one. I had my sweater and my pants. Even my Army uniform was worn out. My medals were sold. I was nothing. Then, suddenly, I was needed. National Socialism had a place for me. I was nothing -- and then I was needed.

The movement also provides a suitable outlet for the pent-up rage which frustrated people feel, against themselves and the world. It fans that rage and honors it. The believer's rage may actually increase in proportion to what he has had to give up to become part of the movement: his former life, his friends, his family, his privacy, his judgment, sometimes even his name and worldly goods. He is willing, even eager, to make these sacrifices and more, of course, because by making them he can slough off the undesirable self. He receives, in return, an artificial sense of worth. His stature grows through involvement with the group. He is assured that he is great, one of the chosen.

SS men were held together by the idea that they were a sworn brotherhood of the elect. Their mystic rituals gave them special obligations, some too abhorrent to contemplate, but also special privileges.

The believer becomes a fanatic. As a frustrated person, incapable of acting in his own best interests, he never had a firm grip on reality. He can enter into the fantasy life of the movement and act on behalf of impossible dreams, which impose less risk on his fragile ego than he would encounter if he were to tussle with personal hurdles. He gets a sense of omnipotence, too, from tackling world-shaking tasks.

Running away from an acceptance of his own nature and the world as it is, the believer is prone to credulity. He believes because it is impossible. He can be persuaded by the irrational and led by the nose by charlatans. It is easy for him to become irresponsible, since he is not following

his own will.

Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, was the perfect exemplar of will-lessness. As he confessed at Nuremberg: "I had nothing to say. I could only say Jawohl! We could only execute orders without thinking about it.... from our entire training the thought of refusing an order just didn't enter one's head, regardless of what kind of order it was."

Since life has been irremediably spoiled for the believer, he has relatively little hesitation about spoiling it for others. This gives him an advantage. He can be unscrupulous under the disguise of idealism. His self-righteousness permits him to convince himself that he is destroying people for their own good. Josef Goebbels felt it his duty "to unleash volcanic passions, outbreaks of rage, to set masses of people on the march, to organize hatred and despair with ice-cold calculation." Eric Hoffer explains such inhumanity:

It seems that when we are oppressed by the knowledge of our worthlessness we do not see ourselves as lower than some and higher than others, but as lower than the lowest of mankind. We hate then the whole world, and we would pour our wrath upon the whole of creation.

There is a deep reassurance for the frustrated in witnessing the downfall of the fortunate and the disgrace of the righteous. They see in a general downfall an approach to the brotherhood of all. Chaos, like the grave, is a haven of equality. Their burning conviction that there must be a new life and a new order is fueled by the realization that the old will have to be razed to the ground before the new can be built. Their clamor for a millennium is shot through with a hatred for all that exists, and a craving for the end of the world.

This recalls Alfred Rosenberg's argument that "the denial of the world needs a still longer time in order to grow so that it will acquire a lasting predominance over affirmation of the world," and his equation of the Jew with world affirmation.

To be bored is also to be potentially an easy mark for a movement. It provides the meaning and purpose which are gone from the life of the isolated individual, burdened with freedom. As one young Nazi put it just before World War II, "We Germans are so happy. We are free of freedom."

What sort of social milieu is it that breeds people who want to be free of freedom?

Precisely that which has increasingly prevailed since the nineteenth century: a mass society in which the individual is atomized and counts for very little. He stands completely alone. His ties with the community, the family, the kinship group have been broken. Paradoxically, he needs them more than ever, because individual life becomes increasingly absurd and incoherent the more mass society advances.

Uprooted from village and ancestral loyalties and shifted to the anonymous city, the individual suffers culture shock: The old values are out of place in the hostile, competitive world. As an isolated person, no longer part of a settled group whose norms he accepted, he is uncertain and empty -- unless he is an independent thinker or a creative spirit, in which case he may feel himself well rid of the influence of the group. But with the encroachment of mass society, it is less and less likely that he will be able to think or create. A philologist, specializing in Middle High German, described the situation candidly to Milton Mayer (They Thought They Were Free):

... suddenly, I was plunged into all the new activity, as the university was drawn into the new situation; meetings, conferences, interviews, ceremonies, and, above all, papers to be filled out,

reports, bibliographies, lists, questionnaires. And on top of that were the demands in the community, the things in which one had to, was "expected to" participate that had not been there or had not been important before.... it consumed all one's energies.... You can see how easy it was, then, not to think about fundamental things. One had no time.... The dictatorship, and the whole process of its coming into being, was above all diverting. It provided an excuse not to think for people who did not want to think anyway.... Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things and never had. There was no need to. Nazism gave us some dreadful, fundamental things to think about -- we were decent people -- and kept us so busy with continuous changes and "crises" and so fascinated, yes, fascinated, by the machinations of the "national enemies," without and within, that we had no time to think about these dreadful things that were growing, little by little, all around us. Unconsciously, I suppose, we were grateful. Who wants to think?

Through mass education and mass communication, the individual is propagandized and molded into conditioned responses, like one of Pavlov's dogs. His innate ability to figure things out for himself atrophies, with predictable consequences.

To soften the pain of emptiness, he is drowned in entertainments, which offer him hero-surrogates who are able to live for him. Eternally occupied either as hustler, machine, or spectator, he seldom has a moment to notice that he cannot think, feel or live; that his life is petty, shabby, and totally without meaning; that his authorities are deceitful and manipulative, his society disintegrating, his relationships hollow, and worst of all, that nothing is being done to remedy these horrors.

The irony is that the individual in mass society has only himself. The authority of his parents has been undermined. He has moved from the soil where he was born and experienced certain local allegiances. His work is inhuman and mechanical. No meaning, responsibility, or dignity attaches to it. It requires his participation, but actually develops passivity. It regiments him, and he remains an apathetic machine. He is dependent on his job, and in periods of economic insecurity, glad to have it, but he feels diminished by it.

His relationships lack intimacy and affection. He can no longer trust anyone. He must have answers that will explain the problems of his life. Yet, because he has been trained not to think for himself, he faces a void, and his life becomes unendurable.

Human beings can't stand being unimportant. Most will readily accept the idea of further and further "massification" -- the greater leveling and equality which is evidence of greater democracy -- as a sign of progress. Mass society is symbolized by modernism and egalitarianism, two popular myths of progress. In Germany, this egalitarianism culminated in Hitler's boast that

sixty thousand men have outwardly become almost a unit, that actually these men are uniform not only in ideas, but that even the facial expression is almost the same. Look at these laughing eyes, this fanatical enthusiasm, and you will discover how a hundred thousand men in a movement become a single type.

What does the movement offer the faithful?

Nothing less than a new life. His rebirth is sometimes symbolized in a new name, exotic and foreign, to make the change of identity tangible. Now there is certainty. He knows exactly what is expected of him. Within a circumscribed set of rules, all is permitted: rage without guilt, relief from responsibility, the assertion of superiority over others.

He knows what action is required of him in the present and can look forward to a millennial future as well. There is no more ambiguity. The conflicts, tensions, self-criticisms, and doubts that assail the rest of us are washed away, and he enjoys a state of equilibrium. He is no longer a passive participant. Righteously, he looks down at those whom he formerly felt to be superior. The same society which scorned him now is forced to recognize that his beliefs are important. The mass man becomes a power in the world. Rudolf Hess, the melancholy student who became deputy leader of the Third Reich, remained grateful to the end. As he testified at Nuremberg:

It was granted to me for many years of my life to live and work under the greatest son whom my nation has produced in the thousand years of its history. Even if I could I would not expunge this period from my existence. I regret nothing. If I were standing once more at the beginning I should act once again as I did then, even if I knew that at the end I should be burnt at the stake. No matter what men do, I shall one day stand before the judgment seat of the Almighty. I shall answer to him, and I know that he will acquit me.

In exchange for this miraculous transformation, the individual willingly subjects himself to a thorough brainwashing, through which his old beliefs and personality are eradicated. He may never be aware that he is being brainwashed. It may happen instantly or gradually, but he puts absolute trust in the leaders of the movement. The group becomes the good father he may never have had, the proxy whom he depends on to solve all his problems, the authority to which he owes obedience. From the moment he is captured, he identifies with the group and begins to think as they do. Their common undertaking insures that he will never have to shoulder any personal blame for failure or shortcomings. So long as he behaves according to the rules, he will be accepted. The rules are clear and consistent, or seem to be.

The Germans were used to compulsion from early childhood. Rudolf Hoess's reminiscence is fairly typical, and makes his subsequent acquiescence in running Auschwitz more plausible:

It was constantly impressed upon me in forceful terms that I must obey promptly the wishes and commands of my parents, teachers, priests, etc., and indeed of all grown-up people, including servants, and that nothing must distract me from this duty. Whatever they said was always right.

These basic principles on which I was brought up became part of my flesh and blood. I can still clearly remember how my father, who on account of his fervent Catholicism, was a determined opponent of the Reich Government and its policy, never ceased to remind his friends that, however strong one's opposition might be, the laws and decrees of the State had to be obeyed unconditionally.

From my earliest youth I was brought up with a strong awareness of duty. In my parents' house it was insisted that every task be exactly and conscientiously carried out. Each member of the family had his own special duties to perform.

The group is beyond criticism. Its realm is sacred. Even if a man has convictions which run counter to those of the movement, he can still be led to act in a manner which contradicts his own beliefs, either because his will is weak or because he is the victim of certain techniques which cause his will to be transcended. He can say, with Hermann Goring, "I have no conscience! Adolf Hitler is my conscience!" or "It is not I who live, but the Fuhrer who lives in me."

It is important to examine these techniques if we are to understand how people can be made to

follow a Fuhrer wherever he may lead.

The proselyte is isolated at first. No free exchange with unbelievers is allowed. He is cut off from ties of loyalty with the past. His family and friends are discredited. Feelings of exclusivity are encouraged.

His mind is barraged with repetitive propaganda until it is made weary. The indoctrination may go on uninterrupted for sixteen hours or more a day, for weeks on end. Even if the proselyte rejects what he hears, argues against it, or falls into apathy, the Pavlovian conditioning ultimately seduces him, and he surrenders to the training.

Mechanical drill, rhythmical marches, dance rituals, and repetitive chanting are also effective in breaking down resistance.

The English psychiatrist William Sargant could better grasp how Hitler was able to bring even intelligent Germans into "a condition of intellectual and emotional subjection" through "mass rallies, marching and martial music, chanting and slogans and highly emotional oratory and ceremony" after witnessing the subservience of certain African tribes to their leaders and seeing their powerful initiation rites:

Whether in a "primitive" tribe or at school or in the army, the process is essentially the same. Severe stress is imposed on the new recruit, by subjecting him to arbitrary and frightening authority, by bewildering him, abusing or ill-treating him, by telling him that his old values and sentiments are childish, and so inducing in him a state of unease and suggestibility in which new values can easily be drummed into him, and he recovers his self-confidence by accepting them. The initial conditioning techniques may have to be reinforced from time to time by further conditioning procedures, and follow-up indoctrination is considered most important in all types of religious or other conversion.

Once the proselyte has been broken down and sensitized, his thinking and feelings can be manipulated, and delusions implanted. He falls under the suggestive power of the group and accepts its distortions as objective truth.

Most people are suggestible and can be hypnotized against their will, obeying commands even when they go against the grain. Dr. Sargant observes:

It is not the mentally ill but ordinary normal people who are most susceptible to "brainwashing," "conversion," "possession," "the crisis" ... and who ... fall readily under the spell of the demagogue or the revivalist, the witch-doctor or the pop group, the priest or the psychiatrist, or even in less extreme ways the propagandist or the advertiser.

In the suggestible state, the proselyte may attribute divine powers to his leader and accept dogmas which he might have rejected in a more normal state. Some of the men closest to Hitler, for example, acknowledged that they believed in his divinity. Himmler's masseur, Felix Kersten, relates that he once answered the phone and heard Hitler's voice before passing the phone on to Himmler, who exclaimed: "You have been listening to the voice of the Fuhrer, you're a very lucky man." Himmler told Kersten that Hitler's commands came "from a world transcending this one" and "possessed a divine power." It was the "Karma" of the German people that they should be "saved" by "a figure of the greatest brilliance" which had "become incarnate" in Hitler's person.

And even disbelievers and scoffers can also come to accept irrational dogmas -- through

contagion, imitation or sudden conversion.

Beliefs have the power to infect. The onlookers at a mass rally, where emotions are being stirred up, often feel the same intensity of excitement that the participants feel. We can "catch" ideas that are completely foreign to us. In early Judaism, for example, there was no concept of a demonic force. God was responsible for both good and evil. But with influences from Iran, Egypt, and Greece came a tendency to explain evil as the work of demons. Soon after, people began to see manifestations of evil spirits everywhere, and "every misfortune, every illness, and particularly, under the name of possession, all disorders of the nervous system were ascribed to them," according to Charles Guignebert in *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*.

Hitler's early speeches were so mesmerizing that even people who were repelled by his ideas felt themselves being swept along. The playwright Eugene Ionesco mentions in his autobiography that he received the inspiration for *Rhinoceros* when he felt himself pulled into the Nazi orbit at a mass rally and had to struggle to keep from developing "rhinocercitis."

We "catch" ideas, too, because we want to be like others, particularly when we want not to be our despised selves. If we're satisfied, we don't need to conform, but if we're not, we imitate people whom we admire for having greater judgment, taste, or good fortune than we do. Obedience itself is a kind of imitation. Through conformity, the person who feels inferior is in no danger of being exposed. He's indistinguishable from the others. No one can single him out and examine his unique being. Conformity, in turn, sets him up to be further canceled out as an individual, to have no life apart from his collective purpose. This gives a movement tremendous power over the individual. Even intelligent people are not immune from the desire to conform. Heinrich Hildebrandt, a schoolteacher who was anxious to hide his liberal past, joined the Nazi party, and to his own disgust, found himself "proud to be wearing the insignia. It showed I 'belonged,' and the pleasure of 'belonging,' so soon after feeling excluded, isolated, is very great.... I belonged to the 'new nobility.'"

Hoffer observes:

Above all, he [the true believer] must never feel alone. Though stranded on a desert island, he must still feel that he is under the eyes of the group. To be cast out from the group should be equivalent to being cut off from life.

This is undoubtedly a primitive state of being, and its most perfect examples are found among primitive tribes. Mass movements strive to approximate this primitive perfection, and we are not imagining things when the anti-individualist bias of contemporary mass movements strikes us as a throwback to the primitive.

Sudden conversions, which may happen through hypnosis, emotional shock, despair, or exhaustion, can bring people into movements. William Sargant believes an apparently well-balanced person, "dominated by hypnoid and slightly suggestible brain activity," may suddenly give up his "previous intellectual training and habits of rational thought," to accept "ideas which he would normally find repellent or even patently nonsensical." Sargant is convinced that a heightened state of suggestibility accounts for many cases of demonic possession, or for sudden salvation. The history of mysticism offers instances of extreme opinions instantly reversed. The critical faculty is suspended, and what was formerly believed to be black is now white, and vice-versa.

Once the believer has been taken over by one of these means, it is difficult for him to revert to his former self. In a sense, collective totalitarian thinking can be compared with schizophrenia. In both, there is, says Joost Meerloo in *The Rape of the Mind*, a "loss of an independent,

verifiable reality, with a consequent relapse into a more primitive state of awareness." In both, thought and action are arrested at an infantile level of development.

Since the totalitarian denies man's dynamic nature, views him simply as a submissive robot, and provides this robot with one single, simple answer to all the ambivalences, doubts, conflicts, and warring drives within him, all attempts to dislodge the official cliches clash with those same cliches. The believer's isolation in a fortress of other delusional thinkers gives him no opportunity for clear thought or contact with other influences. He is immune to reasonable propositions. He is convinced that he is reasonable, and that his enemies are not. Having burned his bridges behind him, broken with his family and old friends, he cannot go back. He is committed to his involvement in the group. To renounce it would be to repudiate himself. It would also mean giving up all the psychic benefits of omnipotence. His personality and prejudices have become crystallized around a set of actions and dogmas. They are irreversible. Any external stimulus which threatens to penetrate his armor and make him see the absurdity or injustice of his position is rationalized to further harden his rigidity. He has joined the movement at least partly because it handed him stereotypes in place of his vague notions and saved him from having to think things out for himself. Any stimulus which evokes a symbol causes a reflex action. With his weakened conscience and consciousness, he can no longer respond spontaneously, however he may appear to be doing so. He has become the movement. All thoughts and feelings that are at odds with it are snuffed out. This is what gives the believer the air of a one-dimensional man. He lacks depth. There is a limited range of possibilities open to him. If one wants, therefore, to convert him back to an autonomous human being, one finds that there is nobody at home. His mind is shut tight against new ideas. The slogans and ready-made judgments he has absorbed stretch forward into infinity. The believer is protected for all time. Within his sacred circle, all other knowledge is taboo. One might say that the most telltale sign of a believer is his refusal to examine ideas other than the divine commandments which have been implanted in him. One can't get to him because he will not and cannot engage in dialogue. What is particularly maddening about him is that, sterile and unimaginative, he masquerades as an exemplary man, an objective guide eager to spread enlightenment.

The ability to exercise his own judgment, having atrophied, is never restored. Even if he should drop out of one group, he will quickly seek and find another. Like a drug addict who needs his fix, he cannot live without his cliches.

At Nuremberg after the war, Allied examiners were shocked to see how unrepentant some of the Nazis were. Julius Streicher cried "Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!" at his execution, until the opening of the trap door muffled his voice. Arthur Seyss-Inquart declared, to the last, that Hitler remained "the man who made Greater Germany a reality in history." Rudolf Hoess, by his own admission "completely filled, indeed obsessed" with his monstrous goal, was not guilty of arrogance when he proudly declared that "Auschwitz became the greatest human extermination center of all time." He was one of the countless ordinary men who had been turned into a believer. He gave validity to Hitler's contention "that by the clever and continuous use of propaganda a people can even be made to mistake heaven for hell, and vice versa, the most miserable life for Paradise." As Hitler knew better than perhaps anyone else: "The essence of propaganda consists in winning people over to an idea so sincerely, so vitally, that in the end they succumb to it utterly and can never again escape from it."

We need not, however, look as far back as Nazi Germany for examples of people undergoing personality changes and extreme shifts in ideology. We can learn from present-day American groups.



[Richard Alpert, Older Brother] When Richard came back from India, and he would come to visit us in Franklin, New Hampshire, hundreds of hippies came to visit us. If we'd go out to dinner, as you're driving I'd say, "Richard, what are all these people walking up the road to our place?" He'd say, "Well, those are some of the people that want to see me." And by the time we'd get back, there'd be maybe 2, 3, 400 people all over the place. And I said, "Richard, get them off the golf course."



[Hippies Singing] Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare

[George Alpert, Ram Dass' father] Sounds like a fellow in the clothing business: Harry Krishna.



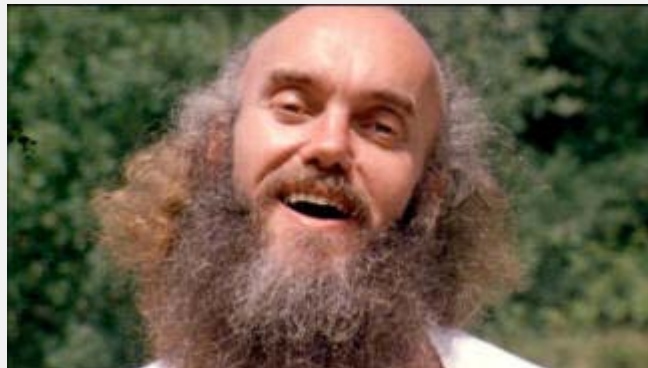
[Ram Dass] Every individual's karma is unique to that individual. Your method, your upaya, must be found for your particular karma. You can't buy into someone else's trip. People come to me and say, 'I went with this swami, or this baba, or this school, or this discipline, and they

were beautiful people, and I tried, and nothing happened. Am I wrong?' They say it didn't feel right. And I say, 'Always trust your inner voice.' Come back into the sea of silence. We'll now meditate for about seven minutes. If you're not familiar with meditating, don't try to turn off any of the other sounds, let it all go by. Just be here. Don't judge, don't try, don't stop, don't start, just be here. It's all just enough.



[Krishna Das, Musician] I arrived at his father's place the first summer in New Hampshire. So I arrived there with my two dogs and my cat, and all my worldly things, right? And the thing about meeting Ram Dass was that I knew that he knew. I knew that he knew what I wanted to know. And I had never met anybody who really knew what I wanted to know. I knew that what it is I was looking for existed. It was real. It wasn't just some dream. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know if I was going to get a piece of it or not. But it was real. It actually existed in the world. And that changed my life.

[Hippie] It feels really wonderful to be part of the continuing story. All around the country everyone's common. We're all together here, you know, no matter where we go. It's just like being almost in the same place. Like Ram Dass says, "We're all here no matter where we are."



[Ram Dass] Exactly! Exactly! We're totally, totally interconnected. We're totally interconnected. So that the minute you change your consciousness, the entire universe consciousness changes.

-- Fierce Grace, directed by Mickey Lemle



[Narrator] A neighborhood dispute on the Obersalzberg.



Angela wanted the neighboring guest house to close.



She put her mind to solving the problem in her own way.



[Ulrich Ziegltrum, Archivist] I think she kept firing up her brother, or urging him on, especially after the Schusters refused to give up their land.



[Narrator] Angela turned to the powerful Martin Bormann. He had the Schusters' guest house closed down and had Karl Schuster arrested.



[Gertrud Straniak, Neighbour, Schuster's daughter] They sent a taxi to pick up my father. And my mother ... It was terrible. I'll never forget it. She lay down in front of the taxi.



[Narrator] Resistance was useless. Bormann forced the Schusters to leave their home.



[Gertrud Straniak, Neighbour, Schuster's daughter] It was dreadful. On 25 November we had to hand over our house. We were only allowed to take one suitcase with us.



[Narrator] Angela personally supervised the eviction.



The Obersalzberg was systematically cleared of its local residents.



But then the half-sister got a rival:



Hitler's new girlfriend -- Eva Braun.



[Margarethe Hansen, Hitler's housekeeper] She was introduced to us in passing as a guest.



We were told that she worked at Photo Hoffmann in Munich, and was a guest like any other guest. But we knew that she had her own quarters.



[Narrator] Eva Braun's presence was a slap in the face for Angela. Calling Eva "a silly goose," she complained to Hitler.



[Ulrich Ziegltrum, Archivist] She kept saying, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You've taken up with another young thing." He said, "She's mine. It's not your business. Get out and be quick about it."



[Narrator] Angela had no choice. She left the Berghof. For the time being, she was persona non grata.



Hitler's rhetoric in the 1932 election campaign brimmed with hatred.



[Adolf Hitler] I can only ask the German people never to listen to the stupid, deceitful rhetoric of international Jewry.



[Narrator] The more powerful the racist agitator became, the more his opponents questioned his own lineage.



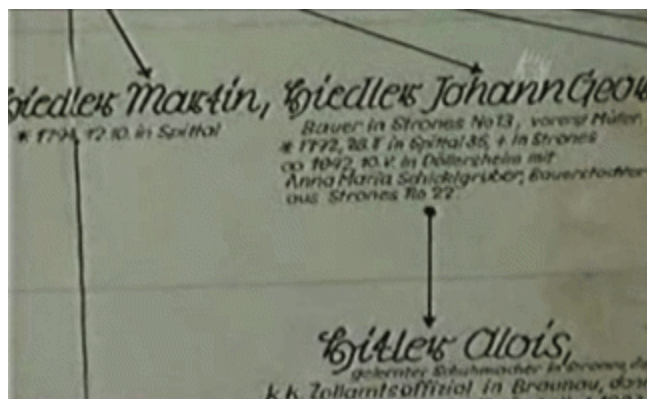
Someone who could help Hitler with his problem lived in Zenkinift Castle in lower Austria.

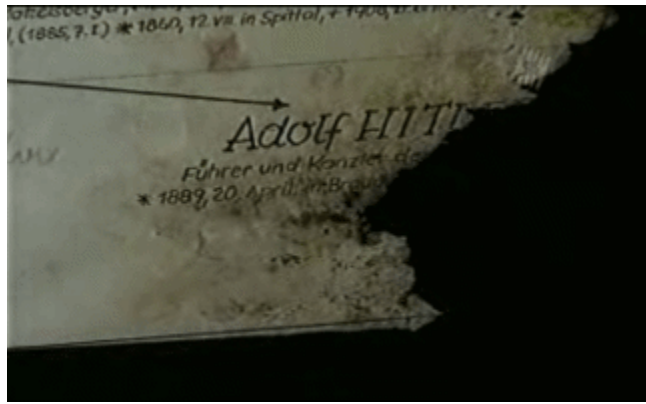


Genealogist Karl Friedrich von Frank offered to certify the racial purity of Hitler's ancestry.



In this secret hiding place in the castle library, his files on the Hitler family's history lay undetected for decades.





Over 1,200 pages document the Dictator's mysterious family tree.



Soon, every school child in Hitler's Germany had to learn how to prove their Aryan heritage.



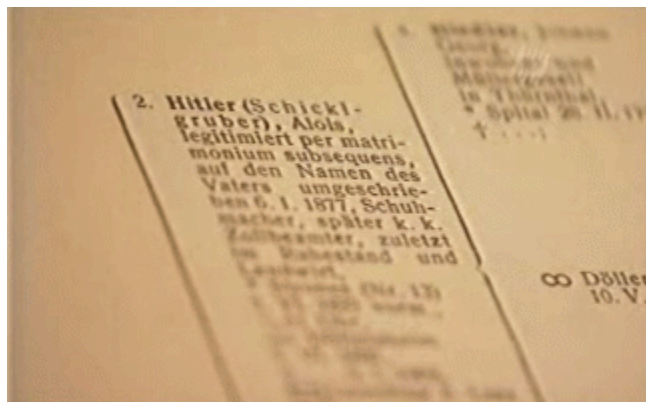
But the Fuhrer himself had problems with it.



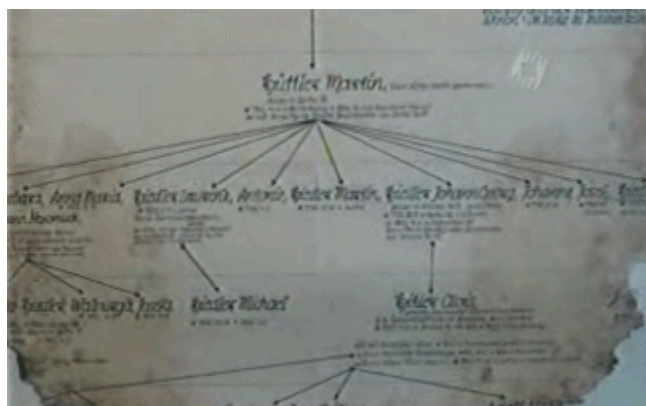
[Timothy Ryback, Historian] Hitler's own family, in no way, measured up to the Aryan ideal that he placed before Germany. And there are very few members of his family when you look through there who would have measured up to that, and the truth is, most of them would have been considered a blemish or an embarrassment.



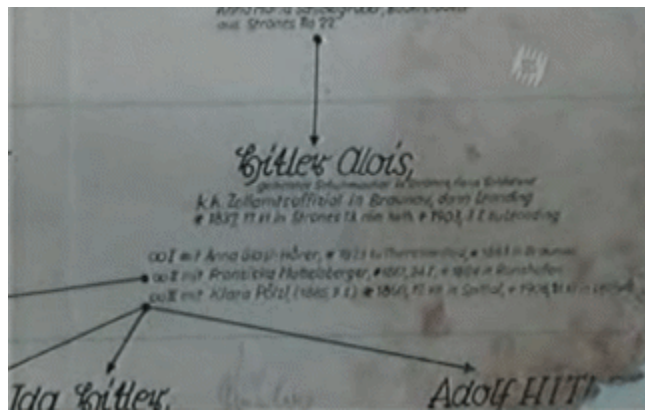
[Narrator] Mystery even surrounds the paternity of Hitler's own father.



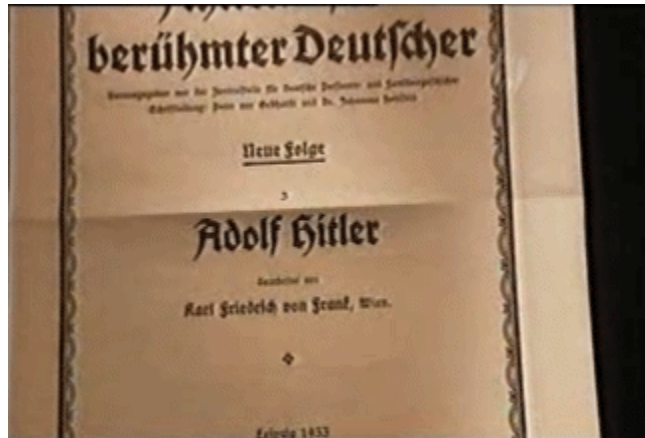
He was born illegitimate under the name of Alois Schicklgruber.



Later, he had his father's name registered as Georg Hiedler, 20 years after Hiedler's death, a dubious proof of identity.



But, from then on, Alois called himself Hitler.



His son Adolf had the family tree published anyway, and wrote to the genealogist,



"As far as I and my sisters can tell, it is correct."

Nachträglich danke ich Ihnen vielmals
für die Ausarbeitung der Ahnentafel meiner Familie.
Ich habe die mir übersandte Sammlung mit grossem
Interesse durchgesehen. Soweit ich bzw. meine
Schwester es beurteilen können, stimmt sie durchaus.
Ich freue mich, dass Ihre Arbeit soviel
Anerkennung findet.

Mit deutschem Gruss
Ihr sehr ergebener
by Han

His family line.

90. Hamberger, Paul, Bauer in Nieder-Flöttbach
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 7.I.1690
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 7.II.1747
• 11.V.1700 Döllersheim

91. Sil(l)ig, Ursula
• Klein-Motten, um 10.IX.1693 Döllersheim
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 27.X.1705 Döllersheim

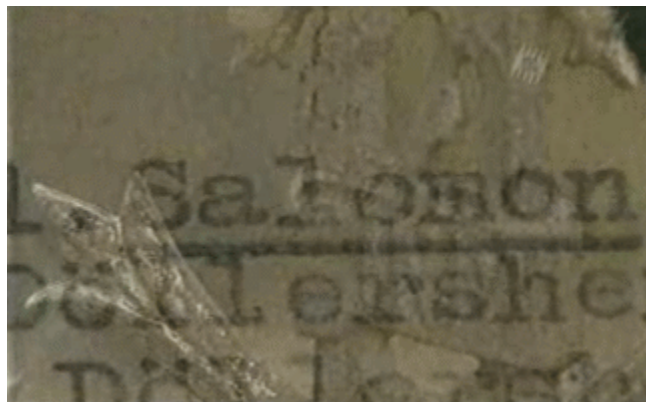
92. Ha(e)g(e)n, Johann, Hufeisnied und Bauer in F.
• um 1646
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 11.II.1715 Döllersheim
• 11., 10.VI.1698 Döllersheim

93. Wid(t)man(n), Elisabeth, wiederverheh. Salomon
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 10.XI.1690 Döllersheim
• Nieder-Flöttbach, um 20.V.1737 Döllersheim

94. Leiferer, Georg, Bauer in Raumanns
• um 1657
• Raumanns, um 11.IV.1705 Döllersheim
• 3.III.1680 Döllersheim

95. Weber, Susanna
• Raumanns, um 6.XII.1656 Döllersheim
• Raumanns, um 5.VIII.1704 Döllersheim

But his opponents were looking more closely now,



and they discovered a Salomon in the family tree.



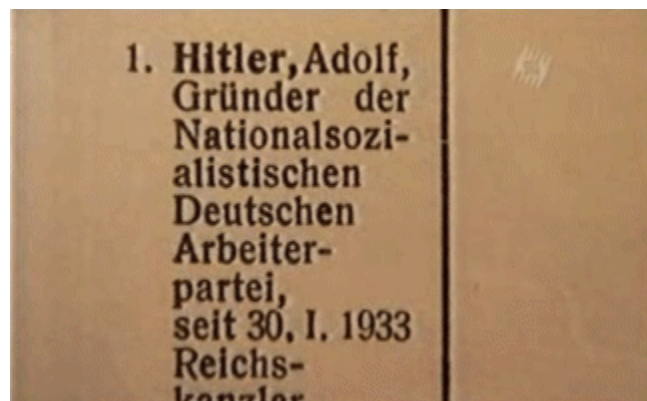
The press said, "That sounds Jewish!"



Soon the papers were speculating about the racial fanatic's own racial heritage.



A Vienna newspaper printed pictures of Jewish gravestones inscribed with names like "Hiedler."



Actually, there is no evidence that Hitler did have Jewish ancestry, but at the time there were unanswered questions.

Adolf Hitler is likely to have been descended from both Jews and Africans, according to DNA tests.

Samples taken from relatives of the Nazi leader show that he is biologically linked to the 'sub-human' races he sought to exterminate.

Journalist Jean-Paul Mulders and historian Marc Vermeeren used DNA to track down 39 of the Fuhrer's relatives earlier this year.

They included an Austrian farmer revealed only as a cousin called Norbert H.

A Belgian news magazine has reported that samples of saliva taken from these people strongly suggest Hitler had antecedents he certainly would not have cared for.

A chromosome called Haplogroup E1b1b (Y-DNA) in their samples is rare in Germany and indeed Western Europe.

'It is most commonly found in the Berbers of Morocco, in Algeria, Libya and Tunisia as well as among Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews,' Mr Vermeeren said.

'One can from this postulate that Hitler was related to people whom he despised,' adds Mr Mulders in the magazine, Knack.

-- DNA Tests Reveal Hitler Was Descended From the Jews and Africans He Hated, by Allann Hall



1933.



Hitler's accession to power. From now on, he would decide what people were allowed to know about him. Erna Hitler wrote in her Chronicle: "Alois and Hedwig stood in the midst of the cheering crowd and marveled at what was happening.



Like everybody else, they saluted in the direction of the balcony.



Their great relative must have spotted them. He saluted back, and no one on that huge Wilhelm-Platz knew how small the two loyal Hitlers felt.



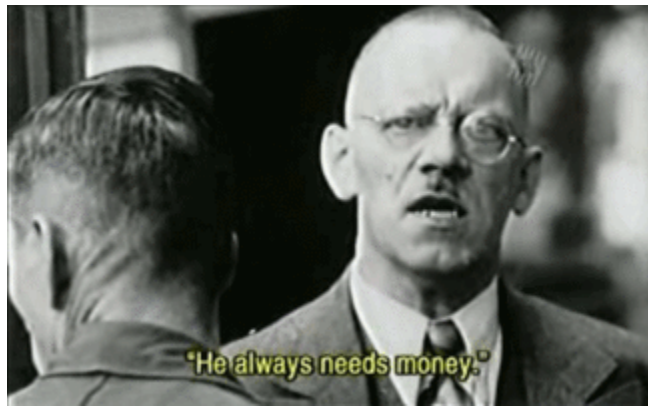
[Narrator] The next day, reporters visited Hitler's half-brother Alois in Berlin. Overnight, the simple waiter had become sought-after. Alois wanted to take advantage of it.



[Margarethe Hansen, Hitler's housekeeper] All I know is that he had a brother called Alois and that he corresponded with him.



Once, when I was dusting his desk, I saw two large sheets of paper that had come from Alois. Hitler said to Bruckner or Krause, I forget which of the two, "Alois wants money again."



He always needs money."



[Narrator] Alois wanted to open his own bar in the middle of Berlin. As Alois's foster daughter recalls, the Dictator helped him.



[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] Adolf must have given him some start-up money to open the bar in Berlin. He gave them other presents too, because I think Mummy got a car from him.



[Narrator] Just three kilometres from the Brandenburg Gate,



on the Wittenburg Platz,



Hitler's half brother opened the restaurant he called simply, "Alois."



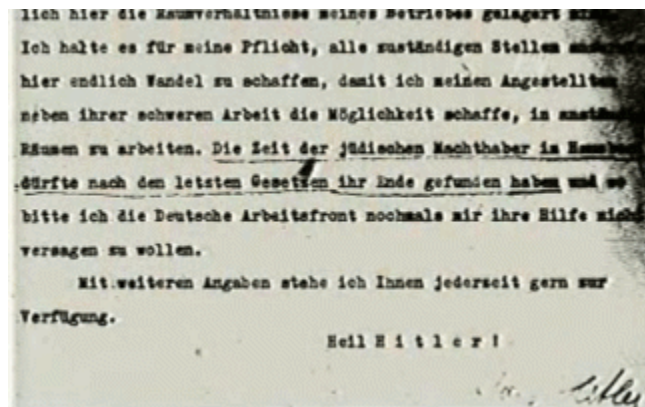
Word of who was in charge soon got around. Actors, journalists and Nazi party members were among the clientele.



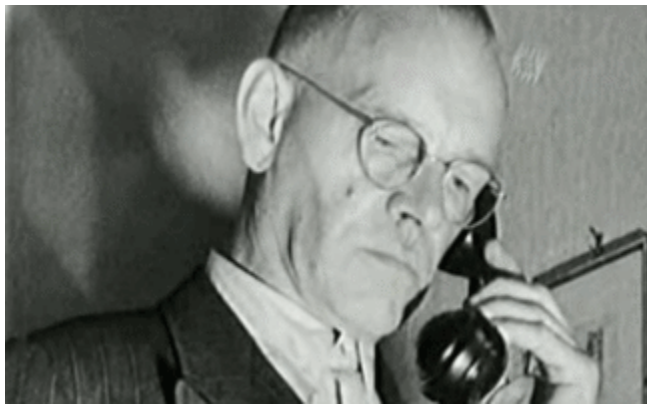
[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] It must have done well. All the bigwigs met there. Probably because of the name.



[Narrator] Heil Hitler, Herr Hitler, is how they greeted Mein Host. Alois was keen to expand. His landlord, a Jew, opposed his plans.



Hitler's half brother, not forgetting to mention his name, wrote to the German Labor Front: "According to recent laws, the era in which Jews dictate the rules of house ownership must now be at an end." With the backing of his brother's powerful racist policies, Alois won the dispute and expanded his business. His landlord was forced to flee to the Netherlands.



Alois also led a shady private life. For years, he was married to two women at the same time.



His marriage to Bridget Dowling, an Irish woman, produced a son:



William Patrick Hitler who, to the great annoyance of the Dictator,



loved to regale the international press with stories of Uncle Adolf.



Uncle was furious and called William Patrick his most loathsome relative.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] Here's this nephew, named Willy Hitler, living in London. His uncle becomes Chancellor of Germany.



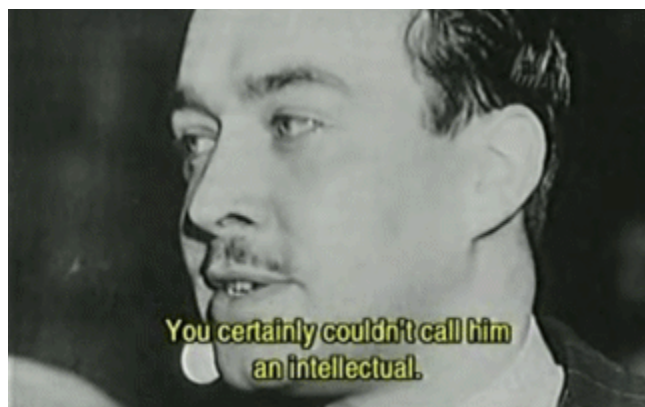
Within months, Willy shows up in Berlin basically playing off the Hitler men.



[Narrator] In London, the name "Hitler" was a liability. In the Third Reich it could make your career. Hitler's nephew seized his opportunities.



[Otto Schlepper] I knew him as William Patrick Hitler. I called him Herr Hitler. Plain and simple, but polite.



You certainly couldn't call him an intellectual. He was a petit bourgeois, and neither well educated nor very knowledgeable.



[Narrator] German culture left him cold.



He had other interests to pursue in Berlin.

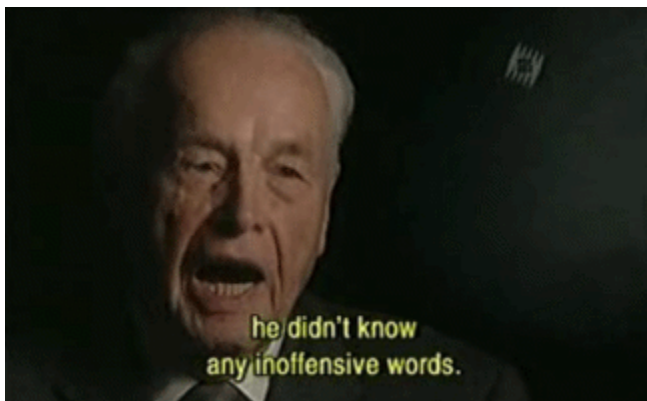


He refused to go with me
to the university.

[Otto Schlepper] He refused to go with me to the university. Instead he said, "Where can I meet a girl?"



I suggested he go to a tea dance.



he didn't know
any inoffensive words.

In sexual matters, he didn't know any inoffensive words. He only knew coarse expressions and he used plenty of them.



[Narrator] Willy had a habit of making foul-mouthed passes at women.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] William Patrick Hitler was the classic nephew from hell. He was the bane of Adolf Hitler's life. While Hitler had a lot to hide, he had a lot to be embarrassed about, he had a lot to be uncomfortable about, but I don't think there was anyone in his life who was more of a curse upon him than Willy Hitler. He was the nephew that Hitler deserved.



[Narrator] Thanks to his uncle, Willy Hitler got a job at the Reich Credit Bank in Berlin. But this Hitler had no taste for regular work. Willy had other plans.

ings wird es für mich ganz zwecklos
unter derselben Lebensauffassungen
n so herzlich empfangen sein würde
daher klar machen, dass ich beabsich
on, die schon jahrelang mein Leben
verwüstet haben, endgültig zu beir

In a letter to his uncle, he threatened to take the Hitler family secrets to the British press unless his personal circumstances improved.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] It was a blatant act of blackmail on William's part, and the most astonishing thing is that it worked.



[Narrator] How did Willy manage to put pressure on the most powerful man in Europe?



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] Hitler's expressed concern was that Willy had found proof that there was Jewish blood in the Hitler family veins, which would have been absolutely catastrophic for Hitler. The fact was Willy's threat, allegedly, was the fact that Willy's father, Alois, had committed bigamy and been charged with it.



[Narrator] A misunderstanding that paid off. For six years Willy lived a carefree life in Hitler's Reich.



March 1938. The annexation of Austria. Hitler made a triumphant return to his old homeland.



[Adolf Hitler] As Fuhrer and chancellor of the German nation and the Reich, I hereby proclaim the incorporation of my homeland into the German Reich!





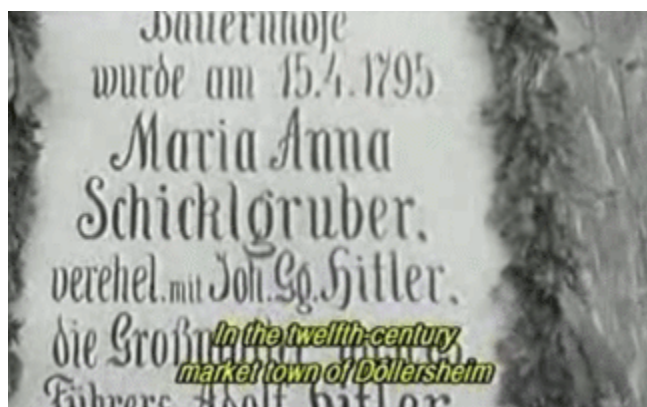
[Narrator] The home district of the Hitler family.



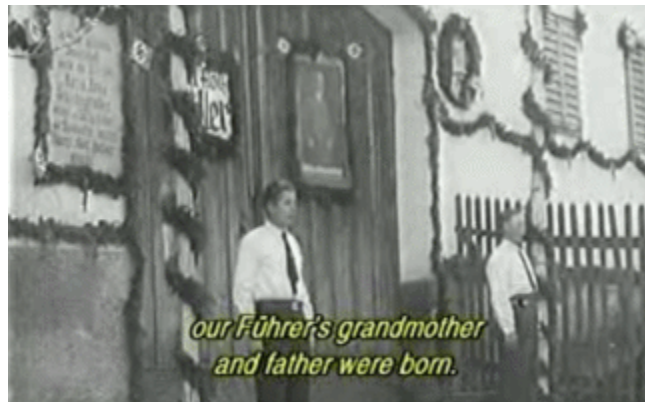
Waldviertel in lower Austria was declared the Fuhrer's ancestral province.



The local newsreel, the Ostmark Wolken Schau? was in raptures.



[Newsreel] In the twelfth-century market town of Dollersheim,



our Fuhrer's grandmother and father were born.



[Narrator] For all the Hiedlers, Schmidts and Schicklgrubers, it was almost like getting a knighthood.



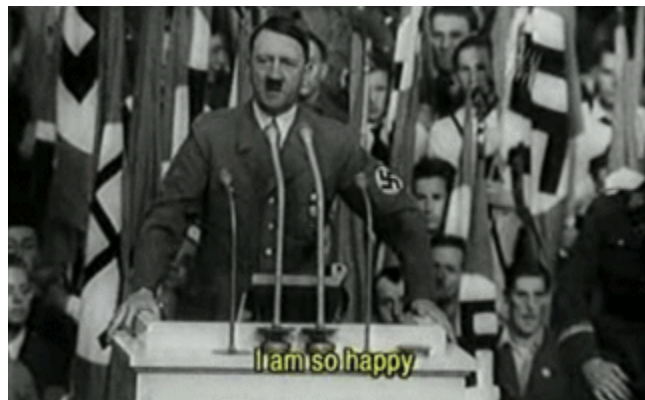
[Josef Pointstingl, local resident] Hitler's birthday on 1 May ...



was celebrated with a lot of hoo-ha.



All the Nazis, the illegal ones, suddenly came into their own. All you could hear was shouts of "Heil Hitler!"



[Adolf Hitler] I am so happy to be here at this time, because a youthful dream and my life's greatest desire have been fulfilled.



[Narrator] But the ancestors had to make way. The ancestral province became a military training ground.



Thousands were resettled.



Dollersheim after it was demolished. A symbolic clean sweep in matters of ancestry.



It put a stop to all quick questions about Hitler's descent.



A year later the war broke out.



The Dictator wanted the victory of the so-called "Master Race."



With his second wife, Hedwig, Alois had a son who wanted to fight for the cause.



Hitler's favorite nephew, Heinz.



First he went to the Nazi Educational Institution at Ballenstedt, an elite school with military discipline.



Heinz wanted to become an officer.



Everyone in the school knew who Heinz was.



[Hans-Wolf Werner, school friend] One of the lads had a car. They tore through Magdeburg without a license. The police stopped them and he showed his ID, Heinz Hitler. The police just saluted and let them drive on.



[Narrator] In 1941, Heinz went to war for his uncle against the Soviet Union,



the campaign of annihilation in the East.



He served as a signals intelligence officer in the 23rd artillery regiment. His name spelled danger.



[Hans-Wolf Werner, school friend] Everyone must have realized that if a Hitler fell into Russian hands, there were two possibilities. Either he'd be used as an important prisoner of war or ... bang!



[Narrator] On the evening of the 10th of January, 1942, Heinz Hitler was ordered to recover radio equipment from an army post. He never came back.



[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] Mum and Dad always used to say ...



that they didn't want him to go to the front. I don't think Adolf Hitler was too pleased either.

[Narrator] But his nephew didn't want preferential treatment.

[Alois Hitler's foster daughter] He went missing in action. We never got a death notice or a confirmation from Russia that he was killed there. Nobody knows what happened to him. That really demoralised them. Dad said, "I could stand knowing he's dead. But I don't know anything."



[Narrator] Heinz was taken prisoner.



He was transferred to Moscow's V.I.P. prison Butyrka.



He died in captivity after months of interrogation. His name was his downfall.



In April 1945, Soviet troops reached Waldviertel region of lower Austria, Hitler's ancestral province.



The hunt for the Dictator's relatives began.



The Red Army passed through this very valley.



Adolf Hitler's second cousin still lives here --



a farmer, Adolf Koppensteiner.



For the first time, the keen accordionist discusses the curse of being related to the Nazi Dictator.

[Adolf Koppensteiner, Hitler's second cousin] My father and mother didn't hurt anyone.



They never hurt anyone in their entire lives. They were terribly afraid of the Russians. They were so scared that they dug a cave outside our house. I remember being there as a little boy. They wanted to hide in it.



[Narrator] This was the Koppensteiner family seven days before the Red Army invaded the Waldviertel. After that, everything was to change.



The orders from Moscow were collective imprisonment for all of Hitler's relatives.

[Adolf Koppensteiner, Hitler's second cousin] The Russians said it was only to take a statement,



but we knew then that they'd never come back.



[Narrator] The sentence was clear from the start:



forced labor.



Ignatz Koppensteiner ...



and his wife Maria were interrogated until they finally acknowledged their so-called complicity in the Second World War.

Принимая предварительное следствие по делу законченным, в добытые данные
исчерпывающими для ведения суда, руководствуясь ст. 306 УПК РСФСР, объявила об
этом обвиняемому, разъяснила для ознакомления все производство по делу и спросила —
имеет ли обвиняемый чем-либо дополнить следствие.
Обвиняемый Коппенштайнер Адольф ознакомившись с кате-
горией следственного дела заявил, что со своей матерью начал
свидетельство для ознакомления по делу не имеет
никаких жалоб и ходатайств не желает.



[Adolf Koppensteiner, Hitler's second cousin] We all hoped they would return one day. But it was not to be. They never came back. Not one message, not one letter. We heard absolutely nothing.



[Narrator] Adolf Koppensteiner was six years old when he lost his parents.



[Adolf Koppensteiner, Hitler's second cousin] To be honest, I'm still scared today. I often feel scared.

[Narrator] Why?

[Adolf Koppensteiner, Hitler's second cousin] Because you never know what might happen.



[Narrator] It's the fear of having to pay for his great-uncle's crimes, sixty years after the war's end.



Only one member of the Hitler family could free himself from the Dictator's thrall. His nephew, William Patrick Hitler. He left Germany before the war.



In 1939, he and his mother went to New York, and he changed sides.



[William Patrick Hitler] I believe that Hitler's policy in Europe will not bring any benefit to the human race at all.

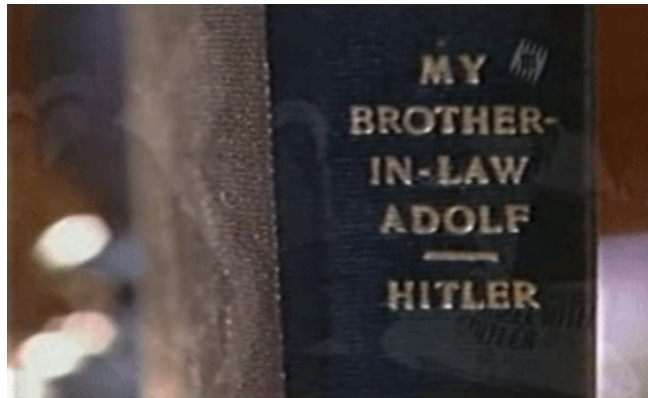
[Narrator] Willy knew how to make the most of the situation.



[William Patrick Hitler] I hope that the American people in this country will not be kidded by my moustache, because after all my heart's in the right place, and that's the main thing.



[Narrator] Even in exile, these Hitlers wanted to capitalize on their name.



Willy's mother wrote a book called "My Brother In-Law Adolf Hitler,"



and William Patrick went on a lecture tour "To Hell With Hitler."

The White House.,
Washington.D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

May I take the liberty of encroaching on you and that of your staff at the White House? Mindful of days the nation is now passing through, I do so only if prerogative of your high office alone can decide my singular situation.

Permit me to outline as briefly as possible of my position, the solution of which I feel could be should you feel moved to give your kind intercession.

Willy wrote to President Roosevelt to say he wanted to fight against his uncle. At first, the FBI had him tailed. But then they offered support.



[Newscast] EXTRA! HITLER JOINS U.S. NAVY.



P.S. -- IT'S NOT ADOLF HITLER!
Paramount News
Voice: Bernard Dudley



[Bernard Dudley] It is the Fuhrer's nephew. William Patrick Hitler, 32, who came here from England five years ago. This will break Uncle Schickelgruber's heart.



[William Patrick Hitler] As a member of the Armed Forces, I hope to take an active part in the liquidation of this man, my uncle, who has unleashed such misery upon the world.



[Narrator] After the war, Willy Hitler went into hiding on Long Island. Now, he was afraid that being related to the 20th century's greatest criminal might be his undoing.



[Timothy Ryback, Historian] What Willy ultimately did was to change his name repeatedly. He moved residences repeatedly. He lived in absolute terror that this past would catch up with him.



[Narrator] And yet he called his first son Alexander Adolf. And his new surname, which we cannot give here, is reminiscent of one of Adolf Hitler's spiritual ideals. [Stuart-Houston (Houston Stewart Chamberlain)]



William Patrick's children will never reveal their secret.



But it is hard to remain completely anonymous.



Jeff Fuhrman, a former friend of Willy's youngest son Howard, learns Howard's true identity for the first time.



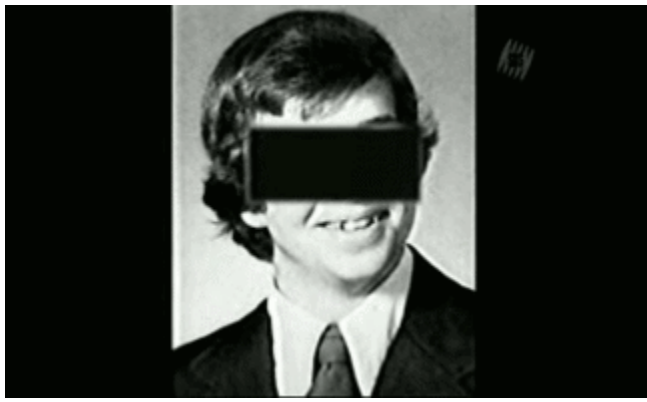
[Jeff Fuhrman] Well, I'm glad he changed his name, because I think they would have had a terrible time living virtually anywhere, unfortunately.



[Narrator] Can they escape their past?



[Jeff Fuhrman] He grew out of a piece of history he wasn't involved with,



and he did a tremendous job of choosing not to tell anybody. And from what I know of Howard, I believe with all that baggage his parents brought with him, brought with them, I think they just came out here and became just an American family, like the rest of us.



[Narrator] Two of Willy's sons are gardeners. The third is a psychotherapist. They all keep their silence. A lawyer shields them from all contact.



[Florian Beierl, Historian] All Hitler's relatives shut themselves off. With a few exceptions they won't answer questions, and they avoid the public. As a result, the myth surrounding their ancestor Adolf Hitler will inevitably be perpetuated.



[Narrator] A life of secrecy.



[Florian Beierl, Historian] It looks as if they made a decision to let the family line die out. The eldest son is over 50, the others are in their 30s. None of them has a family or children, and of course, it leads one to think that their plan might be not to propagate this family.



[Narrator] A family no one wants to admit to.



Angela Raubal lived incognito near Munich until her death in 1949. She left two children.



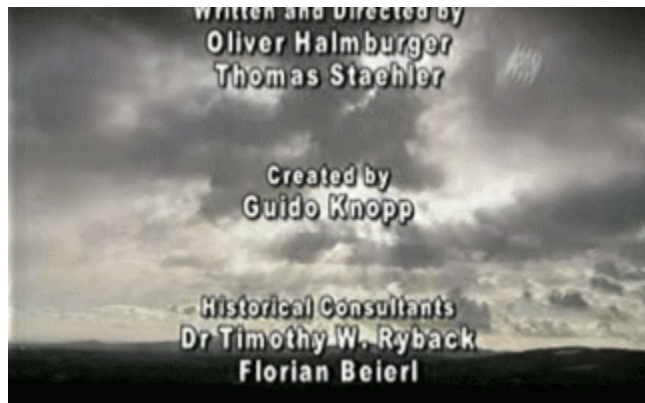
Paula Hitler died without issue in 1960.



Alois died in 1956. He is buried in Hamburg, together with Hedwig and Erna and Hans Hitler.



William Patrick Hitler died in 1987. He is survived by three sons who live in the United States. Relatives of Adolf Hitler are alive today in Austria and North America. The shadow of a criminal past will never leave them.



Written and directed by
Oliver Halmburger
Thomas Staehler

Created by
Guido Knopp

Historical Consultants
Dr. Timothy W. Ryback
Florian Beierl

Research and Documentation
Franz Fleischmann
Kai Schafer

Location Manager
Jasmina Krajacic

Camera
Tobias Corts

Assistant Camera
Jannis Frick
Richard Koburg

Editor
Ingo Guski

Music
Markus Lonardoni

Graphics
Oliver Kochs

Audio Mix
Oliver Gorts

Executive Producer
Carola Ulrich

Commissioning Editor
Stefan Brauburger

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Narrator
David Ritchie

Additional Readings
Mary Anne Slavich

Script and Subtitles
Rosamund Ziegert
Keith McLennan

Audio
Robert Fenton
Bruce Dale



Post Production
Vivian Andrews
Slavica Gajic

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Keith McLennan

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