Führer

Führer (/ˈfjʊərər/; German pronunciation: [ˈfyːʁɐ]), alternatively spelled **Fuehrer** in both English and German when the umlaut is not available, is a German title meaning *leader* or *guide* now most associated with Adolf Hitler. The word *Führer* in the sense of *guide* remains common in German, but because of its strong association with Nazi Germany, it comes with some stigma and negative connotations when used as the meaning of *leader*. The word *Leiter* is therefore used instead.

In other languages, the word is used almost exclusively as the epithet for Hitler.

History

Führer and Reich Chancellor of Germany ***Führer und Reichskanzler des deutschen Volkes***	
Former political post	
 Hitler's Standard	
 Adolf Hitler, Führer of Germany (1934 to 1945).	
Predecessor	Paul von Hindenburg (as president)[1][2] himself (as chancellor)
Successor	Karl Dönitz (as president) Joseph Goebbels (as chancellor)
Official residence	Reich Chancellery
Office began	2 August 1934
Office ended	30 April 1945

Origin of the title and its use as party leader

Führer was the unique name granted by Hitler to himself, and this in his function as *Vorsitzender* (chairman) of the Nazi Party. It was at the time common to refer to party leaders as "Führer", yet only with an addition to indicate the leader of which party was meant. Hitler's adoption of the title was partly inspired by its earlier use by the Austro-German nationalist Georg von Schönerer, whose followers also commonly referred to as the *Führer* without qualification, and who also used the *Sieg Heil*-salute.[3] Hitler's choice for this political epithet was unprecedented in German. Like much of the early symbolism of Nazi Germany, it was modeled after Benito Mussolini's Italian Fascism. Mussolini's chosen epithet *il Duce* or *"Dux"* if Latin ('the Leader') was widely used, though unlike Hitler he never made it his official title. The Italian word *Duce* (unlike the German word *Führer*) is no longer used as a generic term for a leader, but almost always refers to Mussolini himself.

As a political office

After Hitlers' appointment as Reichskanzler (*Chancellor of the Reich*) the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act which allowed Hitler's cabinet to promulgate laws by decree. One day before the death of Reichspräsident Paul von Hindenburg Hitler and his cabinet issued a decree, that dissolved the office of the president and made Hitler Hindenburg's successor. However this move was in breach of the Enabling Act. Hitler adopted *"Führer und Reichskanzler"*, combining his positions in party and government, as his title.[1][2] Ostensibly Hitler did not use the title "president" out of respect for Hindenburg's achievements as a heroic figure in World War I (though the decree, rather impiously, was already passed before Hindenburg's death on August 2, 1934).

In popular reception, the title of Führer and Chancellor was soon understood to mean Head of State and Head of Government – a view that becomes even more accurate seeing that he was given by propaganda the title of *"Führer des deutschen Reiches und Volkes"* (Leader of the German Reich and People), the name the soldiers had to swear to. However, it keeps some meaning as "Leader of Party and Head of Government" with reference to the confusing relationship of party and state, including posts in personal union as well as offices with the same portfolio Hitler wanted to fight for his favour. The style of the Head of State was changed on July 28, 1942 to *"Führer des Großdeutschen Reiches"* ("Leader of the Greater German Reich"). In his political testament, Hitler also refers to himself as *Führer der Nation*.[4]

Nazi Germany cultivated the *Führerprinzip* (leader principle),[5] and Hitler was generally known as just *der Führer* ("the Leader"). One of the Nazis' most-repeated political slogans was *Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer* — "One People, One Nation, One Leader".

Military usage

Further information: Military career of Adolf Hitler

According to the Constitution of Weimar, the President was Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces. Unlike “President”, Hitler did take this title (*Oberbefehlshaber*) for himself. When conscription was reintroduced in 1935, Hitler had himself promoted to the new title *Oberster Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht* (Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces), which meant then a presidential position over the Wehrmacht in fact led by another (newly instituted) Commander-in-chief, the Minister for War. Following the Blomberg–Fritsch Affair in 1938, Hitler took the responsibilities of this commander-in-chief for himself, though he kept on using the older formally higher title of Supreme Commander, which was thus filled with a somewhat new meaning. Combining it with "Führer", he used the style *Führer und Oberster Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht* ("Leader and Supreme Commander of the *Wehrmacht*"), yet a simple "Führer" since May 1942.

"Germanic" Führer

Further information: Greater Germanic Reich

An additional title was adopted by Hitler on 23 June 1941, declaring himself the "Germanic Führer" (*germanischer Führer*) in addition to his duties as Führer of the German state and people.[6] This was done to emphasize Hitler's professed leadership of what the Nazis described as the "Nordic-Germanic master race", which peoples such as the Norwegians, Danes, English, and Dutch, etc. were considered members of in addition to the Germans, and the intent to submerge these countries into the Third Reich. Waffen-SS formations from these countries had to declare obedience to Hitler by addressing him in this fashion.[7] On 12 December 1941 the Dutch fascist Anton Mussert also addressed him as such when he proclaimed his allegiance to Hitler during a visit to the Reich Chancellery in Berlin.[8] He had wanted to address Hitler as *Führer aller Germanen* ("Führer of all Germanics"), but Hitler personally decreed the former style.[8] Historian Loe de Jong speculates on the difference between the two: *Führer aller Germanen* implied a position separate from Hitler's role as *Führer und Reichskanzler des Grossdeutschen Reiches* ("Führer and Reich Chancellor of the Greater German Reich"), while *germanischer Führer* served more as an attribute of that main function.[8] As late as 1944 occasional propaganda publications continued to refer to him by this unofficial title as well however.[9]

Hitler's honorary titles

Nazi propaganda occasionally used a number of honorary titles when referencing Hitler.

- **Supreme Judge of the German People** (German: *Oberster Richter des Deutschen Volkes*) - Announced by Hitler on 30 June 1934 after the "Röhm-Putsch"[10]
- **First Soldier of the German Reich** (German: *Erster Soldat des Deutschen Reiches*) - This title was assumed by Hitler at the start of World War II on 1 September 1939. Addressing the Reichstag in the Kroll Opera House, Hitler appeared in a gray military uniform, declaring that he wanted "to be nothing but the first soldier of the German Reich", and pledging not to take it off until after victory had been achieved.[11]
- **First Worker of the New Germany** (German: *Erster Arbeiter des neuen Deutschland*)[12]
- **Greatest Military Commander of All Time** (German: *Größter Feldherr aller Zeiten*) - A title bestowed to Hitler by General Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel after the successful western campaign against France and the Benelux countries in the summer of 1940.[13]
- **Military Leader of Europe** (German: *Heerführer Europas*) - Bestowed on Hitler after the start of Operation Barbarossa by the Nazi propaganda ministry in order to portray Hitler as the leader of a continental European struggle against Soviet Bolshevism.[14]

Military usage outside of Hitler

Führer has been used as a military title (compare Latin Dux) in Germany since at least the 18th century. The usage of the term "Führer" in the context of a company-sized military subunit in the German Army referred to a commander lacking the qualifications for permanent command. For example, the commanding officer of a company was (and is) titled "Kompaniechef" (literally, Company Chief), but if he did not have the requisite rank or experience, or was only temporarily assigned to command, he was officially titled "Kompanieführer". Thus operational commands of various military echelons were typically referred to by their formation title followed by the title *Führer*, in connection with mission-type tactics used by the German military forces. The term Führer was also used at lower levels, regardless of experience or rank; for example, a *Gruppenführer* was the leader of a squad of infantry (9 or 10 men). See below however

Under the Nazis, the title *Führer* was also used in paramilitary titles (see Freikorps). Almost every Nazi paramilitary organization, in particular the SS and SA, had Nazi party paramilitary ranks incorporating the title of Führer. The SS including the Waffen-SS, like all paramilitary Nazi organisations, called all their members of any degree except the

lowest Führer of something; thus confusingly, "Gruppenführer" was also an official rank title for a specific grade of general. The word *Truppenführer* was also a generic word referring to any commander or leader of troops, and could be applied to NCOs or officers at many different levels of command.

Modern German usage

In Germany the isolated word *Führer* is usually avoided in political contexts, due to its intimate connection with Nazi institutions and with Hitler personally.

However, the term *-führer* is used in many compound words. Examples include *Bergführer* (mountain guide), *Fremdenführer* (tourist guide), *Geschäftsführer* (CEO or EO), *Führerschein* (driver's license), *Führerstand* or *Führerhaus* (driver's cab), *Lok(omotiv)führer* (train driver), *Reiseführer* (travel guide book), and *Spielführer* (team captain—also referred to as *Mannschaftskapitän*).

The use of alternate terms like "Chef" (a borrowing from the French, as is the English "chief", e.g. *Chef des Bundeskanzleramtes*) or *Leiter*, (often in compound words like *Amtsleiter*, *Projektleiter* or *Referatsleiter*) is usually not the result of replacing of the word "Führer", but rather using terminology that existed before the Nazis. The use of Führer to refer to a political party leader is rarely used today and *Vorsitzender* (chairman) is the more common term. However, the word *Oppositionsführer* ("leader of the (parliamentary) opposition") is more commonly used.

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