



1932: The Rise of Hitler and FDR--Two Tales of Politics, Betrayal, and Unlikely Destiny

By David Pietrusza

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Two Depression-battered nations confronted destiny in 1932, going to the polls in their own way to anoint new leaders, to rescue their people from starvation and hopelessness. America would elect a Congress and a president—ebullient aristocrat Franklin Roosevelt or tarnished “Wonder Boy” Herbert Hoover. Decadent, divided Weimar Germany faced two rounds of bloody Reichstag elections and two presidential contests—doddering reactionary Paul von Hindenburg against rising radical hate-monger Adolf Hitler. The outcome seemed foreordained—unstoppable forces advancing upon crumbled, disoriented societies. A merciless Great Depression brought greater—perhaps hopeful, perhaps deadly—transformation: FDR’s New Deal and Hitler’s Third Reich.

But neither outcome was inevitable.

Readers enter the fray through David Pietrusza’s page-turning account: Roosevelt’s fellow Democrats may yet halt him at a deadlocked convention. 1928’s Democratic nominee, Al Smith, harbors a grudge against his one-time protege. Press baron William Randolph Hearst lays his own plans to block Roosevelt’s ascent to the White House. FDR’s politically-inspired juggling of a New York City scandal threatens his juggernaut. In Germany, the Nazis surge at the polls but twice fall short of Reichstag majorities. Hitler, tasting power after a lifetime of failure and obscurity, falls to Hindenburg for the presidency—also twice within the year. Cabals and counter-cabals plot. Secrets of love and suicide haunt Hitler.

Yet guile and ambition may yet still prevail.

1932’s breathtaking narrative covers two epic stories that possess haunting parallels to today’s crisis-filled vortex. It is an all-too-human tale of scapegoats and panaceas, class warfare and racial politics, of a seemingly bottomless depression, of massive unemployment and hardship, of unprecedented public works/infrastructure programs, of business stimulus programs and damaging allegations of political cronyism, of waves of bank failures and of mortgages foreclosed, of Washington bonus marches and Berlin street fights, of once-solid

financial empires collapsing seemingly overnight, of rapidly shifting social mores, and of mountains of irresponsible international debt threatening to crash not just mere nations but the entire global economy.

It is the tale of spell-binding leaders versus bland businessmen and out-of-touch upper-class elites and of two nations inching to safety but lurching toward disaster. It is 1932's nightmare—with lessons for today.

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Editorial Review

Review

WINNER OF THE INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER BOOK AWARD SILVER MEDAL FOR WORLD HISTORY

"1932 confirmed my belief that David Pietrusza is the best historian of our times. Deep, clever, witty, master of the subject."

(Columnist and film critic Ivan Denisov)

"excellent"

(Carl M. Cannon, Washington Bureau Chief, *RealClear Politics*)

"Sweeping and surprising"

(John Batchelor, syndicated radio host)

"Powerful! . . . majestic . . ."

(John Gizzi, *NewsMax*)

"well written, well researched . . . Pietrusza's easy informal style moves back and forth between the two [Hitler and FDR] expertly."

(John Bicknell, executive director, watchdog.org)

"extremely well written and researched. Highly recommended!!"

(*Huffington Post* critic Rob Taub)

"Thought I knew much about these two giants of 20th century leadership till Pietrusza's new history with one focus: their simultaneous rise to power in 1932; a truly momentous year. Pietrusza fills in the gap that most histories skim over . . ."

(*The Heartland Progressive*)

Review

[In *Rothstein*], Pietrusza does a terrific job of capturing Rothstein's colorful career and sheds new light on [his] role in fixing the World Series, disputing the standard history. (*New York Times*)

[Starred Review of *1920: The Year of the Six Presidents*] A rousing chronicle . . . Pietrusza . . . adds color and dimension with smart discussions of Prohibition, women's suffrage, immigration, civil rights, the League of Nations and labor strife, and he offers animated portraits.... A hugely fascinating episode in American history, told with insight and great humor, by an author in command of his subject. (*Kirkus*)

[Starred Review for *1960*] Almost half a century after Theodore White's *The Making of the President*, 1960, Pietrusza (*1920: The Year of the Six Presidents*) raises the bar with his winning and provocative chronicle . . . Highly recommended. (*Library Journal*)

From the Author

1932's richly-textured cast of characters includes:

- Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt
- Adolf Hitler
- Herbert Hoover
- Reich President Paul von Hindenberg and his son Oskar
- Germany's scheming gray eminence Gen. Kurt von Schleicher

- Controversial radio priests: Detroit's Fr. Charles Coughlin and Pittsburgh's Fr. James R. Cox
- Populist Sen. Huey "The Kingfish" Long
- Nazi propaganda chief Joseph "The Evil Dwarf" Goebbels
- 1928 Democratic nominee Al "The Happy Warrior" Smith
- Wall Street financiers Bernard Baruch and Joseph P. Kennedy
- Peripatetic journalist Winston Churchill
- American press lord and Democratic kingmaker William Randolph Hearst
- Nazi Reichstag leader (and former morphine addict) Hermann Goring
- Speaker of the House (and reluctant presidential candidate) John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner
- Hitler confidante (and former FDR friend) Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl
- Columnists Walter Lippmann, Will Rogers, Heywood Broun--and the acerbic H. L. Mencken
- FDR advisor (and former Woodrow Wilson gray eminence) Col. Edward Mandel House
- Embattled German chancellors Heinrich Brüning and Franz von Papen
- Big city mayors James J. "Beau James" Walker (New York), Anton "Pushcart Tony" Cermak (Chicago), and James Michael Curley (Boston)
- Rightwing German veterans leaders: the one-armed Franz Seldte and the part-Jewish Theodor Duesterberg
- FDR's gnomish but adoring alter-ego Louis McHenry Howe
- Brain Trusters Rexford Guy Tugwell and Raymond Moley
- Nationalist German press lord Alfred Hugenberg
- Scandal-plagued Brownshirt leader Ernst Rohm
- Left-wing Nazi Party leader Gregor Strasser
- Stormtroopers Edmund Heines and Horst Wessel
- Bonus March leader Walter W. "Hot" Waters
- Hitler's suicidal women: Geli Raubal and Eva Braun
- AP reporter and Eleanor Roosevelt's confidante Lorena Hickok
- Eleanor's bodyguard State Police Sgt. Earl Miller
- German film star (and budding Nazi) Leni Riefenstahl
- US military men Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, and George Patton
- An array of stumbling Democratic dark horses: "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, Albert Ritchie, Newton D. Baker, and Owen D. Young
- 400,000 Brown Shirts
- 20,000 Bonus Marchers
- . . . and millions of desperate unemployed.

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Lisa Hegland:

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