

Letters to Hitler (1933–1943)

Abstract

One of the greatest propaganda successes of the Nazi regime was Hitler's mass popularity among the German population. A concerted effort to exploit the emotional hopes and fears of the population and to link them to the image of the Führer led to the development of a personality cult around the *idea* of Adolf Hitler as the savior of the German people, a phenomenon that historian Ian Kershaw has called the "Hitler Myth." Many Germans bought into this myth early on, showing greater enthusiasm. For some, their conviction held an almost spiritual significance, one that did not waver until very late in the war. One key element of this social belief was Germans' genuine faith in Hitler's capacity to solve their problems—both as Germans and individuals. As a result, they feared neither him nor the regime. This collection of letters reveals the intense popular adoration for Hitler. It also suggests how comfortable Germans felt writing to their leader. Some asked Hitler to intercede in matters on their behalf, such as the personal appeal to "Uncle Hitler" to "save" the Germans of Memel from the "oppression" they allegedly suffered at the hands of local Jews and Lithuanians. In other cases, Germans applauded and even thanked Hitler for the regime's actions, such as the praise and gratitude that nine-year-old Helga J. offered to Hitler for "returning" the Sudetenland to Germany. Appeals also included requests for Hitler to intercede directly in the personal affairs of private citizens, as is the case with the mother who asks for her son's body to be returned home for burial.

Source

1. Letter from Annelene K. from Heydekrug in the Memel Region, dated May 7th, 1933

Dear, good Uncle Hitler,

We have been waiting for a long time for you to come to our Memel region. From the smallest child to the tallest person, Jews and Samogitians excluded, everyone here is calling out only "Heil Hitler!" with full enthusiasm. We would all be very, very happy if we were to rejoin Germany. The Jews and Lithuanians would then all have to leave, right? They are getting terribly uppity here. If I say to them: "Heil Hitler!," they want to beat me up, or they call out: "Heil Hague!," because not so long ago, the disgraceful decision against the Memel region was pronounced in The Hague.

Our "commandant" has strictly prohibited the wearing of swastikas or similar emblems. We are also not allowed to call out Heil Hitler; if we do, we are promptly taken to the Bajohr fortress and imprisoned there. Yes, dear uncle Hitler, we are as though in captivity here. Come as soon as possible and deliver us from the Jews and Lithuanians. The Jews are not only taking away our bread, but on Easter they even butcher Christians. On Easter every child is afraid to go to a Jewish store. That is terrible. If our paper ever writes something the Lithuanians do not like, the newspaper man is immediately punished with a heavy fine or with imprisonment. And so, dear uncle Adolf, please do come soon.

I will try to send this letter to my uncle, Richard Maul, in Tilsit, Garnisonsstr 33, I hope that our dear Lord will see to it that this letter reaches you. Should you be so gracious to write to me some time, do not send the letter directly to me, but to: Richard Maul, Tilsit, Garnisonsstraße 33.

Uncle Maul will get it to me, as I have asked him to do so. If the commandant were to find out about this, he would shoot me dead, but I fear nothing, I want to act like Horst Wessel, whose song not only I, but all young people here, sing every day.

Now, dear uncle, also do not speak about this letter on the radio, as the Lithuanians are so very eager to hear your lovely radio speeches.

Warm greetings to you from the youth of the Memel land and especially from your little, 13 3/4-year-old niece.

[signed] Annelene K.

Source: RGWA Fond 1355, Opis 1, Delo 6, Blatt 178; in Henrik Eberle, *Briefe an Hitler: Ein Volk schreibt seinem Führer. Unbekannte Dokumente aus Moskauer Archiven – zum ersten Mal veröffentlicht*. Bergisch-Gladbach: Lübbe, 2007, pp. 133–34. © Bastei Lübbe AG

2. Letter from Horst Schrade to Hitler's Half-Sister Angela Raubal at Obersalzberg, dated December 10th, 1936

My heart wants to burst,
When it calls out "My Führer";
A thousand inner voices seek
To resound in unison,
When it calls you, oh Führer.
Tears must surge –
And yet my heart in fetters lies,
Because it is not standing with you, my Führer.
It wants to be with you everywhere,
Early in the morning, late at night!
My tears flow –
I wish you could see.
I would fold myself into your arms –
Draw strength, go with you every hour.
Holy will would sprout:
Standing straight and slender!

Horst Schrade

Source: RGWA Fond 1355, Opis 1, Delo 20, Blatt 113f, in Eberle, p. 225

3. Helga J, a Girl from Wandsbek, September 30th, 1938

My dear Führer,

I had my birthday on September 29th, I turned nine. I thank you now for giving me such a nice birthday present and bringing the Sudetenland back to Germany, for now Daddy does not have to go to war, because Daddy is still young.

Now I wish you much good luck and a long life.

Warm wishes from your Helga J.

Source: RGWA Fond 1355, Opis 1, Delo 30, Blatt 46f; in Eberle, p. 344.

4. A Couple from Berlin-Charlottenburg, September/October 1938

To the Führer and Reich Chancellor!

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you, our Führer, for all your efforts.

It makes us glad and happy to know that there is and will be peace. With all our heart we wish you, our revered Führer, good health, a long, happy life, may you, our Führer, always have a benevolent fate at your side.

We wish this from a grateful heart with Heil Hitler
Josef and Elli Jablonski

Source: RGWA Fond 1355, Opis 1, Delo 30, Blatt 41; in Eberle, p. 345.

5. Letter from Dresden, dated October 3rd, 1938

Dear Mr. Reich Chancellor, beloved Führer!

Words are not enough to express what we feel in the face of the admirable success which you, beloved Führer, have won.

This time it was surely the most difficult, combined with sleepless nights, in order to spare us and the other peoples great bloodshed.

But our great trust tells us that you, beloved Führer, will think about and weigh everything before a shot is fired.

Not only that our tormented Sudeten brothers and sisters are returning home, the thing with England is magnificent. Finally, the English have a hard-charging man who will tell them what's what. Likewise, France, too, has regained greater belief in us.

For all this we thank you, beloved Führer, from overflowing hearts, and we wholeheartedly wish you good health.

We greet you, beloved Führer
Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!
Bruno Jäschke and wife
Dresden Leubnitz
Bärenklauer Str. 9

Source: RGWA Fond 1355, Opis 1, Delo 30, Blatt 89f; in Eberle, p. 347.

6. Letter from an Old Woman from Wolfenbüttel, Luise Sellwig, dated May 1, 1943

O Adolf Hitler, great, wise
Illustrious, be Europe's emperor!
Soon all peoples will believe in you,
And will completely rely on you.
Take their gift into your hands,
And give them peace, blessings.
Let them fend off their enemies,
And live from the fruit of their labor.
Then they will experience happiness,
There will be eternal peace!

Source: RGWA Fond 1235, Opis 2, Delo 26, Blatt 295ff; in Eberle, p. 414.

7. Letter from Marie Schicklgruber, dated August 24th, 1943

My Führer!

As our ancestor certificate shows, my husband is very closely related to you, my Führer. Your grandfather, Georg Hiedler, married his [her husband's] great aunt Anna Marie Schicklgruber on May 10th, 1842, in Döllersheim. That is the only reason why I dare to bother you with a few lines, and I would like to ask you, my Führer, for your help. Our eldest son, Anton Schicklgruber, an apprentice roofer, had to join the RAD [Reich Labor Service] on January 11th, 1943. He was born on July 7th, 1925. After barely fourteen days, as he was tall and strong, he was transferred to the SS. Following brief training in Prague, he went East. There he was trained once again. On July 7th, having just turned eighteen, he was sent into action under the Army Postal Number 05452 C. On July 10th, he met a hero's death when he was shot in the head during a night attack on the Belenichino train line. He is buried in Lutschki, 50 km north of Belgorod. We would like to have his body transferred to the homeland.

That is why ask you, my Führer, to help us with Office 05452 C of the SS with the authorization for the transfer. The Ravensbach NSDAP would also consider it the highest honor to have a hero from the bloodline of our beloved Führer in the Ravensbach cemetery.

The father of the fallen hero, Anton Schicklgruber, senior, born March 21st, 1899, a World War [I] fighter, has been enlisted since April 29th, '43. He is serving at the large air force training site Gorno 107/17 Mail Reichshof, District Cracow, G.[eneral] G.[overnment]. There are a lot of camps of gangs there. I have approached the Command of the Military District of Znaim to request that he be exempted from military service. Because I have been told that if the son is killed in action, the father is exempted.

And since I am now also ill, I am not able to do the work alone. I'm supposed to work about 100 days for the house and the carriage, and do it in the summer, since our landlord doesn't need anyone in the winter. I also have two school-age children, and I also have work at home. My request was turned down in Znaim, because the local head of the farmers did not approve it. And so many young, strong men are at home who have never even seen a barracks from the inside. Even active age cohorts are entirely deferred. But a worker must not be deferred, because the young men are afraid that they might have to join up if a worker is deferred for a longer period. And how urgently I need my husband. I cannot pay for the workdays either, since I receive for me and the three children only 51 RM family support and 12 RM housing aid, and my husband verifiably earned 1350 RM last year. For in the summer he worked in agriculture, and in the winter in a sawmill. In addition, we worked 28 Ar [a little over a quarter hectare] of a vineyard from the the Ravensbach estate management in return for payment in kind. And this year I'm supposed to live from this support and make all payments. We were also supported by our eldest son in the summer with 30 RM a month. That is why I ask you, my Führer, to help us with the transfer of our son to the homeland. And with the deferral for my husband.

I thank you in advance for your help.
With German greeting Marie Schicklgruber
Ob. Ravensbach 42
Post Ravensbach N.[ieder] D.[onaue]

Source: RGWA Fond 1235, Opis 4, Delo 16, Blatt 338–342ff; in Eberle, pp. 415–16.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap

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