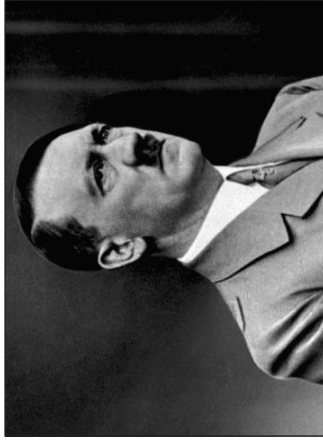


World War II on the War Front

Mein Kampf

by Adolf Hitler



Adolf Hitler's attitudes were a product of longstanding European prejudices, although he took those prejudices to new extremes. In this selection from his autobiography Mein Kampf (German for 'My Struggle'), he describes the development of his views on the Jewish citizens of Germany.

were exactly the same in the other papers. Yet one fact seem conspicuous: there was not one paper with Jews working on it which could have been regarded as truly national, according to my education and way of thinking. From the publisher down, they were all Jews.

I took all the Social Democratic pamphlets I could lay hands on and sought the names of their authors: Jews. I noted the names of the leaders; by far the greatest part were likewise members of the 'chosen people,' whether they were representatives in the Reichsrat or trade-union secretaries, the heads of organizations or street agitators ... One thing had grown clear to me: the party with whose petty representatives I had been carrying on the most violent struggle for months was, as to leadership, almost exclusively in the hands of a foreign people; for, to my deep and joyful satisfaction, I had at last come to the conclusion that the Jew was no German.

Today it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to say when the word 'Jew' first gave me ground for special thoughts... Not until my fourteenth year did I begin to come across the word 'Jew,' with any frequency, partly in connection with political discussions ... There were few Jews in Linz. In the course of the centuries their outward appearance had become Europeanized and had taken on a human look; in fact, I even took them for Germans.

Then I came to Vienna ... Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew?, was my first thought ... Is this a German?

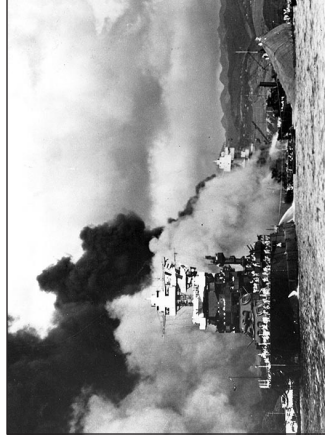
Wherever I went, I began to see Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity. Particularly the Inner City and the districts north of the Danube Canal swarmed with a people which even outwardly had lost all resemblance to Germans. In a short time I was made more thoughtfully than ever by my slowly rising insight into the type of activity carried on by the Jews in certain fields. Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?

The fact that nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people, constituting hardly one hundredth of all the country's inhabitants, could simply not be talked away; it was the plain truth.

When I recognized the Jew as the leader of the Social Democracy, the scales dropped from my eyes. A long soul struggle had reached its conclusion ... I gradually became aware that the Social Democratic press was directed predominately by Jews; yet I did not attribute any special significance to this circumstance, since conditions

Remembering Pearl Harbor

by John Garcia



On December 7, 1941, The Japanese naval and air forces launched a surprise attack against the United States at Pearl Harbor, located in Hawaii. The attack had the effect of drawing the United States into World War II. Here, John Garcia—who was still a teenager at the time of the invasion, but ultimately joined the U.S. Army—recounts his experience at Pearl Harbor.

I was sixteen year old, employed as a pipe fitter apprentice at Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. On December 7, 1941, oh, around 8.00 a.m., my grandmother woke me. She informed me that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor. I said, 'They're just practicing.' She said, no, it was real and the announcer is requesting that all Pearl Harbor workers report to work. I went out on the porch and I could see the anti-aircraft fire up in the sky. I just said, 'Oh boy.'

I was four miles away. I got out on my motor-cycle and it took me five, ten minutes to get there. It was a mess. I was working on the *USS Shaw*.* It was on a floating dry dock. It was in flames. I started to go down into the pipe fitter's shop to get my toolbox when another wave of Japanese came in. I got under a set of concrete steps at the dry dock where the battleship *Pennsylvania* was. An officer came by and asked me to go into the *Pennsylvania* and try to get the fires out. A bomb had penetrated the marine deck, and that was three decks below. Under that was the magazines: ammunition, powder, shells. I said, 'There ain't no way I'm gonna go down there.' It could blow up any minute. I was young and sixteen, not stupid, not at sixty-two cents an hour. (Laughs.)

A week later, they brought me before a navy court. It was determined that I was not service personnel and could not be ordered. There was no martial law at the time. Because I was sixteen and had gone into the water, the whole thing was dropped. I was asked by some other officer to go into the water and get sailors out that had been blown off the ships. Some were unconscious, some were dead. So I spent the rest of the day swimming inside the harbor, along with some other Hawaiians. I brought out I don't know how many bodies and how many were alive and how many dead. Another man would put them into ambulances and they'd be gone. We worked all day at that...

* - *The USS Shaw was a destroyer. The USS Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Arizona, and Utah were all battleships (much larger than a destroyer).*

The following morning, I went with my tools to the *West Virginia*. It had turned turtle, totally upside down. We found a number of men inside. The *Arizona* was a total washout. Also the *Utah*. There were men in there, 100. We spent about a month cutting the superstructure of the *West Virginia*, tilting it back on its hull. About three hundred men we cut out of there were still alive by the eighteenth day. It took two weeks to get all the fires out. We worked around the dock for three days. There was so much excitement and confusion. Some of our sailors were shooting five inch guns at the Japanese planes. You just cannot down a plane with a five-inch shell. They were landing in Honolulu, the unexploded naval shells. They have a ten-mile range. They hurt and killed a lot of people in the city.

When I came back after the third day, they told me that a shell had hit the house of my girl. We had been going together for, oh, about three years. Her house was a few blocks from my place. At the time, they said it was a Japanese bomb. Later we learned it was an American shell. She was killed. She was preparing for church at the time.

Enjoy the Great Adventure

by Dwight Fee



The following letter was written by World War I veteran Dwight Fee to his son William. William had enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1944, just as soon as he was old enough.

October 1, 1944

Dear Will:

Well, I figure you're off on the Great Adventure. There will be many disagreeable experiences; soul-shaking experiences; tragic experiences; uplifting experiences. You will see examples of selfishness and selflessness that will stir you tremendously. I have no doubt that you will develop the same respect that I have for the Infantry, the Gol-Damed Infantry, and the same awesome regard for the Medics.

I have no fears for you; you will do well. You have the finest spirit of any one I know of. I wish I could go FOR you, or at least WITH you, but this is your war. Mother and I will pray that God will give you courage for any danger you will have to face; that you will be given steadfastness, and patience, and resolution. We believe that God lays on nobody more than he is able to bear; that through all trials God will provide the qualities needed to meet them. I believe David: The Lord upholdeth all that fall; The cast-down raiseth up again.

Just be your own self; and there are not many people to whom I could say that.

You are serving in a great cause. Because of you and those like you millions of fathers and mothers and children again will be able to think and speak freely without fear; to live their lives without oppression. And we here at home will be spared what most certainly would have been the fate of those people if all of you had not gone out to prevent the domination of the world by Japan and Germany (and Italy)—and don't think for a minute that they wouldn't have dominated it. And they'll try again in another generation if they can. Goodnight, son. Have at em!

As always, Pop

Keep busy. Keep bucking.

I Can Render Service to This Great Cause

by Patrick Hitler



This letter was written by a man of German and Irish descent who relocated to the United States from Germany in 1939. When the United States joined World War II, he was eager to enlist, but was denied because of his unfortunate familial connections. The letter was addressed to President Roosevelt, asking his assistance.

March 3, 1942

His Excellency Franklin D. Roosevelt

The White House

Washington. D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

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

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

I am the nephew and only descendant of the ill-famed Chancellor and Leader of Germany who today so despotically seeks to enslave the free and Christian peoples of the globe.

Under your masterful leadership men of all creeds and nationalities are waging desperate war to determine, in the last analysis, whether they shall finally serve and live an ethical society under God or become enslaved by a devilish and pagan regime.

Everybody in the world today must answer to himself which cause they will serve. To free people of deep religious feeling there can be but one answer and one choice, that will sustain them always and to the bitter end.

I am one of many, but I can render service to this great cause and I have a life to give that it may, with the help of all, triumph in the end.

All my relatives and friends soon will be marching for freedom and decency under the Stars and Stripes. For this reason, Mr. President, I am respectfully submitting this petition to

you to enquire as to whether I may be allowed to join them in their struggle against tyranny and oppression?...

Your favorable decision on my appeal alone would ensure that continued benevolent spirit on the part of the American people, which today I feel so much a part of. I most respectfully assure you, Mr. President, that as in the past I would do my utmost in the future to be worthy of the great honor I am seeking through your kind aid, in the sure knowledge that my endeavors on behalf of the great principles of Democracy will at least bear favorable comparison to the activities of many individuals who for so long have been unworthy of the fine privilege of calling themselves Americans. May I therefore venture to hope, Mr. President, that in the turmoil of this vast conflict you will not be moved to reject my appeal for reasons which I am in no way responsible?

For me today there could be no greater honor, Mr. President, to have lived and to have been allowed to serve you, the deliverer of the American people from want, and no greater privilege then to have striven and had a small part in establishing the title you once will bear in posterity as the greatest Emancipator of suffering mankind in political history.

I would be most happy to give any additional information that might be required and I take the liberty of enclosing a circular containing details about myself.

Permit me, Mr. President, to express my heartfelt good wishes for your future health and happiness, coupled with the hope that you may soon lead all men who believe in decency everywhere onward and upward to a glorious victory.

Very respectfully yours,

Patrick Hitler

Note: The letter was forwarded to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who concluded that Adolf Hitler's nephew really did dislike his uncle and really did want to fight for the United States. Consequently, Patrick Hitler was allowed to join the U.S. Navy in 1944.

A Death in the D-Day Invasion

by Pvt. Charles McCallister



Private Charles McCallister and Private Jim Dashner were cousins and also paratroopers with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division. As part of the massive D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944, the Allied Powers (primarily the United States and Great Britain) attacked the coastline of France with 175,000 men and also airdropped 80,000 soldiers into the French countryside. Dashner was killed during the invasion; McCallister was left to break the news to Dashner's mother.

My dearest Aunt:

I suppose this is the first time I have ever written to you, Aunt Mima. I have always been able to maintain the closest contact through Mom and it never seemed necessary. I am sorry that this first letter must be written under such a sad circumstance but I hope we may come to know each other better through future correspondence and that we may be able to comfort each other in some way. At a time like this, it's hard for any one, especially one who isn't good at words such as I, to say anything that might be on comfort to someone who has suffered a great loss like you have, but since I can at least tell you how James met his death, I feel that it might be of some comfort to you.

When Jim came to see me a few weeks before the invasion, I knew instinctively when I first saw him that I would like him. First of all his wonderful physique and handsome features command respect and once you talked with him his honest ways and great personality made you like very much. We were friends from the start. We had a pleasant afternoon of talking of home and loved ones and then I walked out on the road with him where he flagged a truck going toward his camp. We shook hands and wished each other luck and I thought as I watched him running to catch his truck — "What a great guy!"

That was the last time I saw him. I knew he jumped in France because he is in the same division as I am and I hoped to meet him there. His regiment was close by all the time but there was not time to try to get together until the 10th day when I located his company and went over to see about him. I found his platoon and it only took a glance around to prove to me Jim wasn't there. I hoped for the best but dreaded to ask about him. By chance I approached a former very close friend of his who was with him at the time, and when he told

me what had happened it was quite a blow. By this time I had lost many friends and thought I had become hardened to it, but this was different. Jim was part of the family, the same blood as mine and that was different. But the battle field is no place to grieve so I made an effort to control my feelings and ask the fellow to tell me the details. This was what he told me:

“Jim’s Section Leader had been killed and Jim was in charge so he took over the machine gun himself. His platoon was sent out on a flank and ran into plenty trouble. The enemy had them surrounded on three sides and had them pinned down with fire. Jim took the machine gun and was in a spot and was doing plenty of good, so the Hinnies started concentrating all their efforts on him. They were trying to get him with a mortar. His platoon leader saw that were getting close and yelled to Jim that he’d better get out of there. The boys in the platoon said it was possible Jim didn’t hear, as they had never known him to refuse to obey an order but his friends seem to think he was just mad and was doing so much good at the time he didn’t want to move. So he stayed right there and fired until his gun was red hot. Then they got zeroed in on him and landed a mortar shell right on top of him. He died instantly but his hand was still clutching the trigger. As a result of his continued fire, the platoon was able to advance on their objective.”

On the way back to my outfit I let myself go and cried like a baby but I wasn’t ashamed of it.

When his son gets old enough, tell him how his father died and his son’s son, for our family must never forget him. Let’s try to replace grief with pride in the way he died and the things he died for, as that is the way Jim would want it...

Give my love and sympathy to them and Martha and his brothers.

With all my love

Charles

The Attack on Iwo Jima

by a Marine Corps reporter



Iwo Jima is a small volcanic island that lies just south of Tokyo (the capital of Japan). In order to launch a final attack on the nation of Japan in the summer of 1945, it was imperative that the heavily defended island be captured. The assault on Iwo Jima was launched on February 19, 1945 and was expected to take two days. It ended up taking five weeks, and resulted in the deaths of 6,000 American soldiers. The following story of the difficult, bloody invasion was written by an anonymous U.S. Marine Corps reporter.

When the 24th Marine Regiment’s 2nd Battalion reached the scene, they called it ‘the Wilderness,’ and there they spent four days on the line, with no respite from the song of death sung by mortars among those desolate crevices and gouged shell holes. The Wilderness covered about a square mile inland from Blue Beach 2, on the approaches to Airfield no. 2, and there was no cover. Here and there stood a blasted dwarf tree; here and there a stubby rock ledge in a maze of volcanic crevices.

The 2nd Battalion attacked with flame throwers, demolition charges, 37-millimeter guns, and riflemen. A tank advancing in support was knocked out by a mortar shell. After every Japanese volley, Corsair fighter planes streamed down on the mortar positions, ripping their charges of bombs into the Wilderness. But after every dive was ended, the mortars started their ghastly song again. Cracks in the earth run along the open field to the left of the Wilderness, and hot smoke seeped up through the cracks. Gains were counted in terms of 100 or 200 yards for a day, in terms of three or four bunkers knocked out. Losses were counted in terms of three or four men suddenly turned to bloody rags after the howl of a mortar shell, in terms of a flame-thrower man hit by a grenade as he poured his flame into a bunker. The assault platoon of flame throwers and demolitionists, spearheading the regiment’s push through the Wilderness, lost two assistant squad leaders killed.

The Japs were hard to kill. Cube-shaped concrete blockhouses had to be blasted again and again before the men inside were silenced. Often the stunned and wounded Japs continued to struggle among the ruins, still trying to fire back. A sergeant fired twenty-one shots at a semi-concealed Jap before the latter was killed. Another Marine assaulting a pillbox found a seriously wounded Jap trying to get a heavy machine gun into action. He emptied his clip at him but the Jap kept reaching. Finally, out of ammunition, the Marine used his knife to

kill him.

Forty-eight hours after the attack began, one element of the Third Division moved into the line under orders to advance at all costs.

Behind a rolling artillery barrage and with fixed bayonets, the unit leaped forward in an old-fashioned hell-bent-for-leather charge and advanced to the very mouths of the fixed Jap defenses. Before scores of pillboxes the men flung themselves at the tiny flaming holes, throwing grenades and jabbing with bayonets. Comrades went past, hurdled the defenses and rushed across Airfield No. 2. In three minutes one unit lost four officers. Men died at every step. That was how we broke their line. Across the field we attacked ridge. The enemy rose up out of holes to hurl our assault back. The squads re-formed and went up again. At the crest they plunged on the Japs with bayonets. One of our men, slashing his way from side to side, fell dead from a pistol shot. His comrade drove his bayonet into the Jap who had killed him. The Japs on the ridge were annihilated.

And now behind those proud and weary men, our whole previously stalled attack poured through. Tanks, bazookas and demolition men smashed and burned the by-passed fortifications. In an area 1,000 yards long and 200 deep, more than 800 enemy pillboxes were counted.

The survivors of this bold charge covered 800 yards in an hour and a half. Brave men had done what naval shelling, aerial bombardment, artillery and tanks had not been able to do in two days of constant pounding. What was perhaps the most intensively fortified small area ever encountered in battle had been broken.

Visit to a Concentration Camp

by Sgt. Horace Evers



This letter was written by Sergeant Horace Evers, who enlisted early in World War II and spent much of his time in Italy (Anzio, which he refers to in his letter, is in Italy). He participated in the D-Day assault on France in June of 1944, and helped push the German army to the brink of defeat by May of 1945. He was, as his letter reveals, part of the contingent who took control of German leader Adolf Hitler's private apartment--this letter, in fact, was written on Hitler's personal stationery. He also had the unpleasant experience, common to many soldiers, of seeing that the rumors of German death camps--exterminating Jews, gypsies, gays, and other "undesirable" groups--were true.

2 May 1945

Dearest Mom and Lou,

A year ago today I was sweating out shells on Anzio Beachhead ; today I am sitting in Hitler's luxuriously furnished apartment in Munich writing a few lines home. ; What a contrast. ; A still greater contrast is that between his quarters here and the living hell of DACHAU Concentration Camp only 10 miles from here. ; I had the misfortune of seeing the camp yesterday and I still find it hard to believe what my eyes told me.-

A railroad runs alongside the camp and as we walked toward the box cars on the track I thought of some of the stories I previously had read about DACHAU and was glad of the chance to see for myself just to prove once and for all that what I had heard was propaganda. ; But no it wasn't propaganda at all ; if anything ; some of the truth had been held back. In two years of combat you can imagine I have seen a lot of death, furious deaths mostly. But nothing has ever stirred me as much as this.

The first box car I came to had about 30 what were once humans in it. ; All were just bone with a layer of skin over them. Most of the eyes were open and had an undecipherable look about them. They had that beaten "what did I do to deserve

this” look. Twenty to thirty other box cars were the same. Bodies on top of each other ; no telling how many. No identification as far as I could see. ; And then into the camp itself. ; Filthy barracks suitable for about 200 persons held 1500. 160,000 persons were originally in the camp and 32,000 were alive (or almost alive) when we arrived.

There is a gas chamber and furnace room in one barracks. Two rooms were full of bodies waiting to be cremated. In one room they were all nude-in the other they had prison clothes on ; As filthy as dirt itself.

How can people do things like that? I never believed they could until now.
Well enough for now — Miss you all very much.

Your son,

Horace

Remembering World War II

by Adm. Gene La Rocque



Gene La Rocque had a lengthy career in the U.S. Navy, ultimately reaching the rank of admiral. In 1985, after his retirement, he was interviewed for a book about World War II. Here, he reflects on his experience during the war.

In the summer of '41 I asked to be sent to Pearl Harbor, The Pacific fleet was there and it sounded romantic. I was attached to the U.S.S. MacDonough when the Japanese attacked. We got under way about ten o'clock looking for the Japanese fleet. It's lucky we didn't find them; they would probably have sunk us. I spent the whole war in the Pacific, four years.

At first I thought the U.S. Army Air Corps was accidentally bombing us. We were so proud, so vain, and so ignorant of Japanese capability. It never entered our consciousness that they'd have the temerity to attack us. We knew the Japanese didn't see well, especially at night — we knew this as a matter of fact. We knew they couldn't build good weapons, they made junky equipment, they just imitated us. All we had to do was get out there and sink 'em. It turns out they could see better than we could and their torpedoes, unlike ours, worked.

We'd thought they were little brown men and we were the great big white men. They were of a lesser species. The Germans were well known as tremendous fighters and builders, whereas the Japanese would be a pushover. We used nuclear weapons on these little brown men. We talked about using them in Vietnam. We talked about using our military force to get our oil in the Middle East from a son of dark-skinned people. I never hear about us using the military to get our oil from Canada. We still think we're a great super-race.

It took a long time to realize how good these fellows were. We couldn't believe it. One time I was down in a South Pacific atoll that we'd captured. There were still a few Japanese ships in the harbor. We ran into two Japanese who hanged themselves right in front of us rather than be captured. We hated them during the war. They were Japs. They were subhuman.

I hated the boredom of four years in the Pacific even though I had been in thirteen battle engagements, had sunk a submarine, and was the first man ashore in the landing at Roi.* In that four years, I thought, What a hell of a waste of a man's life. I lost a lot of friends. I had the task of telling my roommate's parents about our last days together. You lose limbs, sight, part of your life—for what? Old men send young men to war. Flags, banners, and patriotic

* - *An island in the Pacific, captured by the United States in early 1944.*

sayings.

I stayed in the navy because I believed the United States could really make the world safe for democracy. I went around to high schools in uniform, telling the kids that I thought war was stupid, to ignore all this baloney that shows up in poetry and novels and movies about gallantry and heroism and beauty. I told them it's just a miserable, ugly business.

After the war, we were the most powerful nation in the world. Our breadbasket was full. We enjoyed being the big shots. We were running the world. We were the only major country that wasn't devastated. France, Britain, Italy, Germany had all felt it. The Soviet Union, our big ally, was on its knees. Twenty million dead.

We are unique in the world, a nation of thirty million war veterans. We're the only country in the world that's been fighting a war since 1940. Count the wars — Korea, Vietnam — count the years. We have built up in our body politic a group of old men who look upon military service as a noble adventure. It was the big excitement of their lives and they'd like to see young people come along and share that excitement. We are unique.

We've always gone somewhere else to fight our wars, so we've not really learned about its horror. Seventy percent of our military budget is to fight somewhere else...

What if Adolf Hitler Was Never Born?

by Christopher Bates



A popular way of exploring history — among the general public, not among professional historians — is to play “What if?” What if Columbus had never reached the New World? What if Napoleon had won at Waterloo? What if Lincoln wasn't assassinated in 1865? What if penicillin was never invented? This general approach to the past, which blends both fact and fiction, is called “alternate history.”

Because World War II was very recent, and had such a profound impact on the world, it is a popular subject for these sorts of questions. What if the atomic bomb was never dropped on Japan? What if Winston Churchill had died when he was hit by a car in 1931 (which he was)? What if the United States had entered the war a year earlier? Or a year later? And, of course: What if Adolf Hitler had never been born? Whole books have been written on this subject, most notably Stephen Fry's *Making History*. And I would suggest the answer to the question (and Fry largely agrees with me, by the way) is that history would not be much different, even if Adolf Hitler was never born.

When people are suffering terribly their leaders can really take one of two basic approaches. The first is to “rally the troops,” offering a message focused on hope and triumph over adversity — in other words, appealing to the better parts of human nature. I would suggest that President Roosevelt took this basic approach during the Great Depression, and so too did Great Britain's Winston Churchill, among other examples.

The other approach is to find someone to blame for the nation's problems — in other words, appealing to the worst parts of human nature. The formal term for this strategy is “demagoguery.” Historically, various demagogues have chosen all sorts of social groups as their targets — Jews, Christians, Muslims, ethnic minorities, the rich, the poor, immigrants, homosexuals, women, and citizens of neighboring nations among them. Adolf Hitler, of course, was a demagogue.

Was the rise of a demagogue inevitable in 1930s Germany? I would say so. The humiliation of losing World War I, the economic problems caused by the reparations payments to Britain and France, and the effects of a worldwide depression created a situation ripe for the emergence of someone like Hitler. Further, the man who led Germany immediately before Hitler — whose name was Paul von Hindenburg — tried very hard to rally the German people and to persuade them to work together to overcome their difficulties. And what happened to him? Well, he barely won re-election in 1932, he was forcibly removed from office in 1934,

and he surely would have lost if he'd run for reelection again. In short, Germans of the 1930s were — by all evidence — no longer interested in a Roosevelt or Churchill-type leader with a positive message. They were so angry and frightened that they demanded a scapegoat.

Now, if it had been a demagogue other than Hitler, can we be sure that the chosen target would have been the Jewish people? I think that is quite likely, as well. Europe had (and has) a long history of anti-Jewish bigotry (the proper name for this, of course, is anti-Semitism). Why have Jews been targeted in this way? There are many reasons; I'll limit myself to three of the most important:

1. Theological differences: Jews and Christians disagree on a very major theological question, namely whether or not Jesus was the messiah (savior) promised by the Bible. Christians say yes, Jews say no.

2. Jews are a small, identifiable minority: If it's "us" vs. "them," it works best if the "them" are obviously different from "us" (Jewish people wear different clothes than non-Jews, have different customs, eat different foods, etc.) and if the "them" are small enough in number to be bullied by "us."

3. Banking: For many centuries, Christians (and Muslims, for that matter) were forbidden by their religion from practicing usury (the practice of lending money and charging interest). If you cannot engage in usury, you cannot be in the banking business, because charging interest on loans is how banks make money. The Jewish religion did not (and does not) forbid usury, and so Jewish people owned and operated the banks of Europe for hundreds of years. This made it possible to develop a false stereotype that "all Jews are rich" and also for Europeans to get into the habit of unfairly blaming economic downturns (like the one Germany was suffering in the 1920s and 1930s) on Jewish people and their banks.

Given these things, it is not surprising that Adolf Hitler chose Jewish people as his primary target, and it likely that any other demagogue that rose to power in Germany in the 1930s would have done much the same. And ultimately, whether my assumptions are correct or not, the important point is this: Adolf Hitler was very much a product of the political and economic and cultural circumstances of his time. If we want to understand why World War II (and the Holocaust) happened, it is more important to look at the events that took place at the end of World War I and to look at what was happening in German (and Japanese and Italian) society in the 1920s and 1930s, as opposed to focusing on Hitler himself.