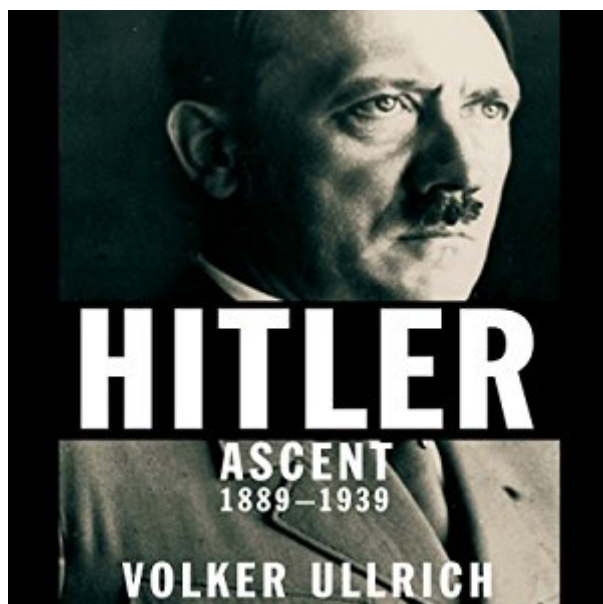


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Hitler: Ascent 1889-1939



Synopsis

A major new biography - an extraordinary, penetrating study of the man who has become the personification of evil. For all the literature about Adolf Hitler, there have been just four seminal biographies; this is the fifth, a landmark work that sheds important new light on Hitler himself. Drawing on previously unseen papers and a wealth of recent scholarly research, Volker Ullrich reveals the man behind the public persona, from Hitler's childhood, to his failures as a young man in Vienna, to his experiences during the First World War, to his rise as a far-right party leader. Ullrich deftly captures Hitler's intelligence, instinctive grasp of politics, and gift for oratory as well as his megalomania, deep insecurity, and repulsive worldview. Many previous biographies have focused on the larger social conditions that explain the rise of the Third Reich. Ullrich gives us a comprehensive portrait of a postwar Germany humiliated by defeat, wracked by political crisis, and starved by an economic depression - but his real gift is to show vividly how Hitler used his ruthlessness and political talent to shape the Nazi party and lead it to power. For decades the world has tried to grasp how Hitler was possible. By focusing on the man at the center of it all, on how he experienced his world, formed his political beliefs, and wielded power, this riveting biography brings us closer than ever to the answer. Translated from the German by Jefferson Chase.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First published in Germany in 2013, HITLER: ASCENT 1889-1939 is a dense, scholarly work that looks at the dictator of the Third Reich from many perspectives, offering perhaps the most human view available in our times. Volker Ullrich states that writing about Adolf Hitler is

without a doubt the most difficult task for a historian. Hitler was, by the time of his suicide at the end of World War II, considered by all but a handful of his most fanatical followers to be a monster, and since then has been almost universally depicted as such. Thus a chapter entitled "Hitler as Human Being" reveals the author's notable determination to present a responsible view of his complex protagonist. Ullrich chronicles Hitler's early childhood, his adolescence as a rather dreamy school dropout and his service in World War I, up to the moment when he became the occupant of the German Chancellery, pivoting his country to the brink of all-out war. Contrary to other accounts that suggest Hitler was the product of abuse, Ullrich asserts that the boy experienced an unremarkable childhood for the time and place. The young Hitler showed early academic promise but wound up with slipping grades, contempt for teachers and an autodidact's love of solitary reading. Eschewing the intimacy of most romantic relationships, but not a sexual deviant, he purposely developed an uncommon ability to stifle personal sentiment and morph into an iron-willed leader with near superhuman charisma. His pale violet eyes were variously described as intense, hypnotic, unforgettable and unwavering. Though he had only average talent as a painter, his hands were cited as those of an artist, and he used them memorably in his highly dramatic speeches.

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