

EUROPEAN HISTORY: THE HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE

Years of Turmoil in Germany

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Years of Turmoil in Germany

Wars often begin with a surge of enthusiasm and patriotism, and World War I was no exception.

In France, England, Russia, Germany, and Austria, crowds cheered troops as they headed off to war. In Berlin, marching soldiers were handed flowers by admirers on the streets.

Adolf Hitler fell to his knees rejoicing that Heaven had allowed him to live in such a time. He believed war would cleanse Germany of its impurities and build a great future for the German nation.

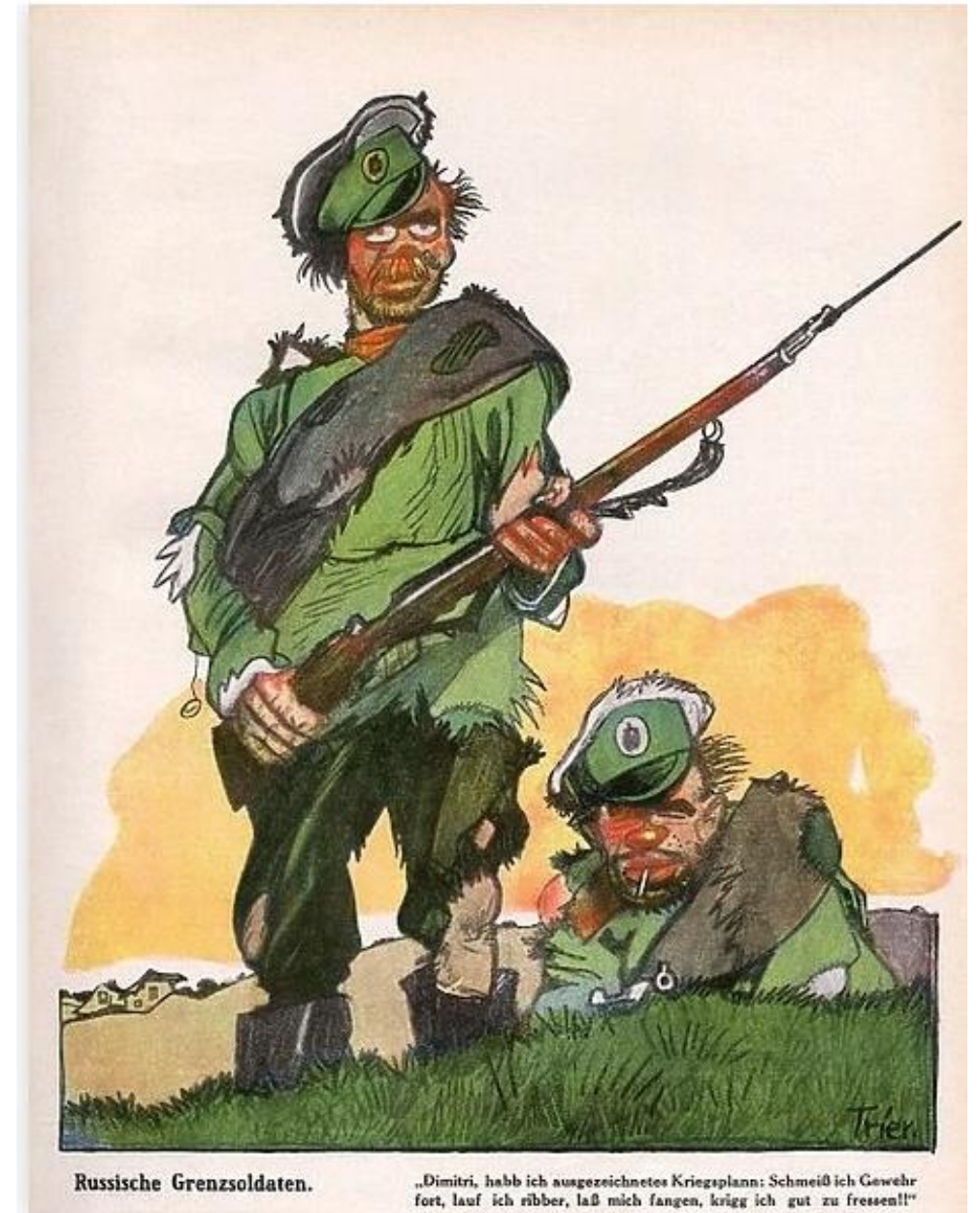


WWI German troops marching off to war, their tunics & rifles festooned with flowers from the jubilant crowd

Behind wars often lie long-standing hatreds. The German Kaiser said: "I hate the Slavs. I know it is a sin, but I can't help hating them."

The French wanted revenge on Germany for their 1871 defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Belgian crowds shouted: "Down with the Germans."

Austria's emperor said: "This is war between Teutons and Slavs."
(Central Europeans and Eastern Europeans)



German caricature of Russian soldiers, WW1

German caricature of Russian soldiers in 1914 at the beginning of the First World War. Date: 1914

The war soon lost its charm, however, and became a struggle for national survival. The Russians, badly beaten by the Germans, found an easier target to scapegoat, and began driving Jews from small villages in the Pale. German troops, angered by Belgian resistance, began looting and killing Belgian civilians.

These attacks occurred despite the fact that thousands of Jews served in the Russian army during WWI.

This is a photo of Russian Jewish Soldiers stationed in Ukraine during this time.



A terrible cruelty was reserved for the Armenians of Turkey. Conquered in 1515, the Armenians were Christians in an Islamic country, and they had no rights. After Turkey (a German ally) had been beaten back by the Russians, their troops attacked the unarmed Armenians.

They did this because they erroneously feared the Russians would help the Armenians create their own independent country in Eastern Anatolia.



The 100,000 Armenians in the Turkish army were shot by their officers, and Armenian leaders were arrested and hanged.

The Interior Minister sent out an order: 'Regardless of women, children, or invalids, and however deplorable the methods of destruction might seem, an end is to be put to their existence.'

Within seven months of 1915, about 500,000 of the two million Armenians had died.



The heads of victims of the Armenian massacre shown in 1915 in Turkey. (AP Photo

By November 1918, German defeat in the war seemed certain. Mutinies broke out in the army and navy; in cities, Communist-led uprisings occurred.

On November 10, the Kaiser gave up his throne, and the army informed Chancellor Ebert that it would support the government against a Communist takeover. Germany signed the armistice on November 11.

As a result of the abdication and the German Revolution of 1918-19, the nobility as a legally-defined class was abolished. Following the proclamation of the Weimar Constitution on 11 August 1919, all Germans were declared equal before the law.

KAISER ABDICATES

'BEAST OF BERLIN AND FAMILY RENOUNCE THE GERMAN THRONE

FORESAKEN BY HIS "GOTT," ARMIES DEFEATED, KAISER ACCEPTS THE INEVITABLE

With Passing From Power of William Hohenzollern All Heads of Central Powers When They Entered the War Have Died or Lost Their Thrones Through Internal Disorder or Revolt of Their Subjects.

NO REPLY YET RECEIVED TO TERMS OF ARMISTICE

Red Flag Is Waving Over a Continually Increasing Area of Germany, While Haig, Pelain and Pershing Continue as Though They Had Never Heard of an Armistice.

ALLIES HAVE NO DESIGNS ON THE GERMAN PEOPLE

LOLD MAYOR HOLDS A "VICTORY" SHOW

WASHINGTON STATEMENT

NEWS FROM GERMANY THAT KAISER HAD ABDICATED WAS HEARD IN WASHINGTON WITH SCARCELY MORE THAN A RIPPLE

IN Government and Diplomatic Circles the Announcement Was Accepted as a Matter to Be Expected as One of the Acts in the Great Tragedy Now Being Brought to a Close By Collapse on Western Front.

Who Is to Blame?

There was no statement from the Kaiser...

(CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO)



The Man Who Brought It About

GERMANY HAS MADE NO ANSWER TO THE ARMISTICE TERMS

More Than Half the Time Allowed for Answer Is Gone

MOMENTOUS EVENTS MAY CAUSE DELAY

With Kaiser Out Modification of Terms May Be Asked

WASHINGTON (Special)

(CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO)

\$500 REWARD

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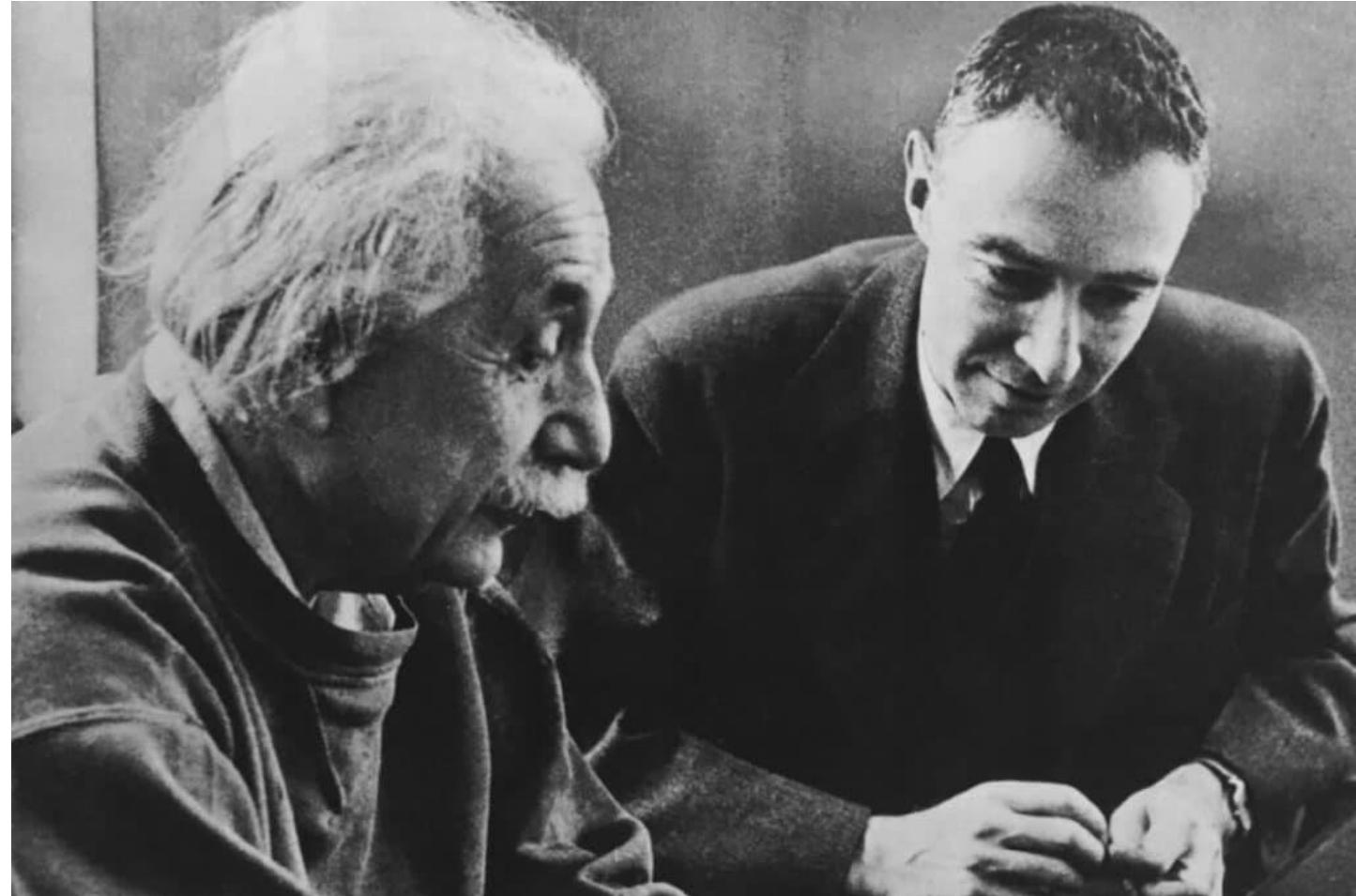
As a result of the abdication and the German Revolution of 1918–19, the nobility as a legally-defined class was abolished. Following the proclamation of the Weimar Constitution on 11 August 1919, all Germans were declared equal before the law. This short-lived Weimar Republic allowed Jews to participate fully in German life, academics, and all professional pursuits.

Comprising only 1% of the German population, Jews brought in 1/3 of all of its Nobel Prizes, accounted for 1/3 of all doctors, 1/3 of all lawyers, and found themselves excelling in commercial pursuits, as well.

Unfortunately, such success also bred envy and a new antisemitism to some Germans who were not so successful.

Regarding the many German-Jewish intellectuals who escaped Germany to come to the U.S., President Roosevelt said, “Hitler shook the tree, and I picked up all the apples.”

Ironically, these German intellectuals, led by Robert Oppenheimer, created the Atomic Bomb for the U.S., which won WWII for the Allies against Hitler.



Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, circa 1950.

(Photo: Wikipedia Commons)

The WEIMAR REPUBLIC replaced Imperial Germany, although it was off to a poor start. Violent groups fought for control; leaders were murdered, uprisings (Putsches) had to be put down, and ranting politicians and street thugs kept the country in turmoil. Troops returning from the front quietly disappeared as civilians, so the army was of little help in keeping order. A Communist, left-wing group, the Spartacists, started a revolt in Berlin. They were attacked by the right-wing Frei Korps (Free Corps), and Spartacist leaders were murdered. The Frei Korps then went from town to town, beating up Communists.



German Freikorps troops executing a communist in Munich during the German Revolution

In 1920, the government ordered the army to bring the Freikorps under control, but the troops mutinied. The government left Berlin, right-wingers led by Wolfgang Kapp took over the city, but a strike started by left-wingers allowed the government to take over again.



[Youtube \(Putsch-attempted coup d'etat, seizure of government power.](https://youtu.be/3wd7_Z4QO4Y?si=vWGYKC4CmOJruKbg)

https://youtu.be/3wd7_Z4QO4Y?si=vWGYKC4CmOJruKbg

During this time, the German economy suffered greatly from the instability and the loss of Alsace and Lorraine.

German money dropped in value from 4,500 marks to one U.S. dollar to 4.2 billion marks to the dollar.

Money was worthless, and desperate Germans turned to the right- or left-wingers for answers.



Children play with worthless banknotes during the 1923 hyperinflation

In Saxony, the army crushed a left-wing revolt, and in Bavaria, it stopped the small right-wing Nazi party, and the Nazi leaders were sent to prison. From 1924 to 1929, Germany's economy made a dramatic comeback. The middle parties (neither right- nor left-wing) took control of the Reichstag (lower house of the German legislature). Radical groups lost popularity.

Gustav Stresemann and economic recovery

In 1923, the Weimar Republic was on the verge of collapse socially and economically. But surprisingly, this crisis was followed by a period of relative stability and success. The period 1924-1929 was a time when the Weimar economy recovered and cultural life in Germany flourished.

This dramatic turnabout happened in large part because of the role played by Gustav Stresemann who became Chancellor in August 1923 during the crisis. This was a time when prices in Germany went up quicker than people could spend their money and the German currency lost its value.

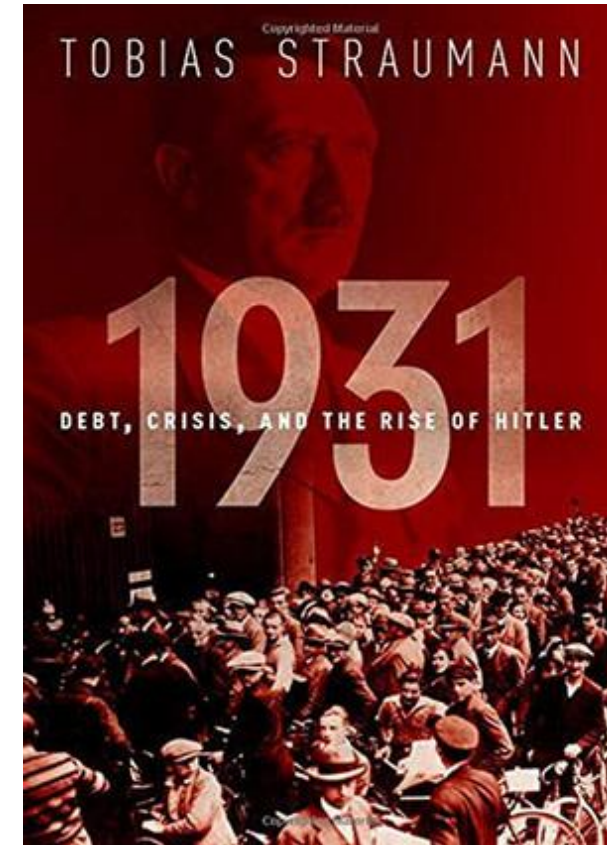
Stresemann was Chancellor for only three months but continued to serve as Foreign Minister, rebuilding and restoring Germany's international status until his death in October 1929, ironically just weeks before the crisis that would end Weimar's period of greater prosperity and stability.



However, the Great Depression changed this, and in a short time, high unemployment and renewed Communist activity made many middle-class Germans look to Adolf Hitler's Nazis for help.

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 marks a major turning point in Germany: following prosperity under the government of the Weimar Republic, foreign investors withdraw their German interests, beginning the crumbling of the Republican government in favor of Nazism. The number of unemployed reaches three million.

A bank in Berlin damaged during violent clashes between police and demonstrators in June 1931 © Getty



<https://www.ft.com/content/62f52cda-759a-11e9-b0ec-7dff87b9a4a2>

Few texts cover the narrative of Germany's experience during the Great Depression as well as Straumann's *1931*.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazis won followers by promising to create a strong Germany.

The Nazis promised to:

- fix the economy and put people back to work,
- return Germany to the status of a great European, and even world, power,
- regain territory Germany had lost in World War I,
- create a strong authoritarian German government, and
- unite Protestant Germans along racial and ethnic lines.

The Nazis played on people's hopes, fears, and prejudices.

They also offered scapegoats.

They falsely claimed that Jews and Communists were to blame for Germany's problems.

This claim was part of the Nazis' antisemitic and racist ideology.

25 point program for the National Socialist German Workers' Party (known as Nazi Party).



Programm der National-Sozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiter-Partei

Das Programm der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei ist ein Zeit-Programm. Die Führer lehnen es ab, nach Erreichung der im Programm aufgestellten Ziele neue aufzustellen, nur zu dem Zweck, um durch künstlich gesteigerte Unzufriedenheit der Massen das Fortbestehen der Partei zu ermöglichen.

- 1 Wir fordern den Zusammenschluß aller Deutschen auf Grund des Selbstbestimmungsrechtes der Völker zu einem Groß-Deutschland.
- 2 Wir fordern die Gleichberechtigung des Deutschen Volkes gegenüber den anderen Nationen, Aufhebung der Friedensverträge von Versailles und St. Germain.
- 3 Wir fordern Land und Boden (Kolonien) zur Ernährung unseres Volkes und Ansiedlung unseres Bevölkerungüberschusses.
- 4 Staatsbürger kann nur der sein, wer Volksgenosse ist. Volksgenosse kann nur sein, wer deutschen Blutes ist, ohne Rücksicht auf Konfession. Kein Jude kann daher Volksgenosse sein.
- 5 Wer nicht Staatsbürger ist, soll nur als Gast in Deutschland leben können und muß unter Fremden-Gesetzgebung stehen.
- 6 Das Recht über Führung und Gesetz des Staates zu bestimmen, darf nur dem Staatsbürger zustehen. Daher fordern wir, daß jedes öffentliche Amt, gleichgültig welcher Art, gleich ob im Reich, Land oder Gemeinde, nur durch Staatsbürger bekleidet werden darf.
Wir bekämpfen die korumpierende Parlamentswirtschaft einer Stellenbesetzung nur nach Parteigleichspunkten ohne Rücksicht auf Charakter und Fähigkeiten.
- 7 Wir fordern, daß sich der Staat verpflichtet, in erster Linie für die Erwerbs- und Lebensmöglichkeit der Staatsbürger zu sorgen. Wenn es nicht möglich ist, die Gesamtbevölkerung des Staates zu ernähren, so sind die Angehörigen fremder Nationen (Nicht-Staatsbürger) aus dem Reich auszuweisen.
- 8 Jede weitere Einwanderung Nicht-Deutscher ist zu verhindern. Wir fordern, daß alle Nicht-Deutschen, die seit 2. August 1914 in Deutschland eingewandert sind, sofort zum Verlassen des Reiches gezwungen werden.
- 9 Alle Staatsbürger müssen gleiche Rechte und Pflichten besitzen.
- 10 Erste Pflicht jedes Staatsbürgers muß sein, geistig oder körperlich zu schaffen. Die Tätigkeit des Einzelnen darf nicht gegen die Interessen der Allgemeinheit verstoßen, sondern muß im Rahmen des Gesamten zum Nutzen Aller erfolgen.
Daher fordern wir:
 - 11 Abschaffung des arbeits- und mühseligen Einkommens.
Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft.
 - 12 Im Hinblick auf die ungeheuren Opfer an Gut und Blut, die jeder Krieg vom Volke fordert, muß die persönliche Bereicherung durch den Krieg als Verbrechen am Volke betrachtet werden. Wir fordern daher restlose Einziehung aller Kriegsgewinne.
 - 13 Wir fordern die Verstaatlichung aller (bisher) bereits vergesellschafteten Betriebe (Trusts).
 - 14 Wir fordern Gewinnbeteiligung an Großbetrieben.
 - 15 Wir fordern einen großzügigen Ausbau der Altersversorgung.
 - 16 Wir fordern die Schaffung eines gesunden Mittelstandes und seine Erhaltung, sofortige Kommunalisierung der Groß-Warenhäuser und ihre Vermietung zu billigen Preisen an kleine Gewerbetreibende, schärfste Berücksichtigung aller kleinen Gewerbetreibenden bei Lieferungen an den Staat, die Länder oder Gemeinden.
 - 17 Wir fordern eine unseren nationalen Bedürfnissen angepasste Bodenreform, Schaffung eines Gesetzes zur unentgeltlichen Enteignung von Boden für gemeinnützige Zwecke, Abschaffung des Bodenzinses und Verhinderung jeder Bodenpekulation.
 - 18 Wir fordern den rücksichtslosen Kampf gegen diejenigen, die durch ihre Tätigkeit das Gemeininteresse schädigen. O m e i n e V o l k s v e r b r e c h e r, Wucherer, Schieber usw. sind mit dem Tode zu bestrafen, ohne Rücksichtnahme auf Konfession und Rasse.

ADOLF HITLER was born in Austria in 1889. As a boy, Hitler hated anyone who tried to bring him under control, his father and his teachers included.

He wrote that in his school days, he met only one Jewish boy and had no opinion on Jews at the time.

Hitler dropped out of school in 1915 and went to Vienna where he painted postcards and read antisemitic books and racial theories on the natural superiority of Aryans and the animal features of "subhuman" Slavs and Jews.



He served in the German army in World War I, earning two Iron Cross medals for bravery. After he recovered from injuries, the army sent him to spy on a small right-wing group called the German Workers' Party-men without a program, leader, or money.

He joined as member number 55 and soon became member 7 of the executive committee.



Hitler was twice decorated for bravery. He received the Iron Cross Second Class in 1914 and the Iron Cross First Class in 1918, an honor rarely given to a lance corporal. Hitler's First Class Iron Cross was recommended by Lieutenant Hugo Gutmann, above, a Jewish adjutant in the List Regiment.

It was a group to his liking, one he could mold to his wishes. He changed the name to the NSDAP, usually called Nazis. He made the swastika the party symbol and "Heil!" (Hail!) the greeting. He organized a militia, the brown-shirted SA (The Sturmabteilung, or **SA**, was a paramilitary organization associated with the Nazi Party), and formed the SS, his loyal bodyguards.

The early years of the Nazi Party



From 1921 to 1925 the Nazi Party offices were based at 12 Corneliusstresse, Munich. This photo was taken in 1921.

Courtesy of The Wiener Holocaust Library Collections.

Their "Beer Hall Putsch" in 1923 failed, and the leaders were put in prison. While there, Hitler wrote Mein Kampf (My Struggle), blaming Jews and Communists for Germany's troubles. No one knew how much suffering would come because of this man and his party.

