

The Downfall (Movie)

1. Action (movie)

Downfall is a 2004 German / Austrian drama film depicting the final twelve days of *Adolf Hitler* in his Berlin bunker and Nazi Germany in 1945, directed by *Oliver Hirschbiegel* (right).



The situation in the beginning of 1945:

- catastrophic
- complete breakdown of the social system
- extensive destruction of the German cities and the infrastructure by allied air attacks and the German armed forces (acted on behalf of *Hitler*: destruction of all transportation routes, communication systems, industrial and supplying facilities)

Berlin, April, 1945. A nation is waiting for its downfall.

An urban warfare is going on in the streets of the capital. *Hitler* entrenches himself in the leader's bunker of the German Reich Office with some generals and his closest confidants. *Traudl Junge*, his privet secretary, who doesn't want to let him down, also belongs to them.

While the situation outside is escalating more and more, the Red Army continues to move forward and desperate scenes happen in the quarters. *Hitler* experiences the downfall of the Third Reich behind the walls of the bunker. Although Berlin can't be held any more, the leader refuses to leave the city. According to architect *Speer*, he wants to "stand onstage when the curtain falls". But *Hitler* doesn't stand onstage, instead he wants to direct again. While the vehemence of the lost war is coming over his nation with all hardness, the leader stages his leaving of the bunker. Hours before their suicide, he marries *Eva Braun*.

Instead of the ultimate victory, the end comes but even that is planned in detail.

Hitler's political testament:

- everything only because of "love and loyalty for my fatherland"
- not he started the war in 1939 but "those international statesmen who either were of Jewish descent or worked for Jewish interests"
- he speaks out on his hatred towards Jews
- concentration camps were "humane appliances"
- he thanks the women who stayed at home, the men on the front and the young people for bearing his name

After he and *Eva Braun* have taken their own lives, their corpses are burnt in the courtyard of the German Reich Office to make sure that the enemy doesn't get hold of them. Many of *Hitler*'s abiders also choose suicide. *Goebbels* and the remaining generals keep refusing to accept the absolute capitulation demanded by the Russians. When the situation becomes more and more hopeless, *Magda Goebbels* poisons her six children in the bunker before the *Goebbels* also commit suicide.

2. Traudl Junge's biography

2.1 Adolescence

- born to brewer Max Humps and a general's daughter (Hildegard Humps, maiden name Zottmann)
- Father loses his job and joins the "Freikorps Oberland", an extreme right winger association
- parents' divorce
- Attendance of a business school
- works as a clerk, as a chief editor's assistant and as a secretary

2.2 Hitler's private secretary

- 1942: Traudl moves to Berlin
- wins a secretary competition
- December 1942: employed at Adolf Hitler's "Reichskanzlei" (German Reichs Office)
- common meals with Hitler, gets to know him better
- July 19th, 1943: marriage with an officer of the SS arms, Hermann Junge, from Holstein
- Hans Junge died on August 13th, 1944, in Normandy
- because of her faithfulness to the leader, she stays despite of the bombing of Berlin

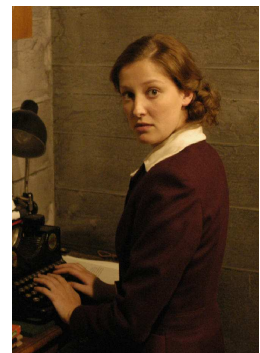
2.3 Her life after the war

- Junge writes a book about her life, which isn't published, however;
- works as a secretary at the "Bayrische Landverein für Heimatpflege", as a chief editor's assistant for Quick and as a free journalist
- 2000 shooting for a documentation film and announcement of her book
- a little later Traudl Junge dies because of cancer

3. Main characters in the movie

3.1 Traudl Junge

- actress: Alexandra Maria Lara
- 22 years old
- dresses chastely
- acts in a dispirited way
- warned of the dangers of the National Socialism by her parents, she sees these effects too late
- believes however in Hitler's planes
- looks up to him and admires him
- considers him thoughtful and is scared by his abusiveness
- it's a see-saw between abhorrence and admiration
- she doesn't desert Hitler and stays in Berlin
- takes care of Goebbels' children



3.2 Adolf Hitler

- actor: Bruno Ganz
- looks grimly
- ducked position
- acts coldly, cavalierly, and in a determined way
- says he is Aryan
- screams often, doesn't possess self-control and is aggressive
- charts orders
- is barred and discloses his true feelings and thoughts to nobody
- considers others to be cowards and is cocky himself
- aims for global power
- feels deceived → revengeful
- loses sense for reality
- callousness against the people's misery
- won't leave Berlin
- won't capitulate
- composes a political last will
- loses the hope in the end
- doesn't want to run into the Russian neither dead nor alive
- commits suicide with his wife by taking poison and shoots himself in the temple in addition



3.3 Eva Braun

- actress: Juliane Köhler
- later Hitler's wife
- wears expensive clothes
- her apartment is arranged extravagantly
- loves celebrating parties and dancing
- loves being a hostess
- seems to be bright
- displaces reality and is naive
- because of her faithfulness towards Hitler she stays in Berlin
- smokes
- kills herself with poison



3.4 Joseph Goebbels

- actor: Ulrich Matthes
- a German politician and Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda
- he has no sympathy for the people: “The people have chosen their destiny on their own.”
- he is closely committed to Hitler and abides his constructions
- he doesn't leave Berlin because he won't let his leader alone
- in the end he shoots his wife and himself



3.5 Mrs Goebbels

- actress: Corinna Harfouch
- Hitler: “the bravest mother in the Reich”
- she wants to give her children “salvation”: they shouldn't grow up in a world without the Nazi ideology
- she doesn't see any future for her family after the war
- finally she poisons her children by pretending to give them medicine



4. Facts on the movie:

4.1 Design:

- colouring: very grim, dark, little light (especially in the bunker)
- picture: good quality (focused, you can see everything)
- room: action in the bunker (without windows) or on the street seems depressing
- texts: protocol (dictated from Hitler, performed from Traudl Junge)
- symbols: swastika, fraternities

4.2 Camera:

- not complex (simple)
- camera movement: smooth
- camera perspective: no close-up view, but bigger distances

4.3 Sound:

- dialogues
- noises: you can hear the war in muffled sounds in the bunker
- with Hitler: silence

With this, the loneliness of Hitler should be shown because more and more people leave Berlin in order to escape the enemy. Hitler's silence is in contrast to the hustle and the noisiness at the people. Here you can see again the disinterest of Hitler towards the people.

- again and again bombs, screams → bustle, fear
- music: dolorous, fierce, agitating
- effect of the music: thought-provoking, illustrated

4.4 Continuity:

- chronological order
The film starts in 1942 with the approach of Traudl Junge as Hitler's private secretary and ends in 1945 with the end of the war.
- hectic cut rhythm
There's always a change between both points of views.
- no connections
The movie only shows what happens where and at what time but the persons mostly don't know each other.
- technical cut: noticeable
First the action is shown in the bunker of the "leader", then again the action in the streets. It's like a hectic see-saw.

4.5 Aims of the film's arrangement:

- hopelessness and suppression of the people
- depressing disposition
- ruin in case of the war
- worthlessness of people's lives
- accentuation of Hitler's character

5. Critics:

The fact that Adolf Hitler is also shown as a private person in the film is responsible for a lot of discussions. Here are some of the reviews:

The clear point of view is missing because there's always a change between Traudl Junge's and Peter's point of view.

Also Hitler is portrayed as too humane and positive, which is probably due to the obfuscation of the truth by Traudl Junge. The viewers aren't allowed to see Hitler dying, for example. The question is why the director did this. Also, you aren't allowed to see Goebbels dying.

6. Personal statement:

In conclusion, you can say that all in all the film "Downfall" is a well-made movie because of the impressive pictures and the demonstration of the war situation through a contemporary witness's eyes (Traudl Junge). Hitler's inhumanity is shown very well. He doesn't show any interest in the people, something which becomes clear in this little excerpt: "If the war is lost, then it is of no concern to me if the people will perish in it. I still would not shed a single tear for them because they did not deserve any better."

In some passages, however, the presentation of Hitler is too humane and because of this probably not accurate.