

Did you know?



“Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it.” (Edmund Burke)

In the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. we can find the famous poem “First they came...” of Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller, who was arrested in 1939, sent to the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp, then later to Dachau before being freed in 1945 by the Allies.

The poem reads, *“First, they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.”*

After reading this poem many may reach the conclusion that Hitler and his regime stood against, communism, socialism, trade unions and Jews.

Adolf Hitler, 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, was the son of Alois, a successful customs bureau officer. In 1914, at the outbreak of World War I, Hitler was living in Munich and voluntarily enlisted in the German Army, served as a dispatch runner on the Western Front, was decorated for bravery, received the Iron Cross, Second Class, in 1914, Iron Cross, First Class on 4 August 1918, and the Black Wound Badge on 18 May 1918. His heroic service and received medals helped him in his after-war career.

In 1919 he joined the German Workers' Party, which a year later changed its platform to appeal to the majority of the German population, renaming itself the “National Socialist German Workers' Party,” known today as the Nazi Party, and in 1921 Hitler was appointed its head.

By attacking the Treaty of Versailles and promoting the unification all Germanic-speaking people into a single nation-state, ***The Greater Germanic Reich***, Hitler's party grew so rapidly that in 1923, he attempted to seize power. He enlisted the help of World War I General Erich Ludendorff for an attempted coup known as the “Beer Hall Putsch” to overthrow the Bavarian government. Arrested on 11 November 1923 for high treason he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and released a year later he gained national recognition. He was seen by patriots as one who could restore the greatness of Germany. The communists, socialists, and the trade unionists, of Communist International (Comintern) viewed him as one who could help start a communist revolution in the country. To industrialists and businessmen, many of them Jewish, Hitler was a potential source of new, big, lucrative government contracts. To the impoverished, he was the one who would take care of their basic needs. Over the next eight years the Nazi Party grew nationally to the point that in 1932 it caused a parliamentary impasse. On 30 January, 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg, to break the parliamentary gridlock, appointed Hitler as chancellor which shifted the balance to the benefit of the Nazi party. To secure his party's gains, Hitler had to eliminate the communist party. It was not a sentimental move, but a tactical one. The communist parties had secret military wings in every country with the purpose to prepare for the civil war. In Germany it was the M-Apparat of the Communist Party (Roterfrontkämpferbund) which with the help of Soviet Russia and Communist International could initiate a successful revolution in Germany which had been demilitarized after WWI.



However, Hitler had no problem working together with the communists if this benefited him and his agenda. Just before starting WWII in August 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact beginning almost two-year period of military and economic cooperation between two countries starting with the invasion of Poland. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, from west and the Soviets joined them seventeen days later attacking from east.



In 1940 Germany received from Russia one million tons of cereals, half-a-million tons of wheat, 900,000 tons of oil, 100,000 tons of cotton, 500,000 tons of phosphates and considerable amounts of other vital raw materials, along with the transit of one million tons of soybeans from Manchuria. In return the Soviets were to receive a naval cruiser, the plans to the battleship Bismarck, heavy naval guns, other naval gear and 30 of Germany's latest warplanes, as well as nonmilitary equipment like locomotives, turbines, generators, diesel engines, commercial ships and machine tools. This alliance with the communists allowed Hitler to successfully invade France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in May 1940.

However, back in 1933, to eliminate competition and secure power, on 27 February the German parliament building in Berlin (the Reichstag) was set on fire and Hitler's government accused Marinus van der Lubbe, a Dutch council communist as the perpetrator. In effect president Paul von Hindenburg issued an emergency decree suspending civil liberties and the government instituted mass arrests of communists, including all the Communist Party's parliamentary delegates. With communists gone and their seats empty, the Nazi Party went from having a plurality to a majority.

Since the Nazi Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) was the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the statement of Martin Niemöller; *then they came for the Socialists, then they came for the trade unionists*, seems confusing, but the explanation is simple. Hitler went after independent socialist parties and independent trade unions and by eliminating them created a one-party, one-man dictatorship like Stalin's in the Soviet Union.

To gain absolute power over his people, Hitler needed control over their hearts. He used two elements just like Stalin and the communists. First was a mixture of patriotism and pride, the Soviets were fighting and dying for Mother Russia and the superiority of the communist system, Germans were dying for the superiority of Germany and the Aryan race. The second element is hate, a hate powerful enough to replace and eliminate rational thought. Communists despised the freedom of capitalism and its symbol the United States of America.



Hitler needed a target for the people to hate. The Jews, many of whom were successful, prosperous, highly educated and visibly different; different culture, different language, religion and race, already envied by many Germans, were the obvious choice. Around 6 million Jews died in concentration camps, Slavs were another lesser people to be despised and for elimination. Just from Poland during WW II 1.5 million were deported to German territory for forced labor and 1.9 million non-Jewish civilians killed in concentration camps. All of that to gain power, more power, the absolute power, which *"corrupts absolutely"* (Sir John

Dalberg-Acton).

Government has a monopoly on power and a tendency to grow, that's why "Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one." (Thomas Paine)