

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Seeds of Hatred and Destruction: A Critical Analysis of Adolf Hitler's Anti-Semitic Worldview

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Abstract:

The paper is twofold: to examine Hitler's time spent as a drifter and vagabond artist between 1907 to 1913 and illuminate influences which contributed to Hitler's anti-Semitic worldview; and relate Hitler's hatred and contempt for Jews to his military service and the end of World War I, and demonstrate how his hatred and contempt for Jews and Marxists contributed to the start of his political career. This work will focus on Hitler's time spent in Vienna before the war, fighting in the trenches at the Western Front, recovering from injuries sustained from a mustard attack in a Bavarian hospital, and his reactions to seeing civilians profiting from the War coupled with their lack of continued support towards a German victory in World War I. It will also look at Hitler's military duties working as political spy and barracks informer and his entry in party politics in Germany.

Keywords: *Hilter vienna beer hall pusch anti-semitism nazis martin luther final solution*

1. Introduction

Deeply rooted anti-Semitism¹ ruled the life of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and can be largely attributed to his exposure to Pan-Germanism and anti-Semitic overtures by teachers and fellow students as a young boy living in Linz, revelations of several leading anti-Semites while living in Vienna as a vagabond artist (1907 to 1913), and his service in the German army on the front lines during World War I (1914-1918). This eleven-year period became the foundation of Hitler's pathological hatred for Jews and Marxists, liberalism, and the cosmopolitan Habsburg monarchy.² Hitler's hatred for Jews and Marxists inspired and moved him to enter politics in 1920, seize power in 1933, and perpetrate one of the great crimes against humanity during the 20th century – the Holocaust (1933-1945).

The purpose of this paper is twofold: to examine Hitler's time spent as a drifter and vagabond artist between 1907 to 1913 and illuminate influences which contributed to Hitler's anti-Semitic worldview; and relate Hitler's hatred and contempt for Jews to his military service and the end of World War I, and demonstrate how his hatred and contempt for Jews and Marxists contributed to the start of his political career. This paper will focus on Hitler's time spent in Vienna before the war, fighting in the trenches at the Western Front, recovering from injuries sustained from a mustard attack in a Bavarian hospital, and his reactions to seeing civilians profiting from the War coupled with their lack of continued support towards a German victory in World War I. It will also look at Hitler's military duties working as political spy and barracks informer and his entry in party politics in Germany.

2. Vienna (1907-1913)

The genesis of Hitler's hatred and contempt for Jews and Marxists did not start at the end of World War I. It can be largely attributed to his exposure to several powerful and influential anti-Semitic demagogues and politicians, whom he idolized while living in Vienna between 1907 and 1913. In 1914, when Hitler joined the German army and the Nationalist Socialist German Workers Party in 1920, while openly professed his hatred for Jews, there are no accounts of Hitler having any traumatic, unpleasant encounters, frictions or quarrels with Jews.³ From all accounts, Hitler had several positive personal and social contacts with Jews during his years in Vienna. Hitler, while working as a vagabond painter in Vienna,

¹Prejudice towards Jews had existed in Europe for hundreds of years. Anti-Semitism is the political, social, and economic agitation activities directed against Jews. Jews in the minds of many Germans and Austrians were associated with the goals and values of Liberalism, the stock market and speculative capitalism, the city, and modernity as contrasted with traditionalism. Because of their legal equality gained after 1848, Jews were able to rise to positions of prominence in legal and medical professions, journalism, the arts, and even politics. Jews had long been prominent in business and banking throughout Europe. They were often viewed as pushy and regarded with a mixture of envy, admiration, fear, and hatred. Peter Pulzer, "The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria," *The Western Political Quarterly* 18, No. 3 (September 1965): 720.

² Anti-Semitism, as a rule, was part of most of the German elite and the general electorate in Germany. Large parts of the ruling class had tangible interests in destroying liberal and pluralist democracy in Germany. An example of a strong institutional vestige of anti-Semitism could be found in Student fraternities in German universities. It also occurred in the ranks of the officer corps in the military since Jews were not allowed to serve as German officers. Most people living in Germany apparently found anti-Jewish sentiments (jokes and expressions of general distaste) both familiar and abstract. Dieter D. Hartmann, "Anti-Semitism and the Appeal of Nazism," *Political Psychology* 5.4 (December 1984): 635-636.

³Fritz Redlich, *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 31.

made numerous contacts with Jewish art dealers and frame makers, as well as Jewish clients. Reinhold Hanisch, whom he lived within several flop houses, reported that Hitler ranted and raved more about the Social Democrats, the Czechs, and the Habsburg dynasty than about Jews. Thus, Hitler's "anti-Semitism in Vienna was not as fierce as he claimed in Mein Kampf, and, most all, he was not a politically active anti-Semite."⁴

As noted above, the source of Hitler's hatred for Jews was largely a by-product of his direct contact with Pan-German philosopher Georg von Schonerer, interactions with local anti-Semitic politician Karl Luegar, despot, Adolf Lanz von Liebenfels, as well as his days self-educating himself on anti-Semitic literature. When he was not working menial jobs in Vienna, Hitler would spend endless hours reading anti-Semitic tabloids and pamphlets available at newsstands and at local coffee houses.⁵ Time spent studying each of these men and their arguments, along with Pan-German and anti-Jewish literature contributed greatly to Hitler constructing a worldview and political philosophy rooted in anti-Semitism.⁶ Hitler took many of these ideological tenets and racial epithets with him into the trenches of France and argued his case with anyone who would listen.

Hitler most likely was a convinced anti-Semite long before seeing Vienna.⁷ Pan-Germans in Austria peddled the love of the German Empire and contempt for the "Jew-ridden" Habsburg domain constantly. This outlook towards Jews was personified by the political career of Karl Luegar (1844 – 1910). Luegar centered his anti-Semitic attacks on the prominent role of Viennese Jews played in the liberal press as well as business affairs of various stock exchanges, banking institutions, and industrial capitalism. He passed onto Hitler two very enduring trademarks that helped him advance his political career: fiery and demagogic delivery of impassioned speech-making and the use of stereotyping and scapegoating. Luegar also modeled for Hitler the use of propaganda to appeal to the masses. This included obsessive anti-Semitism rooted in verbiage, loaded with brutal, violent, and sexual connotations and concern with the "purity of blood" for future generations of Germans.⁸

3. Anti-Semitic Dictums

Another prolific influence on Hitler's anti-Semitic worldview came in the form of printed pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and periodicals. Many of Hitler's racial theories came from ex-Catholic monks, Josef Adolf Lanz von Liebenfels literature. Hitler was a devout reader of a periodical written by von Liebenfels, *Ostara* which contained anti-Semitic dictums. Von Liebenfels occult racial views and his systematic program of breeding and extermination strongly influenced Hitler's ideas about race. He also called for genetic selection, sterilization, deportations, forced labor, and even "direct liquidations." When not reading *Ostara*, Hitler also read a publication, *Der Scherer*⁹, an illustrated monthly published in Innsbruck. This paper was a satirical publication that regularly published anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic articles with drawings of fat priests and big-nosed Jews, the proto-type of the Jewish image. The *Der Scherer* carried some of the décor and many of the slogans of the future National Socialists: it used a swastika as an arcane symbol of Germanism. It also used words and phrases like Volksgenossen ("Folk Comrades"), Heil, "Our People Awake," "Buy Only from Germans," and even "One Volk, One God, One Reich." With one word removed, "One Volk, One God, One Reich," would be heard again when Hitler took power in Germany.¹⁰

Another strong influence on Hitler was the leader of the Pan-German movement, Georg Ritter von Schonerer (1842-1921), who undoubtedly had become a boyhood hero of Hitler's as he was for many other German-Austrian youth.¹¹ Schonerer was a self-styled aristocrat who began his political career as a liberal who advocated reform to correct urban wrongs and poverty. Schonerer helped form the Pan-German Party, which became a force in Austrian politics centering on two central themes: economic corruption and the tyranny of unrestrained laissez-faire capitalism.

The centerpiece of his ideology to bring about both economic and political change was his anti-Semitism. Schonerer advocated that Germany revive ancient Germanic customs and called for the end of Jewish assimilation. He also labeled and ostracized the Jews as agents of all evils and troubles in the world.¹² Schonerer's utterances emphasized the role of the "wealthy Jew" in dictating the direction of economic affairs in both Austria and in Europe. He was also very vocal about his displeasure with Liberalism in politicians and called for the removal of Jewish influence from all spheres of public life.¹³ To put at an end to Jewish political persuasion, he recommended the passage of laws prohibiting the migration or settlement of foreign Jews in Austria.¹⁴

⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁵ Joachim Fest, Hitler (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1973): 21.

⁶ Jackson L. Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany – A History (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hill, Inc., 1992): 36.

⁷ One of the major issues that hampered Vienna was a lack of housing and jobs for the influx of immigrants into the city. Vienna's population increased by 259 percent between 1860 and 1900, surpassed only by in the respect by Berlin, with an increase of 281 percent. In comparison, Paris had 60 percent more residents in 1900 than in 1860, while London reported only 62 percent. Of the 1,674,957 persons residing in Vienna, only 46.4 were natives. Due to Karl Luegar's overzealous socialization, overcrowding, and unemployment was a constant source of misery. Hitler's Vienna was not the Vienna of decadent archdukes, well-fed party hacks, and international businessmen. He hated all such persons with the loathing that failure, hunger, and filthy rags alone can instill in a human soul. William Jenks, Vienna and The Young Hitler (New York: Octagon Books, 1976): 39.

⁸ Robert S. Wistrich Hitler and the Holocaust (New York: The Modern Library, 2003): 36.

⁹ The *Der Scherer* was not original in its attacks on Jews. Many daily newspapers throughout Germany and Europe published blistering attacks on the Jews. The Nazis would use the context of many of these attacks' decades later in literature and speeches. Eugene Davidson The Making of Adolf Hitler (New York: MacMillan Publishing, Inc., 1977): 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹¹ J. Sydney Jones, Hitler in Vienna, 1907-1913: Clues to the Future (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002): 159.

¹² Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany: 22-25.

¹³ Jenks, Vienna and the Young Hitler: 84.

¹⁴ Ibid., 88.

Schoenerer was quite vocal regarding the education matters as well. He wanted only Christian teacher educating young Austrian minds, funding for Jewish schools to be cut, and the non-hiring of Jewish teachers. Schoenerer's happiest associations in the 1880s, transcended the bitterness which often disfigured his relationships with other Austrian politicians who did not share his Pan-German zeal.¹⁵ Although he was widely respected for his efforts to reform education, business practices, and politics based on his anti-Semitic views, Schoenerer was not widely accepted for anti-Jewish viewpoints. Many of his colleagues needed the support of Jewish business and religious in order to conduct affairs of state. All told, Hitler was greatly influenced by Schoenerer's anti-Semitic worldview. He used much of the same rhetoric and political tactics (mass protests using young students) and to drum up support for his platform to wage war against Jews in Austrian and German politics and business.

4. German Nationalism and Munich (1913-1914)

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler contended that his disenchantment with Vienna was entirely the fault of the Jews. His years in Vienna served as a foundation for Hitler developing a demagoguery and political tactics, as well as a warped world picture and philosophy of struggle that would carry him through the rest of his life.¹⁶ Racial anti-Semitism was clearly at the center of these ideas and philosophies. By the time he left Vienna for Munich in 1913, he had developed traits that characterized his life as a whole: awkward, moody, and reserved, secretive, lonely, a Spartan life-style, and hatred of anything cosmopolitan and multinational in character. Other personality traits included his inability to establish ordinary human relationships, intolerance and hatred of Jews, a tendency toward denunciatory outbursts, and a readiness to live in a fantasy-world and to escape his failures in life.¹⁷

His years in Vienna contributed greatly to extreme German nationalism and the idea of a union of all German peoples. It also contributed to the development of ideas regarding extermination of those people or peoples considered "un-German" either by blood or culture. In the end, Hitler left Vienna in 1913 schooled in the ideology of anti-Semitism¹⁸, the effective use of propaganda, and the use of terror by political parties to achieve a political end. More importantly, Hitler gained real purpose, hating the society (namely Jews, the bourgeois, the rich, and aristocrats) who had rejected him but convinced that he would someday be recognized.¹⁹ Hitler left for Munich in 1913, bitter and despondent.

While in Munich, Hitler found it much more to his liking – it was homogeneous and less cosmopolitan than Vienna. Hitler no longer wanted to reside in a city that represented a swarm of foreign people that had begun to unearth the roots of German culture.²⁰ He had been dodging the military service since 1910. The Austrian police had been making inquiries about him. http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/hitler_munich1914.jpg Once located in Munich, he was given the choice of either appearing voluntarily at a board of inspection or face extradition and arrest. Hitler later reported to Linz for a medical examination under police orders. He was rejected for military or auxiliary service on the grounds of poor health, and the incident was closed.²¹

In Munich, Hitler again spent excessive time living in a fantasy world making few, if any, friends or social contacts, along with excessive bouts brooding. He gave anyone who had contact with him an impression of eccentricity and lack of balance, brooding and muttering to himself over his extravagant theories of race, anti-Semitism, and anti-Marxist. These outbursts and sarcastic diatribes occurred in cafes and beer-cellars, while he devoured the newspapers and argued about politics with anyone who would engage him.²²

5. World War I (1914-1918)

With no real trade or few interests, other than painting or politics, World War I gave Hitler a purpose in life.²³ The importance of Hitler's service to Germany during World War I cannot be understated. Hitler used his frontline experiences from the Great War to prove his authenticity and authority to speak for the German people. This authenticity gave Hitler a steep advantage in German electoral politics, as well as aided him when he seized dictatorial power in 1933.²⁴ Having shared the suffering of a frontline soldier, he could stand apart from other professional soldiers and politicians, whom he would deem the architects of the Fatherland's defeat and the Versailles Treaty of 1918.²⁵

The idea of serving Germany held special appeal for Hitler. Hitler asked for special permission to enlist with a Bavarian regiment. In *Mein Kampf*, he remarked that he waited for a reply with bated breath: "I opened the document with trembling hands; no words of mine can describe the satisfaction I felt." He added: "I sank down upon my knees and

¹⁵This was not the case with German Nationalist fraternities and clubs. His feelings of anti-Semitism seemed to intensify when interacting with nationalistic German students located in Vienna, Prague, and Munich. Since many of these student organizations were already firmly engrained with the same anti-Semitic viewpoints, he was able to make inroads with these groups and attract a large following. Jenks, Vienna and the Young Hitler: 93.

¹⁶Fest, Hitler: 47.

¹⁷Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1962): 46-48.

¹⁸At its core, the anti-Semitism that took possession of a young Hitler was a blend of both theological and political anti-Semitism, with the underpinnings of the volkisch view of Jews, which considered them unredeemable no matter what they did. For Hitler, the Jew became the counter-image, a projection of everything that was wrong in man and his society. Davidson, Making of Adolf Hitler: 16.

¹⁹Spielvogel, Hitler and Nazi Germany: 33.

²⁰Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny: 47.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³During the First World War, many Germans made great efforts to demonstrate their patriotic loyalty and validate their Germanness (Deutschtum) on the battlefield. For some Germans, the war represented a chance to validate their lives both professionally and personally. This validation also meant bringing their political and social worldview with them as they fought the Entente Powers of France, Great Britain, and Russia. Wistrich, Hitler and the Holocaust: 6.

²⁴Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny: 52.

²⁵Ibid., 52.

thanked Heaven out of the fullness of my heart."²⁶ Hitler, the crude provincial Austrian artist, had become Hitler, the dutiful and brave *German* soldier. He now had a chance for glory and recognition, the two things he craved most.

The 1st Company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment ordered Hitler to report for duty. Unofficially, the company of the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment was known as the List Regiment, named after its original Commander, Colonel Von List.²⁷ After months of drilling and training, Hitler recovered his health from years of neglecting his diet. On 8 October, he took an oath of allegiance to the Bavarian, King Ludwig III, as well as Kaiser Wilhelm. For the nationalistic Hitler, this oath took on a special meaning; to him it had an almost religious significance. Indeed, the oath represented a sacred contract between Hitler and his beloved Germany. The intensity of his beliefs towards duty, honor, and loyalty towards serving the motherland explains the extent to which Hitler felt betrayed on 11 November 1918. Ultimately, Hitler believed that whilst he had upheld his side of the bargain, the State (hijacked by traitors), had reneged.²⁸ This betrayal served as the crux of Hitler's campaign against Marxists and Jews throughout much the 1920s.

Hitler's first taste of combat came at the First Ypres. He quickly found out how early war engagements, although less static in nature, would prove very costly and deadly. The murderous capability of 20th century modern weaponry had been unleashed under the commands that espoused 19th Century tactics. These tactics rendered terrible results. The firepower of accurate rifles and lethal machine guns mowed down Bavarian and Austrian assault troops at will. Hitler's regiment suffered high levels of casualties at the famous and semi-mythological *Kindermord zu Ypres*, the massacre of the Innocents at Ypres.²⁹

While at the front, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/germantroops1914.jpg> Hitler proved to be a brave and quite capable soldier. He remained calm under fire, showed respect to his superiors, and never questioned his orders. Whilst casualties mounted and morale plummeted, Hitler unstintingly carried on with his duty. He was rewarded with a promotion to Lance Corporal. Hitler later earned an Iron Cross 2nd Class in an engagement near Croonaert Wood, Wytschaete. He later volunteered to be a *Meldeganger* (a dispatch runner) putting himself in greater danger. Ironically, the same Hitler who would shirk work in Vienna and his early days in Munich was the same foot-soldier fighting a war of willpower, nerves, and stamina. Hitler displayed these qualities at the <http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/ypres191415.jpg> battle of Neuve Chapelle (1915) facing another brutal and deadly British assault.³⁰

6. Hitler at the Front

Hitler was not a typical soldier at the front. He refused to request leave and refrained from entering into bawdy talk concerning the local girls. His greatest pleasures were to either paint trench scenes or cartoon sketches on postcards illustrating comical moments of his comrades' lives. "Hitler was a loner who received no letters, nor parcels from home."³¹ He refused to share his comrades' packages, on the grounds Hitler could not repay them. From time-to-time he would pontificate upon the evils of smoking and drinking to his trench mates. However, Hitler crossed the line when he tried to make points regarding politics. He drove many of comrades to the edge of distraction, especially when it came to his political "lectures." Even though such talk was not highly regarded by many of his enlisted comrades, listening to his rants on Marxist conspiracies and Jewish plots, whilst stuck in a dug-out on the receiving end of an Allied bombardment, drove some to despair.³²

In spite of these rants, Hitler was highly regarded by his comrades. He was a consummate professional, and this gained him a great amount of respect with his comrades. Over and over, Hitler displayed nerves of steel as he rushed to deliver and return with staff messages in the midst of a heavy barrage. Hitler's survival against suicidal odds gave him a certain mystique in the eyes of his comrades. In his own mind, Hitler believed his duties and survival at the front were being guided by a divine force. It was the same force that guided him to restore the Fatherland to all its glory some seventeen years later.³³ http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/hitler_fuhrer.jpg

On 7 October 1916, whilst stationed near Bapaume, Hitler received a severe wound to the leg resulting from a shell blast. He was sent to convalesce at Beelitz, near Berlin. When he was well enough, he visited the nation's capital for some sight-seeing. By now the city was suffering from acute food shortages, strikes by munitions workers, and civil unrest. Basic supplies, like meat, had become luxury items. Although Hitler would witness the sufferings of German citizens back home, he still labeled the public as cowards and traitors. He became indignant at the contrast between the spirit of the army at the Front and the poor morale and lack of discipline at home.³⁴

Once Hitler was declared fit for light duties, he was posted to the List Regiment's Reserve Battalion station back in Munich. Although he was happy to be "home," he despaired of the civilians for their defeatist attitudes. The lack of morale, the lack of action, and the lack of camaraderie depressed him. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, "I could not tolerate this

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Toland, *No Man's Land: 1918, The Last Year of the Great War* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1980): 58.

²⁹ The battle at the First Ypres decimated Hitler's regiment. Only 600 men were left out of approximately 3500. For his bravery, Hitler was commended for having pulled an injured officer to safety on two occasions. His regiment commander recommended Hitler for an Iron Cross. In the course of four years of fighting, Hitler saw considerable action at the front: Ypres, Fromelles, Messines, Wytschaete, Somme, Artois, La Bassée, Arras, Chemin des Dames, Marne, and La Montagne. Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*: 51-52; Werner Maser, *Hitler: Legend, Myth & Reality*, trans. Peter and Betty Ross (New York: Harper and Row, 1973): 82, 88-89.

³⁰ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*: 51-53.

³¹ Ibid., 53.

³² Toland, *No Man's Land: 1918*: 61-62.

³³ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*: 52-53.

³⁴ Ibid., 54.

squabbling among people of the same German stock." Hitler detested the shirkers he met in the street, who boasted of dodging military service, grumbling, profiteering, the black market, and other familiar accompaniments of civilian life.³⁵

7. Stab-in-the-Back Theory

Years later, Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, blamed the Jews for the collapse of morale. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, "The Jews! They were behind the frontline plotting Germany's downfall. Nearly every clerk was a Jew and nearly every clerk was a Jew. They were behind the front lines plotting the defeat of Germany. The Jews have control of Germany's finances and have seized control of production." Hitler placed blame on the Kaiser himself. Both of these charges became central in many of his speeches in the 1920s. It was the corrupt Kaiser Wilhelm government that tolerated political discussion, covert anti-war propaganda, and strikes in wartime that caused Germany's defeat. Disgusted by what Hitler witnessed in Munich while recovering from his injuries, Hitler applied for frontline duties having become disgusted by what he saw in Munich.³⁶

Once <http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/ypres1917.jpg> Hitler was back on the frontlines, he quickly fell back into his old ways of making rambling political speeches to his comrades. His favorite topic was conspiracy on the Home Front by Jewish capitalists. It was common for Hitler to sit in a corner of a bunker holding his head between his hands in deep contemplation. His tendency to brood for long periods of time had returned. "Like many of his fellow soldiers, he had become convinced that the old leadership of society had failed Germany that the very social order he had marched to war to defend, was perishing of internal exhaustion."³⁷ Even though Germany was showing signs of collapse at home, the German Army was well prepared to fight on, and its morale was indeed high. Yet behind all of this lurked impending disaster.³⁸

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/graphics/germanmgunner1918.jpg> In October 1918, the Hitler's Regiment found itself thrown into the defensive battle in Flanders. On the night of October 13, south of Ypres, Hitler was caught in a British gas attack. On a hill near Wervick, his position had been shelled for hours of drumfire filled with gas shells. "The poison deprived him of his sight and on the following day his ability to stand."³⁹ He was sent back to recover at Pasewalk, in Pomerania, in the German north-east. It was there, during his recovery that Hitler learned in due course of Germany's defeat, the Armistice and the Revolution. He internalized these events and considered the defeat of Germany as incomprehensible. He likened this event to his failure to gain acceptance into the Academy in Vienna years early. Hitler later magnified this moment into legend and made it one of the themes of his career.⁴⁰

8. Operative and Spy (1919-1920)

"In contrast to millions of German soldiers, who happily returned to their homes at the end of the war, Hitler had no home to return to."⁴¹ He stayed in the army, which had become the army of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933). Hitler's First World War career as a German soldier stood in stark contrast to his days as a bohemian artist. Not once did he shirk or shy away from danger. His bravery won him numerous citations and awards, including the Iron Cross First Class. However, festering under this façade of military prowess was an excessive abundance of extremism, hair-brained scientific ideas, and twisted racial and anti-Semitic theories. The Great War had taken the education that he had received in Vienna from von Schonerer, von Liebefels, and Luegar and allowed it to ferment and crystallize. No matter how twisted his views were the ramblings of a down-and-out bohemian artist and that of a soldier at the front disenchanting at the progress of the war were prime material by which to exploit a proud military record for political means, and thus command the respect of Hitler's peers.⁴²

In the summer of 1919, before leaving the German army for civilian life, the Reichswehr assigned Hitler to a small investigation unit in Munich. This unit was charged with spying on political parties in the overheated atmosphere of post-revolutionary Munich. Hitler was charged with keeping tabs on a small group of idealists, known as the German Workers' Party. Many of those who served in this unit dressed in civilian clothes and attended party meetings in the back rooms of Munich beer halls. Hitler also spent time working as an informer, whereby he kept a close eye on soldiers in his barracks. Anyone he suspected of supporting the Marxists' influences or uprisings was to be arrested and executed.⁴³

During the early spring of 1919, Hitler was assigned to the Press and Propaganda Unit of the Second Infantry, with the task of helping soldiers of the Reichswehr transition back to civilian life.⁴⁴ In June of 1919, the Army sent Hitler to political indoctrination courses⁴⁵ held at the University of Munich that launched his political career.⁴⁶ He quickly came to the attention of his superiors for oratory and debating skills. His anti-Semitic outbursts were considered first-rate and

³⁵ Toland, *No Man's Land*: 1918: 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Fest, *Hitler*: 70.

³⁸ Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff continued their policy of systematic deception. By late fall of 1918, members of the Reichstag were astounded when informed that peace negotiations were almost inevitable. Morale on the German home front already had been damaged by extended periods of food shortages, labor strikes, and prolonged war. Peace talks with the allies were simply a case of speeding up the inevitable. Fest, *Hitler*: 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁰ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin Books, 2003): 167.

⁴¹ Redlich, *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*: 44.

⁴² Redlich, *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*: 44-45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁵ In addition to taking these courses at the University, Hitler resumed his self-education regarding anti-Semitism. Amongst the anti-Semitic pamphlets and books, he read was a fraudulent, malicious publication by the Tsar's secret police, called the *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*, describing the Jewish world conspiracy. Redlich, *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*: 47.

⁴⁶ Evans, *Coming of the Third Reich*: 168.

worthy of repeating to returning German prisoners of war on the dangers of Communism and pacifism, as well as democracy and disobedience. Any lingering socialist sentiments from regular Bavarian troops were rooted out and replaced with the beliefs of the far right. The far-right political notion of German nationalism was exploited at the expense of the Marxists, liberals, and Jews.⁴⁷

While at the University of Munich Hitler, Hitler was taught political and economic courses by many leading conservative scholars. Amongst the many lecturers who came to speak were conservative Munich history professor, Karl Alexander von Muller, and the Pan German economic theorist, Gottfried Feder, who put an anti-Semitic spin on economics by accusing Jews of destroying the livelihood of hard working "Aryans" through using capital unproductively.⁴⁸ Hitler was selected to teach these same courses a few months later because he imbibed the same ideas as his instructors. He also delivered tirades against Jews that were well received by disillusioned and bitter soldiers who were looking for someone to blame for all the misfortunes. All told, Hitler discovered that his true talents lay in delivering speeches in front of a large audience, holding their attention, and his ability to communicate with the simple and ordinary men and swaying them to his point of view.⁴⁹

On September 12, 1919, Hitler, dressed in civilian clothes, was sent to a meeting of the German Workers' Party in the back room of a Munich beer hall. Listening to familiar diatribes of Gottfried Feder on the merits of eliminating capitalism, Hitler was in his element. At this meeting, Hitler delivered a fifteen-minute speech renouncing any talk of Bavaria breaking away from Germany in order to form a new Catholic, South German nation with Austria.⁵⁰

One of the founders of the German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or DAP), Anton Drexler, was enthralled with Hitler's forceful, passionate, bombastic, and humorless speech-making abilities. He asked Hitler to join the party and support building a strong nationalist, pro-military, anti-Semitic party made up of working-class people. A few days later, Hitler joined the Nazi Party, was welcomed as a new member, and asked to join the executive committee. Although Hitler was not impressed with the organization of this political party, he did see opportunity by becoming a member. By joining the committee of the German Workers' Party, Hitler had thus entered the life of politics. In a matter of one year, Hitler was recognized as Fuhrer of a movement, which had 3,000 members and powered by strong-arm squads to keep order at meetings and threaten opponents.⁵¹

9. German Nationalist and Zealot

After the failure of his beer-hall putsch in 1923, Hitler decided that his road to power had to be obtained legally. This required him to build an electoral following, while at the same time construct a cadre of fanatical Nazis to overtake power once he had taken it.⁵² His first step was to find a cause that Nazis found appealing. Hitler focused his attention on the middle-class based on Luegar's blueprint on recruiting a body of electors which had everything to gain and nothing to lose. This same class of adherents was hard to shake, ready for both great sacrifices and capable of stubborn fighting.⁵³

Hitler also recruited people in positions of authority in the existing system to protect him legally, as well as gain the financial backing of business and financial leaders to provide campaign contributions. Hitler later crafted an electoral appeal out of economic chaos by linking economic gain in a superficial way. He put forth a platform of economic reforms to reconcile appeals to capital and labor, farmers and consumers, by creating the image of a Jewish land speculator, a Jewish capitalist, a Jewish department operator, and a Jewish labor agitator. To Hitler, the basis of his militant movement was the advent of Aryan racism in all cultural and social matters. This allowed economic order to be restored. According to Hitler, there would be no "labor troubles" after the Jewish agitator had been proscribed; no exploitation of the worker when Jewish capitalists were curbed; no "unfair competition" with small shopkeepers when Jewish department stores were confiscated; and no foreclosing of farm mortgages when Jewish land speculators were done away with.⁵⁴

Like many demobilized soldiers of his generation, Hitler was convinced that the German fatherland had been betrayed in 1918 by pacifists and Marxists, deliberately incited by Jews.⁵⁵ He centered all his political activities between 1920 and 1933 on never allowing this to happen again. This idea coupled with his war experiences allowed him to use this to his political advantage many times over. Indeed, the seeds of Hitler's twisted Darwinian theories, the ones that led to the creation of Auschwitz, were developed among the corpses littering the First World War's trenches and dugouts. "Two themes emerged in many of his political speeches following the war: "Man of the People and Unknown Soldier of the First World War" Hitler was able to turn inward like many of his generation who had experienced the War."⁵⁶ He was haunted by its horrors, and he returned home to help rebuild a more civilized and more modern society.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁴⁸ From both professors', von Muller and Feder, lectures on economics and the Jew, Hitler fashioned a link between anti-Semitism and economic gain. He created a superficial consistency between his economic promises, to reconcile appeals to capital and labor, farmers and consumers, by creating the image of a Jewish land speculator, a Jewish capitalist, a Jewish department store operator, a Jewish labor agitator. Anti-Semitism, and its positive corollary, Aryan racism, became the Nazi Party's core program and produced an appearance of sincerity as well as an ideological basis for a militant mass movement. Martin Needler, "Hitler's Anti-Semitism: A Political Appraisal," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1960): 667-668.

⁴⁹ Evans, *Coming of the Third Reich*: 169.

⁵⁰ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*: 62.

⁵¹ Ibid., 64-65.

⁵² By the time Hitler became prominent in German politics, the early Nazi campaign against "Western Liberalism", Big Business, and Jews was, as had often been pointed out, simply a repetition of a well-known political refrain. The main difference between the post- and pre-war periods lies not in its content, but in its success. Pulzer, "Rise of Political Anti-Semitism": 720.

⁵³ Needler, "Hitler's Anti-Semitism": 666.

⁵⁴ Needler, "Hitler's Anti-Semitism": 667-668.

⁵⁵ Wistrich, *Hitler and the Holocaust*: 38.

⁵⁶ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*: 55.

10. Conclusion

The years between the end of 1908 and the end of 1918 hardened Hitler. He had learned to be self-reliant, confirmed his belief in himself, and toughened the power of his will. From his experiences on the Front, he emerged with a stock of fixed ideas and prejudices, which altered little the rest of his life: hatred of Jews; contempt for the ideas of democracy, internationalism, equality, and peace; a preference for authoritarian forms of government; an intolerant nationalism; a rooted belief in the inequality of the races and individuals; and a faith in the heroic virtues of war.⁵⁷ Most importantly, from his experiences of Munich and the Front, Hitler had hit upon a conception of how political power was to be secured and exercised, which, when fully developed, opened the way to a career without parallel in history. The sudden shock to become an agent of change for Germany was supplied by the end of the war, the capitulation of Germany, and the overthrow of the Empire.⁵⁸

Hitler regarded his wartime experiences as a confirmation of many of the opinions he had formed during his Vienna years: that without the masses, without knowledge of their weaknesses, virtues and sensitivities, politics was no longer possible. "In his mind the great democratic demagogues, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and President Wilson, joined his idol, Karl Luegar, by advocating stubborn conservatism, having clung to traditional positions, no matter how arrogant and unimaginative were no longer useful."⁵⁹ Also, Hitler came to fear and loathe the Jews and the Reds even more during his in the German army during the Great War. He would be engulfed by what he saw during his hospital stays away from the front and foster a belief that the Jews were to blame for the collapse of morale. Jewish finance had seized control of Germany's production and sought to ruin it. According to Hitler, "The spider was slowly beginning to suck the blood out of the people's pores."⁶⁰ The Marxist-inspired strikes and uprisings that threatened to destroy the fabric of German existence hardened Hitler's anti-Semitic views.⁶¹ The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the possible encore in German were often receptive of the Jewish conspiracy.

Germany did not or would not acknowledge the new reality created by the end of the war. Instead, it organized itself into a swarm of *volkisch* (racist nationalist) parties, clubs and free corps.⁶² Hitler, like many of his unemployed military peers, joined these organizations as a way to deal with the realities of war and to rebuild their lives. To him, as it was to many of his fellow Germans, to end the carnage of World War I was justified; however, it was Germany who was left to deal with a staggering political and psychological burden. Hitler and others like him, shifted blame to the "November Criminals", which were infested with Jews. The shock of defeat, moral censure of the Versailles Treaty, loss of territory and excessive demand for reparations, national impoverishment, and spiritual undermining of the population needed some sort of rationale or explanation.

Hitler's experiences in World War I had made him callous and bitter of human life in general.⁶³ This would explain his contempt for those entities that were not "pure" German in origin or in practice. Nonetheless, Hitler was able to channel his resentment, bitter, and anger energies into a career in politics. In doing so, he was able to take the anti-Semitic rhetoric he was exposed to in Vienna and use it as a way to communicate a remedy to Germany's problems just after the war and solidify his ethos and philosophy on race.⁶⁴

It was under these auspices, that National Socialism was born as a way to overturn the status quo within the natural order of things. The Social Darwinism competition that characterized politics and economics under the Third Reich was largely a by-product of conditions created by the First World War and exploited for political gain by Hitler and the Nazis. Regardless of its fluctuating intensity, anti-Semitism was prevalent among conservative elites and symbolically attached to their prejudices and their concerns for the future of Germany.⁶⁵ It was this mood of discontent⁶⁶ that Hitler exploited.

Everything with which Hitler had identified himself with seemed to be defeated, swept away in a torrent of events with which had been released, as he had no doubt, by the same Jews who had always desired the defeat and humiliation of Germany. Hitler seized on this stab-in-the-back theory, eagerly placing blame on the Jews with suspicion and distaste. Thus, the ideas, dictums, and prejudices that he had garnered from Luegar, von Liebenfels, von Schonerer, Wagner and

⁵⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Fest, Hitler: 73.

⁶⁰ Toland, No Man's Land: 1918: 70.

⁶¹ Amongst the lower classes, many did indeed believe that Jews had profited from the war or from reparations. Hitler, and many others like him, used these fears and beliefs to their advantages, as they formed over four hundred anti-Semitic associations and societies in Germany, along with over seven hundred anti-Jewish periodicals. Wistrich, Hitler and the Holocaust: 42.

⁶² In the First World War and in the Weimar Republic, the state actually attempted to prevent the spread of anti-Semitism; acts of anti-Semitism violence during the Republic were the work of extremists opposed to the state; by contrast, in the Third Reich, anti-Semitism was raised to the status of an official doctrine and state policy. Alan Kramer, Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War (Cambridge: Oxford UP, 2007): 332.

⁶³ Toland, No Man's Land: 1918: 382.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Cocks, "The Hitler Controversy," Political Psychology 1, No. 2 (Autumn 1979): 67.

⁶⁵ Shelley Baranowski, Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 527.

⁶⁶ Disdain for the Jews' humanity, however vague and trivial, constituted an essential component of some for the most prominent aspects of Nazism's popular appeal. Anti-Semitism not only allowed for extreme forms of scape-goating, but it is also linked to what may well be the most enticing feature of Nazism: the delusion of German superiority. The emotional appeal of Nazism focused on images of greatness, purity, and impregnability. Beyond economic despair and political troubles, Nazism answered to forceful emotional needs of the German people. It offered opportunity to distance oneself from the weak, the vulnerable, and the ugly. Such imagery needs symbols. The dream of power and purity stood above the human rights for the Jews. The Nazis were able to exploit anti-Western liberal and humanitarian sentiments at a time in Germany when the political culture was ripe. Hartmann, "Anti-Semitism and the Appeal of Nazism" Political Psychology 5, no. 4 (December 1984) : 639.

others fell into a coherent, neat, and utterly paranoid pattern for Hitler. This pattern of behavior manifested itself into his political career in Germany and onto the world stage as a dictator and tyrant, the likes the world has never seen.

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