

Hour-Long Documentary March 14 On Public TV



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (left) and ADOLF HITLER (right) are THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR in Bill Moyers' hour-long documentary special which contrasts the backgrounds and personalities of two leaders who came to power within weeks of each other, confronted each other in global warfare, and died in the same month. Part of the continuing series of specials, A WALK THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY WITH BILL MOYERS, THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR will air on Wednesday, March 14 at 9 P.M. (ET*) on public television. Produced by The Corporation for Entertainment & Learning, Inc. (CEL) and Bill Moyers, and presented by WNET/THIRTEEN, New York, and KQED/San Francisco, A WALK THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY is made possible by a grant from Chevron. (*Check local listings.)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler, according to Bill Moyers, were "gladiators of light and darkness in a worldwide morality play." The two leaders came to power within weeks of each other in 1932. Less than a decade later, they confronted each other in global warfare, with the destiny of the entire world hanging in the balance. These charismatic figures -- their childhoods, early careers, and pinnacles of power -- are profiled and contrasted in THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR, an hour-long documentary airing as part of the continuing series of specials, A WALK THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY WITH BILL MOYERS.

THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR will be broadcast on Wednesday, March 14 at 9 p.m. (ET*) on public television. The special features an exclusive interview with Fritz Hippler, who was supervisor of film propaganda for Adolf Hitler. Hippler is interviewed at his home in Berchtesgaden, Germany.

A WALK THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY WITH BILL MOYERS explores the major events, personalities and mores which shaped our century, and is journalist Bill Moyers' personal at-

tempt to rediscover, in his own words, "the vivacity of the past."

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A WALK THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY marks Chevron's second major commitment to public television since its funding of the Emmy Award-winning series, "Creativity with Bill Moyers," in 1982.

In THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR, Bill Moyers says that "the collision between the ideas of Adolf Hitler and Franklin D. Roosevelt represented the century's greatest turning point." The broadcast, produced by Betsy McCarthy, vividly portrays the difference between the two men. Adolf Hitler was born in an Austrian village in 1889, his father a strict disciplinarian. Hitler was a moody schoolboy with a modest talent for drawing and painting. He moved to Vienna as a young man, where he sought unsuccessfully to enroll in the Imperial Art Academy. According to the broadcast, his life in Vienna

was "cheerless and melancholy." Franklin Roosevelt, on the other hand, was born into a family of wealth and prominence. "His world," says Moyers, "was full of possibility and promise."

Hitler's rise to power was fed by inflation and unemployment, caused by reparations exacted from Germany after the First World War, which continued to send shock waves through the German economy. When Roosevelt became president of the United States in 1932, after working his way up the political ranks, he too was forced to cope with the devastating depression of his own country's economy. At this crucial point in their countries' histories, the two men provided political leadership and a philosophy of life that was as opposite as black and white.

Vintage newsreels show FDR blending, as Moyers puts it, "highmindedness and corn," exhorting Americans to the spirit of service and preservation of freedoms. In THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR, FDR's fireside homilies contrast with the roar of the German crowds as Hitler's zealous fanaticism whipped his angry, frustrated followers into a furious passion where, says Moyers, "politics was all. The state was church. The Fuehrer -- God."

Roosevelt used charm, a sense of humor, and say Moyers, "deals and ideals" to get what he wanted. Hitler, on the other hand, used "venomous nationalism and malicious racism" in his search for scapegoats. Fritz Hippler admits that "Hitler moved the unconsciousness of the masses more than the intellect," yet also says, "I am convinced that Hitler was a very great man and I am convinced that perhaps in a century, this will be the meaning (the thinking) of the majority of mankind. His only fault was to get into the war and to lose the war."

Moyers points out that "neither man was a stereotype. FDR was not universally loved. Hitler was -- for helping Germany back on its feet." Yet despite respective failings and virtues, Moyers says that "nations were locked in a mighty struggle that somehow went beyond competing arms to diametrically opposed ideas about the human race. Ironically," says Moyers, "Hitler saw himself as a man of the people, but he meant to turn those people into a pure Germanic aristocracy, goose-stepping to his beat and trampling others as they went. While across the ocean, FDR, a patrician from the landed gentry, was a democrat -- not simply a member of the political party of that name, but one who did, in Thomas Jefferson's words, cherish the idea of the common folk, and lead them to save the ideals of liberty and equality."

"The Democrat and the Dictator," says Moyers, "remain in death what they were in life -- archetypes of political thought as different as compassion from genocide."

THE DEMOCRAT AND THE DICTATOR is produced by Betsy McCarthy. Writers are Bill Moyers and Bernard A. Weisberger. Associate Producer is Judy Epstein. Senior executive producer is Mert Koplin. (*Check local listings.)

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