

Adolf Hitler assumes power in Germany, January 30, 1933

At noon on January 30, 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg, the president of Germany, appointed Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi Party), to be the country's chancellor. Hitler took the oath of office immediately, and convened his cabinet four hours later. Europe's nightmare had begun.

That night the Nazis celebrated their victory with a huge torchlight parade of brown-shirted SA [Sturmabteilung] storm troopers in jackboots, shown on this postal card as they marched in formation through Berlin's Brandenburg gate.

One year later, Germany commemorated the Nazi seizure of power by issuing a 6-pfennig picture postal card, with Hitler and Hindenburg in the stamp imprint indicium and the torchlight parade at the left. This example was canceled on January 29, 1934, the first day of issue.



Sequence of the Exhibit

In the pages that follow, contemporary postal and related materials reveal and illuminate the Hitler regime's ruthless suppression of its political opponents in Germany; construction of a vast system of forced labor and concentration camps; persecution of Jewish people; and annexation, military conquest, and subjugation of other countries in Europe. Following each successive triumph, the Nazis reproduced the essential features of their system in the overrun countries, and escalated the torment directed against Jews — first by imprisoning them in overcrowded sealed ghettos, and afterward by transporting them to death camps — with each phase of that catastrophe represented here by appropriate letters, cards, and documents. After a group of Holocaust cards and letters are several pages of mail to undercover addresses, followed by communications from anti-Nazi resistance fighters. The exhibit concludes with the Allied victory over the Axis powers, and the postwar consequences of the Holocaust.