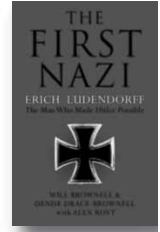


The first Nazi: Erich Ludendorff – the man who made Hitler possible

by Will Brownell and Denise Drace-Brownell with Alex Rovt

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General Erich Ludendorff was one of the most important military individuals of the last century, yet today, he is one of the least known. One of the top two German generals of World War I, Ludendorff manipulated and dominated not only his superior, General Paul von Hindenburg, but also Germany's head of state, Kaiser Wilhelm II.

For several years, Ludendorff was the *de facto* dictator of Germany. Ludendorff not only directed all aspects of World War I, he refused all opportunities to make peace; he antagonised the Americans until they declared war; he sent Lenin into Russia to forge a revolution to shut down the Russian front; and then pushed for total military victory in 1918, in a rabid slaughter known as 'The Ludendorff Offensive'. This savage man had staggering designs to build a gigantic state that would dwarf even the British Empire. A brilliant tactician and an abysmally poor politician and strategist, Ludendorff summed up the strengths and weaknesses of the German General Staff.

Shortly after the war, Ludendorff created the myth that Germany had lost the war only because Jews had conspired on the home front. He then wrote arguing maniacally about how Germans needed a new 'total world war' to redeem the Fatherland. He then aided Hitler's new Nazi movement and then drifted ever further into the haze of right-wing conspiracy theories that poisoned the Weimar Republic.

The consequences of Ludendorff's actions are mind boggling in their scale and reach. He could have ended World War I in 1916; by sending Lenin to St Petersburg he enabled the October Revolution to succeed and the Communist ideology to subsequently control billions of people for decades; his 'stabbed in the back' excuse ultimately became the basis for the Holocaust.

The title, 'The First Nazi', comes from the authors' argument that Ludendorff was the source of a large part of

the Nazi ideology and was an essential player in helping Hitler and the Nazi party rise to power. "Most analyses of World War II tend to begin with Hitler. And most people assume that Nazism began with that man. But it was Ludendorff who unleashed the social, military, and political forces that were keys to Hitler's success" the authors argue.

The First Nazi is a fascinating read, opening a whole new window on the world wars and providing a chilling view of a man who had a profound impact on the 20th century. Throughout, the authors draw many broad-ranging insights that open a whole new window on the world wars and the German psyche at the time. "So it was that this miserable war began with the Schlieffen Plan, which could not work, collapsed with the Ludendorff Offensive, which could not succeed, closed with the Versailles Treaty, which could not be implemented, and culminated in a conspiracy legend against Jews, which could never be proven." "... Germany was unbalanced between 1914 and 1945, and a case could be made that World Wars I and II were an insane continuum that started with the slow rise of Ludendorff as a *de facto* dictator by 1916 and ended with the suicide of Hitler in his pathetic bunker in 1945."

Will Brownell is an expert in European military history and the author of *So Close to Greatness*, a biography of William C. Bullitt, the first United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Denise Drace-Brownell is a technologist, inventor, and international business executive.

The First Nazi contains some black-and-white photographs, a timeline of the Great War, biographical notes on the main characters, notes and an index. It is well-researched and accessible, the narrative connecting dots that have long been overlooked. It is highly recommended to readers of military and political history.

Marcus Fielding