



Hitler's Contribution to World War Two: Historiography

	Hugh Trevor-Roper 	AJP Taylor 
Why did Hitler take Germany towards war?	Intentionalist (“Strong Dictator”) : Hitler <u>wanted</u> to have wars for ideological reasons. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eberhard Jackel 	Functionalist (“Weak Dictator”) : Hitler <u>needed</u> to have focused wars of conquest to prevent the German state and economy from collapsing. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Mason • Karl-Dietrich Bracher
What did Hitler want?	Radical : Hitler wanted to establish an East European Empire based on racial purity; this was a sharp break with traditional German policy. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friedrich Meinecke • Ralf Dahrendorf 	Traditional : Hitler wanted to establish German dominance in central Europe by overturning Versailles. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fritz Fischer • Lewis Namier • Gordon Craig
How did Hitler take Germany towards war?	Strategist : He had a very coherent strategy for achieving his objectives, step-by-step. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hilbdebrand • Hillgruber 	Opportunist : He simply took advantages of situations as they occurred. <u>Key supporters:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hans Mommsen • Martin Broszat
Who argues this?	Hugh Trevor-Roper (<i>Hitler's War Aims</i> , 1960) used Mein Kampf and the Hossbach Memorandum as evidence that Hitler's ideas (especially the Final Solution) were radical, and argued that these objectives were pursued with conviction and coherence.	AJP Taylor (<i>Origins of the Second World War</i> , 1961) used the Treaty of Brest Litovsk and the Bethmann-Hollweg Memorandum as evidence that Hitler's ideas (especially Lebensraum) were traditional, and suggested these objectives were pursued with desperate opportunism.
Key Quotes	“To the end, Hitler maintained the purity of his war aims”	“Far from wanting war, a general war was the last thing Hitler wanted”

It is not necessary to believe purely in one column or the other:

- William Shirer (*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 1960) agreed with Taylor that Hitler's aims were essentially traditional, but agreed with Roper that Hitler had a clear strategy for achieving those objectives.

It is also possible to reconcile some of the views of Roper and Taylor:

- Alan Bullock (*Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 1964) said that Hitler was a strategist, but was used opportunistic techniques to reach those objectives.

Task 1: Concepts

Research each of the following in more detail:
 The Bethmann-Hollweg Memorandum (sometimes known as the “September Programme”)
 The Hossbach Memorandum

Task 2: Historians

Research some of the historians named above in more detail, trying to get some useful quotes backing up their ideas if possible. Use Amazon.co.uk as a starting point (do an author search, and read some of the reviews of their books).

Task 3: Textbooks

- Chapter 5 of Frank McDonough's book “The Origins of the first and Second World Wars” has an excellent section on the historiography of World War Two. Make notes from it if it is available, using this document as an example of how you could set your notes out in a more accessible format.
- Chapter 5 of Alan Monger's “Causes of the Second World War” has some excellent extracts from AJP Taylor and Trevor-Roper which you may also wish to refer to.