

ALOIS AND ADOLF

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~~Obviously~~, Adolf Hitler's ^{obviously} readiness to exterminate humans by the train-load and the gas chamber was not at this time an active longing. In

If I speak, therefore, of a year like 1945, it is to make no direct connection to 1900 and

in the months after Edmund's death. While it is apparent that ~~I was engaged~~ ^{I was engaged already in} already, guided by the Maestro, into intensifying the sense, even then, that he,

young Adolf Hitler, could yet become a high agent of the gods of death, and ^{so} ~~in~~

that manner believe that his own end would not be like others, I also find it

^{course} ~~no sense yet of the dimensions to come,~~ interesting that in the beginning of 1945, close to the last few months of his

life, he ^{did} wished to be cremated. The meanest aspect of his life had always been

his body, that somewhat foul-smelling flesh towards which Angela often

reacted as if his soul were bound to it. Yet, this late in his life, such
 understanding was false. By then, his soul—by any but our measure—was
~~much~~ more befouled than his torso. Of course it is also true that when one
 holds the power to select whole ranks and categories of people to be liquidated,
 one does become an overseer of death and such leaders are in immense need of
 a very hard shell to their ego, hard enough to feel no intimate horror over the
 price to one's soul. Most statesmen who become leaders of a country at war
 have usually risen to such eminence because they had already installed the
 ability not to suffer sleepless nights when obliged to think of the casualties on
 the other side. They ^{have become} ~~were~~ ready to call forth any bloody deeds ~~they~~ needed.
 At their disposal ^{is} ~~was~~ the mightiest of all our social engines of psychic
 immunization—patriotism! That is still ^{the} ~~our~~ most dependable lever upon the
 masses, although it may yet be replaced by revealed religion ^{we love} ~~which shows~~
~~fundamentalists~~ ^{they} ~~their~~ ^{faith} ~~offers us~~
 every promise of becoming a weapon of mass destruction.

If these are the conclusions I have come to, I must also warn the reader:
 Our Maestro detests ^{large} ~~our biggest~~ ^{in his minions,} thoughts. He speaks of them as vapors. He
 reminds us to return to more modest matters.

I think that by the end Hitler shared this sentiment. In 1944, one of the worst years of his life, with the war going badly, the Fuehrer, out at his underground retreat in East Prussia—The Wolfschanze—liked to tell his secretaries passing anecdotes over dinner. As, for example, how his father, on many a night, would lay a whipping on him. But, he assured his secretaries, he had been as brave as an American Indian under torture. Never did he make the smallest sound. On he went, regaling the ladies with these modest tales of his heroism. By then, being much more aged than his actual years—fifty-five—Adolf was ready to enjoy the advantages of old age. He delighted in receiving the admiration of women without having to pass through the anxiety of deciding whether he should consider copulating with them. His sexual spirit, so wholly unlike Alois', had never committed itself to seeking the glories or disasters of new fornication. (The fear of embarrassment was prodigious in Adolf and we looked to keep it that way—one more ~~small~~ tool at our command.) Given the sum of the levers and buttons we had installed in the Fuehrer by then, an earthly companion was not in the least necessary to our aims.

Of course, the story he told the secretaries was a shameless exaggeration. On occasion he would even speak of two hundred strikes delivered by his father's ~~hand~~ ^{as the ~~arm~~ hand} arm,

Once, in the late 1930's, talking to Hans Frank, he told him, "When I was ten or twelve I had to go late at night into this stinking smoke-filled tavern. I made no attempt to spare my father's feelings. I went right up to the table where he sat staring at me doltishly and I shook him. 'Father,' I would say, 'it's time for you to come home. Up you get.' And often I would have to wait for a quarter of an hour or more, pleading and scolding before I could get him to his legs. Then I supported him home. I never felt so horribly ashamed. Oh, Frank, I know what a demon alcohol can be. Because of my father, it was the bane of my youth." Indeed, he told the story so well that Herr Frank even repeated it in the course of the Nuremberg trials.

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Actually, Alois happened to be drinking with care. He did not dare to take too much. The fact that Edmund had died and so would not be there to greet him in the morning remained close to unendurable. He would feel as if he had consumed a bowl of ashes in his sleep.

On many an evening, he now needed to be alert because he was going often to the Burger-Abends, and the gentry were certainly more cultivated than himself. So he was not ready to get drunk, not when he needed these people. They could lift him for an hour out of his worst moods. Without such elegant diversion, he would have to spend his night, whether in drink or sober,

brooding on the young one's death. And so he became a regular and was usually present all four nights a week at whatever was the inn chosen for that date. If, in the beginning, he had been stiff in his entrances and departures, the condition was eased by the quiet compassion he was now being offered. A general courtesy met him when he entered and many offered their warmth when he left. "This is the good side of the gentry," he told himself. At Customs, he had always seen them as chilly in their manner except when they had something to hide. Then they were over-friendly.

What impressed him now was that one of the members present most often at these Burger-Abends was a rabbi named Moriz Friedmann who had been a member of the Austrian District School for eighteen years. Alois could see that the other gentry were respectful of Friedmann and this certainly helped to reinforce his notion that humankind could be divided into those who were cultured and those who were not. If a Jew could be acceptable to a Burger-Abend, he told himself, then so could a peasant born into the lowest circumstances, yes, even if it were never to be mentioned, a child born illegitimately to a woman who slept on straw in an abandoned cattle trough. No, he was not about to drink too much on these evenings. Adolf never had to

bring him home drunk. Given the decent welcome the Burger-Abends gave him now, he felt much too much warmth toward them. Indeed, the more he thought about it the more he concluded that he had a right to belong in their society because he, too, like Rabbi Moriz Freedmann, was a special individual. Something like six hundred Jews were living in Linz at this time which, given a population of sixty thousand, meant that there was one such man or woman in one hundred. Most of these Jews came from Bohemia and were actually not as crude as one would expect—so he would have told Klara if she had not supposed he was Jewish. Indeed, many of them were assimilated. They didn't walk around in old caftans smelling of stale places. Many were professionals or manufacturers, and many, like Moriz Freedman, had honorary federal posts. So, yes, they had come from the outside and so had he.

By now, Alois felt (just like Mayrhofer) that the town tavern was too raw. Given his grief, the loud tavern voices could bring him close to tears whenever he thought of Edmund. Of course, he drank more at the tavern—but what an unmanly sight it would be, bursting into tears.

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Adolf entered Middle School in September of 1900, close to eight months after Edmund's death. Provided he was able to pass all his grades over the next four years—no routine matter—he would be out by his fifteenth birthday. His preference had been to attend the Gymnasium with its curriculum focused on the classics and art rather than the Realschule where emphasis would be given to practical disciplines.

Alois and Adolf had discussions concerning this. Sometimes, Klara would sit in the room, sometimes not, but the point at issue was the Gymnasium. Adi felt he could work there to good effect. His talent, he declared, was for art. Looking to put Alois in a compliant mood, he added that

he was also looking forward to studying the classics. Alois was scornful. "The classics? Even, your spelling in German has deteriorated."

Klara spoke up. "Our boy is upset. Naturally, that affects many other things."

"I can appreciate some of his unhappy thoughts," said Alois, "But what you say is neither here nor there. I see no use in trying to enter the Gymnasium when he is not going to prove acceptable." He chose to look into Adolf's eyes. "Since you seem unable these days to ^{spell} speak German ~~and so~~ correctly, how, in the name of what your mother calls the Good God, will you do anything with Latin or Greek?"

At this point, Alois chose to speak to him in Latin. Not to test him, but to mock him. Absque labore nihil," said Alois.

"And what does that mean?" asked Klara sharply. How cruel of Alois! He made a show of lighting his pipe, pulling smoke in slowly, then releasing it at leisure before he said, "Without labor, there is nothing,' is what it means," he said, offering up the smoke with small cultivated puffs of his lower lip. "I would say that applies to one's choice of schooling. The future for most young men today is likely to be in the technical subjects." He looked into his son's

eyes once more as if to confirm what small readiness there would be to study the ancients. "Yes," he said, "in the Gymnasium the students must master their grammar in Latin and in Greek. Those are fine knowledges to acquire. It would give you superiority over others for the rest of your life. But there is nothing without proper labor, and that school, Adolf, is not for you. Nor do you require courses in Ancient History or Philosophy or Art. In very few of them do I believe you would excel. It is better for you, in my opinion, to go to the Realschule. Not only is their practical teaching what you need, but I can help you to get in." (He was thinking of Mayrhofer's assistance.) "The other one will be too unlikely, no matter what efforts I put forth. One look at your spelling and they will send you home."

Alois knew that he could ask some of the Burger gentry for recommendations to the Gymnasium, but to what end? He would lose so much more than he could gain, and to no point or purpose. He sighed.

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4 Adolf's life was now going to change ^{for the worse,} to
 Linz was five miles away, and with its sixty thousand inhabitants, the ^{commence his troubles,}
 city was twenty times larger than Leonding. A trolley car was available once
 an hour, but ^{if one missed} ~~should~~ ^{reaching} ~~Adolf~~ miss it, there was a long walk across fields and forest
 before ~~he reached~~ ^{reaching} the Realschule, a ~~most~~ forbidding edifice on dark days.

Each morning, he would be reminded in one or another manner by his
 father, his mother, or even Angela, that he was the only one left of Alois' sons
 and so the family must be able to count on him. Klara's homilies about
 honoring and fearing one's father were back in force, even if he was being

asked to honor such sentiments in the face of Alois' view that he might be bright, but was also spoiled enough to live in danger of becoming useless.

Before long, he ^{loathed} came to loathe the Realschule. Gone was the pleasure ^{at school} he had taken in Hafeld, in Lambach, and in Leonding ^{where he would} at how he could excel in class. Now, ^{that greeted him were ready to} when he entered, the dark halls shared the gloom that sat on his chest. He thought often of the day when Alois, weeping over Edmund's death, had come close to suffocating him with the force of his embrace ~~even~~ as he kept repeating, "Now, you are my only hope,"—and such hope was full of tobacco breath. ~~Yet, even as Alois was speaking, it was as if he was offering these words to the air.~~ Could the atmosphere ever believe in such a lie? And this recollection of his father's assertion, so full of misery and mistruth was now attached to the portals of the Realschule.

His classmates, for the most part, came from well-to-do homes. They carried themselves differently from the farm boys and town boys he had known for the last few years, and he did not believe his mother when she told him: "Your father is the second most important man in Leonding. And the first, the mayor, Mayrhofer, is his good friend."

He doubted that ^{such} ~~their~~ importance ^{even} reached the ^{outskirts} ~~city~~ of Linz. No one there seemed to respect where he came from. Why, the Mayor, the most important man in Leonding, also sold vegetables in his store—a most elevated mayor! Adolf had not been in the school for a day before he felt uncultivated. In recess, he overheard two students speaking of the merits of the opera they had been taken to by their parents the night before. That was enough to give him pause, but then he ^{thought} ~~began to think~~ he ~~had~~ also heard a remark about himself: “This Hitler, he comes from the peasants.” It was obvious to him that he was being seen as a dolt who had to walk all the way to school from the provinces. Yes, on rainy days, he could take the trolley, but only if his parents gave him the pfennigs to afford it. An outlander! So many of these boys from Linz had never even seen Leonding. They probably assumed it was mud-ridden. They certainly had no idea of the beauty of Lambach's monastery. And then he could hardly stay ~~for long~~ after class and make friends with anyone. No, he had to plod back to the Garden house. His mock wars in the forest were possible now only on Saturday. There was no time to train troops or try out new rules of warfare.

Before long he was overcome once again with the thought that he was the person responsible for Edmund's death. Once more, he chose to talk to the ~~trees~~. ~~But~~ the conversations had become orations. He inveighed against the stupidity of his teachers, and the ~~repulsiveness of their stale~~ ^{stale aroma of their} clothing. "They are earning a pittance," he said to a stately oak. "It is obvious. They cannot afford to change their linens. Angela should smell these teachers. Then she would respect her brother!" He had other topics. To an old elm, he declared, "It is supposed to be an advanced school, but I can say that it is a stupid place. It is uncouth." He could hear the leaves murmuring in assent. "I have decided to go back to my study of drawing. I will do that at once. I know that I am excellent at capturing every detail of the most interesting buildings in Leonding ~~as well as~~ ^{and in} Linz. When I show these drawings to my parents, even my father approves. He says, 'You are an excellent draftsman.' But then, he must spoil it. He also says, 'You have to learn more about perspective. You have not found the right size for the people who walk in front of your buildings. Some could be eight feet tall, others are ~~pygmies~~ ^{pygmies}. You must learn to draw bodies to scale. The people must be in proportion to the size of the building. Can you take into account, Adolf, whether they are nearer to the eye than is the

⊛ Now, that he was at the Realgymnasium he did not often feel enough of a man to talk to Shatterhand.

building? It is a pity you cannot get this right, because your drawing of the edifice, taken by itself, would be an excellent sketch. Then, I could appreciate the accuracy you bring to the most prominent element."

Of course, half-praise from his father was worth more than all of Klara's loving exclamations. It proved his point. Art was worth pursuing, not scholarship. "Scholarly work," he told the next grove of trees, "is pretentious. It is clear to me. That may be why my teachers show a lack of interest in my possibilities. They are snobs. They dance ~~around~~ disgustingly over boys who come from well-to-do families. The air of this school, therefore, has become intolerable to me." What he does not tell the trees is that the only students who will have anything to do with him during recess happen to be the ugliest kids in class, or the stupidest, or the poorest.

He believes in the wisdom of these old trees. They seem as wise to him as full-grown elephants. He would not want them to have a low opinion of young Adolf Hitler. An amputated conscience in one so young is always a work-in-progress, and what is left of the roots can seek approval in unorthodox places.

Some mornings he would wake up late and be obliged to take the train from Leonding to Linz. That bothered Klara. It was not a large expense but it was certainly unnecessary should the sun be out. She had a gnawing sense of loss when money was disbursed heedlessly. It even came down to the pfennings. She used to feel as if coins spent in such a manner fell into a well that was dry at the bottom and so they made an awful clatter when they struck—a blow to your spirit.

In contrast, Adolf had no bad conscience about taking the train whenever he could. Still, on those many mornings when he did have to walk, his route would take him across fine old meadows and he did become interested in the forts on the way, particularly after he learned that these crumbling towers were left over from the earliest years of the nineteenth century when the Austrians had lived in fear that come one year or another, Napoleon was bound to march his armies across the Danube. So, they had built these watchtowers. One morning, thinking of the workers who had put it together and the soldiers who had inhabited it, he became so excited that he had an ejaculation. Afterward, he was languid, but joyous. He was, of course, very late for school and was sent home with a note his mother was required to sign. She did not know

whether to believe him that he had missed the train. For the next few days, however, the pfennigs were available to buy a ticket and travel to school at his ease.