

Adler

Kershaw

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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HITLER

1889-1936: HUBRIS

Ian Kershaw



W. W. Norton & Company

NEW YORK • LONDON

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First American edition 1999

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kershaw, Ian.
Hitler, 1889–1936 : hubris / Ian Kershaw. —1st American ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-393-04671-0

1. Hitler, Adolf, 1889–1945 2. Hitler, Adolf, 1889–1945—Childhood and youth.
3. Germany—Politics and government—1918–1933. 4. Heads of state—Germany—
Biography. 5. Germany—Politics and government—1933–1945. 6. Antisemitism—
Austria. 7. Antisemitism—Germany. I. Title.

DD247.H5K462 1999

943.086'092—dc21

[B] 98-29569

CIP

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

<http://www.wwnorton.com>

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 10 Coptic Street, London CW1A 1PU

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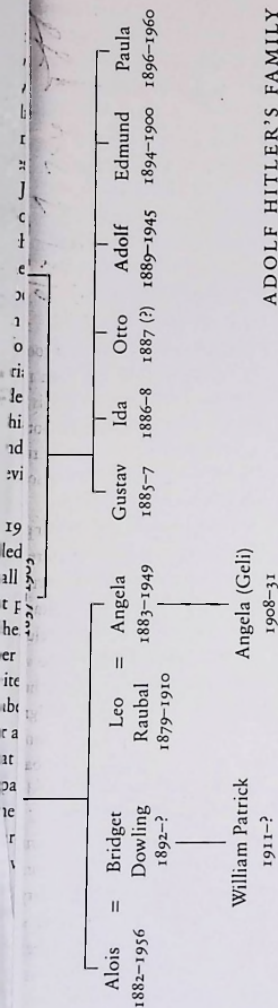
The first of many strokes of good fortune for Adolf Hitler took place thirteen years before he was born. In 1876, the man who was to become his father changed his name from Alois Schicklgruber to Alois Hitler. Adolf can be believed when he said that nothing his father had done had pleased him so much as to drop the coarsely rustic name of Schicklgruber.¹ Certainly, 'Heil Schicklgruber' would have sounded an unlikely salutation to a national hero.

The Schicklgrubers had for generations been a peasant family, smallholders in the Waldviertel, a picturesque but poor, hilly and (as the name suggests) woody area in the most north-westerly part of Lower Austria, bordering on Bohemia, whose inhabitants had something of a reputation for being dour, hard-nosed, and unwelcoming.² Hitler's father, Alois, had been born there on 7 June 1837, in the village of Strones, as the illegitimate child of Maria Anna Schicklgruber, then forty-two years old and daughter of a poor smallholder, Johann Schicklgruber, and baptized (as Aloys Schicklgruber) in nearby Dollersheim the same day. The baptismal register left a blank in the space allocated to the baby's father.³ The name of Hitler's paternal grandfather was not disclosed and, despite much speculation, has remained unknown ever since.

Five years later, Maria Anna married Johann Georg Hiedler, a fifty-year-old miller's journeyman from Spital, some fifteen miles away. Hiedler's aimless and meandering lifestyle had brought him to Strones, where he had for some time dwelt in the same house as Maria Anna and her father.⁴ The marriage lasted five years. Maria Anna died in 1847, and Hiedler's hand-to-mouth existence was ended by a stroke a decade later.

No later than the time of his mother's death, and perhaps earlier, the

ADOLF HITLER'S FAMILY



youngster Alois was taken by Johann Georg's brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, fifteen years his junior, to live on Nepomuk's middling-sized farm in Spital.⁵ The reasons for Nepomuk's effective adoption of young Alois are unclear. But to all appearances the boy was provided with a modest but good home. After going to elementary school, Alois took up an apprenticeship with a local cobbler, and already at the age of thirteen, like many country lads, made his way to Vienna to continue his training in leatherwork.

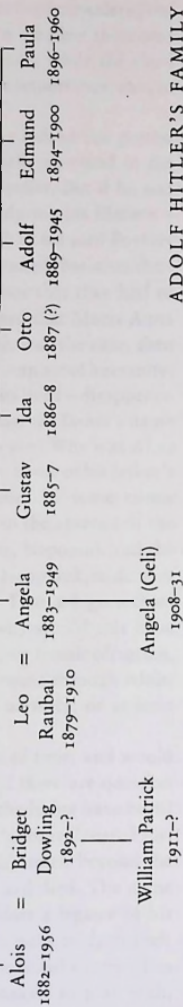
Hitler's father was the first social climber in his family. In 1855, by the time he was eighteen, Alois had gained employment at a modest grade with the Austrian ministry of finance.⁶ For a young man of his background and limited education, his advancement in the years to come was impressive. After training, and passing the necessary examination, he attained low-ranking supervisory status in 1861 and a position in the customs service in 1864, becoming a customs officer in 1870 before moving the following year to Braunau am Inn, and attaining the post of customs inspector there in 1875.⁷

A year later came the change of name. This had nothing to do with any social stigma attached to Alois's illegitimacy. Though castigated by the Catholic Church, illegitimacy was scarcely an unusual feature of Austrian country life.⁸ Alois did not attempt to conceal his illegitimacy, even after 1876. It is unclear whether the impulse for the change of name came from Alois himself, or from his uncle (and effective stepfather) Nepomuk, who, deprived of male heirs, seems to have made a legacy to Alois dependent upon the adoption of his own name.⁹ The legalization protocol of a notary in Weitra on 6 June 1876, signed by three witnesses, recorded Alois as the son of *Georg Hitler* – the name is already entered here in this form, not as 'Hiedler'.¹⁰ Then the following day the legitimization of Alois, thirty-nine years after he had been born, was completed when the parish priest of Dollersheim altered the birth register to strike out the name 'Schicklgruber', replacing 'out of wedlock' by 'within wedlock', and entering in the hitherto empty box for the father's name 'Georg Hitler'.¹¹ This was the Johann Georg Hiedler who had married Alois's mother as long ago as 1842, had been dead for nineteen years, but had, according to the three witnesses of the legitimizing ceremony (all of whom had family connections) and according to Alois himself, acknowledged his paternity.¹² The priest's entry notes also the testimony of the witnesses that Alois's father had requested the entry of his name in the baptismal register.¹³

The change of name – an event at the time of significance only for the history of a peasant family in provincial Austria – has attracted unceasing speculation purely because it is inextricably bound up with the identity of

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possibilities need consideration. More than whether there was a Hiedler family, while the third of some importance, can, in li-
 Alois was indeed the person and officially accepted in the J. Georg Hiedler. But if he was to attempt during his lifetime – the birth of his son? Poverty was rumoured that after their were so poor that they had to established that Maria Anna and if this was the case, then Nepomuk – an act of humanity, let his parents lived – disappears. his not disclose the father's name and her only son? Why was Alois read in the home of his father's accompanied by some minor maternity in the absence of the ed e by Alois, Nepomuk and the all elated to Nepomuk, to deceive pl 1876?¹⁵ That a legacy from uly. But why would this have r uk, with only female offspring, te e family name through Alois, be seems an unlikely, or at least a
 t) the mists of time, and would a nce. But if there are question e se might the father have been? r nself. He 'adopted', cared for, v the moving spirit beyond the a Maria, had died. The name making Alois a legatee of his tant heirs were told, to their at only six months later Alois ounts of money to play with,

purchased a substantial house and adjoining property not far from Spital, costing between 4,000 and 5,000 Gulden.¹⁶ It seems conceivable, then, that Nepomuk, not Johann Georg, was the actual father of Alois, that Johann Georg had rejected Alois, the son of his brother, at the time of his marriage to Maria Anna, but that the family scandal had been kept quiet, and that a change of name had not been possible as long as Nepomuk's wife had lived.¹⁷

However, there is no proof and, even after his wife's death, Nepomuk, if he was himself the actual father, was keen to avoid public admission of the fact. Some significance has been read into Adolf Hitler's comment at the beginning of *Mein Kampf* that his father had been the son of a 'poor, small cottager' (which was not a description of Johann Georg, a miller's journeyman).¹⁸ But Hitler was frequently inaccurate or careless with detail in the autobiographical parts of *Mein Kampf*, and it would be a mistake to read too much into his brief and vague reference to his grandfather (who, if it referred to Nepomuk, was in any case rather more than a 'poor cottager'). It has also been claimed that the form of name chosen by Alois in 1876 – 'Hitler' – was a deliberate reflection of 'Hüttler' (Nepomuk's name) rather than Hiedler (that of Johann Georg). But this would be to interpret too much from the adoption of one form of a name which remained fluid and fluctuating before the late nineteenth century. The names 'Hiedler', 'Hietler', 'Hüttler', 'Hürler', and 'Hitler' – the name meant 'smallholder' – occur interchangeably in documents of the early and mid-nineteenth century and were phonetically scarcely distinguishable.¹⁹ Nepomuk himself was baptized 'Hiedler' and married as 'Hüttler'.²⁰ Alois, the social climber, may have preferred the less rustic form of 'Hitler'. But 'Hitler' may have been no more than the particular form chosen by the notary in Weitra at the legalization, and copied by the parish priest of Dollersheim the next day.²¹ Whatever the reason for the selection of the form of name, Alois seemed well satisfied with it. He thereafter never deviated in his usage of the name, and from the final authorization in January 1877 always signed himself 'Alois Hitler'. His son was equally pleased with the more distinctive form 'Hitler'.²²

The third possibility is that Adolf Hitler's grandfather was Jewish. Rumours to that effect circulated in Munich cafés in the early 1920s, and were fostered by sensationalist journalism of the foreign press during the 1930s. It was suggested that the name 'Hüttler' was Jewish, 'revealed' that he could be traced to a Jewish family called Hitler in Bucharest, and even claimed that his father had been sired by Baron Rothschild, in whose house in Vienna his grandmother had allegedly spent some time as a servant.²³ But

the most serious speculation about Hitler's supposed Jewish background has occurred since the Second World War, and is directly traceable to the memoirs of the leading Nazi lawyer and Governor General of Poland, Hans Frank, dictated in his Nuremberg cell while awaiting the hangman.

Frank claimed that he had been called in by Hitler towards the end of 1930 and shown a letter from his nephew William Patrick Hitler (the son of his half-brother Alois, who had been briefly married to an Irish woman) threatening, in connection with the press stories circulating about Hitler's background, to expose the fact that Hitler had Jewish blood flowing in his veins. Allegedly commissioned by Hitler to look into his family history, Frank reportedly discovered that Maria Anna Schicklgruber had given birth to her child while serving as a cook in the home of a Jewish family called Frankenberger in Graz. Not only that: Frankenberger senior had reputedly paid regular instalments to support the child on behalf of his son, around nineteen years old at the birth, until the child's fourteenth birthday. Letters were allegedly exchanged for years between Maria Anna Schicklgruber and the Frankenbergers. According to Frank, Hitler declared that he knew, from what his father and grandmother had said, that his grandfather was not the Jew from Graz, but because his grandmother and her subsequent husband were so poor they had conned the Jew into believing he was the father and into paying for the boy's support.²⁴

Frank's story gained wide circulation in the 1950s.²⁵ But it simply does not stand up. There was no Jewish family called Frankenberger in Graz during the 1830s. In fact, there were no Jews at all in the whole of Styria at the time, since Jews were not permitted in that part of Austria until the 1860s. A family named Frankenreiter did live there, but was not Jewish. There is no evidence that Maria Anna was ever in Graz, let alone was employed by the butcher Leopold Frankenreiter. No correspondence between Maria Anna and a family called Frankenberg or Frankenreiter has ever turned up. The son of Leopold Frankenreiter and alleged father of the baby (according to Frank's story and accepting that he had merely confused names) for whom Frankenreiter was seemingly prepared to pay child support for thirteen years was ten years old at the time of Alois's birth. The Frankenreiter family had moreover hit upon such hard times that payment of any support to Maria Anna Schicklgruber would have been inconceivable.²⁶ Equally lacking in credibility is Frank's comment that Hitler had learnt from his grandmother that there was no truth in the Graz story: his grandmother had been dead for over forty years at the time of Hitler's birth. And whether in fact Hitler received a blackmail letter from his nephew in 1930

is also doubtful. If such was the case, a nuisance of himself by scrounging to survive the next few years which he and to be able to leave the country 'revelations', when they came in 1918, nothing about the Graz story.²⁸ No inquiries into Hitler's family background any reference to the alleged Graz birth, new skeletons in the cupboard. Had when he was waiting for the hangman's crisis,³⁰ are full of inaccuracies and regard to the story of Hitler's alleged grandfather, whoever he was.

The only serious contenders for it therefore, Johann Georg Hiedler and the official version always declared. The evidence is insufficient to know though there is no firm reason to believe Georg Hiedler.³² In any case, as regards were Nepomuk his grandfather, the more incestuous than if his grandfather was also the grandfather of Adolf.

Klara Pölzl, who was to become Adolf's only three surviving children out of and Theresia – from the marriage of Hüttler, with Johann Baptist Pölzl, all grew up on the adjacent farm to that mother, Johanna, and her aunt Maria Alois Schicklgruber in Nepomuk's name and legitimation in 1876, Alois cousins. In 1876, aged sixteen, Klara moved to Braunau am Inn to join the

By this time, Alois was a well-respected personal affairs were, however, less so eventually marry three times, first to then to women young enough to be his last two marriages would give him die in infancy. It was a private life for a provincial customs officer.³⁶ H

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The only serious contenders for the paternity of Hitler's father remain, therefore, Johann Georg Hiedler and Johann Nepomuk Hiedler (or Hüttler). The official version always declared Johann Georg to be Adolf's grandfather. The evidence is insufficient to know. And perhaps Adolf did not know, though there is no firm reason to believe that he doubted that it was Johann Georg Hiedler.³² In any case, as regards Adolf the only significance is that, were Nepomuk his grandfather, the family descent would have been even more incestuous than if his grandfather had been Johann Georg: for Nepomuk was also the grandfather of Adolf's mother.³³

Klara Polzl, who was to become Adolf Hitler's mother, was the eldest of only three surviving children out of eleven – the other two were Johanna and Theresia – from the marriage of Nepomuk's eldest daughter, Johanna Hüttler, with Johann Baptist Polzl, also a smallholder in Spital. Klara herself grew up on the adjacent farm to that of her grandfather Nepomuk. Klara's mother, Johanna, and her aunt Walburga had in fact been brought up with Alois Schicklgruber in Nepomuk's house.³⁴ Officially, after the change of name and legitimization in 1876, Alois Hitler and Klara Polzl were second cousins. In 1876, aged sixteen, Klara Polzl left the family farm in Spital and moved to Braunau am Inn to join the household of Alois Hitler as a maid.³⁵

By this time, Alois was a well-respected customs official in Braunau. His personal affairs were, however, less well regulated than his career. He would eventually marry three times, first to a woman much older than himself, then to women young enough to be his daughters. A pre-marital liaison and his last two marriages would give him nine children, four of whom were to die in infancy. It was a private life of above average turbulence – at least for a provincial customs officer.³⁶ He had already fathered an illegitimate

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child in the 1860s.³⁷ In 1873 he married Anna Glassl, then aged fifty. It is unlikely to have been a love-match. The marriage to a woman fourteen years older than himself had almost certainly a material motive, since Anna was relatively well off, and in addition had connections within the civil service.³⁸ Within a short time, if not from the outset, Anna became ill. Her illness cannot have been helped by knowledge of the affair Alois was conducting by the later 1870s with Franziska (Fanni) Matzelberger, a young maid at the Gasthaus Streif, where the Hitlers lived. By 1880 Anna had finally had enough, and was granted a legal separation.³⁹

Alois now lived openly with Fanni, one of whose first acts was to insist that Klara Polzl, a year older than she was and evidently regarded as a potential rival for Alois's favours, should leave the Hitler household. In 1882 Fanni gave birth to a son, baptized Alois Matzelberger but legitimized as soon as Anna Hitler's death in 1883 cleared the way for the marriage, six weeks later, between Alois and Franziska. A second child, Angela, was born less than two months after the wedding. But in 1884 Fanni developed tuberculosis, and she died in August that year aged only twenty-three.⁴⁰

During her illness, Fanni had been moved to the fresh air of the countryside outside Braunau. For someone to look after his two young children, Alois turned straight away to Klara Polzl, and brought her back to Braunau. While Fanni was dying, Klara became pregnant. Since they were officially second cousins, a marriage between Alois and Klara needed the dispensation of the Church. After a wait of four months, in which Klara's condition became all the more evident, the dispensation finally arrived from Rome in late 1884, and the couple were married on 7 January 1885. The wedding ceremony took place at six o'clock in the morning. Soon after a perfunctory celebration, Alois was back at his work at the customs post.⁴¹

The first of the children of Alois's third marriage, Gustav, was born in May 1885, to be followed in September the following year by a second child, Ida, and, with scarcely a respite, by another son, Otto, who died only days after his birth. Further tragedy for Klara came soon afterwards, as both Gustav and Ida contracted diphtheria and died within weeks of each other in December 1887 and January 1888.⁴² By the summer of 1888 Klara was pregnant again. At half-past six in the evening on 20 April 1889, an overcast and chilly Easter Saturday,⁴³ she gave birth in her home in the 'Gasthof zum Pommer', Vorstadt Nr. 219, to her fourth child, the first to survive infancy: this was Adolf.⁴⁴

In the very first sentences of *Mein Kampf*, Adolf was to emphasize – what became a Nazi stock-in-trade – how providential it was that he had been

born in Braunau am Inn, on the border his life's task to unite.⁴⁵ He remembered Braunau, since in 1892 his father was Collector of Customs – the highest elementary school education behind him in Bavaria, before he was three years German side of the border.⁴⁶ It was which the young Hitler was to experience.

The historical record of Adolf's account in *Mein Kampf* is inaccurate: Post-war recollections of family and care, and are at times as dubious as itself to glorify the childhood of the first so important to psychologists and 'I' faced that there is little to go on which.

In material terms, the Hitler family. In addition to Alois, Klara, the first Alois Jr (before he left home in 1896 brother Edmund (born in 1894, but c 1896), the household also ran to a addition, there was Adolf's aunt Johanna a bad-tempered, hunchbacked woman a good help for Klara around the house purchase in 1889, Alois was a man of no one – rather more than that of an elder.

Family life was, however, less than an archetypal provincial civil servant: humourless, frugal, pedantically pursued, regarded with respect by the local community, he had a bad temper which smoked like a chimney, and enjoyed a around the beer table more than going in bringing up his family, and was his family home.⁵⁰ His passion was bee- and from his bees from his Passau way back doubtless marked a peaceful of young children. His aim of owning his beehives was realized in 1889 when him to buy a property near his birth.

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⁴² By the summer of 1888 Klara was
evening on 20 April 1889, an overcast
birth in her home in the 'Gasthof zum
rth child, the first to survive infancy:

ampf, Adolf was to emphasize – that
providential it was that he had been

born in Braunau am Inn, on the border of the two countries he saw it as
his life's task to unite.⁴³ He remembered, however, little or nothing of
Braunau, since in 1892 his father was promoted to the position of Higher
Collector of Customs – the highest rank open to an official with only an
elementary school education behind him – and the family moved to Passau,
in Bavaria, before he was three years old and was based for a time on the
German side of the border.⁴⁶ It was one of numerous changes of address
which the young Hitler was to experience.

The historical record of Adolf's early years is very sparse. His own
account in *Mein Kampf* is inaccurate in detail and coloured in interpretation.
Post-war recollections of family and acquaintances have to be treated with
care, and are at times as dubious as the attempts during the Third Reich
itself to glorify the childhood of the future Führer. For the formative period
so important to psychologists and 'psycho-historians', the fact has to be
faced that there is little to go on which is not retrospective guesswork.⁴⁷

In material terms, the Hitler family led a comfortable middle-class exist-
ence. In addition to Alois, Klara, the two children of Alois's second marriage,
Alois Jr (before he left home in 1896) and Angela, Adolf, and his younger
brother Edmund (born in 1894, but died in 1900) and sister Paula (born in
1896), the household also ran to a cook and maid, Rosalia Schichtl. In
addition, there was Adolf's aunt Johanna, one of his mother's younger sisters,
a bad-tempered, hunchbacked woman who was, however, fond of Adolf and
a good help for Klara around the house. After his inheritance and property
purchase in 1889, Alois was a man of moderate means. His income was a solid
one – rather more than that of an elementary school headmaster.⁴⁸

Family life was, however, less than harmonious and happy.⁴⁹ Alois was
an archetypal provincial civil servant – pompous, status-proud, strict,
humourless, frugal, pedantically punctual, and devoted to duty. He was
regarded with respect by the local community. But both at work and at
home, he had a bad temper which could flare up quite unpredictably. He
smoked like a chimney, and enjoyed a few drinks after work and a discussion
around the beer table more than going back home. He took little interest
in bringing up his family, and was happier outside rather than inside the
family home.⁵⁰ His passion was bee-keeping. His daily half-hour walk to
and from his bees from his Passau work-post before visiting the inn on his
way back doubtless marked a peaceful respite from a boisterous household
of young children. His aim of owning a plot of land where he could keep
his beehives was realized in 1889 when the legacy from Nepomuk helped
him to buy a property near his birthplace at Spital in the Waldviertel.

The childhood years were also punctuated by the instability caused by several changes of home. Alois's promotion in 1892 brought the move to Passau. Klara remained there with the children, now including the new baby Edmund, when her husband was assigned to Linz in April 1894. The separation from the family, interrupted only by brief visits, lasted a year. With his mother taken up by the new baby, and his stepsister and stepbrother Angela and Alois Jr busy with their schooling, Adolf had for a time the run of the house. He showed in these months the first signs of tantrums if he did not get his way.⁶⁶ He would remark much later that even as a boy he was used to having the last word.⁶⁷ But for the most part, he was free to play cowboys and Indians or war games to his heart's content.

In February 1895, Alois had bought a small farm in the hamlet of Hafeld, part of the community of Fischlham, near Lambach, some thirty miles away from Linz, and two months later the family joined him there. It was at the tiny primary school at Fischlham that Adolf began his schooling on 1 May 1895, and for the next two years he made good headway, attaining high marks for his schoolwork and behaviour.⁶⁸ Outside school, Adolf continued to have fun with his friends in outdoor games. At home, however, the tensions increased once Alois took retirement in June 1895 after forty years in the service of the Austrian state in order to devote himself to his bee-keeping. Alois was now present in the home more than ever before; the farm was too much for him and also a financial liability, the children – now with the further addition of baby Paula – trying his nerves. When Alois Jr left home at this time, incurring the wrath of his father, Adolf became, apart from baby Edmund, the only boy in the household and more directly exposed to his father's irritability.⁶⁹

In 1897, Alois sold the Hafeld property and the family moved to temporary accommodation in the tiny market town of Lambach, moving house within Lambach again in early 1898. Adolf's schooling, now in Lambach, continued to produce good reports from his teachers, though he later claimed that he was already becoming 'rather hard to handle'.⁷⁰ At this time Adolf also went to the nearby monastery at Lambach for singing lessons – probably at the prompting of his father, who enjoyed choral singing. According to his later testimony, he was intoxicated by the ecclesiastical splendour and looked up to the abbot as the highest and most desirable ideal.⁷¹

Alois Hitler had always been a restless soul. The Hitlers had moved

house several times within Braunau subsequently been uprooted on a final move for Alois took place w of attached land in Leonding, h vill on, the family settled in the Linz ar bunker in 1945 – looked upon Linz of the happy, carefree days of his mother. And it was the most 'Gei evidently symbolized for him the j the image he would throughout hi: come to know, and detest: Vienna. of making Linz the cultural counter-city on the Danube. He would pour With the Red Army at his portal constructed by his architect, Hern where he had intended to spend hi

Adolf was now in his third elemen himself rapidly with a new set of leader⁷² in the game of cops and n the woods and fields around their favourite.⁷³ Adolf himself was thrill Prussian war, which he had come a broke out, the games revolved ar whom the village boys fervently su became gripped by the adventures of the Wild West and Indian wars (enthralled thousands of youngster from the Karl May adventures and they grew up. For Adolf, however faded.⁸⁰ As Reich Chancellor he st them, too, to his generals, whom h

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Adolf
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Though he sold this three years later, he went on to buy two further plots.⁵¹ At home, Alois was an authoritarian, overbearing, domineering husband and a stern, distant, masterful, and often irritable father. For long after their marriage, Klara could not get out of the habit of calling him 'Uncle'.⁵² And even after his death, she kept a rack of his pipes in the kitchen and would point to them on occasion when he was referred to, as if to invoke his authority.⁵³

What affection the young children missed in their father was more than recompensed by their mother. According to the description given much later by her Jewish doctor, Eduard Bloch, after his own forced emigration from Nazi Germany, Klara Hitler was 'a simple, modest, kindly woman. She was tall, had brownish hair which she kept neatly plaited, and a long, oval face with beautifully expressive grey-blue eyes.'⁵⁴ In personality, she was submissive, retiring, quiet, a pious churchgoer, taken up in the running of the household, and above all absorbed in the care of her children and stepchildren. The deaths within weeks of each other of her first three children in infancy in 1887-8, and the subsequent death of her fifth child, Edmund, under the age of six in 1900, must have been hammer blows for her.⁵⁵ Her sorrows can only have been compounded by living with an irascible, unfeeling, overbearing husband. It is scarcely surprising that she made an impression of a saddened, careworn woman. Nor is it any wonder that she bestowed a smothering, protective love and devotion on her two surviving children, Adolf and Paula.⁵⁶ Klara was in turn held in love and affection by her children and stepchildren, by Adolf quite especially. 'Outwardly, his love for his mother was his most striking feature,' Dr Bloch later wrote. 'While he was not a "mother's boy" in the usual sense,' he added, 'I have never witnessed a closer attachment.'⁵⁷ In one of the few signs of human affection recorded in *Mein Kampf*, Adolf wrote 'I had honoured my father, but loved my mother.'⁵⁸ He carried her picture with him down to the last days in the bunker. Her portrait stood in his rooms in Munich, Berlin, and at the Obersalzberg (his alpine residence near Berchtesgaden).⁵⁹ His mother may well, in fact, have been the only person he genuinely loved in his entire life.

Adolf's early years were spent, then, under the smothering protectiveness of an over-anxious mother in a household dominated by the threatening presence of a disciplinarian father, against whose wrath the submissive Klara was helpless to protect her offspring. Adolf's younger sister, Paula, spoke after the war of her mother as 'a very soft and tender person, the compensatory element between the almost too harsh father and the very

lively children who were perhaps ever quarrel[s] or differences of opinion 'it was always on account of the child who challenged my father to extraordinary every day.' How often him and try to obtain with her kind [in obtaining] with harshness!⁶⁰ Hitler monologues in the 1940s, often recollecting of temper and would then immediately he said, but instead feared him all used to remark, to whom he was about the beatings he had to take, he was thrashed.⁶¹

Quite possibly, Alois's violence was in *Mein Kampf*, in which Hitler of workers' family where the children their mother by their father, may childhood experiences.⁶² What the character developed must remain a profound is hard to doubt.

Beneath the surface, the later Hitler speculation though it must remain, patronizing contempt for the submission (and imagery of the Leader the inability to form deep personal brutality towards humankind, and - profound that it must have reflected self-hatred concealed in the extreme must surely have had roots in the subfamily circumstances. But assumption traces of Adolf's early life, so far as to what would emerge. Attempts to fit within the murderous dictator' have our knowledge of what was to come the most part sympathy for the child

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In one of the few signs of humaneness, Adolf wrote 'I had honoured my father, and a picture with him down to the last in his rooms in Munich, Berlin, and near Berchtesgaden'.⁵⁹ His mother's person he genuinely loved in his entire

under the smothering protectiveness of the household dominated by the threatening father against whose wrath the submissive child was struggling. Adolf's younger sister, Paula, 'a very soft and tender person, the most too harsh father and the very

lively children who were perhaps somewhat difficult to train. If there were ever quarrel[s] or differences of opinion between my parents,' she continued, 'it was always on account of the children. It was, especially my brother Adolf, who challenged my father to extreme harshness and who got his sound thrashing every day.' How often on the other hand did my mother caress him and try to obtain with her kindness what the father could not succeed [in obtaining] with harshness!⁶⁰ Hitler himself, during his late-night fireside monologues in the 1940s, often recounted that his father had sudden bursts of temper and would then immediately hit out. He did not love his father, he said, but instead feared him all the more. His poor beloved mother, he used to remark, to whom he was so attached, lived in constant concern about the beatings he had to take, sometimes waiting outside the door as he was thrashed.⁶¹

Quite possibly, Alois's violence was also turned against his wife. A passage in *Mein Kampf*, in which Hitler ostensibly describes the conditions in a workers' family where the children have to witness drunken beatings of their mother by their father, may well have drawn in part on his own childhood experiences.⁶² What the legacy of all this was for the way Adolf's character developed must remain a matter for speculation.⁶³ That its impact was profound is hard to doubt.

Beneath the surface, the later Hitler was unquestionably being formed. Speculation though it must remain, it takes little to imagine that his later patronizing contempt for the submissiveness of women, the thirst for dominance (and imagery of the Leader as stern, authoritarian father-figure), the inability to form deep personal relationships, the corresponding cold brutality towards humankind, and – not least – the capacity for hatred so profound that it must have reflected an immeasurable undercurrent of self-hatred concealed in the extreme narcissism that was its counterpoint must surely have had roots in the subliminal influences of the young Adolf's family circumstances. But assumptions have to remain guesswork. The outer traces of Adolf's early life, so far as they can be reconstructed, bear no hint of what would emerge. Attempts to find in the youngster 'the warped person within the murderous dictator' have proved unpersuasive.⁶⁴ If we exclude our knowledge of what was to come, his family circumstances invoke for the most part sympathy for the child exposed to them.⁶⁵

* Perhaps a scene where the kid is too afraid to attack the father while he is berating the mother.

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house several times within Braunau during the lengthy stay there, and had subsequently been uprooted on a number of occasions. In November 1898, a final move for Alois took place when he bought a house with a small plot of attached land in Leonding, a village on the outskirts of Linz. From now on, the family settled in the Linz area, and Adolf – down to his days in the bunker in 1945 – looked upon Linz as his home town.⁷² Linz reminded him of the happy, carefree days of his youth.⁷³ It held associations with his mother. And it was the most 'German' town of the Austrian Empire. It evidently symbolized for him the provincial small-town Germanic idyll – the image he would throughout his life set against the city he would soon come to know, and detest: Vienna. In the 1940s he would speak repeatedly of making Linz the cultural counterweight to Vienna, and the most beautiful city on the Danube. He would pour vast sums into the town's reconstruction. With the Red Army at his portals, he was still poring over the model constructed by his architect, Hermann Giesler, of the city of his youth, where he had intended to spend his last days and lie buried.⁷⁴

Adolf was now in his third elementary school. He seems to have established himself rapidly with a new set of schoolmates, and became 'a little ring-leader'⁷⁵ in the game of cops and robbers which the village boys played in the woods and fields around their homes.⁷⁶ War games were a particular favourite.⁷⁷ Adolf himself was thrilled by an illustrated history of the Franco-Prussian war, which he had come across at home.⁷⁸ And once the Boer War broke out, the games revolved around the heroic exploits of the Boers, whom the village boys fervently supported.⁷⁹ About this same time, Adolf became gripped by the adventure stories of Karl May, whose popular tales of the Wild West and Indian wars (though May had never been to America) enthralled thousands of youngsters. Most of these youngsters graduated from the Karl May adventures and the childhood fantasies they fostered as they grew up. For Adolf, however, the fascination with Karl May never faded.⁸⁰ As Reich Chancellor he still read the May stories, recommending them, too, to his generals, whom he accused of lacking imagination.⁸¹

Adolf later referred to 'this happy time', when 'school work was ridiculously easy, leaving me so much free time that the sun saw more of me than my room', when 'meadows and woods were then the battleground on which the ever-present "antagonisms"' – the growing conflict with his father – 'came to a head'.⁸²

In 1900, however, the carefree days were drawing to a close. And just around the time when important decisions had to be made about Adolf's future, and the secondary education path he should follow, the Hitler family

-a H 49

was once more plunged into distress with the death, through measles, of Adolf's little brother Edmund on 2 February 1900.⁸³ With Alois's elder son, Alois Jr, already spiting his father and living away from home, any careerist ambitions for his offspring now rested upon Adolf. They were to lead to tension between father and son in the remaining years of Alois's life.

A.H.-11

Adolf began his secondary schooling on 17 September 1900. His father had opted for the *Realschule* rather than the *Gymnasium*, that is, for a school which attached less weight to the traditional classical and humanistic studies but was still seen as a preparation for higher education, with an emphasis upon more 'modern' subjects, including science and technical studies.⁸⁴ According to Adolf, his father was influenced by the aptitude his son already showed for drawing, together with a disdain for the impracticality of humanistic studies deriving from his own hard way to career advancement.⁸⁵ It was not the typical route for a would-be civil servant – the career which Alois had in mind for his son. But, then, Alois himself had made a good career in the service of the Austrian state with hardly any formal education at all to speak of.

The transition to secondary school was a hard one for young Adolf. He had to trek every day from his home in Leonding to school in Linz, a journey of over an hour each way, leaving him little or no time for developing out-of-school friendships. While he was still a big fish in a little pond among the village boys in Leonding, his classmates in his new school took no special notice of him. He had no close friends at school; nor did he seek any. And the attention he had received from his village teacher was now replaced by the more impersonal treatment of a number of teachers responsible for individual subjects. The minimum effort with which Adolf had mastered the demands of the primary school now no longer sufficed.⁸⁶ His school work, which had been so good in primary school, suffered from the outset. And his behaviour betrayed clear signs of immaturity.⁸⁷

In his first year in his secondary school, 1900-1901, Adolf was recorded as 'unsatisfactory' in mathematics and natural history, ensuring that he had to repeat the year. His diligence was noted as 'variable'. There was some improvement during the repeated year, presumably following a wiggling at home, but it was not sustained, and Adolf's school record, down to the time he left in autumn 1905, hovered between poor and mediocre.

A.H.-16

In a letter to Hitler's defence counsel on 12 December 1923, following the failed putsch attempt in Munich, his former class teacher, Dr Eduard Huemer, recalled Adolf as a thin, pale youth commuting between Linz and Leonding, a boy not making full use of his talent, lacking in application,

and unable to accommodate himself as stubborn, high-handed. his teachers were received with classmates he was domineering; pranks which Huemer attributed Indian stories together with a trip from Leonding and back.

Whether in fact Hitler was, Huemer suggested, is doubtful had not stood out at school positively.⁸⁹

There can be little doubting school and teachers (with one school 'with an elemental hatred his schooling and teachers.'⁹⁰ (was singled out for praise in vivid narratives and tales of the strongly emotional Germans were in any case widely prevalent.

The problems of adjustment Linz were compounded by the the running sore of the dispute account in *Mein Kampf* heroic to turn him into a civil servant upon this intentional rejection simplification. But there seem school had a backcloth of cc 1940s. Hitler recounted how he old, into the Linz customs office civil service career, not realizing hatred, and lasting disgust for virtues of a civil service career to enthrall his son met with at my stomach at the thought of ceasing to be master of my own

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'Artist, no, never as long as I live!', Hitler has him saying.⁹⁵ Whether the young Adolf, allegedly at the age of twelve, so plainly stipulated he wanted to be an artist may be doubted. But that there was a conflict with his father arising from his unwillingness to follow a career in the civil service, and that his father found fault with his son's indolent and purposeless existence, in which drawing appeared to be his main interest, seems certain.⁹⁶ Alois had worked his way up through industry, diligence, and effort from humble origins to a position of dignity and respect in the state service. His son, from a more privileged background, saw fit to do no more than dawdle away his time drawing and dreaming, would not apply himself in school, had no career path in view, and scorned the type of career which had meant everything to his father. The dispute amounted, therefore, to more than a rejection of a civil service career. It was a rejection of everything his father had stood for; and with that, a rejection of his father himself.

There was an added dimension to the conflict between father and son. The almost homogeneously German population of the provincial town of Linz, numbering around 60,000, was strongly German nationalist, but politically divided in its expression of nationalist feelings. Hitler's father's nationalist sentiment was of the kind which vehemently supported the continued dominance of German interests within the Austrian state (especially at the time in the later 1890s when they seemed threatened by concessions made to the Czechs). He would have no truck, however, with the pan-German nationalism of the Schönerer variety – the ideas of the movement that had emerged in the 1870s, led by Georg Ritter von Schönerer – which rejected the Austrian state and lauded the virtues of Wilhelmine Germany. Adolf, on the other hand, was plainly drawn in his Linz school – a hotbed of German nationalism – to the symbols and incantations of the shriller Schönerer-style pan-German nationalism which, whatever its limited general appeal in Linz, found ready backers for its emotional appeal among the youth.⁹⁷ Adolf was not actively involved in any way with the Schönerer movement. But it is almost certain that the opinionated and disputatious son further riled his father through his pan-German ridiculing and deriding of the very state to which his father had devoted his life.⁹⁸

Adolf's adolescence, as he commented in *Mein Kampf*, was 'very painful'.⁹⁹ With the move to the secondary school in Linz, and the start of the rumbling conflict with his father, an important formative phase in his character development had begun. The happy, playful youngster of the primary school days had grown into an idle, resentful, rebellious, sullen, stubborn, and purposeless teenager.

When, on 3 January 1903, the morning glass of wine in the over Adolf's future was over circumstances.¹⁰¹ And whatever widow, Klara, it is unlikely that grieved over his father.¹⁰² With pressure was removed. His mother with his father's wishes. But she concerned she was about his future whims.¹⁰³ In any case, his continued out any realistic expectation the civil service.

In 1902-3 – the year in which again registered a failure in mathematics before being allowed into more recorded as 'variable', and registered as 'unsatisfactory' in the examination, but only on condition this failure, Adolf was removed away, where he had to take up from his home.¹⁰⁴ He recalled must stay away to school, and how he

Adolf's performance at Steyr school report for the first semester: physical education and drawing, diligence 'variable', and he received geography and history (which he rejects),¹⁰⁷ and chemistry, a marginal the optional course in stenography language and mathematics.¹⁰⁸ The second half of the school year, a repeated year.¹⁰⁹ By September 1903 semester, he had evidently applied his grades and effort in most subjects though failing in geometry, which pass the final-year examination in Adolf returned to Steyr, and passed examination, he was now eligible for *co* *schule*, or to a technical school.¹¹²

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When, on 3 January 1903, his father collapsed and died over his usual morning glass of wine in the Gasthaus Wiesinger,¹⁰⁰ the conflict of will over Adolf's future was over. Alois had left his family in comfortable circumstances.¹⁰¹ And whatever emotional adjustments were needed for his widow, Klara, it is unlikely that Adolf, now the only 'man about the house', grieved over his father.¹⁰² With his father's death, much of the parental pressure was removed. His mother did her best to persuade Adolf to comply with his father's wishes. But she shied away from conflict and, however concerned she was about his future, was far too ready to give in to Adolf's whims.¹⁰³ In any case, his continued poor school performance in itself ruled out any realistic expectation that he would be qualified for a career in the civil service.

In 1902–3 – the year in which his father died – Adolf's school report again registered a failure in mathematics and he had to pass a re-sit examination before being allowed into a higher class. His application was once more recorded as 'variable', and remained so in 1903–4, when he was registered as 'unsatisfactory' in French. He was granted a pass in the re-sit examination, but only on condition that he leave the *Realschule* in Linz. At this failure, Adolf was removed to the *Realschule* in Steyr, some fifty miles away, where he had to take up lodgings because the school was too far from his home.¹⁰⁴ He recalled much later how sick at heart he was at being sent away to school, and how he detested Steyr to that very day.¹⁰⁵

Adolf's performance at Steyr showed no initial improvement.¹⁰⁶ In his school report for the first semester in 1904–5 he gained good marks for physical education and drawing. His 'moral conduct' was satisfactory, his diligence 'variable', and he received mediocre results in religious instruction, geography and history (which he later claimed to have been his best subjects),¹⁰⁷ and chemistry, a marginally better grade in physics, but failures in the optional course in stenography and two obligatory subjects, German language and mathematics.¹⁰⁸ These failures, had they been continued in the second half of the school year, would have condemned him to yet another repeated year.¹⁰⁹ By September 1905, according to the report for the second semester, he had evidently applied himself better and was able to improve his grades and effort in most subjects, now passing mathematics and German, though failing in geometry, which meant a re-sit before being allowed to pass the final-year examination in the lower *Realschule*. On 16 September, Adolf returned to Steyr, and passed the re-sit in geometry. With this qualification, he was now eligible for consideration for entry to the higher *Realschule*, or to a technical school.¹¹⁰ Whether he would have been admitted

* drawing

with his mediocre school record of the previous five years is doubtful.¹¹¹ But in any case Adolf by this time had no more stomach for schooling. He used illness – feigned, or most likely genuine but exaggerated¹¹² – to persuade his mother that he was not fit to continue school and in autumn 1905, at the age of sixteen, gladly put his schooling behind him for good with no clear future career path mapped out.¹¹³

The time between leaving school in autumn 1905 and his mother's death at the end of 1907 is passed over almost completely in *Mein Kampf*. From the vagueness of the account, it could be presumed that Klara's death followed two, not four, years after that of her husband, and that Adolf's time was spent in careful preparation for attendance at the Viennese Academy of Art, before orphanage and poverty meant that he had to fend for himself.¹¹⁴ Reality was somewhat different.

In these two years, Adolf lived a life of parasitic idleness – funded, provided for, looked after, and cosseted by a doting mother, with his own room in the comfortable flat in the Humboldtstraße in Linz, which the family had moved into in June 1905. His mother, his aunt Johanna and his little sister Paula were there to look after all his needs, to wash, clean and cook for him. His mother even bought him a grand piano, on which he had lessons for four months between October 1906 and January 1907.¹¹⁵ He spent his time during the days drawing, painting, reading, or writing 'poetry'; the evenings were for going to the theatre or opera; and the whole time he daydreamed and fantasized about his future as a great artist. He stayed up late into the night and slept long into the mornings. He had no clear aim in view.¹¹⁶ The indolent lifestyle, the grandiosity of fantasy, the lack of discipline for systematic work – all features of the later Hitler – can be seen in these two years in Linz. It was little wonder that Hitler came to refer to this period as 'the happiest days which seemed to me almost like a beautiful dream'.¹¹⁷

A description of Adolf's carefree life in Linz between 1905 and 1907 is provided by the one friend he had at that time, August Kubizek, the son of a Linz upholsterer with dreams of his own about becoming a great musician. Kubizek's post-war memoirs need to be treated with care, both in factual detail and in interpretation. They are a lengthened and embellished version of recollections he had originally been commissioned by the Nazi Party to compile.¹¹⁸ Even retrospectively, the admiration in which Kubizek continued to hold his former friend coloured his judgement. But more than that, Kubizek plainly invented a great deal, built some passages around Hitler's own account in *Mein Kampf*, and deployed some near plagiarism to amplify

his own limited memory.¹¹⁹ However, these distortions have been shown to be a more was once thought, in particular when it comes to Kubizek's own interests in music. That, whatever their deficiencies, the young Hitler's personality, show be all too prominent in later years.

August Kubizek – 'Gustl' – was son met by chance in autumn 1905 (not 19 in Linz. Adolf had for some years been and his love of opera, especially the Wagner, shared by Kubizek. Gustl was highly intelligent to impress. Gustl was compliant, was superior, determining, dominant. Gustl. Gustl had strong feelings about even Kubizek, 'and needed someone to listen to his artisanal background, having attended Hitler, and feeling himself therefore bored was filled with admiration at Adolf's, Gustl was haranguing him about the deficiencies of local taxation, social welfare lotteries, buildings, Gustl was gripped as never had to say, but how he said it, was was a self-depiction a quiet, dreamy youth, had a cocksure, 'know-all' Hitler. It was

In the evenings they would go off, either to the opera, the pale and weedy young man with a thin moustache, looking distinctly for the image completed by a black cane. In performance Adolf would invariably be in production, or effusively rapturous. Even more gifted and knowledgeable than Hitler, a submissive partner in the 'discussions'.

Hitler's passion for Wagner knew no affect him almost like a religious experience, mystical fantasies.¹²⁰ Wagner amounted to genius, the model to be emulated.¹²¹ And powerful musical dramas, his evocation of the mystical Germanic past. *Lohengrin*, the

Adolf had, he later wrote, left home 'armed with a thick pile of drawings'.¹⁴⁵ He was one of 113 candidates and was allowed to proceed to the examination itself. Thirty-three candidates were excluded following this initial test.¹⁴⁶ At the beginning of October, he sat the two tough three-hour examinations in which the candidates had to produce drawings on specified themes. Only twenty-eight candidates succeeded. Hitler was not among them. 'Test drawing unsatisfactory. Few heads,' was the verdict.¹⁴⁷

It apparently never occurred to the supremely self-confident Adolf that he might fail the entrance examination for the Academy. He had been, he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, 'convinced that it would be child's play to pass the examination . . . I was so convinced that I would be successful that when I received my rejection, it struck me as a bolt from the blue.'¹⁴⁸ He sought an explanation, and was told by the Rector of the Academy that there was no doubt about his unsuitability for the school of painting, but that his talents plainly lay in architecture. Hitler left the interview, as he put it, 'for the first time in my young life at odds with myself'. After a few days pondering his fate, he concluded, so he wrote, that the Rector's judgement was right, and 'that I should some day become an architect' - not that he then or later did anything to remedy the educational deficiencies which provided a major obstacle to studying for a career in architecture.¹⁴⁹ In reality, Adolf probably did not bounce back anything like so quickly as his own story suggests, and the fact that he reapplied the following year for admission to the painting school casts some doubt on the version of a lightning recognition that his future was as an architect. At any rate, the rejection by the Academy was such a body blow to his pride that he kept it a secret. He avoided telling either his friend Gustl, or his mother, of his failure.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Klara Hitler lay dying. The sharp deterioration in her condition brought Adolf back from Vienna to be told by Dr Bloch, towards the end of October, that his mother's condition was hopeless.¹⁵¹ Deeply affected by the news, Adolf was more than dutiful. Both his sister, Paula, and Dr Bloch later testified to his devoted and 'indefatigable' care for his dying mother.¹⁵² But despite Dr Bloch's close medical attention, Klara's health worsened rapidly during the autumn. On 21 December 1907, aged forty-seven, she passed away quietly.¹⁵³ Though he had witnessed many deathbed scenes, recalled Dr Bloch, 'I have never seen anyone so prostrate with grief as Adolf Hitler.'¹⁵⁴ His mother's death was 'a dreadful blow', Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, 'particularly for me'.¹⁵⁵ He felt alone and bereft at her passing.¹⁵⁶ He had lost the one person for whom he had ever felt close affection and warmth.

'Poverty and hard reality,' Hitler took a quick decision. What little he exhausted by my mother's grave was entitled was not enough for me. The problem of somehow making money he returned to Vienna for the third year, his old defiance and deterrent goal was now clear: 'I wanted to exist to be surrendered to, but only to overcome the obstacles, inspired through his own efforts from poverty'.¹⁵⁸

In reality, his mother's careful contributions from her sister Johanna for the considerable medical costs, Nor was Adolf left nearly penniless having to earn his own living. He received 25 Kronen which he and his young half-sister Angela and her husband provide for his upkeep in inflation. Adolf and Paula could not touch the twenty-fourth year. But what his 2,000 Kronen once the funeral expenses between the two orphaned minors. pension, was enough to provide for work.¹⁶⁰ And on top of that, he still had a loan. He scarcely had the finance attributed to him.¹⁶¹ But, all in all, he was, substantially better than that time.

Moreover, Adolf was in less of a hurry to return to Vienna within a few days of their arrival as in Urfahr in mid-January and unlikely, he made brief visits to Vienna. He stayed in Urfahr for at least seven weeks. The family household account-book was not made before May.¹⁶³

When he did return to Vienna, with all vigour the necessary course

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'Poverty and hard reality,' Hitler later claimed, 'now compelled me to take a quick decision. What little my father had left had been largely exhausted by my mother's grave illness; the orphan's pension to which I was entitled was not enough for me even to live on, and so I was faced with the problem of somehow making my own living.'¹⁵³ When after her death he returned to Vienna for the third time, he continued, now to stay for some years, his old defiance and determination had come back to him, and his goal was now clear: 'I wanted to become an architect and obstacles do not exist to be surrendered to, but only to be broken.' He claimed he set out to overcome the obstacles, inspired by the example of his own father's rise through his own efforts from poverty to the position of a government official.¹⁵⁴

In reality, his mother's careful housekeeping – aided by not insignificant contributions from her sister Johanna – had left more than sufficient to pay for the considerable medical costs, as well as a relatively expensive funeral.¹⁵⁵ Nor was Adolf left nearly penniless. There was no question of immediately having to earn his own living. Certainly, the monthly orphan's pension of 25 Kronen which he and his younger sister Paula – now brought up by their half-sister Angela and her husband Leo Raubal – received could scarcely provide for his upkeep in inflation-ridden Austria. And apart from interest, Adolf and Paula could not touch the inheritance from their father until their twenty-fourth year. But what his mother had left – perhaps in the region of 2,000 Kronen once the funeral expenses had been covered – was divided between the two orphaned minors. Adolf's share, together with his orphan's pension, was enough to provide for his upkeep in Vienna for a year without work.¹⁶⁰ And on top of that, he still had the residue of his aunt's generous loan. He scarcely had the financial security which has sometimes been attributed to him.¹⁶¹ But, all in all, his financial position was, during this time, substantially better than that of most genuine students in Vienna.¹⁶²

Moreover, Adolf was in less of a hurry to leave Linz than he implies in *Mein Kampf*. Though his sister almost forty years later stated that he moved to Vienna within a few days of their mother's death, Adolf was still recorded as in Urfahr in mid-January and mid-February 1908.¹⁶³ Unless, as seems unlikely, he made brief visits to Vienna between these dates, it looks as if he stayed in Urfahr for at least seven weeks after the death of his mother.¹⁶⁴ The family household account-book indicates that the break with Linz was not made before May.¹⁶⁵

When he did return to Vienna, in February 1908, it was not to pursue with all vigour the necessary course of action to become an architect, but

lleness, and self-indulgence which Heeven now worked on Kubizek's let August leave his work in the Vienna in order to study music.¹⁶⁶ His mother's death, both occurring 7, amounted to a crushing double abruptly jolted from his dream of : artist; and the sole person upon n lost to him at almost the same alternative – such as settling down bhorrent thought. A neighbour in er, later recalled: 'When the post- ed to do for a living and whether ie replied that it was his intention inded that he lacked the necessary ilied tersely: "Makart and Rubens unds."¹⁶⁷ How he might emulate rested upon retaking the entrance ing year. He must have known his g to enhance them. Meanwhile, he

spects and circumstances, Adolf's goistic fantasy-world – remained rovincialism of Linz to the political eless marked a crucial transition. vere to leave an indelible mark on he formation of his prejudices and

2

DROP-OUT

'Wherever I went, I now saw Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they set themselves apart in my eyes from the rest of humanity.'

Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*

* D.T.

'In those days Hitler was by no means a Jew hater. He became one afterward.'

Reinhold Hanisch, a friend of Hitler in 1909-10

* D.T. It was not difficult to intensify this hatred, this conviction that they were apart from the rest of humanity, since one way or another, his minister had to tell him that it was not permitted and any larger but cease and stop and abated. He was himself and he was also not quite himself but certainly apart from the rest of humanity.

'I owe it to that period that I grew hard.' Hitler was referring to the years he spent in Vienna between February 1908 and May 1913, when he left the Austrian capital for Munich and the beginning of a new life in Germany. The 'mother's darling' had lost his 'soft downy bed' and the carefree existence he had enjoyed in Linz. Instead of 'the hollowness of comfortable life', he was now thrown into 'a world of misery and poverty', with 'Dame Care' as his new mother. Even as he dictated *Mein Kampf*, during his internment in Landsberg in 1924, Vienna aroused in Hitler only 'dismal thoughts' of 'the saddest period' of his life.

But the Vienna years, Hitler stressed, were crucial to the formation of his character and his political philosophy. 'In this period my eyes were opened to two menaces of which I had previously scarcely known the names . . . : Marxism and Jewry.' The social and political naivety with which he arrived in the city was during this time replaced, he claimed, by the 'world-view' that formed the 'granite foundation' of his political struggle.¹ His own account of these years, spread over two chapters of *Mein Kampf*,² describes graphically how deprivation, dire poverty, life among the dregs of society, and avid study brought him political understanding and the decisive shaping of his 'world-view'. 'Vienna was and remained for me,' wrote Hitler more than a decade after he had left the city, 'the hardest, though most thorough, school of my life.'³

Hitler was writing, as always in his public statements, for effect. By 1924 the failed putsch, fiasco though it was, and the subsequent trial that he had turned into a propaganda triumph had brought him celebrity on the extreme nationalist Right. But the Nazi Party was by then banned, and the *völkisch* movement hopelessly divided. Hitler was seeking in *Mein Kampf* to establish sole and undisputed claim to leadership of the *völkisch* Right. The heroic image of a genius whose unique personality and 'world-view' had been

ever adversity was the basis of leaders who emerged from the a Bismarck, say, or a Churchill t. But the very contrast between is disappearance into the black r elevation to almost demi-god

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respectability, self-righteousness, moral rectitude, refined manners, and proper etiquette. But beneath the surface, vice, prostitution, and criminality were rampant. It offered the very limits of the avant-garde, the pinnacle of innovation and modernism, outshining even Paris and Berlin in the brilliance of its cultural and intellectual life. But both cultural rraditionalism and popular philistinism fiercely resisted the new art, antagonized by those with whose artistic and intellectual achievements – Klimt and the Sezession, Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, Mahler, Schönberg, Otto Wagner, Freud – the city is indelibly linked. The long reign of Franz Joseph on the Habsburg throne implied the stability of an ancient empire. But in reality it was an empire wracked by modern nationalist and ethnic conflict, ill at ease with itself, struggling to cope with new social and political forces pulling it apart, decaying. Fear and anxiety were in the air. Germans felt their culture, way of life, living-standards, and status under threat. The liberal bourgeoisie felt pessimistic about the future, menaced by the new forces of mass politics and democracy; small traders and craftsmen resented department stores, large outlets, and modern mass-production; the rise of organized labour reminded them too of Marx's prophecy that they were doomed to slide into the proletariat. The mood of disintegration and decay, anxiety and impotence, the sense that the old order was passing, the climate of a society in crisis, was unmistakable.⁹

It was easy to transfer the impotent anger and fear into race hatred – above all into hatred of Jews, the 'supra-national people of the multi-national state'.¹⁰ The uncrowned king of Vienna, its mayor Karl Lueger, whom Hitler greatly admired, and Vienna's gutter press that supported him, which Hitler read with relish, were adept at it.¹¹ No major city apart from Berlin had grown as fast as Vienna in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its population had increased two-and-a-half-fold between 1860 and 1900 – four times the growth of Paris or London.¹² Of the 1,674,957 residents of Vienna in 1900, fewer than one in two had been born there.¹³ Many had poured into it from the eastern parts of the massive empire of over 50 million, with its ethnic mix of Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Italians, Rumanians and Hungarians. Among them was a sizeable minority of Jews. Vienna's Jewish population was larger than that of any German city at the time. In mid-century, there had been only a little over 6,000 Jews in Vienna, some 2 per cent of the population. By 1910 this had risen to 175,318 Jews, or 8.6 per cent of the population.¹⁴ As in Germany, Jews had historically had a strong presence – far greater than their numbers in the population – in the professions, academic life, the mass media, the

power over adversity was the basis of ideal leaders who emerged from the underground – a Bismarck, say, or a Churchill opponent. But the very contrast between light and shadow in his disappearance into the black is later elevation to almost demi-god myth.

Herbert's tract were not, then, written with it only to their political purpose. But a period in Vienna is far from easy.⁴ *Die erste Kampf* itself, has to rest upon the foundation – of four individuals: August Bebel (despite the similarity in name) and a further passing acquaintance who appears for only brief periods during his stay in Vienna, that of Josef Greiner, like the events it purported to describe, resting on this part of Hitler's life, but is, in fact, so thoroughly flawed and unconvincing.⁶ Many details, some of them remain unclear. Not least, how and where it was formed is far less evident than his earlier work, the uncertainties, there can be no doubt, did indeed stamp its lasting imprint

I

Five years was an extraordinary place. A metropolis, Vienna epitomized tensions – it reflected the turn of an era, the death of the old and the birth of the new. In the twentieth century was a city of contradictions, of grandeur, dazzling opulence and splendour, of intellectual fervour. But behind its resplendent streets, elegant cafés, spacious parks and parks and glitter, lay some of the direst poverty. It oozed bourgeois solidity and

respectability, self-righteousness, moral rectitude, refined manners, and proper etiquette. But beneath the surface, vice, prostitution, and criminality were rampant. It offered the very limits of the avant-garde, the pinnacle of innovation and modernism, outshining even Paris and Berlin in the brilliance of its cultural and intellectual life. But both cultural traditionalism and popular philistinism fiercely resisted the new art, antagonized by those with whose artistic and intellectual achievements – Klimt and the Sezzession, Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, Mahler, Schönberg, Otto Wagner, Freud – the city is indelibly linked. The long reign of Franz Joseph on the Habsburg throne implied the stability of an ancient empire. But in reality it was an empire wracked by modern nationalist and ethnic conflict, ill at ease with itself, struggling to cope with new social and political forces pulling it apart, decaying. Fear and anxiety were in the air. Germans felt their culture, way of life, living-standards, and status under threat. The liberal bourgeoisie felt pessimistic about the future, menaced by the new forces of mass politics and democracy; small traders and craftsmen resented department stores, large outlets, and modern mass-production; the rise of organized labour reminded them too of Marx's prophecy that they were doomed to slide into the proletariat. The mood of disintegration and decay, anxiety and impotence, the sense that the old order was passing, the climate of a society in crisis, was unmistakable.⁹

It was easy to transfer the impotent anger and fear into race hatred – above all into hatred of Jews, the 'supra-national people of the multi-national state'.¹⁰ The uncrowned king of Vienna, its mayor Karl Lueger, whom Hitler greatly admired, and Vienna's gutter press that supported him, which Hitler read with relish, were adept at it.¹¹ No major city apart from Berlin had grown as fast as Vienna in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its population had increased two-and-a-half-fold between 1860 and 1900 – four times the growth of Paris or London.¹² Of the 1,674,957 residents of Vienna in 1900, fewer than one in two had been born there.¹³ Many had poured into it from the eastern parts of the massive empire of over 50 million, with its ethnic mix of Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Italians, Rumanians and Hungarians. Among them was a sizeable minority of Jews. Vienna's Jewish population was larger than that of any German city at the time. In mid-century, there had been only a little over 6,000 Jews in Vienna, some 2 per cent of the population. By 1910 this had risen to 175,318 Jews, or 8.6 per cent of the population.¹⁴ As in Germany, Jews had historically had a strong presence – far greater than their numbers in the population – in the professions, academic life, the mass media, the

arts, and in business and finance.¹⁵ And as in Germany, Jews had striven to be assimilated to liberal society and German culture.¹⁶ Different to German cities, however, was the stratum of poor Jews, similar to that in a good number of east European towns and cities. Many were Galician, or were descendants of families that had originally fled from the pogroms in Russia. Among these poorer sectors of the Jewish community, accepted by none, hated by many, doctrines of Marxism and Zionism (whose founder, Theodor Herzl, had grown up in Vienna) held some appeal.¹⁷ Conveniently, therefore, Jews could be blamed both as capitalist exploiters and as social revolutionaries. The poorer Jews lived in the old city, and especially in the run-down districts in the north of Vienna. In Leopoldstadt, the site of the old ghetto, a third of the down-at-heel population was Jewish, mainly small traders and pedlars, often dressed in the traditional caftan and black hat. In adjacent Brigittenau, the depressing district where Hitler would spend his last three years in Vienna, some 17 per cent of the inhabitants were Jews.¹⁸ This was the setting in which Hitler would be fully subjected to race hatred. Repelled by the 'conglomeration of races' in the capital, he later wrote: 'to me the giant city seemed the embodiment of racial desecration (*Blutschande*)'.¹⁹

On the Habsburg throne he had occupied for more than fifty years, Kaiser Franz Joseph signified unchangeability in a changing world. His court at the Hofburg, or in summer at the Schönbrunn Palace, retained all the gilt and glitter, the pomp and circumstance, of past centuries. Power in the vast and sprawling multi-ethnic empire stretching from the Carpathians to the Adriatic was still in the hands of ministers, all from traditional noble families, directly appointed by the Kaiser. But beneath the façade, the edifice was crumbling. New social and political pressures were undermining the foundations.

The empire was increasingly beset by its mounting internal contradictions. The granting, in the complex constitutional arrangement of 1867, following the defeat in the 'German brothers' war' the previous year, of near autonomy to Magyar national leaders in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy had stirred nationalist feelings throughout the empire. Slavs became increasingly resentful of the continued domination of the Magyars and, in the Austrian 'half' of the empire, of the German-speaking minority – only around a third of the population even there.²⁰ The Austrian Germans, enjoying disproportionate prosperity, position, and power, responded by ever shriller defence of their advantage. Attempted concessions made to national demands, as in the proposed Badeni reforms of 1897 which sought to grant the Czech language equality with German in Bohemia and Moravia, massively

exacerbated the tensions.²¹ By the tensions were reflected in bitter fo liberal factionalism of the bourgeois the fragile balance of the empire an-sonalized in the Emperor and King. Ar after the introduction of universal m strongest national group)²² had colla threatening rhetoric of nationalist fi heady mixture of nationalist and cla a shambolic farce. A bill in Februar language on an equal footing to Ger be abandoned and the parliamentary of noise from rattles, bells, children's rendered debate impossible, leading rival sets of deputies chimed in with be passed by horse-trading between ti resented. The unseemly spectacle of s insults, and even swapping blows, w: It certainly filled the young pan-Gei lasting contempt and revulsion for p he wrote of his Vienna experience m

Most responsible for introducing agitation into parliament was Georg in 1842 to wealthy parents, Schönerer landlord in the Waldviertel, the po where Hitler's own forebears had thei by Austria's defeat at the hands of Pru Shame at Austria's exclusion from Bismarck, and, eventually, agitation the German Reich followed. He had as the voice of German small farmer the rapaciousness of big business an programme came to embrace an early all else radical German nationalism of all things German), social reform racial antisemitism. 'The strongest : Semite that Austria produced'²³ – befo tism was the cement of his anti-lib anti-Habsburg ideology. Hitler had im

as in Germany, Jews had striven to assimilate into German culture.¹⁶ Different to German Jews, similar to that in a good many cities. Many were Galician, or were originally fled from the pogroms in Russia. Jewish community, accepted by none, and Zionism (whose founder, Theodor Herzl, made an appeal.¹⁷ Conveniently, therefore, the exploiters and as social revolutionaries, and especially in the run-down Polandstadt, the site of the old ghetto, was Jewish, mainly small traders in oriental caftan and black hat. In adjacent Vienna where Hitler would spend his last three years as an inhabitant were Jews.¹⁸ This was doubly subjected to race hatred. Repelled from the capital, he later wrote: 'to me the racial desecration (*Blutschande*)'.¹⁹ Occupied for more than fifty years, Kaiser Franz Joseph in a changing world. His court at Schönbrunn Palace, retained all the glories of past centuries. Power in the vast empire stretching from the Carpathians to the Danube, all from traditional noble families, but beneath the façade, the edifice of imperial pressures were undermining the empire by its mounting internal contradictions. The territorial arrangement of 1867, following the Ausgleich of the previous year, of near autonomy for the Magyar half of the Dual Monarchy had created the empire. Slavs became increasingly discontented of the Magyars and, in the Austrian Empire, making minority – only around a third of the population. Austrian Germans, enjoying disproportionate power, responded by ever shriller defence of their position made to national demands, as in 1897 which sought to grant the Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia, massively

exacerbated the tensions.²¹ By the beginning of the new century, these tensions were reflected in bitter forms of mass politics, superseding the liberal factionalism of the bourgeois notables and threatening to tear apart the fragile balance of the empire and the semblance of Imperial unity personalized in the Emperor and King. Any dignity of parliament (where Germans after the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1907 were no longer the strongest national group)²² had collapsed in the face of the vituperation and threatening rhetoric of nationalist fanatics.²³ Sessions could be chaotic – a heady mixture of nationalist and class politics frequently reducing them to a shambolic farce. A bill in February 1909, again aiming to put the Czech language on an equal footing to German in Bohemia, had, for instance, to be abandoned and the parliamentary session suspended when a cacophony of noise from rattles, bells, children's trumpets, horns, and banging desk-lids rendered debate impossible, leading to fist-cuffs amid chaotic scenes while rival sets of deputies chimed in with competing anthems.²⁴ Laws could only be passed by horse-trading between the numerous interests and factions represented. The unseemly spectacle of squabbling deputies trading multilingual insults, and even swapping blows, was capable of alienating any observer.²⁵ It certainly filled the young pan-German supporter Adolf Hitler with the lasting contempt and revulsion for parliamentarism that poured out when he wrote of his Vienna experience more than a decade and a half later.²⁶

Most responsible for introducing the raucous aggression of nationalist agitation into parliament was Georg Ritter von Schönerer. Born in Vienna in 1842 to wealthy parents, Schönerer became a modernizing and benevolent landlord in the Waldviertel, the poor region on the borders of Bohemia where Hitler's own forebears had their smallholdings. He was deeply affected by Austria's defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1866 at the battle of Königgrätz. Shame at Austria's exclusion from the German Federation, adulation of Bismarck, and, eventually, agitation aimed at the reuniting of Austria with the German Reich followed. He had first come to prominence in the 1870s as the voice of German small farmers and radicalized artisans, castigating the rapaciousness of big business and liberal laissez-faire economics.²⁷ His programme came to embrace an early brand of 'national socialism' – above all else radical German nationalism (meaning the primacy and superiority of all things German), social reform, anti-liberal popular democracy, and racial antisemitism. 'The strongest and most thoroughly consistent anti-Semite that Austria produced'²⁸ – before Hitler, that is – Schönerer's antisemitism was the cement of his anti-liberal, anti-socialist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Habsburg ideology. Hitler had imbibed the Schönerer creed in nationalist

Linz. The 'Heil' greeting, the title of 'Führer' (bestowed by Schönerer on himself and used by his followers), and the intolerance towards any semblance of democratic decision-making in his movement were among the lasting elements of the Schönerer legacy which Hitler carried over to the later Nazi Party.²⁹

By the time Hitler came to Vienna, popular support for the ageing Schönerer had dwindled and fragmented. Schönerer had, in any case, never advocated a mass party, believing that, as always in the course of history, any breakthrough would come from a loyal elite.³⁰ His appeal had always been primarily located in student circles and among the nationalist middle classes.³¹ Schönerer's programme, of which Hitler later wrote so approvingly, had, however, if anything hardened and become more radical and implacable in its demands for integral connection with Germany, in its boundless adoration of Kaiser Wilhelm and his German Reich, its 'away-from-Rome' church policy, and its attacks on the Habsburg polyglot state, all laced together with ferocious racial antisemitism.³² Though he thought Schönerer's political philosophy correct, Hitler would later criticize his readiness to participate in sterile parliamentarism, his mistake in antagonizing the Catholic Church, and above all his neglect of the masses.³³ This was where Hitler was prepared to learn from his second Austrian political hero, Karl Lueger, the Viennese 'tribune of the people'.

The rise of Lueger's Christian Social Party made a deep impression on Hitler.³⁴ Starting as a Schönerer supporter, he came increasingly to admire Lueger. The main reason lay in the presentation of politics. Where Schönerer neglected the masses, Lueger, as Hitler approvingly recognized, gained his support by 'winning over the classes whose existence was threatened', the small- and lower-middle classes and artisans.³⁵ With a heady brew of populist rhetoric and accomplished rabble-rousing, Lueger soldered together an appeal to Catholic piety and the economic self-interest of the German-speaking lower-middle classes who felt threatened by the forces of international capitalism, Marxist Social Democracy, and Slav nationalism. Like Schönerer, the vehicle used to whip up the support of the disparate targets of his agitation was antisemitism, sharply on the rise among artisanal groups suffering economic downturns and only too ready to vent their resentment both on Jewish financiers and on the growing number of Galician back-street hawkers and pedlars. Back in the 1880s, he had supported Schönerer's bill to block Jewish immigration into Vienna.³⁶ But unlike Schönerer's, Lueger's antisemitism was more functional and pragmatic than ideological: 'I say who a Jew is' ('Wer a Jud ist, bestimm'!), was a phrase commonly attributed

Hitler practices in his bedroom w h

to him.³⁷ It was more political and ec-
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But it was nasty all the same. In a dissent a remark made by one of \ 'Jewish problem' would be solved, a all Jews were placed on a large ship time Emperor Franz Joseph was comp and to appoint 'handsome Karl' to b overt antisemitism had been sublimat municipal renewal, populist democra archy all welded together by popular (- in sentiment little different from th the beerhalls of Munich. In a speech in spoke, for instance, of Jews exercising, be imagined' over the masses through It was a matter for him, he continue from the domination of Jewry'.⁴¹ On- leopards, and tigers to be more human in human form'.⁴² When taken to tas through his agitation, he retorted that last Jew perished'.⁴³ Accused of saying to him whether Jews were hanged c 'Beheaded! is what I said'.⁴⁴

When Hitler came to live in Vienna, on Lueger's death, Hitler was among tl his funeral cortège pass by.⁴⁵ Lueger's held little appeal for him. And in his la the shallowness and artificiality of the Social Party had been built.⁴⁶ But wha was Lueger's command of the masse: attain his purposes', his use of propag instincts' of the broad mass of his sup

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to him.³⁷ It was more political and economic – the coating for an attack on liberalism and capitalism – than it was doctrinally racial.³⁸

But it was nasty all the same. In a speech in 1890, he had quoted with no dissent a remark made by one of Vienna's wildest antisemites, that the 'Jewish problem' would be solved, and a service to the world achieved, if all Jews were placed on a large ship to be sunk on the high seas.'³⁹ By the time Emperor Franz Joseph was compelled to retreat from his earlier refusal and to appoint 'handsome Karl' to be Lord Mayor of Vienna in 1897, the overt antisemitism had been sublimated into a programme of social reform, municipal renewal, populist democracy, and loyalty to the Habsburg monarchy all welded together by popular Catholicism.⁴⁰ But it remained vitriolic – in sentiment little different from the poison Hitler would later spread in the beerhalls of Munich. In a speech in 1899, to thunderous applause, Lueger spoke, for instance, of Jews exercising a 'terrorism, worse than which cannot be imagined' over the masses through the control of capital and the press. It was a matter for him, he continued, 'of liberating the Christian people from the domination of Jewry'.⁴¹ On another occasion, he declared wolves, leopards, and tigers to be more human than the Jews – 'these beasts of prey in human form.'⁴² When taken to task for stirring up hatred of the Jews through his agitation, he retorted that antisemitism would 'perish when the last Jew perished'.⁴³ Accused of saying that it was a matter of indifference to him whether Jews were hanged or shot, he provided the correction: 'Beheaded! is what I said.'⁴⁴

When Hitler came to live in Vienna, it was Lueger's city. Two years later, on Lueger's death, Hitler was among the mourning thousands who watched his funeral cortège pass by.⁴⁵ Lueger's pro-Habsburg, Catholic programme held little appeal for him. And in his later appraisal of Lueger, he criticized the shallowness and artificiality of the antisemitism on which his Christian Social Party had been built.⁴⁶ But what he took from the Viennese mayor was Lueger's command of the masses, the moulding of a movement 'to attain his purposes', his use of propaganda to influence 'the psychological instincts' of the broad mass of his supporters.⁴⁷ That is what endured.

Following in the wake of liberalism's demise and forming the third new current of Viennese mass politics besides nationalism and Christian Socialism was Social Democracy. Here, too, Hitler's Vienna years were to leave lasting impressions. His fear of organized labour dated back to this time.

The Social Democrats had won no seats in the 1891 elections, three years after the foundation of the Social Democratic Workers' Party.⁴⁸ But in the year that Hitler moved to Vienna, 1907, they won eighty-seven out of 516

P.T. I gave it to him in a dream
a wet dream. His disgust at his own
emission was now attached to the pollution
rampant of the Jews.

the mist), and the lovely church of St Maria am Gestade. It was after midnight when they returned to Stumpergasse, and later still when an exhausted Kubizek fell asleep with Hitler still haranguing him about the grandeur of Vienna.⁶⁹

The next few months were to be a repeat, on a grander scale, of the lifestyle of the two youths in Linz.⁷⁰ An early search for lodgings for Gustl was rapidly given up, and Frau Zakreys was persuaded to swap her larger room and move into the cramped little room that Hitler had occupied.⁷¹ Adolf and his friend now occupied the same room, paying double the rent (10 Kronen each) that Hitler had paid for his earlier room.⁷² Within the next few days, Kubizek learnt that he had passed the entrance examination and been accepted for study at the Vienna Conservatoire. He rented a grand piano which took up most of the available space in the room, just allowing Hitler the three paces to do his usual stomping backwards and forwards.⁷³ Apart from the piano, the room was furnished with simple necessities: two beds, a commode, a wardrobe, a washstand, a table, and two chairs.⁷⁴

Kubizek settled down into a regular pattern of music study. What Hitler was up to was less clear to his friend. He stayed in bed in the mornings, was missing when Kubizek came back from the Conservatoire at lunchtimes, hung around the grounds of Schonbrunn Palace on fine afternoons, pored over books, fantasized over grandiose architectural and writing plans, and spent a good deal of time drawing until late into the night. Gustl's puzzlement about how his friend could combine so much leisure time with studying at the Academy of Fine Arts was ended only after some considerable time. A show of irritation about Kubizek practising his piano scales led to a full-scale row between the two friends about study timetables and ended in Hitler shouting that 'the whole Academy ought to be blown up', exploding with rage about the 'old-fashioned, fossilized civil servants, bureaucrats, devoid of understanding, stupid lumps of officials' who ran it. He then admitted that 'they rejected me, they threw me out, they turned me down'.⁷⁵ When Gustl asked him what, then, he was going to do, Hitler rounded on him: 'What now, what now? . . . Are you starting too: what now?'⁷⁶ The truth was, Hitler had no idea where he was going or what he would do. He was drifting aimlessly.

Kubizek had plainly touched a raw nerve. Adolf had for mercenary reasons not told his family about his failure to enter the Academy. Otherwise, his guardian would probably have denied him the 25 Kronen a month he received as his share of the orphan's pension.⁷⁷ And he would have come under even more pressure to find a job. But why did he deceive his friend?

For a teenager to fail to pass an exam in itself neither unusual nor shameful to tell his friend, to whom he had matters of artistic judgement, and he had started so promisingly, of his rejection had been profound. And the bitterness of the blow flared off the handle at the slightest touch. He flared up in an instant into boundless fury who he thought were persecuting him. He would pour his fury over every detail he did not understand him, who did not persecute and cheat.⁷⁸ On another occasion 'understanding for true artistry' at Kubizek claimed to remember his ruining his career'.⁸⁰ 'Altogether, in Kubizek, 'I had the impression that his tirades of hate directed at everything I did, I was ego desperately wanting acceptance and personal insignificance, with failure.'

Adolf had still not given up hope. He took no steps to ensure that his situation was round. Just before he left Linz, he had been by the owner of the block of flats Professor Alfred Roller, brilliant and prominent member of the Viennese Academy. Hitler when he came to Vienna.⁸² Roller's rejection.⁸³ That alone suggests there is something through Roller's help, took art lessons from the name of Panholzer.⁸⁴ Systematic foreign to the young Hitler as they his time was largely spent in dilettante devising grandiose schemes shared plans that usually arose from such dreams dropped almost as soon as they had.

One idea was to write a play. Kubizek told him a few hastily written sides of drama he intended to write, set in the arrival of Christianity.⁸⁶ The project with a number of other suppose

Frank Wedekind's play *Frühlingserwachen* (*Spring Awakening*), which dealt with sexual problems of youth, Hitler suddenly took Kubizek's arm and led him into Spittelberggasse to see at first hand the red-light district, or 'sink of iniquity' as Hitler called it. Adolf took his friend not once, but twice, along the row of lit windows behind which scantily clad women advertised their wares and touted for custom. His voyeurism was then cloaked in middle-class self-righteousness by the lecture he proceeded to give Kubizek on the evils of prostitution.¹⁴⁷ Later, in *Mein Kampf*, he was to link the Jews – echoing a commonplace current among antisemites of his Vienna years – with prostitution.¹⁴⁸ But if this association was present in his mind in 1908, Kubizek did not record it.

Though seemingly repelled by sex, Hitler was at the same time plainly fascinated by it.¹⁴⁹ He discussed sexual matters quite often in lengthy talks late at night with Gustl, regaling him, wrote Kubizek, on the need for sexual purity to protect what he grandly called the 'flame of life'; explaining to his naive friend, following a brief encounter with a businessman who invited them to a meal, about homosexuality; and ranting about prostitution and moral decadence.¹⁵⁰ Hitler's disturbed sexuality, his recoiling from physical contact,¹⁵¹ his fear of women, his inability to forge genuine friendship and emptiness in human relations, presumably had their roots in childhood experiences of a troubled family life.¹⁵² Attempts to explain them will inevitably remain speculative. Later rumours of Hitler's sexual perversions are similarly based on dubious evidence. Conjecture – and there has been much of it – that sexual repression later gave way to sordid sado-masochistic practices rests, whatever the suspicions, on little more than a combination of rumour, hearsay, surmise, and innuendo, often spiced up by Hitler's political enemies.¹⁵³ And even if the alleged repulsive perversions really were his private proclivities, how exactly they would help explain the rapid descent of the complex and sophisticated German state into gross inhumanity after 1933 is not readily self-evident.

Hitler was to describe his life in Vienna as one of hardship and misery, hunger and poverty.¹⁵⁴ This was notably economical with the truth as regards the months he spent in Stumpergasse in 1908 (though it was accurate enough as a portrayal of his condition in the autumn and winter of 1909-10). Even more misleading was his comment in *Mein Kampf* that 'the orphan's pension to which I was entitled was not enough for me even to live on, and so I was faced with the problem of somehow making my own living'.¹⁵⁵ As we have noted, the loan from his aunt, his share of his mother's legacy, and his monthly orphan's pension certainly gave him sufficient to live comfortably

– perhaps even equivalent to the or so at least.¹⁵⁶ And his appearance at the opera, was anything Kubizek first saw him on their 1908, young Adolf was wearing a hat. He was carrying the walking stick had in Linz, and 'appeared almost months of 1908, as we have noted about making his own living, or the right track to do so.

If he had a reasonable income nevertheless scarcely led a life of were unenviable. The sixth district where Stumpergasse was situated its dismal, unlit streets and scrub and soot surrounding dark inner at some of the accommodation the day after he had arrived in came to share was a miserable with crumbling plaster peeling furniture.¹⁵⁹ The lifestyle was frugal Adolf was not a vegetarian at t consisted only of bread and butter (*Mehlspeisen*), and often in the Sometimes he went without food parcel every fortnight, it was or sometimes fruit-juice, but no luxury was the opera. How much opera or a concert can only be place¹⁶³ – it infuriated Hitler that occasion than the music had to regular attendance over some at whatever savings he had.¹⁶⁵ Later: 'I was so poor, during the restrict myself to only the very best at that time I had heard *Tristan* best companies.'¹⁶⁶ By the summer into the money he had inherited savings left, as well as the orphan

only income,¹⁶⁷ which would allow him to last out for a further year.¹⁶⁸

Though Kubizek was unaware of it, by summer the time he was spending with his friend in Vienna was drawing to a close. By early July 1908, Gustl had passed his examinations at the Conservatoire and term had ended. He was going back to Linz to stay with his parents until autumn. He arranged to send Frau Zakreys the rent every month to guarantee retention of the room, and Adolf, again saying how little he was looking forward to remaining alone in the room, accompanied him to the Westbahnhof to see him off.¹⁶⁹ They were not to meet again until the Anschluß in 1938.¹⁷⁰ Adolf did send Gustl a number of postcards during the summer, one from the Waldviertel, where he had gone without enthusiasm to spend some time with his family.¹⁷¹ It was to be the last time he would see his relatives for many years.¹⁷² Nothing suggested to Kubizek that he would not be rejoining his friend in the autumn. But when he left the train at the Westbahnhof on his return in November, Hitler was nowhere to be seen. Some time in the late summer or autumn, he had moved out of Stumpergasse. Frau Zakreys told Kubizek that he had left his lodgings without giving any forwarding address.¹⁷³ By 18 November he was registered with the police as a 'student' living at new lodgings in room 16 of Felberstraße 22, close by the Westbahnhof, and a more airy room – presumably costing more – than that he had occupied in Stumpergasse.¹⁷⁴

What had caused the sudden and unannounced break with Kubizek? The most likely explanation is Hitler's second rejection – this time he was not even permitted to take the examination – by the Academy of Fine Arts in October 1908.¹⁷⁵ He had probably not told Kubizek he was applying again. Presumably he had spent the entire year in the knowledge that he had a second chance and in the expectation that he would not fail this time. Now his hopes of an artistic career lay totally in ruins. He could not now face his friend again as a confirmed failure.¹⁷⁶

Kubizek's recollections, for all their flaws, paint a portrait of the young Hitler whose character traits are recognizable with hindsight in the later party leader and dictator.¹⁷⁷ The indolence in lifestyle but accompanied by manic enthusiasm and energy sucked into his fantasies, the dilettantism, the lack of reality and a sense of proportion, the opinionated autodidacticism, the egocentrism, the quirky intolerance, the sudden rise to anger and the outbursts of rage, the diatribes of venom poured out on everyone and everything blocking the rise of the great artist – all these can be seen in the nineteen-year-old Hitler portrayed by Kubizek. Failure in Vienna had turned Hitler into an angry and frustrated young man increasingly at odds with the world around him. But he was not yet the Hitler who comes clearly into

view after 1919, and whose po.
Kampf.

Kubizek had had time to read an account of Hitler's political development of less interest to him than matters in places heavily redolent of Hitler in Vienna. They are not, therefore, so when he claims Hitler was a pacifist. However, there is no reason to doubt his bitter contempt for the multi-visited with him),¹⁷⁹ his strident German of the multinational Habsburg state the streets of Vienna',¹⁸⁰ and 'the fact begun to corrode this old site of German more than an accentuation, a person first imbibed in Linz.¹⁸² Hitler fully deepened these views. However, even years in Vienna for his attitude towards assertion that Hitler attained his 'world together in Vienna is an exaggeration.¹⁸⁵ still not formed. The pathological hatred had still to emerge.

IV

There are no witnesses to Hitler's activity stayed in Felberstraße.¹⁸⁶ A young woman to recall speaking to him occasionally in the and that his quiet manner had made a good apart from other young men.¹⁸⁷ Otherwise Vienna remains obscure. It has often been was in precisely these months that he became a Close to where Hitler lived in Felberstraße and newspapers. Whatever newspapers and, those that he devoured so avidly in cafés, it is Which exactly he read of the many cheap titles at the time is uncertain. One of them was v

called *Ostara*.¹⁸⁹ The magazine, which first appeared in 1905, was the product of the extraordinary and warped imagination of an eccentric former Cistercian monk, who came to be known as Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (though his real name was plain Adolf Lanz).¹⁹⁰ He later founded his own order, the 'New Templar Order' (replete with a full panoply of mystical signs and symbols, including the swastika), in a ruined castle, Burg Werfenstein, on a romantic stretch of the Danube between Linz and Vienna.

Lanz followed in the ideological footsteps of Guido von List – the 'von' was added to denote his membership of the 'Aryan ruling class' – whose prolific writings had established his credentials as the guru of the cultist believers in the superiority of the Aryan-German race, destined for mastery of the world. List had helped popularize the swastika, the sign of the sun found among ancient Hindu symbols which he took as the sign of the 'Unconquerable', the Germanic Hero, the 'Strong One from Above'.¹⁹¹ That Hitler was acquainted with List's ideas is certain.¹⁹² Lanz – also an enthusiastic supporter of Schönerer¹⁹³ – even managed the near-impossible and took List's zany notions a stage further.

Lanz and his followers were obsessed by homoerotic notions of a manichean struggle between the heroic and creative 'blond' race and a race of predatory dark 'beast-men' who preyed on the 'blond' women with animal lust and bestial instincts that were corrupting and destroying mankind and its culture. Lanz's recipe, laid down in *Ostara*, for overcoming the evils of the modern world and restoring the domination of the 'blond race' was racial purity and racial struggle, involving the slavery and forced sterilization or even extermination of the inferior races, the crushing of socialism, democracy and feminism which were seen as the vehicles of their corrupting influence, and the complete subordination of Aryan women to their husbands.¹⁹⁴ It amounted to a creed of 'blue-eyed blondes of all nations, unite'.¹⁹⁵ There are indeed elements in common between the bizarre fantasies of Lanz and his band of woman-hating, racist crackpots and the programme of racial selection which the SS were to put into practice during the Second World War. Whether Lanz's ideas had direct influence on Himmler's SS is, however, questionable. Unsustainable is Lanz's claim to a unique place in history as the man 'who gave Hitler his ideas'.¹⁹⁶

It is usually taken for granted that Hitler read *Ostara* and was at least to some extent influenced by it.¹⁹⁷ Writing in *Mein Kampf* of his 'conversion' to antisemitism, Hitler recounted – no date is given – that he started to read on the subject and:

for a few hellers I bought the first and they all proceeded from the supposition understood the Jewish question to a part was just doubts again arising from unscientific arguments favouring the

I relapsed for weeks at a time, and

The whole thing seemed to me so I was tormented by the fear of doing injustice

Hitler mentions no pamphlet by read several, not just a single one. I him to focus his attentions so as to be doubled. *Ostara* was, in fact, far was upon antisemitism, which fit main evidence that Hitler was acquainted with List's ideas is an interview in which Lanz claimed that during the time he lived in Felberstraße in 1905 he had read several back-copies of the magazine. Since then, he let him have the copies for his journey home.²⁰⁰ How Lanz knew when it was to be well over ten years before he became a celebrity even in Munich, he was forty years after the purported meeting of *Ostara* in post-war interviews fabricated 'recollections' of Hitler mention *Ostara* in his book, but mid-1950s, 'remembered' that Hitler while he was living in the Men's Home supported Lanz's racial theories in a priest called Grill (who does not fit a former Nazi functionary called Grill that she had heard Hitler mention *Ostara* in connection with the is in fact no evidence of a ban).²⁰³

Most likely, Hitler did read *Ostara* was prominent on Vienna newspapers. Nor, if he did read it, can we be statements on antisemitism immediately betray no traces of Lanz's obscure

first appeared in 1905, was the imagination of an eccentric former known as Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (Lanz).¹⁹⁰ He later founded his own with a full panoply of mystical signs in a ruined castle, Burg Werfenstein, on the border between Linz and Vienna.

Footsteps of Guido von List – the 'von' of the 'Aryan ruling class' – whose credentials as the guru of the cultist pan-German race, destined for mastery over the swastika, the sign of the sun disks which he took as the sign of the cross, the 'Strong One from Above'.¹⁹¹ List's ideas is certain.¹⁹² Lanz – also an occultist – even managed the near-impossible further.

Obsessed by homoerotic notions of a manipulated creative 'blond' race and a race of blondes on the 'blond' women with animalistic corrupting and destroying mankind and in *Ostara*, for overcoming the evils of the domination of the 'blond race' was giving the slavery and forced sterilization for races, the crushing of socialism, seen as the vehicles of their corrupting domination of Aryan women to their husband-eyed blondes of all nations, unite'.¹⁹⁵ In between the bizarre fantasies of Lanz and the crackpots and the programme of to put into practice during the Second World War direct influence on Himmler's SS is, that is Lanz's claim to a unique place in his ideas'.¹⁹⁶

Hitler read *Ostara* and was at least to be seen in *Mein Kampf* of his 'conversion' to Nazism – that he started to read

for a few hellers I bought the first anti-Semitic pamphlets of my life. Unfortunately, they all proceeded from the supposition that in principle the reader knew or even understood the Jewish question to a certain degree. Besides, the tone for the most part was such that doubts again arose in me, due in part to the dull and amazingly unscientific arguments favouring the thesis.

I relapsed for weeks at a time, once even for months.

The whole thing seemed to me so monstrous, the accusations so boundless, that, tormented by the fear of doing injustice, I again became anxious and uncertain.¹⁹⁸

Hitler mentions no pamphlet by name in this passage, suggesting that he read several, not just a single one. And whether *Ostara* would have compelled him to focus his attentions so acutely on the 'Jewish Question' might be doubted. *Ostara* was, in fact, far more centred upon racist theory than it was upon antisemitism, which figured only in a subordinate role.¹⁹⁹ The main evidence that Hitler was acquainted with *Ostara* comes from a post-war interview in which Lanz claimed to have remembered Hitler, during the time he lived in Felberstraße in 1909, paying him a visit and asking him for back-copies of the magazine. Since Hitler looked so run-down, Lanz went on, he let him have the copies for nothing, and gave him 2 Kronen for his journey home.²⁰⁰ How Lanz knew that this young man had been Hitler, when it was to be well over ten years before the latter would become a local celebrity even in Munich, he was never asked in the interview more than forty years after the purported meeting.²⁰¹ Another witness to Hitler's reading of *Ostara* in post-war interviews was Josef Greiner, the author of some fabricated 'recollections' of Hitler in his Vienna years. Greiner did not mention *Ostara* in his book, but, when later questioned about it in the mid-1950s, 'remembered' that Hitler had a large pile of *Ostara* magazines while he was living in the Men's Home from 1910 to 1913, and had vehemently supported Lanz's racial theories in heated discussions with an ex-Catholic priest called Grill (who does not figure in his book at all).²⁰² A third witness, a former Nazi functionary called Elsa Schmidt-Falks, could only remember that she had heard Hitler mention Lanz in the context of homosexuality, and *Ostara* in connection with the banning of Lanz's works (though there is in fact no evidence of a ban).²⁰³

Most likely, Hitler did read *Ostara* along with other racist pulp which was prominent on Vienna newspaper stands. But we cannot be certain.²⁰⁴ Nor, if he did read it, can we be sure what he believed. His first known statements on antisemitism immediately following the First World War betray no traces of Lanz's obscure racial doctrine.²⁰⁵ He was later frequently

scornful of *völkisch* sects and the extremes of Germanic cultism.²⁰⁶ As far as can be seen, if we discount Elsa Schmidt-Falk's doubtful testimony, he never mentioned Lanz by name. For the Nazi regime, the bizarre Austrian racist eccentric, far from being held up to praise, was to be accused of 'falsifying racial thought through secret doctrine'.²⁰⁷

When Hitler, his savings almost exhausted, was forced to leave Felberstraße in mid-August 1909 to move for a very short time to shabbier accommodation in nearby Sechshauserstraße 58, it was certainly not as a devotee of Lanz von Liebenfels.²⁰⁸ Nor, anti-Jewish though he undoubtedly already was as a Schönerer supporter, is it likely that he had yet found the key to the ills of the world in a doctrine of racial antisemitism.

Hitler stayed in Sechshauserstraße for less than a month. And when he left, on 16 September 1909, it was without filling in the required police registration form, without leaving a forwarding address, and probably without paying his rent.²⁰⁹ During the next months, Hitler did learn the meaning of poverty. His later recollection that autumn 1909 had been 'an endlessly bitter time' was not an exaggeration.²¹⁰ All his savings had now vanished. He must have left some address with his guardian for his orphan's pension of 25 Kronen to be sent to Vienna each month. But that was not enough to keep body and soul together.²¹¹ During the wet and cold autumn of 1909 he lived rough, sleeping in the open, as long as the weather held, probably in cheap lodgings when conditions forced him indoors.²¹² Reinhold Hanisch, who came to know Hitler soon afterwards, told of him sleeping in a cheap café on Kaiserstraße.²¹³ He was later said to have stayed for a while in November at Simon-Denk-Gasse 11, but this is unlikely. It is doubtful that by this date he had the money to pay for regular lodgings; the address lay well away from his usual haunts in the south of the city, in a fairly middle-class district; and no official registration of Hitler living there has survived.²¹⁴

Hitler had now reached rock-bottom. Some time in the weeks before Christmas 1909, thin and bedraggled, in filthy, lice-ridden clothes, his feet sore from walking around, Hitler joined the human flotsam and jetsam finding their way to the large, recently established doss-house for the homeless (Asyl für Obdachlose) in Meidling, not far from Schonbrunn Palace.²¹⁵ The social decline of the petty-bourgeois so fearful of joining the proletariat was complete.²¹⁶ The twenty-year-old would-be artistic genius had joined the tramps, winos, and down-and-outs in society's basement.

It was at this time that he met Reinhold Hanisch, whose testimony, doubtful though it is in places, is all that casts light on the next phase of

Hitler's time in Vienna.²¹⁷ Hanisch, Walter', came originally from a number of petty misdemeanors in reality had drifted through various casual labourer before tram to Vienna.²¹⁸ He encountered a shabby blue check suit, tired, a dormitory one late autumn nights of Berlin to the young enth was a night-shelter offering showers, disinfection of clothes, were provided. But during the day themselves. Hitler, looking in the mornings along with other desferstraße where the nuns doled visiting public warming-rooms, took him off to shovel snow, but condition to stick at it for long.²¹⁹ at the Westbahnhof, but his app customers.²²¹ Whether he did any spent in Vienna is doubtful. While prepared to entertain the prospect need of money, he was physically 'business associate', lost his temporary living by selling paintings.²²⁴ The story about trade unionism and Marxism while working on a building site in any rate, never heard the story not believe it.²²⁶ The 'legend' propaganda in the Vienna of Hitler.

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Hitler's time in Vienna.²¹⁷ Hanisch, living under the assumed name of 'Fritz Walter', came originally from the Sudetenland and had a police record for a number of petty misdemeanours. He was a self-styled draughtsman, but in reality had drifted through various temporary jobs as a domestic servant and casual labourer before tramping his way across Germany from Berlin to Vienna.²¹⁸ He encountered a miserable-looking Hitler, down at heel in a shabby blue check suit, tired, hungry, and with sore feet, in the hostel dormitory one late autumn night, shared some bread with him and told tales of Berlin to the young enthusiast for all things German.²¹⁹ The hostel was a night-shelter offering short-term accommodation only. A bath or shower, disinfection of clothes, soup and bread, and a bed in the dormitory were provided. But during the day the inmates were turned out to fend for themselves. Hitler, looking in a sorry state and in depressed mood, went in the mornings along with other destitutes to a nearby convent in Gumpendorferstraße where the nuns doled out soup. The time was otherwise spent visiting public warming-rooms, or trying to earn a bit of money. Hanisch took him off to shovel snow, but without an overcoat Hitler was in no condition to stick at it for long.²²⁰ He offered to carry bags for passengers at the Westbahnhof, but his appearance probably did not win him many customers.²²¹ Whether he did any other manual labour during the years he spent in Vienna is doubtful. While his savings had lasted, he had not been prepared to entertain the prospect of working.²²² At the time he was in most need of money, he was physically not up to it.²²³ Later, even Hanisch, his 'business associate', lost his temper over Hitler's idleness while eking out a living by selling paintings.²²⁴ The story he told in *Mein Kampf* about learning about trade unionism and Marxism the hard way through his mal-treatment while working on a building site is almost certainly fictional.²²⁵ Hanisch, at any rate, never heard the story at the time from Hitler, and later did not believe it.²²⁶ The 'legend' probably drew on the general anti-socialist propaganda in the Vienna of Hitler's day.²²⁷

Hanisch had meanwhile thought of a better idea than manual labouring. Hitler had told him of his background, and was persuaded by Hanisch to ask his family for some money, probably under the pretext that he needed it for his studies. Within a short time he received the princely sum of 50 Kronen, almost certainly from his Aunt Johanna.²²⁸ With that he could buy himself an overcoat from the government pawn-shop.²²⁹ With this long coat and his greasy trilby, shoes looking like those of a nomad, hair over his collar, and dark fuzz on his chin, Hitler's appearance even provoked his fellow vagrants to remark on it. They nicknamed him 'Ohm Paul Krüger',

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after the Boer leader.²³⁰ But the gift from his aunt meant that better times were on the way. He was now able to acquire the materials needed to begin the little business venture that Hanisch had dreamed up. On hearing from Hitler that he could paint – Hitler actually told him he had been at the Academy – Hanisch suggested he should paint scenes of Vienna which he would then peddle for him, and they would share the proceeds. Whether this partnership began already in the doss-house, or only after Hitler had moved, on 9 February 1910, to the more salubrious surrounds of the Men's Home in the north of the city, is unclear from Hanisch's garbled account. What is certain is that with his aunt's gift, the move to Meldemannstraße, and his new business arrangement with Hanisch, Hitler was now over the worst.²³¹

The Men's Home was a big step up from the Meidling hostel. The 500 or so residents were not down-and-out vagrants, but, for the most part, a mixed bunch of individuals, some – clerks and even former academics and pensioned officers – just down on their luck, others simply passing through, looking for work or in temporary employment, all without a family home to go to. Unlike the hostel, the Men's Home, built a few years earlier, funded by private donations (some from wealthy Jewish families), offered a modicum of privacy, and for an overnight price of only 50 Heller. Residents had their own cubicles, which had to be vacated during the day but could be retained on a more or less indefinite basis. There was a canteen where meals and alcohol-free drinks could be obtained, and a kitchen where they could prepare their own food; there were washrooms and lockers for private possessions; in the basement were baths, along with a cobbler's, a tailor's, and a hairdresser's, a laundry, and cleaning facilities; there was a small library on the ground floor, and on the first floor lounges and a reading-room where newspapers were available. Most of the residents were out during the day, but a group of around fifteen to twenty, mainly from lower-middle-class backgrounds and seen as the 'intelligentsia', usually gathered in a smaller room, known as the 'work-room' or 'writing-room', to undertake odd jobs – painting advertisements, writing out addresses and the like.²³² This is where Hanisch and Hitler set up operations.

Hanisch's role was to hawk Hitler's mainly postcard-size paintings around pubs. He also found a market with frame-makers and upholsterers who could make use of cheap illustrations. Most of the dealers with whom he had a good, regular trade were Jewish. Hitler's view, according to Hanisch, was that Jews were better businessmen and more reliable customers than 'Christian' dealers.²³³ More remarkably, in the light of later events and his

own claims about the importance of his antisemitism, his closest part art-production business, Josef Neun whom Hitler was, it seems, on friend

Hitler invariably copied his picture visits to museums or galleries to find to be chivvied by Hanisch, who could painted them. The usual rate of profit and Hanisch reckoned to sell it for as Hitler. In this fashion, they managed

Politics was a frequent topic of conversation at the Men's Home, and the atmosphere flaring. Hitler took full part.²³⁶ His violent caused trouble with some of the inmates for Schönerer and Karl Hermann Wolf Radical Party, with its main base in lyrical about the achievements of Lue, on politics, Hitler was lecturing his circle the wonders of Wagner's music and designs of Vienna's monumental buildings.

Whether politics or art, the chance to 'debates' was more than sufficient to summer, Hanisch had become more anxious to keep up with orders.²⁴² Hitler claimed but had to be in the right mood. Hanisch needed to keep the wolf from the door. The sale of one of his paintings, Hitler ever for a few days in June with Neumann Neumann spent their time sight-seeing museums.²⁴⁴ More likely they had other fell through, possibly including a quick squeeze a bit more money out of Aunt the Men's Home were at this time present – a miracle hair-restorer was one such money.²⁴⁶ Whatever the reason for his his money spent, Hitler returned to talk with Hanisch. Relations now, however the bad feeling eventually exploded over than usual in size, of the parliament building

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own claims about the importance of the Vienna period for the development
 of his antisemitism, his closest partner (apart from Hanisch) in his little
 art-production business, Josef Neumann, was also a Jew – and one with
 whom Hitler was, it seems, on friendly terms.²³⁴

Hitler invariably copied his pictures from others, sometimes following
 visits to museums or galleries to find suitable subjects. He was lazy and had
 to be chivvied by Hanisch, who could offload the pictures faster than Hitler
 painted them. The usual rate of production was about one picture a day,
 and Hanisch reckoned to sell it for around 5 Kronen, split between him and
 Hitler. In this fashion, they managed to make a modest living.²³⁵

Politics was a frequent topic of conversation in the reading-room of the
 Men's Home, and the atmosphere easily became heated, with tempers
 flaring. Hitler took full part.²³⁶ His violent attacks on the Social Democrats
 caused trouble with some of the inmates.²³⁷ He was known for his admiration
 for Schönerer and Karl Hermann Wolf (founder and leader of the German
 Radical Party, with its main base in the 'Sudetenland').²³⁸ He also waxed
 lyrical about the achievements of Lueger.²³⁹ When he was not holding forth
 on politics, Hitler was lecturing his comrades – keen to listen or not – on
 the wonders of Wagner's music and the brilliance of Gottfried Semper's
 designs of Vienna's monumental buildings.²⁴⁰

Whether politics or art, the chance to involve himself in the reading-room
 'debates' was more than sufficient to distract Hitler from working.²⁴¹ By
 summer, Hanisch had become more and more irritated with Hitler's failure
 to keep up with orders.²⁴² Hitler claimed he could not simply paint to order,
 but had to be in the right mood. Hanisch accused him of only painting when
 he needed to keep the wolf from the door.²⁴³ Following a windfall from the
 sale of one of his paintings, Hitler even disappeared from the Men's Home
 for a few days in June with Neumann. According to Hanisch, Hitler and
 Neumann spent their time sight-seeing in Vienna and looking around
 museums.²⁴⁴ More likely they had other 'business' plans, which, then, quickly
 fell through, possibly including a quick visit to the Waldviertel to try to
 squeeze a bit more money out of Aunt Johanna.²⁴⁵ Hitler and his cronies in
 the Men's Home were at this time prepared to entertain any dotty scheme
 – a miracle hair-restorer was one such idea – that would bring in a bit of
 money.²⁴⁶ Whatever the reason for his temporary absence, after five days,
 his money spent, Hitler returned to the Men's Home and the partnership
 with Hanisch. Relations now, however, became increasingly strained and
 the bad feeling eventually exploded over a picture Hitler had painted, larger
 than usual in size, of the parliament building. Through an intermediary –

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another Jewish dealer in his group in the Men's Home by the name of Siegfried Löffner – Hitler accused Hanisch of cheating him by withholding 50 Kronen he allegedly received for the picture, together with a further 9 Kronen for a watercolour. The matter was brought to the attention of the police, and Hanisch was sentenced to a few days in jail – but for using the false name of Fritz Walter. Hitler never received what he felt was owing to him for the picture.²⁴⁷

With Hanisch's disappearance, Hitler's life recedes into near obscurity for two years or so. When he next comes into view, in 1912-13, he is still in residence in the Men's Home, now a well-established member of the community, and a central figure among his own group – the 'intelligentsia' who occupied the writing-room.²⁴⁸ He was by now well over the depths of degradation he experienced in 1909 in the doss-house, even if continuing to drift aimlessly.²⁴⁹ He could earn a modest income from the sale of his pictures of the Karlskirche and other scenes of 'Old Vienna'.²⁵⁰ His outgoings were low, since he lived so frugally.²⁵¹ His living costs in the Men's Home were extremely modest: he ate cheaply, did not drink, smoked a cigarette only rarely, and had as his only luxury the occasional purchase of a standing place at the theatre or opera (about which he would then regale the writing-room 'intellectuals' for hours).²⁵² Descriptions of his appearance at this time are contradictory. A fellow resident in the Men's Home in 1912 later described Hitler at the time as shabbily dressed and unkempt, wearing a long greyish coat, worn at the sleeves, and battered old hat, trousers full of holes, and shoes stuffed with paper. He still had shoulder-length hair and a ragged beard.²⁵³ This is compatible with the description given by Hanisch which, though not precisely dated, appears from the context to refer to 1909-10.²⁵⁴ On the other hand, according to Jacob Altenberg, one of his Jewish art dealers, in the later phase at least in the Men's Home Hitler was clean-shaven, took care to keep his hair cut, and wore clothes which, though old and worn, were kept neat.²⁵⁵ Given what Kubizek wrote about Hitler's fussiness about personal hygiene when they were together in 1908, and what was later little short of a cleanliness fetish, Altenberg's testimony rings truer than that of the anonymous acquaintance for the final period in Meldemannstraße.

But, whatever his appearance, Hitler was scarcely enjoying the lifestyle of a man who had come by a substantial windfall – what would have amounted to a king's ransom for someone living in a men's hostel. Yet this is what was long believed. It was suggested – though based on guesswork, not genuine evidence – that towards the end of 1910 Hitler had become the recipient of a sizeable sum, perhaps as much as 3,800 Kronen, which

represented the life-savings of his Aunt. It was stated that this was the amount with which she had given her daughter, Johanna, on 1 December 1910, some 100 Kronen. The suspicion was that the feeling was enhanced by the fact that after his sister Paula, soon afterwards, of the orphan's pension, still at that time children. Adolf who, 'on account of his substantial sums from his aunt, Johanna, in a position to maintain himself, and was in the month which he up to then received from already noted, the household account-book that Adolf, alongside smaller gifts from a loan – amounting in reality to a gift – of providing him with the material basis for a year in Vienna.²⁵⁹ Whatever became of A 1910, there is not the slightest indication of the 25 Kronen a month orphan's pension, a serious dent in his income.²⁶⁰

Though his life had stabilized while in the Men's Home, during the time he had been trafficking in art, he remained unsettled. He was still, as has been said, by no means more than threatening to the social order in view of the quality of his own 'dilettante' and felt he still needed to learn how to present himself in 1910 to have entertained yet a further visit to Vienna, but nothing came of it, and his rejection remained unabated.²⁶²

Karl Hanisch – keen to distance himself from whom he had heard nothing good – kept himself out of written in the 1930s for the NSDAP-Hauptstadt to portray Hitler in the best light possible, a picture of him towards the end of his stay described Hitler at the time as slight in build, dark hair flopping in his face, and was rarely absent from the Home and sat in the writing-room near the window, drawing. This was known as his place, and any new arrival rapidly reminded by the other inmates that 'it

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represented the life-savings of his Aunt Johanna.²⁵⁶ Post-war inquiries indi-
cated that this was the amount withdrawn from her savings account by
Johanna on 1 December 1910, some four months before she died, leaving
no will.²⁵⁷ The suspicion was that the large sum had gone to Adolf. This
feeling was enhanced by the fact that his half-sister Angela, still looking
after his sister Paula, soon afterwards, in 1911, staked a claim to the whole
of the orphan's pension, still at that time divided equally between the two
children. Adolf who, 'on account of his training as an artist had received
substantial sums from his aunt, Johanna Polzl', conceded that he was in a
position to maintain himself, and was forced to concede the 25 Kronen a
month which he up to then received from his guardian.²⁵⁸ But, as we have
already noted, the household account-book of the Hitler family makes plain
that Adolf, alongside smaller gifts from 'Hanitante', received from her a
loan – amounting in reality to a gift – of 924 Kronen, probably in 1907 and
providing him with the material basis of his first, relatively comfortable,
year in Vienna.²⁵⁹ Whatever became of Aunt Johanna's money in December
1910, there is not the slightest indication that it went to Hitler. And the loss
of the 25 Kronen a month orphan's pension would have amounted to a
serious dent in his income.²⁶⁰

Though his life had stabilized while he had been in the Men's Home,
during the time he had been trafficking in paintings, Hitler seems to have
remained unsettled. He was still, as has been rightly said, 'more threatened
by than threatening to the social order' in which he lived.²⁶¹ He was disdainful
about the quality of his own 'dilettante' paintings, as he described them,
and felt he still needed to learn how to paint. He seems, indeed, for a time
in 1910 to have entertained yet a further attempt to enter the Academy in
Vienna, but nothing came of it, and his bitterness and anger about his
rejection remained unabated.²⁶²

Karl Honisch – keen to distance himself from his near-namesake Hanisch,
of whom he had heard nothing good – knew Hitler in 1913. His account,
written in the 1930s for the NSDAP-Hauptarchiv, was consciously intended
to portray Hitler in the best light possible, but for all that paints a plausible
picture of him towards the end of his stay in the Men's Home. Honisch
described Hitler at the time as slight in build, poorly nourished, with hollow
cheeks, dark hair flopping in his face, and wearing shabby clothes. Hitler
was rarely absent from the Home and sat each day in the same corner of
the writing-room near the window, drawing and painting on a long oak-table.
This was known as his place, and any newcomer venturing to take it was
rapidly reminded by the other inmates that 'this place is taken. Herr Hitler sits

money

there.²⁶³ Among the writing-room regulars, Hitler was seen as a somewhat unusual, artistic type. He himself wrote later: 'I believe that those who knew me in those days took me for an eccentric.'²⁶⁴ But, other than his painting skills, no one imagined he had any special talents. Though well regarded, he had a way, noted Honisch, of keeping his distance from the others and 'not letting anyone come too close'. He could be withdrawn, sunk in a book or his own thoughts. But he was known to have a quick temper. This could flare up at any time, particularly in the frequent political debates that took place. Hitler's strong views on politics were plain to all. He would often sit quietly when a discussion started up, putting in the odd word here or there but otherwise carrying on with his drawing. But if he took exception to something said, he would jump up from his place, hurling his brush or pencil on the table, and heatedly and forcefully make himself felt before, on occasion, breaking off in mid-flow and with a wave of resignation at the incomprehension of his comrades, taking up his drawing again. Two subjects above all roused his aggression: the Jesuits and the 'Reds' - at whose hands it was well known that he had suffered unpleasant experiences.²⁶⁵ No mention was made of tirades against the Jews.

The criticism of the 'Jesuits' suggests that some embers of his former enthusiasm for Schönerer's vehement anti-Catholicism were still warm, though the Schönerer movement had by this time effectively collapsed.²⁶⁶ His hatred for the Social Democrats was also long established by now. His own version in *Mein Kampf* of the emergence of this hatred tells the story - as we have already suggested, almost certainly fictional - of the victimization and personal threats he allegedly experienced, on account of his rejection of their political views and refusal to join a trade union, at the hands of Social Democrat workers when he was employed for a short time on a building site.²⁶⁷ If Hitler had suffered physical maltreatment, perhaps while living rough or later in the Men's Home, through making no secret of the evidently strong aversion he already felt towards Social Democracy, it might have been expected that he would have spoken about it to his cronies. Yet none of those who later recounted anecdotes of Hitler at the time refers to it - with the exception of Josef Greiner, whose account is a plain fabrication, no more than an elaborated and embellished variant of the *Mein Kampf* story.²⁶⁸

There is, in fact, no need to look beyond the strength of Hitler's pan-German nationalism as an explanation of his detestation of the internationalism of the Social Democrats. The radical nationalist propaganda of Franz Stein's pan-German 'working-class movement', with its repeated shrill

attacks on 'social democratic' agitation against Czech workers.²⁶⁹ A more underlying so pronounced sense of social antipathy to the class that Social Democracy represented me most at that time,' he later wrote of the 'lower classes': 'the economic misery, the coarseness, or the low level of the telling passage in *Mein Kampf*,

The environment of my youth consists of having very little relation to the proletarian class . . . and the manual worker in this hostility . . . lies in the fear of itself above the level of the man despised class, or at least become it add the repugnant memory of the vulgarity of its social intercourse; however insignificant it may be, man and culture intolerable.²⁷²

Though Hitler's account of his almost certainly in the main apocryphal, not least in his comment that less in order, my speech cultivate Hitler's appearance and lifestyle than proletarian.²⁷⁴ Later, in the 'intellectual' group that frequent from the manual workers in the level of degradation he must social decline into the proletariat readily imagined. But far from the working-class movement, this man Nor social and political theories himself' marked the philosophy

Hitler went on in *Mein Kampf* of the 'upstart', who had risen 'by in life to a higher one', that 'kills of those who have remained behind interest in 'the social question' w

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attacks on 'social democratic bestialities' and 'red terror', and its boundless
 agitation against Czech workers, was the type of 'socialism' soaked up by
 Hitler.²⁶⁹ A more underlying source of the hatred most likely lay in Hitler's
 pronounced sense of social and cultural superiority towards the working
 class that Social Democracy represented.²⁷⁰ 'I do not know what horrified
 me most at that time,' he later wrote of his contact with those of the 'lower
 classes': 'the economic misery of my companions, their moral and ethical
 coarseness, or the low level of their intellectual development'.²⁷¹ In a further
 telling passage in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote:

The environment of my youth consisted of petty-bourgeois circles, hence of a world
 having very little relation to the purely manual worker . . . The cleft between this
 class . . . and the manual worker is often deeper than we imagine. The reason for
 this hostility . . . lies in the fear of a social group, which has but recently raised
 itself above the level of the manual worker, that it will sink back into the old
 despised class, or at least become identified with it. To this, in many cases, we must
 add the repugnant memory of the cultural poverty of this lower class, the frequent
 vulgarity of its social intercourse; the petty bourgeois' own position in society,
 however insignificant it may be, makes any contact with this outgrown stage of life
 and culture intolerable.²⁷²

Though Hitler's account of his first encounter with Social Democrats is
 almost certainly in the main apocryphal, status-consciousness runs through
 it, not least in his comment that at that time 'my clothing was still more or
 less in order, my speech cultivated, and my manner reserved'.²⁷³ As we noted,
 Hitler's appearance and lifestyle while with Kubizek were anything other
 than proletarian.²⁷⁴ Later, in the Men's Home, his status as an 'artist' in the
 'intellectual' group that frequented the writing-room preserved his distance
 from the manual workers in the Home. Given such status-consciousness,
 the level of degradation he must have felt in 1909–10 when the threat of
 social decline into the proletariat for a time became dire reality can be
 readily imagined. But far from eliciting any solidarity with the ideals of the
 working-class movement, this merely sharpened his antagonism towards it.
 Not social and political theories, but survival, struggle, and 'every man for
 himself' marked the philosophy of the doss-house.²⁷⁵

Hitler went on in *Mein Kampf* to stress the hard struggle for existence
 of the 'upstart', who had risen 'by his own efforts from his previous position
 in life to a higher one', that 'kills all pity' and destroys 'feeling for the misery
 of those who have remained behind'.²⁷⁶ This puts into context his professed
 interest in 'the social question' while he was in Vienna. His ingrained sense

sympathy for the destitute and
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On coming to Vienna, he had at first been alienated by the antisemitic press there. But the obsequiousness of the mainstream press in its treatment of the Habsburg court and its vilification of the German Kaiser gradually led him to the 'more decent' and 'more appetizing' line taken in the antisemitic paper the *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Growing admiration for Karl Lueger – 'the greatest German mayor of all times' – helped to change his attitude towards the Jews – 'my greatest transformation of all' – and within two years (or in another account a single year) the transformation was complete.²⁸¹ Hitler highlights, however, a single episode which opened his eyes to the 'Jewish Question'.

Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought.

For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form:

Is this a German?²⁸²

Following this encounter, Hitler continued, he started to buy antisemitic pamphlets. He was now able to see that Jews 'were not Germans of a special religion, but a people in themselves'. Vienna now appeared in a different light. 'Wherever I went, I began to see Jews, and the more I saw, the more sharply they became distinguished in my eyes from the rest of humanity'.²⁸³

Now, to stay with his own account, his revulsion rapidly grew. The language Hitler uses in these pages of *Mein Kampf* betrays a morbid fear of uncleanness, dirt, and disease – all of which he associated with Jews.²⁸⁴ He also quickly formed his newly-found hatred into a conspiracy theory. He now linked the Jews with every evil he perceived: the liberal press, cultural life, prostitution, and – most significant of all – identified them as the leading force in Social Democracy. At this, 'the scales dropped from my eyes'.²⁸⁵ Everything connected with Social Democracy – party leaders, Reichsrat deputies, trade union secretaries, and the Marxist press that he devoured with loathing – now seemed to him to be Jewish.²⁸⁶ But this 'recognition', he wrote, gave him great satisfaction. His already existent hatred of Social Democracy, that party's anti-nationalism, now fell into place: its leadership was 'almost exclusively in the hands of a foreign people'. 'Only now,' Hitler remarked, 'did I become thoroughly acquainted with the seducer of our people'.²⁸⁷ He had linked Marxism and Jewry through what he called 'the Jewish doctrine of Marxism'.²⁸⁸

It is a graphic account. But it is not corroborated by the other sources

that cast light on Hitler's time in Vienna. Indeed, in some respects it is directly at variance with them. It is generally accepted that, for all the problems with the autobiographical parts of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler was indeed converted to manic racial antisemitism while in Vienna. But the available evidence, beyond Hitler's own words, offers little to confirm that view. Interpretation rests ultimately on the balance of probabilities.

Kubizek claimed Hitler was already an antisemite before leaving Linz. In contrast to Hitler's assertion that his father had 'cosmopolitan views' and would have regarded antisemitism as 'cultural backwardness', Kubizek stated that Alois's regular drinking cronies in Leonding were Schönerer supporters and that he himself was certainly therefore anti-Jewish. He pointed also to the openly antisemitic teachers Hitler encountered in the *Realschule*. He allegedly recalled, too, that Adolf had said to him one day, as they passed the small synagogue: 'That doesn't belong in Linz.' For Kubizek, Vienna had made Hitler's antisemitism more radical. But it had not created it. In his opinion, Hitler had gone to Vienna 'already as a pronounced antisemite'.²⁸⁹ Kubizek went on to recount one or two episodes of Hitler's aversion to Jews during the time they were together in Vienna.²⁹⁰ He claimed an encounter with a Galician Jew was the caftan story of *Mein Kampf*. But this, and a purported visit to a synagogue in which Hitler took Kubizek along to witness a Jewish wedding, have the appearance of an outright fabrication.²⁹¹ Palpably false is Kubizek's assertion that Hitler joined the Antisemitenbund (Antisemitic League) during the months in 1908 that the friends were together in Vienna. There was no such organization in Austria-Hungary before 1918.²⁹²

In fact, Kubizek is generally unconvincing in the passages devoted to the early manifestations of Hitler's antisemitism. These are among the least trustworthy sections of his account - partly drawing on *Mein Kampf*, partly inventing episodes which were not present in the original draft version of his recollections, and in places demonstrably incorrect. Kubizek was keen to distance himself in his post-war memoirs from the radical views of his friend on the 'Jewish Question'.²⁹³ It suited him to emphasize that Hitler had from Linz days hated the Jews. His suggestion that Hitler's father (whom he had not known) had been a pronounced antisemite is probably incorrect. As we have seen, Alois Hitler's own more moderate form of pan-Germanism had differed from that of the Schönerer movement in its continued allegiance to the Emperor of Austria and accorded with the line adopted by the dominant party in Upper Austria, the Deutsche Volkspartei (German People's Party), which admitted Jews to membership.²⁹⁴ The

vehemently antisemitic as well as movement certainly had a strong doubt included some at least of But antisemitism seems to have been compared with the antagonism to recollection was probably in this respect that he had become aware of he meant vehement hostility towards of Jewry' had only been made plain

The young Hitler, himself taken could scarcely have missed the element integral to them.²⁹⁷ But for the Sch day, antisemitism appears to have been one of anti-Czech clamour and terror not prevent Hitler's warm expression present of one of his watercolour had treated his mother in her last later antisemitism was of a different not present in his Linz years.

There is no evidence that Hitler he parted company with Kubizek claimed that he became an anti Vienna.²⁹⁹ Could, then, the transition mainly in Felberstraße, between 1 The testimony of Lanz von Lieben have seen that this is of highly deep poverty in autumn 1909 might see and find it in the figure of the Jew than at any other time in Vienna in *Mein Kampf*.³⁰¹

Not only that: Reinhold Hanisch months, was adamant that Hitler hater. He became one afterwards friends and contacts in the Men's locksmith called Robinsohn spent out financially from time to time Robinson, traceable in the Men' we have seen, became, as Hanisch said to have 'liked Hitler very

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Vienna. Indeed, in some respects it is generally accepted that, for all the merits of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler was indeed an antisemite while in Vienna. But the available evidence offers little to confirm that view. A balance of probabilities suggests that Hitler was an antisemite before leaving Linz. In his father had 'cosmopolitan views' and as a 'cultural backwardness', Kubizek's ironies in Leonding were Schönerer's certainly therefore anti-Jewish. He met teachers Hitler encountered in the Linz that Adolf had said to him one day, 'That doesn't belong in Linz.' For Hitler's antisemitism more radical. But it had already gone to Vienna 'already as a Linz on to recount one or two episodes of time they were together in Vienna.²⁹⁰ A Jew was the caftan story of *Mein Kampf* to a synagogue in which Hitler took part, adding, have the appearance of an antisemite. Kubizek's assertion that Hitler joined the (League) during the months in 1908 that there was no such organization in Linz. Indeed, in the passages devoted to the antisemitism. These are among the least interestingly drawing on *Mein Kampf*, partly present in the original draft version of *Mein Kampf* is probably incorrect. Kubizek was keen to draw from the radical views of his father. He suited him to emphasize that Hitler was an antisemite. His suggestion that Hitler's father was a pronounced antisemite is probably correct. Hitler's own more moderate form of antisemitism of the Schönerer movement in its heyday in Austria and accorded with the line of the German Volkspartei which admitted Jews to membership.²⁹⁴ The

vehemently antisemitic as well as radical German nationalist Schönerer movement certainly had a strong following in and around Linz, and no doubt included some at least of Hitler's teachers among its supporters. But antisemitism seems to have been relatively unimportant in his school compared with the antagonism towards the Czechs.²⁹⁵ Hitler's own later recollection was probably in this respect not inaccurate, when he told Albert Speer that he had become aware of the 'nationalities problem' – by which he meant vehement hostility towards the Czechs at school – but the 'danger of Jewry' had only been made plain to him in Vienna.²⁹⁶

The young Hitler, himself taken while still in Linz by Schönerer's ideas, could scarcely have missed the emphatic racial antisemitism which was so integral to them.²⁹⁷ But for the Schönerer supporters in the Linz of Hitler's day, antisemitism appears to have been a subdominant theme in the cacophony of anti-Czech clamour and trumpeted Germanomania. It certainly did not prevent Hitler's warm expressions of gratitude in postcards and the present of one of his watercolours to Dr Bloch, the Jewish physician who had treated his mother in her last illness.²⁹⁸ The deep, visceral hatred of his later antisemitism was of a different order altogether. That was certainly not present in his Linz years.

There is no evidence that Hitler was distinctively antisemitic by the time he parted company with Kubizek in the summer of 1908. Hitler himself claimed that he became an antisemite within two years of arriving in Vienna.²⁹⁹ Could, then, the transformation be placed in the year he spent, mainly in Felberstraße, between leaving Kubizek and becoming a vagrant? The testimony of Lanz von Liebenfels would fit this chronology.³⁰⁰ But we have seen that this is of highly doubtful value. Hitler's descent into abject poverty in autumn 1909 might seem an obvious time to search for a scapegoat and find it in the figure of the Jew. But he had the opportunity less than at any other time in Vienna to 'read up' on the subject, as he claimed in *Mein Kampf*.³⁰¹

Not only that: Reinhold Hanisch, his close companion over the following months, was adamant that Hitler 'in those days was by no means a Jew hater. He became one afterwards.'³⁰² Hanisch emphasized Hitler's Jewish friends and contacts in the Men's Home to demonstrate the point. A one-eyed locksmith called Robinsohn spared Hitler some small change to help him out financially from time to time. (The man's name was actually Simon Robinson, traceable in the Men's Home in 1912–13.³⁰³) Josef Neumann, as we have seen, became, as Hanisch put it, 'a real friend' to Hitler. He was said to have 'liked Hitler very much' and to have been 'of course highly

(Discussion of historians - who, who and who's source?)
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esteemed' by him. A postcard salesman, Siegfried Löffner (misnamed Loeffler by Hanisch), was also 'one of Hitler's circle of acquaintances', and, as we remarked, took sides with him in the acrimonious conflict with Hanisch in 1910.³⁰⁴ Hitler preferred, as we have seen, to sell his pictures to Jewish dealers, and one of them, Jacob Altenberg, subsequently spoke well of his business relationship they had conducted.³⁰⁵ Hanisch's testimony finds confirmation in the later comment of the anonymous resident of the Men's Home in the spring of 1912, that 'Hitler got along exceptionally well with Jews, and said at one time that they were a clever people who stick together better than the Germans do.'³⁰⁶

The three years that Hitler spent in the Men's Home certainly gave him every opportunity to pore over antisemitic newspapers, pamphlets, and cheap literature. But, leaving aside the fact that the chronology no longer matches Hitler's own assertion of a transformation within two years of arriving in Vienna, Karl Hanisch, as we have seen, makes a point of emphasizing Hitler's strong views on 'Jesuits' and the 'Reds', vehemently expressed in his numerous interventions in the debates in the writing-room, though makes no mention at all of any hatred of Jews. Hitler certainly joined in talk about the Jews in the Men's Home. But his standpoint was, according to Hanisch's account, by no means negative. Hanisch has Hitler admiring the Jews for their resistance to persecution, praising Heine's poetry and the music of Mendelssohn and Offenbach, expressing the view that the Jews were the first civilized nation in that they had abandoned polytheism for belief in one God, blaming Christians more than Jews for usury, and dismissing the stock-in-trade antisemitic charge of Jewish ritual murder as nonsense.³⁰⁷ Only Josef Greiner, of those who claimed to have witnessed Hitler at first hand in the Men's Home, speaks of him as a fanatical Jew-hater in that period.³⁰⁸ But, as we have noted, Greiner's testimony is worthless.

There is, therefore, no reliable contemporary confirmation of Hitler's paranoid antisemitism during the Vienna period. If Hanisch is to be believed, in fact, Hitler was not antisemitic at all at this time. Beyond that, Hitler's close comrades during the First World War also recalled that he voiced no notable antisemitic views.³⁰⁹ The question arises, then, whether Hitler had not invented his Viennese 'conversion' to antisemitism in *Mein Kampf*; whether, in fact, his pathological hatred of the Jews did not emerge only in the wake of the lost war, in 1918-19.³¹⁰

Why might Hitler fabricate the claim that he had become an ideological antisemite in Vienna? And, equally, why might a 'conversion' at the end of the war be regarded as something to be concealed by a story of an earlier

transformation? The answer lies in himself in the early 1920s, and p his trial. This demanded the sel nobody who struggled from the academic 'establishment', taught – above all through his own bit society and politics that enabled age of around twenty a rounded 'he was saying in 1924, provided national movement, and indeed 'great leader'.³¹¹ Perhaps by then the pieces of the ideological jigs Vienna years. In any case, by th gainsay the story. An admission t only at the end of the war, as he in Pasewalk and heard of Ger certainly have sounded less heroi.

However, it is difficult to be intensity of his hatred for the J had remained unaffected by the Vienna he knew – one of the m It was a city where, at the turn o punishing sexual relations betw placing Jews under surveillanc murder.³¹² Schönerer, the racial the hatred. Lueger, as we note vicious antisemitism to build up his hold on power in Vienna. It would have been strange had unaffected by such an essentia antisemitism. Certainly, he lear popularizing hatred against the J Hitler read, and singled out fo around 55,000 copies a day at t position and corruption, and r perversion, and prostitution.³¹⁴ I of the caftan-Jew, Hitler's desc antisemitic gutter press to deep him while in Vienna has an aut

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transformation? The answer lies in the image Hitler was establishing for himself in the early 1920s, and particularly following the failed putsch and his trial. This demanded the self-portrait painted in *Mein Kampf*, of the nobody who struggled from the first against adversity, and, rejected by the academic 'establishment', taught himself through painstaking study, coming – above all through his own bitter experiences – to unique insights about society and politics that enabled him without assistance to formulate at the age of around twenty a rounded 'world-view'. This unchanged 'world-view', he was saying in 1924, provided him with the claim to leadership of the national movement, and indeed with the claim to be Germany's coming 'great leader'.³¹¹ Perhaps by then Hitler had even convinced himself that all the pieces of the ideological jigsaw had indeed fallen into place during his Vienna years. In any case, by the early 1920s no one was in a position to gainsay the story. An admission that he had become an ideological antisemite only at the end of the war, as he lay blinded from mustard gas in a hospital in Pasewalk and heard of Germany's defeat and the revolution, would certainly have sounded less heroic, and would also have smacked of hysteria.

However, it is difficult to believe that Hitler of all people, given the intensity of his hatred for the Jews between 1919 and the end of his life, had remained unaffected by the poisonous antisemitic atmosphere of the Vienna he knew – one of the most virulently anti-Jewish cities in Europe. It was a city where, at the turn of the century, radical antisemites advocated punishing sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews as sodomy, and placing Jews under surveillance around Easter to prevent ritual child-murder.³¹² Schönerer, the racial antisemite, had notably helped to stir up the hatred. Lueger, as we noted, was able to exploit the widespread and vicious antisemitism to build up his Christian Social Party and consolidate his hold on power in Vienna. Hitler greatly admired both. Once more, it would have been strange had he of all people admired them but been unaffected by such an essential stock-in-trade of their message as their antisemitism. Certainly, he learnt from Lueger the gains to be made from popularizing hatred against the Jews.³¹³ The explicitly antisemitic newspaper Hitler read, and singled out for praise, the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, selling around 55,000 copies a day at the time, described Jews as agents of decomposition and corruption, and repeatedly linked them with sexual scandal, perversion, and prostitution.³¹⁴ Leaving aside the probably contrived incident of the caftan-Jew, Hitler's description of his gradual exposure through the antisemitic gutter press to deep anti-Jewish prejudice and its impact upon him while in Vienna has an authentic ring about it.³¹⁵

Probably no single encounter produced his loathing for Jews. Given his relations with his parents, there may have been some connection with an unresolved Oedipal complex, though this is no more than guesswork.³¹⁶ Hitler's linkage of Jews and prostitution has prompted speculation that sexual fantasies, obsessions, or perversions provide the key.³¹⁷ Again, there is no reliable evidence. The sexual connotations were no more than Hitler could have picked up from the *Deutsches Volksblatt*. Another explanation would be a simpler one. At the time that Hitler soaked up Viennese antisemitism, he had recently experienced bereavement, failure, rejection, isolation, and increasing penury. The gulf between his self-image as a frustrated great artist or architect, and the reality of his life as a drop-out, needed an explanation. The Viennese antisemitic gutter press, it could be surmised, helped him to find that explanation.³¹⁸

But if Hitler's antisemitism was indeed formed in Vienna, why did it remain unnoticed by those around him? The answer might well be banal: in that hotbed of rabid antisemitism, anti-Jewish sentiment was so commonplace that it could go practically unnoticed. The argument from silence is, therefore, not conclusive. However, there is still the evidence from Hanisch and Anonymous about Hitler's friendship with Jews to contend with. This seems to stand in flat contradiction to Hitler's own lurid account of his conversion to antisemitism in Vienna. One remark by Hanisch, however, suggests that Hitler had indeed already developed racist notions about the Jews. When one of their group asked why Jews remained strangers in the nation 'Hitler answered that it was because they were a different race.' He added, according to Hanisch, that 'Jews had a different smell.' Hitler was said also to have frequently remarked 'that descendants of Jews are very radical and have terroristic inclinations'. And when he and Neumann discussed Zionism, Hitler said that any money of Jews leaving Austria would obviously be confiscated 'as it was not Jewish but Austrian'.³¹⁹ If Hanisch is to be believed, then, Hitler was advancing views reflecting racial antisemitism at the same time that he was closely associated with a number of Jews in the Men's Home. Could it have been that this very proximity, the dependence of the would-be great artist on Jews to off-load his little street paintings, at precisely the same time that he was reading and digesting the antisemitic bile poured out by Vienna's gutter press, served only to underline and deepen the bitter enmities taking shape in his mind?³²⁰ Would the outsized ego of the unrecognized genius reduced to *this* not have translated his self-disgust into inwardly fermenting race-hatred when the plainly antisemitic Hanisch remarked to him that 'he must be of Jewish blood, since

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iced his loathing for Jews. Given his have been some connection with an this is no more than guesswork.³¹⁶ tion has prompted speculation that sions provide the key.³¹⁷ Again, there notations were no more than Hitler *des Volksblatt*. Another explanation t Hitler soaked up Viennese antisemi- avement, failure, rejection, isolation, en his self-image as a frustrated great f his life as a drop-out, needed an c gutter press, it could be surmised, indeed formed in Vienna, why did it m? The answer might well be banal: anti-Jewish sentiment was so common- iced. The argument from silence is, ere is still the evidence from Hanisch ship with Jews to contend with. This o Hitler's own lurid account of his . One remark by Hanisch, however, y developed racist notions about the why Jews remained strangers in the cause they were a different race.' He ws had a different smell.' Hitler was d 'that descendants of Jews are very is'. And when he and Neumann dis- oney of Jews leaving Austria would t Jewish but Austrian'.³¹⁹ If Hanisch ncing views reflecting racial antisemi- ely associated with a number of Jews een that this very proximity, the st on Jews to off-load his little street hat he was reading and digesting the gutter press, served only to underline g shape in his mind?³²⁰ Would the is reduced to *this* not have translated ng race-hatred when the plainly anti- t 'he must be of Jewish blood, since

such a large beard rarely grows on a Christian chin' and 'he had big feet, as a desert wanderer must have'.³²¹ Whether Hitler was on terms of real friendship with the Jews around him in the Men's Home, as Hanisch states, might be doubted. Throughout his life Hitler made remarkably few genuine friendships. And throughout his life, despite the torrents of words that poured from his mouth as a politician, he was adept at camouflaging his true feelings even to those in his immediate company. He was also a clever manipulator of those around him. His relations with the Jews in the Men's Home were clearly, at least in part, self-serving. Robinson helped him out with money. Neumann, too, paid off small debts for him.³²² Löffner was Hitler's go-between with the dealers.³²³ Whatever his true feelings, in his contacts with Jewish dealers and traders, Hitler was simply being pragmatic: as long as they could sell his paintings for him, he could swallow his abstract dislike of Jews.³²⁴

Though it has frequently been claimed, largely based on Hanisch's evi- dence and on the lack of reference to his antisemitic views in the paltry sources available, that Hitler was not a racial antisemite during his stay in Vienna, the balance of probabilities surely suggests a different interpretation? It seems more likely that Hitler, as he later claimed, indeed came to hate Jews during his time in Vienna. But, probably, at this time it was still little more than a rationalization of his personal circumstances rather than a thought-out 'world-view'. It was a personalized hatred – blaming the Jews for all the ills that befell him in a city that he associated with personal misery. But any expression of this hatred that he had internalized did not stand out to those around him where antisemitic vitriol was so normal. And, paradoxically, as long as he needed Jews to help him earn what classed as a living, he kept quiet about his true views and perhaps even on occasion, as Hanisch indicates, insincerely made remarks which could be taken, if mistakenly, as complimentary to Jewish culture. Only later, if this line of argument is followed, did he rationalize his visceral hatred into the fully-fledged 'world-view', with antisemitism as its core, that congealed in the early 1920s. The formation of the ideological antisemite had to wait until a further crucial phase in Hitler's development, ranging from the end of the war to his political awakening in Munich in 1919.

On 21 November 1918, two days after leaving hospital in Pasewalk, Hitler was back in Munich. Approaching thirty years of age, without education, career or prospects, his only plans were to stay in the army, which had been his home and had provided for him since 1914, as long as possible. He came back to a Munich he scarcely recognized. The barracks to which he returned were run by soldiers' councils. The revolutionary Bavarian government, in the shape of a provisional National Council, was in the hands of the Social Democrats and the more radical Independent Social Democrats. The Minister President, Kurt Eisner, was a radical; and he was a Jew. By spring, Eisner was to be assassinated, Bavarian politics to come close to chaos, and Munich for a month in April to be ruled by Soviet-style councils – for the last two weeks of April by Communists looking directly to Moscow for their model. The bloody repression accompanying the 'liberation' of Munich by Reichswehr troops and Freikorps (volunteer freebooter formations) was to lead to Hitler's first involvement in counter-revolutionary activity. In turn this was to mark the beginning of the process which would see him employed by the army as an informant, 'talent-spotted' as a 'born popular speaker' by his superior officer in the Reichswehr, and entering politics, still in army service, as a populist agitator in the tiny German Workers' Party.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the biographical parts of *Mein Kampf* is how quickly Hitler passed over his own experience of the traumatic revolutionary period in Bavaria. After all, he witnessed for the most part at close quarters the turmoil which so deeply scarred his psyche. He was based in Munich, at the epicentre of events, for the whole period that saw the descent into political chaos following the assassination of Eisner and culminated in the violent end of the 'councils' republic'. Yet his entire treatment of the months between the November revolution and the suppression of the

Räterepublik covers a mere page of his otherwise expansive book. Finding the soldiers' councils in charge of his regiment so repelled him, he wrote, that he decided to leave again as soon as possible. He was sent – after volunteering for service is the clear implication – with his closest wartime comrade Ernst Schmidt (whose name he misspells as 'Schmiedt') to Traunstein in the east of Bavaria, not far from the Austrian border, where he remained until the camp (which held prisoners of war) was disbanded, returning to Munich in March 1919. During the Räterepublik – the 'passing rule of the Jews' as he dubbed it – Hitler claimed he pondered what could be done, but repeatedly realized that, since he was 'nameless', he 'did not possess the least basis for any useful action'. In other words, he did nothing; before, that is, allegedly acting in some way – though he does not describe it, and the whole story has the air of a fabrication – that aroused the disapproval of the Central Council. Accordingly, in his account, he was to have been arrested on 27 April, but drove away with a loaded rifle the three men who had come to take him into custody.² Finally, he adds that, a few days after the 'liberation' of Munich, he was summoned to report to the commission examining the 'revolutionary occurrences' within his regiment – his 'first more or less purely political activity'.³

The gulf between the momentous nature of the events taking place before his eyes and this brief and laconic account came not unnaturally to fuel speculation that Hitler was trying to obfuscate his own actions and conceal a role which might prove embarrassing to the later nationalist hero. It does seem likely that this was indeed his aim, and to a considerable extent he succeeded in it. What Hitler did, how he reacted to the drama unfolding around him in Munich in the first half of 1919, remains for the most part a dark spot in his personal history. Even so, the evidence, patchy in the extreme though it is, reveals one or two surprises.

I

The German Revolution, which had been triggered by the mutinies at Wilhelmshaven and Kiel at the end of October and beginning of November, and rapidly spread to most cities and large towns, reaching the national capital on 9 November, was a messy, largely spontaneous and uncoordinated affair. It arose not, as the Right claimed, from the treacherous machinations of hard-core left-wing revolutionaries, but, as we have already noted, out of massive disaffection and mounting popular protest demanding an end to

the war, an end to the hunger and monarchy capable of bringing about on 3 October for an armistice, which was totally unprepared for defeat, the like a bush-fire. The American President on 23 October, in his third note reply rulers and autocratic monarchs position was only at this stage that revolution then weak and not numerous, found of popular demand for radical change sprang into existence; monarchies rulers of Bavaria for over seven centuries to fall, on 7 November; the Kaiser Flag fluttered over the palace in Berlin. But ending the old system with all the representatives of the mobilization opinion varied on what that meant. Improvisation rather than planning. The great majority of Court democracy. But the minority wanted and extending the power of the Court in their demands, as the Majority showed themselves too fearful of a box of potential social change that their own mass support; and too cautious order rather than risk more democracy for the socialization of industries of the army, and drastic reform or reaction, for a short time in disarray within the revolutionary movement widened alarmingly. In Berlin, the Council of People's Representatives to the right had its most fateful government of troops and counter-the small, ill-organized, and mis-carried out by left radicals, mainly in Berlin in early January 1919. The Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg of the disastrous rift within the w

the Weimar Republic prevented any united front being formed against the growing threat of National Socialism.

The revolution in Bavaria had preceded that in the Reich itself. It took place in circumstances and developed in ways that were to leave a profound mark on Hitler, and to fit more than the events in Berlin into what became the Nazi caricature of the 1918 revolution. It was more radical, with the leadership in the hands of the Independents; it degenerated into near anarchy, then into a short-lived attempt to create a Communist-run Soviet-style system; this in turn led to a few days – though a few days which seared the consciousness of Bavarians for many years to come – that amounted to a mini-civil war, ending in bloodshed and brutality; and a number of the revolutionary leaders happened to be Jewish, some of them east European Jews with Bolshevik sympathies and connections. Moreover, the leader of the Bavarian revolution, the Jewish journalist and left-wing socialist Kurt Eisner, a prominent peace-campaigner in the USPD since the split with the Majority Social Democrats in 1917, together with some of his USPD colleagues, had unquestionably tried to stir up industrial unrest during the 'January Strike' in 1918, and had been arrested for his actions. That was to fit nicely into the Right's 'stab-in-the-back' legend. The same was true of Eisner's subsequent publication of official Bavarian documents revealing Germany's complicity in Austria's ultimatum to Serbia in July 1914, which fed right-wing allegations of treason against him and his entourage even after the Minister President's assassination in February 1919.⁷

When, with a cry of 'off to the barracks', workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors attending a huge peace demonstration on Munich's Theresienwiese on 7 November 1918, addressed by Eisner, had headed for the city's main garrison area, they had met with no resistance from the troops.⁸ There was relatively little genuine revolutionary fervour in the barracks, but nevertheless as good as no opposition to the revolution, and no support left for the monarchy. War-weariness was the main determinant of the mood. 'These people wanted neither continued war nor revolutionary tribunals and burning stately homes,' wrote one eye-witness, long after the events. 'They wanted to get home to their farms and workshops.'⁹ Without support from the army, the monarchy was finished. The ailing King Ludwig III and his family fled that night. Hitler, over two decades later, was to remark that at least he had to thank the Social Democrats for ridding him of 'these courtly interests'.¹⁰

The provisional government that was soon constituted under Eisner's leadership was from the outset a highly unstable coalition, mainly composed

of the radical but largely idealistic had not even wanted a revolution mastering the daunting social and support from the countryside, in a problems alone could not be tackled the abandonment of radical land-worsen. The political turmoil moved USPD to a lull. Rapidly, and probably above all in the Bavarian countryside at the same time innately and overthrown of Eisner by a young, aristocratic Munich University, Graf Anton von provided then the signal for a deterioration.

With 'Red Guards' tramping the Palace where once maids-in-waiting attendance on their royal masters,¹¹ the Queen of Bavaria, dominated by proclaimed a 'Councils Republic' in communists – the latter dubbing it a 'Peasants Republic' – refused to participate.¹² A loyal to the elected government, now But the initial failure of the counter-revolution of the revolutionary hot-heads and us revolution: the full Communist takeover – an attempt to introduce a Soviet-style has finally erected the dictatorship of the new Executive Council under Leon Leviné, a veteran of the 1905 Russian a fortnight. But it ended in violence, imposing a baleful legacy on the political.

In conditions of a proclaimed ten-around 20,000 workers and soldiers factories and army garrison was gathered three-year-old sailor and 'veteran' of the it was without hope against the Prussians with Bavarian Freikorps units, that no after Eglhofer, on 29 April, had proclaimed 'Army', eight (including a woman) of them several from the *völkisch* Thule

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of the radical but largely idealistic USPD and the 'moderate' SPD (which had not even wanted a revolution).¹¹ Moreover, it stood no chance of mastering the daunting social and economic problems it faced. Without support from the countryside, in a largely rural province, the provisioning problems alone could not be tackled. But the price of any such support was the abandonment of radical land-reform plans. Conditions continued to worsen. The political turmoil mounted. Elections in January reduced the USPD to a rump. Rapidly, and predictably, the radicals had lost support above all in the Bavarian countryside – massively disaffected, but remaining at the same time innately and overwhelmingly conservative. The assassination of Eisner by a young, aristocratic former officer, currently a student at Munich University, Graf Anton von Arco-Valley, on 21 February 1919, provided then the signal for a deterioration into chaos and near anarchy.¹²

With 'Red Guards' tramping the corridors and rooms of the Wittelsbach Palace 'where once maids-in-waiting and powdered lackeys had fawned attendance on their royal masters',¹³ a meeting in the one-time bedroom of the Queen of Bavaria, dominated by members of the USPD and anarchists, proclaimed a 'Councils Republic' in Bavaria. Majority Socialists and Communists – the latter dubbing it a 'Pseudo-Councils Republic' (*Scheinräte-republik*) – refused to participate.¹⁴ An attempt to unseat it by using troops loyal to the elected government, now exiled in Bamberg, failed on 13 April. But the initial failure of the counter-revolution simply strengthened the resolve of the revolutionary hot-heads and ushered in the last phase of the Bavarian revolution: the full Communist takeover in the second, or 'real' Räterepublik – an attempt to introduce a Soviet-style system in Bavaria. 'Today, Bavaria has finally erected the dictatorship of the proletariat', ran the proclamation of the new Executive Council under the direction of the Communist Eugen Leviné, a veteran of the 1905 Russian revolution.¹⁵ It lasted little more than a fortnight. But it ended in violence, bloodshed, and deep recrimination, imposing a baleful legacy on the political climate of Bavaria.

In conditions of a proclaimed ten-day general strike, a 'Red Army' of around 20,000 workers and soldiers drawn mainly from Munich's big factories and army garrison was gathered under the command of the twenty-three-year-old sailor and 'veteran' of the Kiel Mutiny, Rudolf Eglhofer. But it was without hope against the Prussian and Württemberg troops, combined with Bavarian Freikorps units, that now massed around Munich. The day after Eglhofer, on 29 April, had proclaimed the 'dictatorship of the Red Army', eight (including a woman) of the 'Red Army's' prisoners, among them several from the *völkisch* Thule-Gesellschaft, held as hostages in

the Luitpold-Gymnasium, together with two captured soldiers from the government troops, were badly maltreated then shot by their captors. The fateful order for the shooting had been given as retaliation for atrocities committed by the encroaching 'White Guard' on the outskirts of Munich. News of the shooting of the hostages spread like wildfire, horrified the city, and incited the counter-revolutionary army to speed up its assault on Munich, and to undertake drastic and savage reprisals. The street-fighting in the city centre of Munich and in some working-class districts was bloody. Flame-throwers, heavy artillery, armoured vehicles, even aircraft, were deployed in a short but merciless civil war. The victims of the 'White Guard' included fifty-three Russian prisoners-of-war who had had nothing whatsoever to do with the Räterepublik but were driven into a quarry and summarily dispatched, a group of first-aiders mown down as supposed revolutionaries, twelve civilian SPD supporters in the working-class district of Perlach who had been denounced by political enemies, and twenty-one members of the Catholic St Joseph's Association, mistaken for Spartacists. For several days, terror ruled Munich's streets. All involved in the socialist experiment had to fear for their lives. When Munich was finally 'liberated' on 3 May, the death-roll numbered at least 606 persons, 335 of them civilians. Of the leaders of the Räterepublik, only the Russian-born Communist Max Levien escaped the clutches of the right-wing backlash. Eglhofer and the Jewish anarchist and writer Gustav Landauer were murdered by Freikorps troops; Leviné was executed for high treason (amid a storm of protest and a one-day general strike in Berlin); the anarchist Jewish writer Erich Mühsam was sentenced to fifteen years; Ernst Toller, another Jewish writer, to five years. In all, the draconian sentences meted out totalled some 6,000 years: sixty-five of those indicted were sentenced to hard labour, 1,737 to periods of imprisonment, and 407 to lighter internment.¹⁶

It would be hard to exaggerate the impact on political consciousness in Bavaria of the events between November 1918 and May 1919, and quite especially of the Räterepublik. At its very mildest, it was experienced in Munich itself as a time of curtailed freedom, severe food shortages, press censorship, general strike, sequestration of foodstuffs, coal, and items of clothing, and general disorder and chaos.¹⁷ But, of more lasting significance, it went down in popular memory as a 'rule of horror' (*Schreckensherrschaft*)¹⁸ imposed by foreign elements in the service of Soviet Communism. In reality, the revolutionaries had achieved nothing – beyond gaining some genuine support from Munich's soldiers and workers. Neither the threat to confiscate private property nor the creation of a new political and social order had

any prospect of implementation. Luitpold-Gymnasium was deplorable. But it paled alongside the atrocities which were regarded with relative

However, as so often, images were constructed and massively shored up in Reich as well as in Bavaria itself, with forces taking over the state, threatening property, presiding over chaos and violence, and causing anarchy of a kind. Even more moderate press organs, the mainstream newspaper of Munich's *Nachrichten*, spoke of the 'aims and 'Russian emissaries', 'Bolshevik agents' and 'foreign agitators'. It placed the blame on the 'bestial slaughter of innocent heads of leaders'. Any leniency shown towards the laws of humanity and justice against the troops who had 'liberated' Munich from 'in strict discipline' restored 'the spirit

A mere eighteen months after the reports of the terrible civil war taking place, the Freikorps eventually defeated their counter-revolutionaries, with immense mortalities and unspeakable suffering. It was to recognize how penetrating and pervasive the experience was in a rural province of deeply ingrained polarization that the Räterepublik were the radical Right stoke the fear and hatred of Bolshevism in the middle classes.²⁰ Not least, extreme counter-revolution to be accepted as a legitimate response and now became a regular feature of the

Its flirt with left-wing socialism over the years into a bastion of the conservative Right, with extremists throughout Germany. Though sharply, 'white-blue' Bavarian separatists and *völkisch* extremists found common cause (and broader 'Marxist') Left.²¹ And the stronghold of reactionary, anti-Republican

with two captured soldiers from the reated then shot by their captors. The een given as retaliation for atrocities e Guard' on the outskirts of Munich. spread like wildfire, horrified the city, army to speed up its assault on Munich, e reprisals. The street-fighting in the : working-class districts was bloody. ounded vehicles, even aircraft, were civil war. The victims of the 'White risoners-of-war who had had nothing lik but were driven into a quarry and first-aiders mown down as supposed upporters in the working-class district by political enemies, and twenty-one Association, mistaken for Spartacists. 1's streets. All involved in the socialist . When Munich was finally 'liberated' east 606 persons, 335 of them civilians. ily the Russian-born Communist Max ight-wing backlash. Eglhofer and the andauer were murdered by Freikorps treason (amid a storm of protest and anarchist Jewish writer Erich Mühsam Toller, another Jewish writer, to five meted out totalled some 6,000 years: nced to hard labour, 1,737 to periods nternment.¹⁶

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any prospect of implementation. The shooting of the hostages in the Luitpold-Gymnasium was deplorable, and horrified the Munich bourgeoisie. But it paled alongside the atrocities perpetrated by the 'liberating' troops, which were regarded with relative equanimity as 'restoring order'.

However, as so often, images were more telling than reality. And the image, constructed and massively shored up by rightist propaganda throughout the Reich as well as in Bavaria itself, was that of alien – Bolshevik and Jewish – forces taking over the state, threatening institutions, traditions, order, and property, presiding over chaos and mayhem, perpetrating terrible acts of violence, and causing anarchy of advantage only to Germany's enemies. Even more moderate press organs painted much the same picture. The mainstream newspaper of Munich's middle class, the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, spoke of the 'aims and methods of Russian Bolshevism', 'Russian emissaries', 'Bolshevik agents', the 'practice of asiatic Bolshevism', and 'foreign agitators'. It placed the blame for the 'criminal atrocities' and the 'bestial slaughter of innocent hostages' squarely on the 'communist leaders'. Any leniency shown towards such 'criminals' would be 'a sin against the laws of humanity and justice', it was stated. In contrast, the troops who had 'liberated' Munich from the 'red terror' had, it was claimed, 'in strict discipline' restored 'the spirit of order'.¹⁹

A mere eighteen months after the Russian Revolution and fuelled by reports of the terrible civil war taking place in Russia (in which the Bolsheviks eventually defeated their counter-revolutionary enemies, but only after immense mortalities and unspeakable savagery on both sides), it is not hard to recognize how penetrating and pervasive the neurotic fear of Bolshevism was in a rural province of deeply ingrained conservatism, and in politically polarized towns and cities. The real gainers from the disastrous weeks of the Räterepublik were the radical Right, which had been given the fuel to stoke the fear and hatred of Bolshevism among the Bavarian peasantry and middle classes.²⁰ Not least, extreme counter-revolutionary violence had come to be accepted as a legitimate response to the perceived Bolshevik threat and now became a regular feature of the political scene.

Its flirt with left-wing socialism over, Bavaria turned in the following years into a bastion of the conservative Right and a magnet for right-wing extremists throughout Germany. Though their political tendencies differed sharply, 'white-blue' Bavarian separatists, 'black-white-red' nationalists, and *völkisch* extremists found common cause in their hatred of the Bolshevik (and broader 'Marxist') Left.²¹ And the Bavarian Reichswehr became a stronghold of reactionary, anti-Republican, counter-revolutionary forces,

which were strengthened still further after March 1920, when the leaders of the failed right-wing Kapp Putsch and their paramilitary organizations found a haven awaiting them in Bavaria. These were the conditions in which the 'making of Adolf Hitler' could take place.

Not least, as already indicated, the history of the Bavarian revolution was almost tailor-made for Nazi propaganda. Not just the legend of the 'stab-in-the-back', but the notion of an international Jewish conspiracy could be made to sound plausible in the light of the Munich Räterepublik. Though right-wing extremism had no stronger traditions in Bavaria than elsewhere up to this point, the new climate provided it with unique opportunities and the favour of a sympathetic establishment. Many of Hitler's early followers were deeply influenced by the experience of the turbulent months of post-revolutionary Bavaria. For Hitler himself, the significance of the period of revolution and Räterepublik in Munich can hardly be overrated. It has been said that Hitler did not decide to become a politician; rather, through the revolution and the rule of the Councils, politics came to him, into the barracks.²² It is time to explore the truth of that assertion.

II

On his return to Munich on 21 November 1918, Hitler had been assigned to the 7th Company of the 1st Reserve Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, where, a few days later, he met up again with several wartime comrades. A fortnight later, he and one of these comrades, Ernst Schmidt, were among the fifteen men from his Company (and 140 men in all) assigned to guard duties at the Traunstein prisoner-of-war camp. Probably, as Schmidt later recounted, Hitler suggested they let their names go forward when volunteers were called for to make up the deputation.²³ Hitler, remarked Schmidt, did not have much to say about the revolution, 'but it was plain enough to see how bitter he felt'. Both, according to Schmidt, were repelled by the changed conditions in the Munich barracks, now in the hands of the Soldiers' Councils, where old standards of authority, discipline, and morale had collapsed.²⁴ If that was indeed the reason for volunteering, Hitler and Schmidt could have found no improvement on reaching Traunstein. The camp, meant to contain 1,000 prisoners but much overcrowded, was also run by the Soldiers' Councils which Hitler allegedly so detested. Discipline was poor, and the guards, according to one source, included some of the worst elements among the troops who – like Hitler – saw the army 'as a means

of maintaining a carefree existence. Schmidt had an easy time of this. They were there in all for almost all prisoners-of-war, mainly Russia. The beginning of February the camp was probably in late January, as Schmidt certainly returned no later than stated), since, on 12 February, he was assigned to the 2nd Demobilization

In general, as we have noted, was carried out remarkably swiftly by comrades, including Ernst Schmidt. That Hitler himself was able to do everything to his increasing involvement in political work for the Reichswehr to emerge. Meanwhile, he was keen to stay in the army as long

For just over two weeks, began guard duty at the Hauptbahnhof, sible for maintaining order, partly to and from Munich. During this was the subject of an investigation instances of maltreatment of persons is not known, though he cannot and brutality.³⁰ Beyond guard duty demobilization company had as earn 3 Marks a day testing old guards for the occasional visit to the open about 40 Marks a month – with food enough to keep body and soul together distinctively less rosy.

As we have noted, Hitler spoiled his commission following the suppression of revolutionary activity. Evidence recently comes why Hitler was so reticent about 'November criminals', as he later

A routine order of the demobilization to Hitler by name as the representative

after March 1920, when the leaders and their paramilitary organizations were there. These were the conditions in which he placed.

The history of the Bavarian revolution was propaganda. Not just the legend of the failure of an international Jewish conspiracy, but the light of the Munich Räterepublik. No stronger traditions in Bavaria than that provided it with unique opportunities for establishment. Many of Hitler's early experience of the turbulent months of 1919, Hitler himself, the significance of the work in Munich can hardly be overrated. He decided to become a politician; rather, of the Councils, politics came to him, and the truth of that assertion.

I

In September 1918, Hitler had been assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment, along with several wartime comrades. Among his comrades, Ernst Schmidt, were among the 140 men in all assigned to guard the war camp. Probably, as Schmidt later writes, his name goes forward when volunteers are chosen.²³ Hitler, remarked Schmidt, did not volunteer, 'but it was plain enough to see that Schmidt, were repelled by the changed situation, now in the hands of the Soldiers' Council, authority, discipline, and morale had been lost for volunteering, Hitler and Schmidt were on reaching Traunstein. The camp, so much overcrowded, was also run by an allegedly so derelict. Discipline was the source, included some of the worst of the Hitler - saw the army 'as a means

of maintaining a carefree existence at the expense of the state'.²⁴ Hitler and Schmidt had an easy time of things, mainly on gate-duty, at Traunstein. They were there in all for almost two months, during which time the prisoners-of-war, mainly Russians, were transported elsewhere. By the beginning of February the camp was completely cleared and disbanded. Probably in late January, as Schmidt hinted, Hitler returned to Munich.²⁵ He certainly returned no later than mid-February (not March, as he himself stated), since, on 12 February, his own military record shows that he was assigned to the 2nd Demobilization Company to await discharge.²⁷

In general, as we have noted, the demobilization of the German army was carried out remarkably swiftly and efficiently.²⁸ All Hitler's close wartime comrades, including Ernst Schmidt, were discharged well before he was.²⁹ That Hitler himself was able to avoid discharge until March 1920 owed everything to his increasing involvement, from the late spring of 1919, in political work for the Reichswehr, out of which his entry into politics was to emerge. Meanwhile, he was keen to take whatever opportunity presented itself to stay in the army as long as possible.

For just over two weeks, beginning on 20 February, he was assigned to guard duty at the Hauptbahnhof, where a unit of his company was responsible for maintaining order, particularly among the many soldiers travelling to and from Munich. During this period the guard command at the station was the subject of an investigatory commission examining numerous instances of maltreatment of persons arrested. Whether Hitler was involved is not known, though he cannot fail to have been a witness to the violence and brutality.³⁰ Beyond guard duties, Hitler, Schmidt, and the others in their demobilization company had as good as nothing to do. They were able to earn 3 Marks a day testing old gas-masks, which gave them enough money for the occasional visit to the opera.³¹ Normal earnings appear to have been about 40 Marks a month - with food and accommodation provided, certainly enough to keep body and soul together.³² The future outside the army looked distinctively less rosy.

As we have noted, Hitler spoke of his involvement in the investigatory commission following the suppression of the Räterepublik as his first political activity. Evidence recently come to light of Hitler's actions during the revolutionary era does not accord with this assertion. It also helps to suggest why Hitler was so reticent about his behaviour during the months that the 'November criminals', as he later repeatedly called them, ruled Munich.

A routine order of the demobilization battalion on 3 April 1919 referred to Hitler by name as the representative (*Vertrauensmann*) of his company.

The strong likelihood is, in fact, that he had held this position since 15 February. The duties of the representatives (*Vertrauensleute*) included cooperation with the propaganda department of the socialist government in order to convey 'educational' material to the troops.³³ Hitler's first political duties took place, therefore, in the service of the revolutionary regime run by the SPD and USPD. It is little wonder that he later wished to say little of his actions at this time.

In fact, he would have had to explain away the even more embarrassing fact of his continued involvement at the very height of Munich's 'red dictatorship'. On 14 April, the day after the Communist Räterepublik had been proclaimed, the Munich Soldiers' Councils approved fresh elections of all barrack representatives to ensure that the Munich garrison stood loyally behind the new regime. In the elections the following day Hitler was chosen as Deputy Battalion Representative.³⁴ Not only, then, did Hitler do nothing to assist in the crushing of Munich's 'Red Republic'; he was an elected representative of his battalion during the whole period of its existence.

How to interpret this evidence is, nevertheless, not altogether clear. Since the Munich garrison had firmly backed the revolution since November, and again in April supported the radical move to the Räterepublik, the obvious implication must be that Hitler, in order to have been elected as a soldiers' representative, voiced in these months the views of the socialist governments he later denounced with every fibre of his body as 'criminal'. At the very least it would appear that he could not have put forward strongly opposed views. Already in the 1920s, and continuing into the 1930s, there were rumours, never fully countered, that Hitler had initially sympathized with the Majority SPD following the revolution. Since the rumours tended to come from left-wing journalists, seeking to discredit Hitler, they were presumably not taken too seriously. But comments, for example, in the socialist *Münchener Post* in March 1923 that Hitler had assisted in the indoctrination of troops in favour of the democratic-republican state match the evidence, which we have noted, that he served, probably from February 1919 onwards, in such a capacity as *Vertrauensmann* of his company.³⁵ Similar rumours circulated in the socialist press in the early 1930s.³⁶ Ernst Toller reported that a fellow-prisoner also interned for involvement in the Räterepublik had met Hitler in a Munich barracks during the first months after the revolution, and that the latter had then been calling himself a Social Democrat.³⁷ Konrad Heiden remarked that, during the time of the Councils Republic, Hitler had, in heated discussions among his comrades, voiced support for the Social Democratic government against that of the

Communists. There were even supportive evidence – that Hitler pointed remark when defending the party, Hitler commented: 'I

In itself, Hitler's possible support of the revolutionary upheaval is clear. The political situation was extremely strange bedfellows, including entourage, initially found then Dietrich, later a general in Leibstandarte, was elected chairman in 1918. Hitler's long-time chauffeur at the end of April 1918 supporters, who became the mainstay for a while a journalist of the Feder, whose views on 'interests' in summer 1919, had sent a statement headed by Kurt Eisner the previous one of Hitler's closest wartime recounted how he at first welcomed the establishment of a republic, and the only reason was all the greater. 'Unfortunately, while the people continue to support a councils government (Räterepublik), he concluded bitterly, the case with Brandmayer, aggressive with a form of radicalism born of the old monarchy, switched from the old monarchy to the new republic, widespread following the confusion and opportunism shifting allegiances.

That, as has been implied, Hitler's Democracy and formed his political outlook only following an ideological 'schooling' in the Reichswehr, however, harder to believe. The monarchies through the revolution to determine when, precisely, evidence of his early pan-Ger-

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Communists. There were even reported rumours – though without any
supportive evidence – that Hitler had spoken of joining the SPD.³⁸ In a
pointed remark when defending Esser in 1921 against attacks from within
the party, Hitler commented: 'Everyone was at one time a Social Democrat.'³⁹

In itself, Hitler's possible support for the Majority Social Democrats in
the revolutionary upheaval is less unlikely than it might at first sight appear.
The political situation was extremely confused and uncertain. A number of
strange bedfellows, including several who later came to belong to Hitler's
entourage, initially found themselves on the Left during the revolution. Sepp
Dietrich, later a general in the Waffen-SS and head of Hitler's SS-
Leibstandarte, was elected chairman of a Soldiers' Council in November
1918. Hitler's long-time chauffeur Julius Schreck had served in the 'Red
Army' at the end of April 1919.⁴⁰ Hermann Esser, one of Hitler's earliest
supporters, who became the first propaganda chief of the NSDAP, had
been for a while a journalist on a Social Democratic newspaper.⁴¹ Gottfried
Feder, whose views on 'interest slavery' so gripped Hitler's imagination in
summer 1919, had sent a statement of his position to the socialist government
headed by Kurt Eisner the previous November.⁴² And Balthasar Brandmayer,
one of Hitler's closest wartime comrades and a later fervent supporter,
recounted how he at first welcomed the end of the monarchies, the establish-
ment of a republic, and the onset of a new era. His subsequent disillusionment
was all the greater. 'Unfortunately,' he added, 'we only changed the marion-
ettes,' while the people continued to slave and starve. 'We hadn't bled for
a councils government (*Räteregierung*); 'the thanks of the Fatherland were
missing,' he concluded bitterly.⁴³ Similar sentiments, in which, as was the
case with Brandmayer, aggressive nationalism and antisemitism intermingled
with a form of radicalism born of a sense of social grievance that was rapidly
switched from the old monarchical regime to the new republic itself, were
widespread following the war. Ideological muddle-headedness, political
confusion and opportunism combined frequently to produce fickle and
shifting allegiances.

That, as has been implied, Hitler was inwardly sympathetic to Social
Democracy and formed his own characteristic racist-nationalist *Weltan-
schauung* only following an ideological volte-face under the influence of his
'schooling' in the Reichswehr after the collapse of the Räterepublik is,
however, harder to believe.⁴⁴ Certainly, he welcomed the removal of the
monarchies through the revolution.⁴⁵ But even accepting that it is difficult
to determine when, precisely, he became a pathological antisemite, the
evidence of his early pan-German sympathies, antagonism towards Social

Democracy, belligerent militarism, and aggressive xenophobia rules out any genuine attuning to the aims, policies, and ideas of the SPD after 1918. If, as seems almost certain, Hitler felt compelled to lean outwardly towards the Majority Social Democrats during the revolutionary months, it was not prompted by conviction but by sheer opportunism aimed at avoiding for as long as possible demobilization from the army.

A number of pointers towards Hitler's opportunism exist from this period. In Pasewalk, he did not denounce to his superiors (as patriotic duty would have demanded) the sailors who arrived in the hospital preaching sedition and revolution.⁴⁶ On leaving the hospital, he avoided committing himself politically, and made no attempt to join any of the numerous Freikorps units which sprang up to engage in the continued fighting on the eastern borders of the Reich and the suppression of left-wing radicalism within Germany, not least in Munich itself. After his return to Munich from Traunstein in February 1919, he most likely took part, since his regiment had issued orders to participate, in a demonstration march of about 10,000 left-wing workers and soldiers in Munich. Probably in April 1919, with Munich ruled by the Communist Councils, he wore, along with almost all the soldiers of the Munich garrison, the revolutionary red armband.⁴⁷ That Hitler stood back and took no part whatsoever in the 'liberation' of Munich from the Räterepublik is said to have brought him later scornful reproaches from Ernst Rohm (who was to head the Nazi stormtroopers), Ritter von Epp (after 1933 Reich Governor in Bavaria), and even Rudolf Heß (who would serve as Hitler's private secretary and subsequently become Deputy Leader of the Party).⁴⁸

Whatever his opportunism and passivity, Hitler's antagonism to the revolutionary Left was probably evident to those around him in the barracks during the months of mounting turmoil in Munich. If indeed, as was later alleged, he voiced support for the Social Democrats in preference to the Communists,⁴⁹ it was presumably viewed as a choice of the lesser of two evils, or even, by those in Hitler's unit who knew him of old, as an opportune adjustment betraying none of his real nationalist, pan-German sympathies. Ernst Schmidt, for example, who by then had been discharged but was still in regular touch with him, spoke later of Hitler's 'utter repugnance' at the events in Munich.⁵⁰ The nineteen votes cast for 'Hittler' on 16 April, electing him as the second company representative – the winner, Johann Blüml, received thirty-nine votes – on the Battalion Council, may well have been from those who saw him in this light.⁵¹ That there were tensions within the barracks, and between the soldiers' elected representatives, might be read

out of the subsequent denunciations of the Battalion Council at the Munich soldiers of his regiment during the counter-revolutionary period. Indistinguishable from those of the city. One plausible, if unsubstantiated, exhort his battalion to remain loyal that 'we are not a revolutionary Significant, above all, is that with the Councils, Hitler had been nominated on a three-man committee to the Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment Räterepublik.⁵⁴ This speaks in favour of his deep antagonism to 'red' politics. Hitler being discharged, along with the end of May 1919.⁵⁵ More important the orbit of counter-revolutionary rather than any psychological trauma was, within the following months of extreme right-wing politics in

On 11 May 1919, under the command of the Bayerische Reichswehr Gruppenkommande created from the Bavarian units of the Räterepublik.⁵⁶ With the Bavarian end of August, Munich – its telegraph wire, and army control-points – was placed effectively under military rule and surveillance of the political scene and indoctrination 'dangerous' atmosphere. Gruko took over in May 1919 the 1st Abteilung, Abt. 1b/P) which had been the suppression of the Räterepublik 'correct' anti-Bolshevik, nationalist

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out of the subsequent denunciation by Hitler of two colleagues on the
Battalion Council at the Munich tribunal investigating the actions of the
soldiers of his regiment during the Räterepublik.⁵² Hitler was probably
known to those around him, at the latest towards the end of April, for
the counter-revolutionary he really was, whose actual sympathies were
indistinguishable from those of the 'white' troops preparing to storm the
city. One plausible, if unsubstantiated, story has him jumping on a chair to
exhort his battalion to remain neutral in the imminent fighting, exclaiming
that 'we are not a revolutionary guard for Jews who have come over here'.⁵³
Significant, above all, is that within a week of the end of the rule of the
Councils, Hitler had been nominated – by whom is not known – to serve
on a three-man committee to explore whether members of the Reserve
Battalion of the 2nd Infantry Regiment had been actively involved in the
Räterepublik.⁵⁴ This speaks in favour of the recognition within his battalion
of his deep antagonism to 'red' rule. At any rate, his new role now prevented
Hitler being discharged, along with the rest of the Munich garrison, by the
end of May 1919.⁵⁵ More importantly, it brought him for the first time into
the orbit of counter-revolutionary politics within the Reichswehr. This,
rather than any psychological trauma in Pasewalk at the news of the defeat,
any dramatic decision to rescue Germany from the 'November criminals',
was, within the following months, to open up his path into the maelstrom
of extreme right-wing politics in Munich.

III

On 11 May 1919, under the command of Generalmajor von Mohl, the
Bayerische Reichswehr Gruppenkommando Nr. 4 ('Gruko' for short) was
created from the Bavarian units that had been involved in the crushing of
the Räterepublik.⁵⁶ With the Bavarian government 'exiled' in Bamberg until
the end of August, Munich – its centre crammed with barricades, barbed
wire, and army control-points – was throughout the spring and summer a
city effectively under military rule.⁵⁷ Recognizing twin tasks of extensive
surveillance of the political scene and combating by means of propaganda
and indoctrination 'dangerous' attitudes prevalent in the transitional army,
Gruko took over in May 1919 the 'Information Department' (Nachrichten-
abteilung, Abt. Ib/P) which had been immediately established in Munich at
the suppression of the Räterepublik. The 'education' of the troops in a
'correct' anti-Bolshevik, nationalist fashion was rapidly regarded as a

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priority, and 'speaker courses' were devised in order to train 'suitable personalities from the troops' who would remain for some considerable time in the army and function as propaganda agents (*Propagandaleute*) with qualities of persuasion capable of negating subversive ideas.⁵⁸ The organization of a series of 'anti-Bolshevik courses', beginning in early June, was placed in the hands of Captain Karl Mayr, who, a short while earlier, on 30 May, had taken over the command of the Information Department.⁵⁹ Mayr, one of the 'midwives' of Hitler's political 'career',⁶⁰ could certainly have claimed prime responsibility for its initial launch.

The first of Hitler's many patrons, Mayr had a maverick career which saw him swing from active engagement on the extreme counter-revolutionary Right – he was an important Bavarian link with the putschist Wolfgang Kapp in 1920 – to become a strong critic of Hitler and an active figure in the Social Democrat paramilitary organization, the Reichsbanner. He fled to France in 1933, but was later captured by the Nazis, and died in Buchenwald concentration camp in February 1945. In 1919, his influence in the Munich Reichswehr extended beyond his rank as captain, and he was endowed with considerable funds to build up a team of agents or informants, organize the series of 'educational' courses to train selected officers and men in 'correct' political and ideological thinking, and finance 'patriotic' parties, publications, and organizations.⁶¹ Mayr first met Hitler in May 1919, after the crushing of the 'Red Army'. Hitler's involvement in his battalion's investigations into subversive actions during the Räterepublik may have drawn him to Mayr's attention. And as we have noted, Hitler had already been engaged in propaganda work in his barracks earlier in the spring – though on behalf of the Socialist government. He had the right credentials and ideal potential for Mayr's purposes. When he first met Hitler, Mayr wrote much later, 'he was like a tired stray dog looking for a master', and 'ready to throw in his lot with anyone who would show him kindness . . . He was totally unconcerned about the German people and their destinies'.⁶²

The name 'Hitler Adolf' appears on one of the early lists of names of informants (*V-Leute*, or *V-Männer*) drawn up by the Information Department Ib/P at the end of May or beginning of June 1919. Within days he had been assigned to the first of the anti-Bolshevik 'instruction courses', to take place in Munich University between 5 and 12 June 1919. For the first time, Hitler was to receive here some form of directed political 'education'. This, as he acknowledged, was important to him; as was the fact that he realized for the first time that he could make an impact on those around him. Here he heard lectures from prominent figures in Munich, hand-picked by Mayr,

partly through personal acquaintanceship, 'The Political Historian', 'The Political Historian Practice', 'Our Economic Situation Connection between Domestic and Foreign', at the specific insistence of Mayr to deliver a lecture), was Gottfried F. among the Pan-Germans as an economist of interest slavery' (a slogan Hitler recalled), on which he had already published in nationalist circles – distinguish 'rapacious' capital (which he associated with Hitler, and eventually led to the early Nazi Party.⁶³ The history professor Professor Karl Alexander school. Following his first lecture, emptying lecture hall surrounding a strikingly guttural, tone. He mentioned one of his trainees had natural rhetorical he was sitting. Mayr recognized him as 'List Regiment'.⁶⁴

Hitler himself thought this incident intervened by one of the participants to his deployment as an 'educational' officer; he was never a *Bildungsoffizier*, but the late May or early June.⁶⁵ Plainly attracted attention on Hitler. But it was certainly of Hitler's activity for his department to the latter's selection as one of a group drawn from the participants in the Munich to conduct a five-day course at the Augsburg. The course, beginning on arrival in the camp, was arranged to demonstrate the political unreliability of men stationed being held as prisoners-of-war and no squad was to inculcate nationalist propaganda troops, described as 'infected' by Buchenwald effect the continuation of what the inmates did in Munich.

Alongside the commander of the un-

were devised in order to train 'suitable' would remain for some considerable time propaganda agents (*Propagandaleute*) with negating subversive ideas.⁵⁸ The organization courses', beginning in early June, was Karl Mayr, who, a short while earlier, on command of the Information Department.⁵⁹ Hitler's political 'career',⁶⁰ could certainly for its initial launch.

ons, Mayr had a maverick career which went on the extreme counter-revolutionary variant link with the putschist Wolfgang Krieger, a critic of Hitler and an active figure in the organization, the Reichsbanner. He fled to Germany by the Nazis, and died in Buchenwald in 1945. In 1919, his influence in the Munich ranks as captain, and he was endowed with a team of agents or informants, organize the various selected officers and men in 'correct' politics, and finance 'patriotic' parties, publishing first met Hitler in May 1919, after Hitler's involvement in his battalion's actions during the Räterepublik may have ended as we have noted, Hitler had already worked in his barracks earlier in the spring – government. He had the right credentials for purposes. When he first met Hitler, Mayr described him as a 'stray dog looking for a master', and someone who would show him kindness...⁶² In the German people and their destinies.⁶² Mayr was on one of the early lists of names of officers drawn up by the Information Department beginning of June 1919. Within days he had joined anti-Bolshevik 'instruction courses', to take place on 5 and 12 June 1919. For the first time, a form of directed political 'education'. This, not to him; as was the fact that he realized it had an impact on those around him. Here are figures in Munich, hand-picked by Mayr,

partly through personal acquaintance, on 'German History since the Reformation', 'The Political History of the War', 'Socialism in Theory and Practice', 'Our Economic Situation and the Peace Conditions', and 'The Connection between Domestic and Foreign Policy'. Among the speakers, too, at the specific insistence of Mayr (since he was not originally scheduled to deliver a lecture), was Gottfried Feder, who had made a name for himself among the Pan-Germans as an economics expert. His lecture on the 'breaking of interest slavery' (a slogan Hitler recognized as having propaganda potential), on which he had already published a 'manifesto' – highly regarded in nationalist circles – distinguishing between 'productive' capital and 'rapacious' capital (which he associated with the Jews), made a deep impression on Hitler, and eventually led to Feder's role as the economics 'guru' of the early Nazi Party.⁶³ The history lectures were delivered by the Munich historian Professor Karl Alexander von Müller, who had known Mayr at school. Following his first lecture, he came across a small group in the emptying lecture hall surrounding a man addressing them in a passionate, strikingly guttural, tone. He mentioned to Mayr after his next lecture that one of his trainees had natural rhetorical talent. Müller pointed out where he was sitting. Mayr recognized him immediately: it was 'Hitler from the List Regiment'.⁶⁴

Hitler himself thought this incident – he said he had been roused to intervene by one of the participants defending the Jews – had led directly to his deployment as an 'educational officer' (*Bildungsoffizier*). However, he was never a *Bildungsoffizier*, but a *V-Mann*, which he had been since the late May or early June.⁶⁵ Plainly, the incident helped to focus Mayr's attention on Hitler. But it was certainly Mayr's regular close observation of Hitler's activity for his department rather than a single incident that led to the latter's selection as one of a squad of twenty-six instructors – all drawn from the participants in the Munich 'instruction courses' – to be sent to conduct a five-day course at the Reichswehr camp at Lechfeld, near Augsburg. The course, beginning on 20 August 1919, the day after Hitler's arrival in the camp, was arranged in response to complaints about the political unreliability of men stationed there, many having returned from being held as prisoners-of-war and now awaiting discharge. The task of the squad was to inculcate nationalist and anti-Bolshevik sentiments in the troops, described as 'infected' by Bolshevism and Spartacism.⁶⁶ It was in effect the continuation of what the instructors themselves had been exposed to in Munich.

Alongside the commander of the unit, Rudolf Beyschlag, Hitler undertook

the lion's share of the work, including helping to stir discussion of Beyschlag's lectures on, for example, 'Who Bears the Guilt for the World War?' and 'From the Days of the Munich Räterepublik'. He himself gave lectures on 'Peace Conditions and Reconstruction', 'Emigration', and 'Social and Political-Economic Catchwords'.⁶⁷ He threw himself with passion into the work. His engagement was total. And he immediately found he could strike a chord with his audience, that the way he spoke roused the soldiers listening to him from their passivity and cynicism. Hitler was in his element. For the first time in his life, he had found something at which he was an unqualified success. Almost by chance, he had stumbled across his greatest talent. As he himself put it, he could 'speak':

I started out with the greatest enthusiasm and love. For all at once I was offered an opportunity of speaking before a larger audience; and the thing that I had always presumed from pure feeling without knowing it was now corroborated; I could 'speak' . . . And I could boast of some success: in the course of my lectures I led many hundreds, indeed thousands, of comrades back to their people and fatherland. I 'nationalized' the troops . . .⁶⁸

Participants' reports on the course confirm that Hitler was not exaggerating the impact he made in Lechfeld: he was without question the star performer. Ewald Bolle, who had served on an airship, wrote that Beyschlag's lectures did not go down as well 'as the passionate (*temperamentvollen*) lectures (with examples from life) of Herr Hitler'. Gunner Hans Knoden thought Hitler especially 'revealed himself to be an excellent and passionate speaker and captured the attention of all the listeners with his comments'. And stretcher-bearer Lorenz Frank wrote: 'Herr Hitler especially is, I might say, a born popular speaker who, through his fanaticism and his populist style (*populäres Auftreten*) in a meeting, absolutely compels his audience to take note and share his views.'⁶⁹

A central feature of Hitler's demagogic armoury at Lechfeld was antisemitism. In his ferocious attacks on the Jews, he was, however, doing no more than reflect sentiments which were widespread at the time among the people of Munich, as reports on the popular mood demonstrated. One vicious comment - 'All [the Jews] deserve to be hanged. They are guilty of the war' - made in a Munich tram met with the approval of all other passengers. A worker in a train travelling from Munich to Lindau thought the troops ought to have opened fire on the Jews on 1 May. People said major pogroms against the Jews were as certain to come as the revolution had been. Other reports on popular opinion in August and September 1919 also recorded

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demands to hang all the Jews together with comments that 'the Jews are at present the greatest danger for all working Germans', and that 'only when the Reich is liberated from this malicious, treacherous vermin' could Germany's revival be contemplated. Among the troops the feelings were no different. The responses to Hitler's addresses at Lechfeld indicate how accessible the soldiers were to his way of speaking.⁷⁰ The commander of the Lechfeld Camp, Oberleutnant Bendt, even felt obliged to request Hitler to tone down his antisemitism, in order to prevent possible objections to the lectures as provoking antisemitic agitation (*Judenhetze*). This followed a lecture by Hitler on capitalism, in which Hitler had 'touched on' the 'Jewish Question'.⁷¹ It is the first reference to Hitler speaking publicly about the Jews.

Within the group, and certainly in the eyes of his superior, Captain Mayr, Hitler must have acquired the reputation of an 'expert' on the 'Jewish Question'. When Mayr was asked, in a letter of 4 September 1919 from a former participant on one of the 'instruction courses', Adolf Gemlich from Ulm, for clarification of the 'Jewish Question', particularly in relation to the policies of the Social Democratic government, he passed it to Hitler - whom he evidently regarded highly - for an answer.⁷² Hitler's well-known reply to Gemlich, dated 16 September 1919, is his first recorded written statement about the 'Jewish Question'. He wrote that antisemitism should be based not on emotion, but on 'facts', the first of which was that Jewry was a race, not a religion. Emotive antisemitism would produce pogroms, he continued; antisemitism based on 'reason' must, on the other hand, lead to the systematic removal of the rights of Jews. 'Its final aim,' he concluded, 'must unshakably be the removal of the Jews altogether.'⁷³

The Gemlich letter reveals for the first time key basic elements of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* which from then on remained unaltered to the last days in the Berlin bunker: antisemitism resting on race theory; and the creation of a unifying nationalism founded on the need to combat the external and internal power of the Jews. The fact that Hitler expressly utilized in his letter the arguments of Gottfried Feder, on whom he continued to lavish praise in *Mein Kampf*, suggests that Feder's ideas on 'interest slavery' and capitalism provided for Hitler the key ideological breakthrough, enabling him to rationalize and confirm his long-standing prejudice with a 'scholarly' type of argument.⁷⁴

and I who knew him well, knew that he had not profited by reading Faust, not at all - he was ready to sell his soul to the devil, I was the to receive him in his sleep,

helping to stir discussion of Beyschlag's 'the Guilt for the World War?' and 'republic'. He himself gave lectures on 'Emigration', and 'Social and he threw himself with passion into the he immediately found he could strike y he spoke roused the soldiers listening ism. Hitler was in his element. For the ething at which he was an unqualified tumbled across his greatest talent. As

n and love. For all at once I was offered an audience; and the thing that I had always owing it was now corroborated; I could success: in the course of my lectures I led rades back to their people and fatherland.

confirm that Hitler was not exaggerating as without question the star performer. airship, wrote that Beyschlag's lectures ionate (*temperamentvollen*) lectures 'titler'. Gunner Hans Knoden thought be an excellent and passionate speaker he listeners with his comments'. And :: 'Herr Hitler especially is, I might say, gh his fanaticism and his populist style absolutely compels his audience to take

logic armoury at Lechfeld was antisemi- Jews, he was, however, doing no more videspread at the time among the people ular mood demonstrated. One vicious o be hanged. They are guilty of the war' the approval of all other passengers. A Munich to Lindau thought the troops vs on 1 May. People said major pogroms come as the revolution had been. Other gust and September 1919 also recorded

violence of his called as Anti-Semite - Power, political power

How I counseled him on this letter
Here you do both together. You profit from your Anti-Semitism and you are close to the legal in tone. If you intend to demands to hang all the Jews together with comments that 'the Jews are at present the greatest danger for all working Germans', and that 'only when the Reich is liberated from this malicious, treacherous vermin' could Germany's revival be contemplated. Among the troops the feelings were no different. The responses to Hitler's addresses at Lechfeld indicate how accessible the soldiers were to his way of speaking.⁷⁰ The commander of the Lechfeld Camp, Oberleutnant Bendt, even felt obliged to request Hitler to tone down his antisemitism, in order to prevent possible objections to the lectures as provoking antisemitic agitation (*Judenhetze*). This followed a lecture by Hitler on capitalism, in which Hitler had 'touched on' the 'Jewish Question'.⁷¹ It is the first reference to Hitler speaking publicly about the Jews.

DISCOVERING A TALENT 125

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Within the group, and certainly in the eyes of his superior, Captain Mayr, Hitler must have acquired the reputation of an 'expert' on the 'Jewish Question'. When Mayr was asked, in a letter of 4 September 1919 from a former participant on one of the 'instruction courses', Adolf Gemlich from Ulm, for clarification of the 'Jewish Question', particularly in relation to the policies of the Social Democratic government, he passed it to Hitler - whom he evidently regarded highly - for an answer.⁷² Hitler's well-known reply to Gemlich, dated 16 September 1919, is his first recorded written statement about the 'Jewish Question'. He wrote that antisemitism should be based not on emotion, but on 'facts', the first of which was that Jewry was a race, not a religion. Emotive antisemitism would produce pogroms, he continued; antisemitism based on 'reason' must, on the other hand, lead to the systematic removal of the rights of Jews. 'Its final aim,' he concluded, 'must unshakably be the removal of the Jews altogether.'⁷³

The Gemlich letter reveals for the first time key basic elements of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* which from then on remained unaltered to the last days in the Berlin bunker: antisemitism resting on race theory; and the creation of a unifying nationalism founded on the need to combat the external and internal power of the Jews. The fact that Hitler expressly utilized in his letter the arguments of Gottfried Feder, on whom he continued to lavish praise in *Mein Kampf*, suggests that Feder's ideas on 'interest slavery' and capitalism provided for Hitler the key ideological breakthrough, enabling him to rationalize and confirm his long-standing prejudice with a 'scholarly' type of argument.⁷⁴

and I who knew him well, knew that he had not profited by reading Feder, not at all - he was ready to sell his soul to the devil, I was there to rescue him in his sleep,

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IV

On returning to Munich following the end of the Lechfeld course on 25 August, the commander Rudolf Beyschlag had been accused of not distributing 500 Marks, meant to be given to the course instructors. The case for the instructors was made by Hitler, now evidently the spokesman for his group. Following his success at Lechfeld and in the light of Beyschlag's disgrace, he was by this time plainly Mayr's favourite and right-hand man.⁷⁵ Among the duties of the V-Men assigned to Mayr was the surveillance of fifty political parties and organizations ranging from the extreme Right to the far Left in Munich.⁷⁶ It was in his capacity as V-Man that Hitler was sent, on Friday, 12 September 1919, to report on a meeting of the German Workers' Party in Munich's Sterneckerbräu. He was accompanied by at least two former comrades from Lechfeld.⁷⁷ The speaker was to have been the *volksisch* poet and publicist Dietrich Eckart, but he was ill and Gottfried Feder stood in to lecture on the 'breaking of interest slavery'. According to his own account, Hitler had heard the lecture before, so took to observing the party itself, which he took to be a 'boring organization', no different from the many other small parties sprouting in every corner of Munich at that time. He was about to leave when, in the discussion following the lecture, an invited guest, a Professor Baumann, attacked Feder and then spoke in favour of Bavarian separatism. At this Hitler intervened so heatedly that Baumann, totally deflated, took his hat and left even while Hitler was still speaking, looking 'like a wet poodle'.⁷⁸ The Party Chairman, Anton Drexler, was so impressed by Hitler's intervention that at the end of the meeting he pushed a copy of his own pamphlet, *My Political Awakening*, into his hand, inviting him to return in a few days if he were interested in joining the new movement. 'Goodness, he's got a gob. We could use him' (*Mensch, der hat a Gosch'n, den kunnt ma braucha*), Drexler was reported to have remarked.⁷⁹ According to Hitler's own account, unable to sleep he read Drexler's pamphlet in the early hours, and it struck a chord with him, reminding him, he claimed, of his own 'political awakening' twelve years earlier. Within a week of attending the meeting, he then received a postcard informing him that he had been accepted as a member, and should attend a committee meeting of the party a few days later to discuss the matter.⁸⁰ Though his immediate reaction, he wrote, was a negative one – he allegedly wanted to found a party of his own⁸¹ – curiosity overcame him and he went along to a dimly-lit meeting of the small leadership group in the Altés

Rosenbad, a shabby pub in Herre- aims of those he met. But he was ap organization he encountered – 'cl dubbed it.⁸² After a few days of in mind to join. What determined organization offered 'the individua – the prospect, that is, of quickly

Some time during the second ha Workers' Party, and was given th as he always claimed, the seventh Drexler, put it in a letter address sent:

No one knows better than you yoursel member of the party, but at best the asked you to join as recruitment dire had to complain to a party office th DAP, bearing the signatures of Schüss 555 being erased and number 7 entered

Like so much of what Hitler ha life, his account of entering the p was devised, like everything else, to being cultivated. And whatever Hit whether or not to join the DAP, been his to take. In a little noticee Captain Mayr later claimed that h Workers' Party to help foster its g he was provided at first with funds a week – and, contrary to normal p joining political parties, was allow do this, drawing his army pay as w 31 March 1920. This already enab leaders who had to fit politics arou time to political propaganda.⁸⁷ Ne boosted by his early successes as a he was in a position to do wha anti-Bolshevik course at Munich l Reichswehr propagandist and infi career opening to replace the fant

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Rosenbad, a shabby pub in Herrenstraße. He sympathized with the political aims of those he met. But he was appalled, he later wrote, at the small-minded organization he encountered – 'club life of the worst manner and sort', he dubbed it.⁸² After a few days of indecision, he added, he finally made up his mind to join. What determined him was the feeling that such a small organization offered 'the individual an opportunity for real personal activity' – the prospect, that is, of quickly making his mark and dominating it.⁸¹

Some time during the second half of September, Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, and was given the membership number 555. He was not, as he always claimed, the seventh member.⁸⁴ As the first party leader, Anton Drexler, put it in a letter addressed to Hitler in January 1940, but never sent:

No one knows better than you yourself, my Führer, that you were never the seventh member of the party, but at best the seventh member of the committee, which I asked you to join as recruitment director (*Werbeobmann*). And a few years ago I had to complain to a party office that your first proper membership card of the DAP, bearing the signatures of Schüssler and myself, was falsified, with the number 555 being erased and number 7 entered.⁸³

Like so much of what Hitler had to say in *Mein Kampf* about his earlier life, his account of entering the party cannot be taken at face value, and was devised, like everything else, to serve the Führer legend that was already being cultivated. And whatever Hitler wrote about wrangling for days about whether or not to join the DAP, the decision might not ultimately have been his to take. In a little noticed piece of evidence, his Reichswehr boss Captain Mayr later claimed that he had ordered Hitler to join the German Workers' Party to help foster its growth. For this purpose, Mayr went on, he was provided at first with funds – around the equivalent of 20 gold Marks a week – and, contrary to normal practice about members of the Reichswehr joining political parties, was allowed to stay in the army.⁸⁶ He was able to do this, drawing his army pay as well as speaker fees, until his discharge on 31 March 1920. This already enabled him – in contrast to the other DAP leaders who had to fit politics around their normal jobs – to devote all his time to political propaganda.⁸⁷ Now, on leaving the army, his confidence boosted by his early successes as a DAP speaker in the Munich beerhalls, he was in a position to do what, since he had made his mark in the anti-Bolshevik course at Munich University and worked with Mayr as a Reichswehr propagandist and informant, had emerged as a ready-made career opening to replace the fantasies of becoming a great architect and

Without the Reichswehr's 'discovery' of his talent for nationalist agitation, Hitler had every prospect of returning to the margins of society – an embittered war veteran with little chance of personal advancement. Without his self-discovery that he could 'speak', he would not have been able to contemplate the possibility of making a living from politics. But without the extraordinary political climate of post-war Germany, and, quite especially, the unique conditions in Bavaria, Hitler would have found himself in any case without an audience, his 'talent' pointless and unrecognized, his tirades of hate without echo, the backing from those close to the avenues of power, on whom he depended, unforthcoming.

When he joined the infant German Workers' Party in September 1919, he was still, as he himself put it, among the 'nameless' – a nobody.¹ Within three years, he was being showered with letters of adulation, spoken of on in nationalist circles as Germany's Mussolini, even compared with Napoleon.² And little more than four years later, he had attained national, not just regional, notoriety as a leader of an attempt to take over the power of the state by force. He had of course failed miserably in this – and his political 'career' looked to be (and ought to have been) at an end. But he was now a 'somebody'. The first part of Hitler's astonishing rise from anonymity to prominence dates from these years in Munich – the years of his political apprenticeship.

It is natural to presume that such a swift rise even to provincial celebrity status must have been the result of some extraordinary personal qualities. Without doubt, Hitler *did* possess abilities and traits of character that contributed towards making him a political force to be reckoned with. To ignore them or disparage them totally would be to make the same mistakes of underestimation made by his political enemies, who ridiculed him and regarded him as a mere cipher for the interests of others. But Hitler's personality and his talents, such as they were, alone do not explain the

adulation already being lavished on him by growing numbers in the *völkisch* camp by 1922. The origins of a leadership cult reflected mentalities and expectations prevalent in some sectors of German society at the time, more than they did special qualities of Hitler. Nor would his abilities as a mob-orator, which were most of what he had to offer at the time, in themselves have been sufficient to have lifted him to a position where he could, even if for a mere few hours – in retrospect, hours of pure melodrama, even farce – head a challenge to the might of the German state. To come this far, he needed influential patrons.

Without the changed conditions, the product of a lost war, revolution, and a pervasive sense of national humiliation, Hitler would have remained a nobody. His main ability by far, as he came to realize during the course of 1919, was that in the prevailing circumstances he could inspire an audience which shared his basic political feelings, by the way he spoke, by the force of his rhetoric, by the very power of his prejudice, by the conviction he conveyed that there *was* a way out of Germany's plight, and that *only* the way he outlined was the road to national rebirth. Another time, another place, and the message would have been ineffective, absurd even. As it was, indeed, in the early 1920s the great majority of the citizens of Munich, let alone of a wider population to whom Hitler was, if at all, only known as a provincial Bavarian hot-head and rabble-rouser, could not be captivated by it. Nevertheless, at this time and in this place, Hitler's message did capture exactly the uncontrollable sense of anger, fear, frustration, resentment, and pent-up aggression of the raucous gatherings in the Munich beerhalls. The compulsive manner of his speaking derived in turn much of its power of persuasion from the strength of conviction that combined with appealingly simple diagnoses of and recipes to Germany's problems.

Above all, what came naturally to Hitler was to stoke up the hatred of others by pouring out to them the hatred that was so deeply embedded in himself. Even so, this had never before had the effect it was to have now, in the changed post-war conditions. What, in the Men's Home in Vienna, in the Munich cafés, and in the regimental field headquarters, had been at best tolerated as an eccentricity now turned out to be Hitler's major asset. This in itself suggests that what had changed above all was the milieu and context in which Hitler operated; that we should look in the first instance less to his own personality than to the motives and actions of those who came to be Hitler's supporters, admirers, and devotees – and not least his powerful backers – to explain his first breakthrough on the political scene. For what becomes clear – without falling into the mistake of presuming

that he was no more than the puppet would have remained a political support he obtained from influential Hitler was seldom, if ever, master to take over the party leadership in 1923 – were not carefully conceived to save face. – behaviour characteris

It was as a propagandist, not as a of political ideas, that Hitler made nothing new, different, original, peddling in the Munich beerhalls. Various *völkisch* groups and sects an essentials by the pre-war Pan-Germ unoriginal ideas in an original way make no impact at all. It was less counted. As it was to be througho mattered. He consciously learnt ho speaking. He learnt how to devise the impact of targeting specific scap he was able to mobilize the masses route to the attainment of political that his way and no other could succ that he conveyed to others. Convers – later the mass rallies – gave him th of security, which at this time he ot Hoffmann, when asked to give a sh party in the early 1920s, he refused. explained. 'In a small intimate circ only disappoint you all, and that is a either at a family gathering or a funer demonstrated diffidence and unease diametrically with his self-confident his listeners in the theatrical settir orgasmic excitement which only th satisfaction gained from the rapturo ing crowds must have offered compe relations. More than that, it was a decades in which – apart from the p no achievements of note to set agai

* D.T. I had no need to explain these principles to him. He had his own instinct for such occasions

* D.T. There were our only

by growing numbers in the *völkisch* ship cult reflected mentalities and of German society at the time, more so. Nor would his abilities as a speaker have had to offer at the time, in 1912, which lifted him to a position where he could, in the prospect, hours of pure melodrama, play out the German state. To come

product of a lost war, revolution, and defeat, Hitler would have remained a minor figure. It came to realize during the course of the 1920s the chances he could inspire an audience by the way he spoke, by the force of his prejudice, by the conviction he had of Germany's plight, and that *only* this could lead to the national rebirth. Another time, another chance, ineffective, absurd even. As it was, the reality of the citizens of Munich, let alone Hitler, was, if at all, only known as a failed cause. The le-rouser, could not be captivated in any place, Hitler's message did capture the imagination, fear, frustration, resentment, and indignation in the Munich beerhalls. The message had in turn much of its power of persuasion that combined with appealingly to the audience's problems.

Hitler was to stoke up the hatred of the masses that was so deeply embedded in the German mind that the effect it was to have now, in the Men's Home in Vienna, the beerhall, had been at the heart of Hitler's major asset. The message above all was the milieu and the message should look in the first instance to the motives and actions of those who were the audience and devotees – and not least his own lack of success on the political scene. He fell into the mistake of presuming

that he was no more than the puppet of the 'ruling classes' – is that Hitler would have remained a political nonentity without the patronage and support he obtained from influential circles in Bavaria. During this period, Hitler was seldom, if ever, master of his own destiny. The key decisions – to take over the party leadership in 1921, to engage in the putsch adventure in 1923 – were not carefully conceived actions, but desperate forward moves to save face – behaviour characteristic of Hitler to the end. *

It was as a propagandist, not as an ideologue with a unique or special set of political ideas, that Hitler made his mark in these early years. There was nothing new, different, original, or distinctive about the ideas he was peddling in the Munich beerhalls. They were common currency among the various *völkisch* groups and sects and had already been advanced in all their essentials by the pre-war Pan-Germans. What Hitler did was to advertise unoriginal ideas in an original way. Others could say the same thing but make no impact at all. It was less *what* he said than *how* he said it that counted. As it was to be throughout his 'career', presentation was what mattered. He consciously learnt how to make an impression through his speaking. He learnt how to devise effective propaganda and to maximize the impact of targeting specific scapegoats. He learnt, in other words, that he was able to mobilize the masses. For him this was from the outset *the* route to the attainment of political goals. The ability to convince himself that his way and no other could succeed was the platform for the conviction that he conveyed to others. Conversely, the response of the beerhall crowds – later the mass rallies – gave him the certainty, the self-assurance, the sense of security, which at this time he otherwise lacked. According to Heinrich Hoffmann, when asked to give a short speech at Hermann Esser's wedding party in the early 1920s, he refused. 'I must have a crowd when I speak,' he explained. 'In a small intimate circle I never know what to say. I should only disappoint you all, and that is a thing I should hate to do. As a speaker either at a family gathering or a funeral, I'm no use at all.'¹ Hitler's frequently demonstrated diffidence and unease in dealings with individuals contrasted diametrically with his self-confident mastery in exploiting the emotions of his listeners in the theatrical setting of a major speech. He needed the orgasmic excitement which only the ecstatic masses could give him. The satisfaction gained from the rapturous response and wild applause of cheering crowds must have offered compensation for the emptiness of his personal relations. More than that, it was a sign that he was a success, after three decades in which – apart from the pride he took in his war record – he had no achievements of note to set against his outsized ego.

* D.T. there were times when there were only resources.

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Simplicity and repetition were two key ingredients in his speaking armoury. These revolved around the unvarying essential driving-points of his message: the nationalization of the masses, the reversal of the great 'betrayal' of 1918, the destruction of Germany's internal enemies (above all the 'removal' of the Jews), and material and psychological rebuilding as the prerequisite for external struggle and the attainment of a position of world power.⁴ This conception of the path to Germany's 'salvation' and rebirth was already partially devised, at least in embryo, by the date of his letter to Gemlich in September 1919.⁵ Important strands remained, however, to be added. The central notion of the quest for 'living-space' in eastern Europe was, for instance, not fully incorporated until the middle of the decade. It was only in the two years or so following the putsch débâcle, therefore, that his ideas finally came together to form the characteristic fully-fledged *Weltanschauung* that thereafter remained unaltered.

But all this is to run ahead of the crucial developments which shaped the first passage of Hitler's political 'career' as the beerhall agitator of an insignificant Munich racist party and the circumstances under which he came to lead that party.

I

The equation of National Socialism with Hitler, the frequently heard claim that it is no more than Hitlerism, always was a quite misleading oversimplification.⁶ That Hitler was indispensable to the rise to and exercise of power of National Socialism is, of course, undeniable. But the phenomenon itself existed before Hitler was heard of, and would have continued to exist if Hitler had remained a 'nobody of Vienna'.⁷ Much of the pot-pourri of ideas that went to make up Nazi ideology – an amalgam of prejudices, phobias, and utopian social expectations rather than a coherent set of intellectual propositions – was to be found in different forms and intensities before the First World War, and later in the programmes and manifestos of fascist parties of many European countries. Integral nationalism, anti-Marxist 'national' socialism, social Darwinism, racism, biological antisemitism, eugenics, elitism intermingled in varying strengths to provide a heady brew of irrationalism attractive to some cultural pessimists among the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie of European societies undergoing rapid social, economic, and political change in the late nineteenth century. There was nothing especially Teutonic about them, though, naturally, as we noted in

an earlier chapter, some of the idiosyncrasy of a specific intonation in German.

Ideas of a 'national', or 'German', socialism, of Marxism, were no new war had given such notions a new lease of life. Naumann had founded a 'Nationalist' view to weaning industrial work as the pillars of the new nation in 1903, and the notion of a 'German' with the extreme anti-liberal sentiment. The appeal here was to craftsmen, small farmers, lower middle class, antisemitism, extreme nationalism interpreted as 'Jewish' capitalism. The time of Hitler's youth, we saw in chapter 1, in the Schönerer movement, Czech and German workers in the establishment of a German Workers' Party, known as the Sudetenland. Marxist, anti-capitalist socialism twenty years earlier, of this Austria after the Putsch, though disclaimed. Certainly, there is no hint that it edged its existence during his continued after the war, when the 'National Socialist Workers' Party' (Nationalistische Arbeiterpartei). There were early 1920s, but by 1923 the success of 1926 Hitler became acknowledged and German branches of the party.

The *völkisch* variant of nationalism after the First World War, though gathering force among Germans, through the dissemination of Theodor Fritsch and Houston Chamberlain, popularizing of exclusivist and authoritarian schools and youth organizations were extreme nationalism, a uniquely German social order, harmony, and hierarchy.

two key ingredients in his speaking the unvarying essential driving-points of the masses, the reversal of the great Germany's internal enemies (above all racial and psychological rebuilding as the attainment of a position of world power to Germany's 'salvation' and rebirth in embryo, by the date of his letter to the Kaiser) remained, however, to be the main strands of the Beerhall movement until the middle of the decade. It was following the putsch débâcle, therefore, that formed the characteristic fully-fledged Beerhall movement, unaltered.

racial developments which shaped the Beerhall movement, the 'beerhall agitator' of an earlier chapter, under the circumstances under which he

appeared in an earlier chapter, some of the ideas took on a particular form and developed a specific intonation in Germany and German-speaking Austria.

Ideas of a 'national', or 'German', socialism, in contrast to the international socialism of Marxism, were nothing new in Germany in 1919, though the war had given such notions a strong boost. The liberal pastor Friedrich Naumann had founded a 'National-Social Association' in the 1890s with a view to weaning industrial workers from class-struggle and integrating them as the pillars of the new nation-state. The attempt had failed dismally by 1903, and the notion of a 'German' socialism came to be wholly associated with the extreme anti-liberal politics of the antisemitic and *völkisch* movement. The appeal here was mainly to the lower-middle classes – traders, craftsmen, small farmers, lower civil servants – and rooted in a combination of antisemitism, extreme nationalism, and vehement anti-capitalism (usually interpreted as 'Jewish' capitalism).⁸ Similar tendencies in Austria, during the time of Hitler's youth, were to be found, as we noted in an earlier chapter, in the Schönerer movement. We noted, too, that conflicts between Czech and German workers in Bohemia had already led by 1904 to the establishment of a German Workers' Party at Trautenau in what came to be known as the Sudetenland, combining *völkisch* nationalism and anti-Marxist, anti-capitalist socialism.⁹ Hitler acknowledged the foundation, twenty years earlier, of this Austrian National Socialist Party, at his trial after the Putsch, though disclaimed any connection with his own movement.¹⁰ Certainly, there is no hint that he showed any interest in it or even acknowledged its existence during his time in Austria. The similarity of name continued after the war, when the Trautenau party became the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP, Deutsche Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei). There were contacts with Hitler's movement in the early 1920s, but by 1923 the supremacy of the latter was established and in 1926 Hitler became acknowledged as the sole leader of both the Austrian and German branches of the re-established NSDAP.¹¹

I
with Hitler, the frequently heard claim that the Beerhall movement was a quite misleading oversimplification of the rise to and exercise of power, is undeniable. But the phenomenon of the Beerhall movement, and would have continued to exist in Vienna.⁷ Much of the pot-pourri of Beerhall ideology – an amalgam of prejudices, superstitions rather than a coherent set of ideas, found in different forms and intensities in the programmes and manifestos of various European countries. Integral nationalism, anti-Semitism, racism, biological antisemitism, and varying strengths to provide a heady mixture of some cultural pessimists among the Beerhall societies undergoing rapid social change in the late nineteenth century. There was, of course, much, though, naturally, as we noted in

The *völkisch* variant of nationalism remained a minority taste before the First World War, though gaining influential backing through the Pan-Germans, through the dissemination of popular racist works such as those of Theodor Fritsch and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and through the popularizing of exclusivist and aggressive ethnic nationalism in countless schools and youth organizations. The central strands of *völkisch* ideology were extreme nationalism, racial antisemitism, and mystical notions of a uniquely German social order, with roots in the Teutonic past, resting on order, harmony, and hierarchy.¹² Most significant was the linkage of a

romanticized view of Germanic culture (seen as superior but heavily threatened by inferior but powerful forces, particularly Slavs and Jews), with a social Darwinian emphasis upon struggle for survival, imperialist notions of the need for expansion to the Slavic east in order to safeguard national survival, and the necessity of bringing about racial purity and a new élite by eradicating the perceived arch-enemy of Germandom, the spirit of Jewry.

We have already seen how conditions in the last two years of the war were conducive to the rapid spread of antisemitism and *völkisch* nationalism, of which it was an integral part. The massive political upheaval and disarray that followed defeat and revolution gave even greater sustenance to the ideas of extreme nationalism. These ideas were represented in a variety of forms by a myriad of different political groups and movements. But of importance, in the changed circumstances, was that *völkisch* nationalism, in all its extremes, could now blend into more mainstream nationalist forces to offer a frontal ideological rejection of democracy and the Weimar state. The foundations of a rounded anti-democratic ideology, an antithesis to Weimar, were established not in the primitive beer-table discussions of *völkisch* 'thinkers' and 'philosophers', but by neo-conservative writers, publicists and intellectuals such as Wilhelm Stapel, Max Hildebert Boehm, Moeller van den Bruck, Othmar Spann, and Edgar Jung. Ideas of an organic Volk, resting on purity of blood and race, forming a national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that transcended each individual within it, producing a true 'national' socialism which was anti-liberal as it was anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, binding each individual at the same time to service to that community through subordination to leaders of notable ability, wisdom, and substance, formed central elements of this ideology.¹³

The anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois ideas of this ensemble naturally did not endear themselves to the conservative nationalists in the German National People's Party, the DNVP, the mainstream nationalist party which had arisen from the ashes of the old German Conservative Party.¹⁴ And the neo-conservatives generally thought the Nazis were vulgar and primitive. Even so, defeat, revolution, and the establishment of democracy had fostered a climate in which a counter-revolutionary set of ideas could gain wide currency, blending in part both into older forms of conservative nationalism and into the newer, popularized and vulgarized brands of *völkisch* nationalism. The 'national disgrace' felt throughout Germany at the humiliating terms imposed by the victorious Allies and reflected in the Versailles Treaty signed on 28 June 1919, with its confiscation of territory and, even more so, its 'guilt clause', enhanced the creation of a mood in which such ideas

were certain of a hearing. The first Rur year, in its calamitous losses for the party revealed, as is often said, that Weimar cans' – a notable exaggeration, but e the eyes of a majority of its citizens (in The potential was thus provided for c fringes of politics towards the centre

The crowds that began to flock i were not motivated by refined theori the fires of anger, resentment, and l they were offered in the Munich be version of ideas which were in far w in *Mein Kampf* that there was no ess the *völkisch* movement and those c interest in clarifying or systematizing obsessions – a few basic notions wh formed into a rounded 'world-view driving-force of his 'mission' to 'rescu for Hitler as abstractions. They we mobilization.

When Hitler joined the German seventy-three *völkisch* groups in Ger end of the war.¹⁷ In Munich alone Like the DAP, most of these were exception, however, and an importa Nazi Party, was the German Nationa (Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Tru 1919 on an initiative of the Pan-Ger of smaller *völkisch* associations into the masses to the antisemitic move located in Hamburg, where *völkisch* white-collar workers' union, the De band, it found significant resonanc Munich. Its propaganda output was 7.6 million pamphlets, 4.7 million h the symbol of the *völkisch* struggle membership had drained into it fi Within a year it had expanded from on to more than double this to over

(seen as superior but heavily threatened particularly Slavs and Jews), with a gle for survival, imperialist notions cast in order to safeguard national about racial purity and a new élite of Germandom, the spirit of Jewry. as in the last two years of the war isemitism and *völkisch* nationalism, issive political upheaval and disarray ive even greater sustenance to the as were represented in a variety of al groups and movements. But of ces, was that *völkisch* nationalism, more mainstream nationalist forces f democracy and the Weimar state. nocratic ideology, an antithesis to primitive beer-table discussions of but by neo-conservative writers, elm Stapel, Max Hildebert Boehm, and Edgar Jung. Ideas of an organic ce, forming a national community ach individual within it, producing anti-liberal as it was anti-capitalist dual at the same time to service to leaders of notable ability, wisdom, of this ideology.¹³ s ideas of this ensemble naturally rvative nationalists in the German mainstream nationalist party which man Conservative Party.¹⁴ And the Nazis were vulgar and primitive. lishment of democracy had fostered nary set of ideas could gain wide r forms of conservative nationalism arized brands of *völkisch* national- hout Germany at the humiliating id reflected in the Versailles Treaty ation of territory and, even more on of a mood in which such ideas

were certain of a hearing. The first Reichstag election in June the following year, in its calamitous losses for the parties supportive of the new democracy, revealed, as is often said, that Weimar was now 'a Republic without republicans' – a notable exaggeration, but expressive of the state's low esteem in the eyes of a majority of its citizens (including many of its most powerful).¹⁵ The potential was thus provided for extreme nationalism to move from the fringes of politics towards the centre ground.

The crowds that began to flock in 1919 and 1920 to Hitler's speeches were not motivated by refined theories. For them, simple slogans, kindling the fires of anger, resentment, and hatred, were what worked. But what they were offered in the Munich beerhalls was nevertheless a vulgarized version of ideas which were in far wider circulation. Hitler acknowledged in *Mein Kampf* that there was no essential distinction between the ideas of the *völkisch* movement and those of National Socialism.¹⁶ He had little interest in clarifying or systematizing these ideas. Of course, he had his own obsessions – a few basic notions which never left him after 1919, became formed into a rounded 'world-view' in the mid-1920s, and provided the driving-force of his 'mission' to 'rescue' Germany. But ideas held no interest for Hitler as abstractions. They were important to him only as tools of mobilization.

When Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, it was one of some seventy-three *völkisch* groups in Germany, most of them founded since the end of the war.¹⁷ In Munich alone there were at least fifteen in 1920.¹⁸ Like the DAP, most of these were small, insignificant organizations. An exception, however, and an important bridge to the early following of the Nazi Party, was the German Nationalist Protection and Defiance Federation (Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutz-Bund), founded at the beginning of 1919 on an initiative of the Pan-German League to amalgamate a number of smaller *völkisch* associations into an organization capable of winning the masses to the antisemitic movement.¹⁹ Though its headquarters were located in Hamburg, where *völkisch* ideas were already widespread in the white-collar workers' union, the Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband, it found significant resonance in the heated antisemitic climate in Munich. Its propaganda output was formidable. In 1920 alone it distributed 7.6 million pamphlets, 4.7 million handbills, and 7.8 million stickers.²⁰ As the symbol of the *völkisch* struggle it chose the swastika. Some of its early membership had drained into it from the short-lived Fatherland Party. Within a year it had expanded from 30,000 to 100,000 members and went on to more than double this to over 200,000 members in the three years of

its existence. Prominent among them were former soldiers angered at their treatment after a war allegedly lost through a 'stab-in-the-back', artisans feeling their status under threat from the proletariat, teachers attracted to pan-German ideology, and students resentful at their own altered prospects and insulted by national humiliation.²¹ Many of its members later found their way into the NSDAP.²² The fact that the Schutz- und Trutzbund was a purely agitatory organization, not allied to any political party, and had no clear political aims hampered its effectiveness. But its rapid expansion was an indication of the growing potential for *völkisch* ideas – and particularly for the mobilizing force of antisemitism – if they could be 'marketed' effectively.

Within the *völkisch* pool of ideas, the notion of a specifically German or national socialism, tied in with an onslaught on 'Jewish' capitalism, had gained ground in the last phase of the war, and spawned both Drexler's German Workers' Party and what was soon to become its arch-rival, the German-Socialist Party (Deutschsozialistische Partei).²³ The latter's founder, Alfred Brunner, a Düsseldorf engineer, had been involved in *völkisch* politics since 1904. Radical land and finance reform featured in a programme that had many close affinities with the Nazi Party Programme of 1920. By the end of 1919 the DSP had sizeable branches in Düsseldorf, Kiel, Frankfurt am Main, Dresden, Nuremberg, and Munich. Other branches were set up elsewhere, including Berlin, during 1920. By the middle of the year, the party had thirty-five branches and approaching 2,000 members. The organizational spread eventually proved a weakness compared with the regional concentration of the Nazi Party. And attempts to merge the DSP with the Nazi Party in 1920 and 1921 were to form the backcloth to the bitter conflict in the party in summer 1921 that culminated in Hitler taking over the leadership.

Already during the war, Munich had been a major centre of anti-government nationalist agitation by the Pan-Germans, who found a valuable outlet for their propaganda in the publishing house of Julius F. Lehmann – a prominent Munich member of the Fatherland Party – otherwise renowned for the publication of texts on medicine.²⁴ Lehmann was also a member of the Thule Society, a *völkisch* club of a few hundred well-heeled members, run like a masonic lodge, that had been founded in Munich at the turn of the year 1917–18 out of the pre-war Germanen-Orden, set up in Leipzig in 1912 to bring together a variety of minor antisemitic groups and organizations.²⁵ Its membership list, including alongside Lehmann the 'economics expert' Gottfried Feder, the publicist Dietrich Eckart, the journalist and co-founder of the DAP Karl Harrer, and the young nationalists Hans Frank, Rudolf Heß, and Alfred Rosenberg, reads like a *Who's Who* of early Nazi

sympathizers and leading figures in of the Thule Society, Rudolf Freihe adventurer and a self-styled aristocrat driver and had made his fortune through an opportunistic marriage to a rich heiress in Munich's best hotel, the 'Vier Jahreszeiten' movement in Munich with its own (renamed in August 1919 as the 'Völkischer Arbeiterzirkel') bought by the Nazis in December 1919 the initiative arose towards the working class in Munich. Karl Harrer and made contact with a railway worker. Having been found unfit for military service, he found an expression of his nationalist Party. Then, in March 1918, he had 'Good Peace' in an effort to stir enthusiasm in the working class. He combined his extreme demanding draconian action against a sports-reporter on the right-wing persuaded Drexler and a few others (Politischer Arbeiterzirkel). The 'Circle' members, met periodically for about to discuss nationalist and racist theories, enemy, or responsibility for the war: Harrer.²⁶ Whereas Harrer preferred Drexler thought discussing recipes for the group had scant value, and wanted to in December the setting up of a 'Germania' 'free of Jews (*judenrein*)'.²⁷ The idea 1919, at a small gathering – mainly at the Fürstener Hof in Munich, the Circle Drexler was elected chairman of the (existed), while Harrer was given the role. Only in the more favourable climate: was the infant party able to stage its sparse. Ten members were present on Eckart spoke in August, and forty-eight occasion on which Hitler attended for

former soldiers angered at their high a 'stab-in-the-back', artisans, proletarian, teachers attracted to fulfil at their own altered prospects many of its members later found the Schutz- und Trutzbund was linked to any political party, and had success. But its rapid expansion was *völkisch* ideas – and particularly for it could be 'marketed' effectively. Creation of a specifically German or fight on 'Jewish' capitalism, had war, and spawned both Drexler's son to become its arch-rival, the (the Partei).²³ The latter's founder, been involved in *völkisch* politics in featured in a programme that Party Programme of 1920. By the ties in Düsseldorf, Kiel, Frankfurt and Munich. Other branches were set up by the middle of the year, the party 1000 members. The organizational compared with the regional concentration to merge the DSP with the Nazi blackcloth to the bitter conflict in Hitler taking over the leadership. It had been a major centre of anti-semitic Germans, who found a valuable meeting house of Julius F. Lehmann – Land Party – otherwise renowned Lehmann was also a member of over 1000 well-heeled members, founded in Munich at the turn of the century. It was a League of German Men-Orden, set up in Leipzig in antisemitic groups and organizations. Alongside Lehmann the 'economics' Friedrich Eckart, the journalist and the young nationalists Hans Frank, like a *Who's Who* of early Nazi

sympathizers and leading figures in Munich. The colourful and rich head of the Thule Society, Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorff – a cosmopolitan adventurer and a self-styled aristocrat who was actually the son of a train-driver and had made his fortune through shady deals in Turkey and an opportune marriage to a rich heiress – ensured that meetings could be held in Munich's best hotel, the 'Vier Jahreszeiten', and provided the *völkisch* movement in Munich with its own newspaper, the *Münchener Beobachter* (renamed in August 1919 as the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and eventually bought by the Nazis in December 1920). It was from the Thule Society that the initiative arose towards the end of the war to try to influence the working class in Munich. Karl Harrer was commissioned to attempt this, and made contact with a railway workshop locksmith, Anton Drexler. Having been found unfit for military service, Drexler had in 1917 temporarily found an expression of his nationalist and racist sentiments in the Fatherland Party. Then, in March 1918, he had founded a 'Workers' Committee for a Good Peace' in an effort to stir enthusiasm for the war effort among Munich's working class. He combined his extreme nationalism with an anti-capitalism demanding draconian action against profiteers and speculators. Harrer, a sports-reporter on the right-wing *Münchener-Augsburger Abendzeitung*, persuaded Drexler and a few others to set up a 'Political Workers' Circle' (Politischer Arbeiterzirkel). The 'Circle', a group of usually three to seven members, met periodically for about a year from November 1918 onwards to discuss nationalist and racist themes – such as the Jews as Germany's enemy, or responsibility for the war and defeat – usually introduced by Harrer.²⁶ Whereas Harrer preferred the semi-secretive *völkisch* 'club', Drexler thought discussing recipes for Germany's salvation in such a tiny group had scant value, and wanted to found a political party. He proposed in December the setting up of a 'German Workers' Party' which would be 'free of Jews (*judenrein*)'.²⁷ The idea was well received, and, on 5 January 1919, at a small gathering – mainly contacts from the railway yards – in the Fürstenfelder Hof in Munich, the German Workers' Party was formed. Drexler was elected chairman of the Munich branch (the only one that existed), while Harrer was given the honorary title of 'Reich Chairman'.²⁸ Only in the more favourable climate after the crushing of the Räterepublik was the infant party able to stage its first public meetings. Attendance was sparse. Ten members were present on 17 May, thirty-eight when Dietrich Eckart spoke in August, and forty-one on 12 September. This was the occasion on which Hitler attended for the first time.²⁹

II

Hitler's part in the early development of the German Workers' Party (subsequently the NSDAP) is obscured more than it is clarified by his own tendentious account in *Mein Kampf*. As usual, this is characterized less by pure invention than by selective memory and distortion of facts. And, as throughout his book, Hitler's version of events is aimed, more than all else, at elevating his own role as it denigrates, plays down, or simply ignores that of all others involved. It amounts, as always in Hitler's own account, to the story of a political genius going his way in the face of adversity, a heroic triumph of the will. The story was the core of the 'party legend' which in later years Hitler never tired of retelling at inordinate length as the preface to his major speeches. It was that of the political genius who joined a tiny body with grandiose ideas but no hope of realizing them, raising it single-handedly to a force of the first magnitude which would come to rescue Germany from its plight.

Hitler wrote contemptuously of the organization he had joined. The state of the party was depressing in the extreme. The committee constituted practically the whole membership. Though it attacked parliamentary rule, its own matters were decided, after 'interminable argument', by majority vote. It met in the dingy back rooms of Munich pubs. It had no permanent headquarters. In fact, it had no membership forms, no printed matter, not even a rubber stamp. Invitations to party meetings were handwritten or produced on a typewriter. The same few people turned up.³⁰ Eventually, a move to mimeographed notices brought a modest rise in numbers attending, and funds were raised to allow a newspaper advertisement in the *Münchener Beobachter* for a meeting on 16 October 1919 which attracted 111 people to the Hofbräukeller, the large drinking saloon attached to one of Munich's big breweries, situated in Wienerstraße to the east of the city centre (and not to be confused with the better-known Hofbräuhaus, located in the city centre itself). The main speaker was a Munich professor, but Hitler – according to his own account – then spoke for the first time in public (apart from to captive audiences in the Lechfeld Camp), for half an hour instead of his scheduled twenty minutes. He electrified his audience and prompted a collection of 300 Marks for the party coffers. He brought some of his army contacts into the movement, breathing much-needed new life into it. The party leaders, Harrer and Drexler, were in his view uninspiring: they were neither good speakers, nor had they served in the war. Hitler and the

party leadership were at odds ab initio. On initial success, Hitler insisted on his way, and these took place in the 'Deutschen Reich', on Dachauerstrasse speaking to bigger audiences and within a few weeks later, the attendance star was now in the ascendant. When it went on, he urged the staging of the differences of opinion were major differences of opinion arguing that it was premature and with Harrer, the party's first chairman, and Hitler, and was replaced by Drexler. The meeting was organized for 24 February in the centre of Munich. The evening was rougher and rowdier. 'Schönbrunn's' numerous big drinking establishments the stone beer mugs and benches groaning in Bavarian short leather trousers. The tables delivering foaming litres of beer. It frequently was, for large political meetings, heavy drinking sometimes brawls, was common. The bigger hall than the infant party had the embarrassment of a small turn-out.

A good deal of effort was put into leaflets advertising the meeting. The programme, at the meeting, was also printed and the huge hall was packed when Hitler arrived. Still according to his own account, and not mentioning, had spoken, Hitler – Drexler, who had apparently suffered from the floor. Clashes between his superior speaker took place, but Hitler continued and expounded the programme, with unanimous acclamation of its twenty in his *Mein Kampf* version, 'there united by a new conviction, a new faith setting out on his quest: 'A fire was

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behaving this,

party leadership were at odds about future strategy. On the basis of his
 initial success, Hitler insisted on more frequent and larger meetings. He got
 his way, and these took place in the Eberlbräukeller and the 'Gasthaus Zum
 Deutschen Reich', on Dachauerstraße near the barracks area, with Hitler
 speaking to bigger audiences and with great success. ³¹ By the seventh meeting,
 a few weeks later, the attendance had swollen to over 400 people. Hitler's
 star was now in the ascendant within the party. Early in 1920, his account
 went on, he urged the staging of the first great mass meeting. Again there
 were major differences of opinion within the party leadership, doubters
 arguing that it was premature and would be a disastrous failure. The cautious
 Harrer, the party's first chairman, resigned because of his disagreement with
 Hitler, and was replaced by Drexler. Again, Hitler prevailed. The mass
 meeting was organized for 24 February 1920 in the Festsaal of the Hofbräu-
 haus in the centre of Munich. The big, noisy hall on the first floor - above
 the even rougher and rowdier 'Schwemme' down below - had, like all the
 city's numerous big drinking establishments, rows of tables stacked with
 the stone beer mugs and benches groaning under the weight of thick-set men
 in Bavarian short leather trousers while hefty waitresses bustled between
 the tables delivering foaming litres of beer. When it was not hired out, as
 it frequently was, for large political meetings, the beer-swilling crowds
 would sway merrily to drinking songs played by a Bavarian brass band.
 At political meetings, heavy drinking, prompting verbal interjections and
 sometimes brawls, was commonplace. Moving to such a venue - a far
 bigger hall than the infant party had so far used - was risky, courting the
 embarrassment of a small turn-out.

A good deal of effort was put into designing striking red posters and
 leaflets advertising the meeting. The party's programme, to be announced
 at the meeting, was also printed and distributed. The publicity worked. The
 huge hall was packed when Hitler arrived at quarter past seven that evening.
 Still according to his own account, after a first speaker, whose name he does
 not mention, had spoken, Hitler - chairing the meeting in the absence of
 Drexler, who had apparently suffered some sort of nervous collapse - took
 the floor. Clashes between his supporters and those trying to heckle the
 speaker took place, but Hitler continued speaking, to mounting applause,
 and expounded the programme, swaying his audience to rapturous and
 unanimous acclamation of its twenty-five points.³² Finally, declares Hitler
 in his *Mein Kampf* version, 'there stood before me a hall full of people
 united by a new conviction, a new faith, a new will'. The German hero was
 setting out on his quest: 'A fire was kindled from whose flame one day the

* what fear he felt!

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sword must come which would regain freedom for the Germanic Siegfried and life for the German nation . . . Thus slowly the hall emptied. The movement took its course.³³

The story has been aptly described as 'a heroic legend in half-naturalistic style, young Siegfried warbling his wood-notes wild in Munich beer halls'.³⁴ The legend was framed to portray the beginnings of the Führer figure, Germany's coming great leader and saviour, as it had emerged by the writing of the first volume of *Mein Kampf* in 1924. Towering over the weak and vacillating early leaders of the party, certain of himself and of the coming to fruition of his mighty vision, proven successful in his methods, his greatness – so his account was designed to illustrate – was apparent even in these first months after joining the movement. There could be no doubt about his claim to supremacy in the *volkisch* movement against all pretenders.

After dealing with subsequent successes in building up the party's following, Hitler returned to the early party history in a later passage in *Mein Kampf* when, surprisingly briefly and remarkably vaguely, he described his takeover of the party leadership in mid-1921. His terse summary simply indicates that after intrigues against him and 'the attempt of a group of *volkisch* lunatics', supported by the party chairman (Drexler), to obtain the leadership of the party had collapsed, a general membership meeting unanimously gave him leadership over the whole movement. His reorganization of the movement on 1 August 1921 swept away the old, ineffectual quasi-parliamentary way of running party matters by committee and internal democracy, and substituted for it the leadership principle as the organizational basis of the party. His own absolute supremacy was thereby assured.³⁵

Here, it seems, embodied in the description in *Mein Kampf*, is the realization of Hitler's ambition for dictatorial power in the movement – subsequently in the German state – which could be witnessed in his early conflicts with Harrer and Drexler, and his rejection of the initial inner-party democratic style. The weakness of lesser mortals, their inability to see the light, the certainty with which he went his own way, and the need to follow a supreme leader who alone could ensure ultimate triumph – these, from the outset, are the dominant themes. The beginning of his claim to leadership can thus be located in the earliest phase of his activity within the party. In turn, this suggests that the self-awareness of political genius was present from the beginning.

Little wonder that, on the basis of this story, the enigma of Hitler is profound. The 'nobody of Vienna', the corporal who is not even promoted to sergeant, now appears with a full-blown political philosophy, a strategy

for success, and a burning will to lead his coming great leader. However puzzling thrust of Hitler's self-depiction has four But, though not inaccurate in all respect and qualification.

III

The break with Karl Harrer soon can indicator of Hitler's relentless striving for. Nor was it simply a matter of whether there was or a type of closed *volkisch* debating organizations at the time faced the same; an appeal to a mass audience with regularity. Harrer tended strongly towards a 'Workers' Circle', which he himself called 'Working Committee', where he was simply found himself increasingly isolated. Dre the party's message to the masses. He later had proposed announcing the party's programme in the Hofbräuhausfestsaal, and that Hitler had prospects of filling the hall.³⁶ As long as Hitler's control of the 'Workers' Circle', the question of strategy would remain unresolved. It was the role of the Committee, which Drexler and they drew up in December, giving it the role of any 'superior or side government, whether draft regulations – bearing Hitler's clear Committee's members and its chairman should. Their unity, it went on, would be ensured by the programme of the party (which Hitler and Drexler devised). The new regulations were plainly directed at the party. Evidently, he had no notion of a stepping-stone on the way to the party. He was ready to accept the corporate leadership. Decisions to stage mass meetings in the name of the Committee as a whole, approved by Hitler's alone, though, once Harrer had d

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s 'a heroic legend in half-naturalistic id-notes wild in Munich beer halls'.³⁴ The beginnings of the Führer figure, four, as it had emerged by the writing 1924. Towering over the weak and certain of himself and of the coming even successful in his methods, his ed to illustrate – was apparent even movement. There could be no doubt isch movement against all pretenders. ses in building up the party's follow- r history in a later passage in *Mein* remarkably vaguely, he described his mid-1921. His terse summary simply him and 'the attempt of a group of party chairman (Drexler), to obtain sed, a general membership meeting the whole movement. His reorganiz- 1921 swept away the old, ineffectual rty matters by committee and internal leadership principle as the organiz- lture supremacy was thereby assured.³⁵ ription in *Mein Kampf*, is the realiz- rial power in the movement – sub- ich could be witnessed in his early his rejection of the initial inner-party ser mortals, their inability to see the his own way, and the need to follow sure ultimate triumph – these, from re beginning of his claim to leadership se of his activity within the party. In ness of political genius was present

f this story, the enigma of Hitler is e corporal who is not even promoted down political philosophy, a strategy

for success, and a burning will to lead his party, and sees himself as Germany's coming great leader. However puzzling and extraordinary, the underlying thrust of Hitler's self-depiction has found a surprising degree of acceptance.³⁶ But, though not inaccurate in all respects, it requires substantial modification and qualification.

III

The break with Karl Harrer soon came. It was not, however, an early indicator of Hitler's relentless striving for dictatorial power in the movement. Nor was it simply a matter of whether the party should be a mass movement or a type of closed *völkisch* debating society.³⁷ A number of *völkisch* organizations at the time faced the same problem, and attempted to combine an appeal to a mass audience with regular meetings of an exclusive 'inner circle'. Harrer tended strongly towards the latter, represented by the 'Workers' Circle', which he himself controlled, in contrast to the party's 'Working Committee', where he was simply an ordinary member. But Harrer found himself increasingly isolated. Drexler was as keen as Hitler to take the party's message to the masses. He later claimed that he, and not Hitler, had proposed announcing the party's programme at a mass meeting in the Hofbräuhausfestsaal, and that Hitler had initially been sceptical about the prospects of filling the hall.³⁸ As long as Harrer directed the party through his control of the 'Workers' Circle', the question of the more viable propaganda strategy would remain unresolved. It was necessary, therefore, to enhance the role of the Committee, which Drexler and Hitler did in draft regulations that they drew up in December, giving it complete authority and ruling out any 'superior or side government, whether as a circle or lodge'.³⁹ The draft regulations – bearing Hitler's clear imprint – determined that the Committee's members and its chairman should be elected in an open meeting. Their unity, it went on, would be ensured through strict adherence to the programme of the party (which Hitler and Drexler were already preparing). The new regulations were plainly directed against Harrer. But they were not devised as a stepping-stone on the way to Hitler's supreme power in the party. Evidently, he had no notion of dictatorial party rule at the time. He was ready to accept the corporate leadership of an elected committee. Decisions to stage mass meetings in the next months were, it seems, those of the Committee as a whole, approved by a majority of its members, not Hitler's alone, though, once Harrer had departed and in view of Hitler's

increasing success in drawing the crowds to listen to his speeches, it is hard to believe that there was any dissension. Harrer alone, it appears, opposed the staging of an ambitious mass meeting in early 1920, and accepted the consequences of his defeat by resigning. Personal animosity also played a role. Harrer, remarkably, thought little of Hitler as a speaker. Hitler was in turn contemptuous of Harrer.⁴⁰

The party's first mass meeting was initially planned to take place in the Bürgerbraukeller (another large beerhall, on Rosenheimerstraße, just over the river Isar about half a mile south-east of the city centre) in January 1920, but had to be postponed because of a general ban on public meetings at the time.⁴¹ It was rescheduled for the Hofbräuhaus on 24 February. The fear that the meeting would be broken up through planned disturbances by political opponents, anxious to disrupt the first big meeting of a party calling itself a 'workers' party', was probably exaggerated at this early stage in the party's development. Large antisemitic meetings were nothing new in Munich at the time. Disturbances had to be reckoned with. A high-point of the antisemitic wave of agitation that had begun in Munich in summer 1919 had already taken place: a huge meeting of the Schutz- und Trutzbund on 7 January 1920, attended by 7,000 people, had provoked scenes of uproar.⁴²

Corporal Hitler, who made a brief contribution to the 'discussion', cannot fail to have been impressed by the resonance of antisemitic agitation – or by the mark on public opinion in Munich made by such a piece of political theatre.⁴³ The main worry of Hitler, as of Drexler, was not that there would be disruption, but that the attendance would be embarrassingly small. This was why, since Drexler recognized that neither he nor Hitler had any public profile, he approached Dr Johannes Dingfelder, not even a party member but well known in Munich *völkisch* circles, to deliver the main speech, on 'What We Are Needing' (*Was uns not tut*). Hitler's name was not even mentioned in any of the publicity. Nor was there any hint that the party's programme would be proclaimed at the meeting.⁴⁴

The twenty-five points of this programme – which would in the course of time be declared 'unalterable' and be in practice largely ignored – had been worked out and drafted over the previous weeks by Drexler and Hitler. Discussion was already under way in mid-November 1919; Drexler had a draft ready a month later, and produced a further draft by 9 February, before the final version was produced in time for the Hofbräuhaus meeting.⁴⁵ The content had much in common with the programme of the DSP.⁴⁶ Its points – among them, demands for a Greater Germany, land and colonies, discrimination against Jews and denial of citizenship to them, breaking

'interest slavery', confiscation of middle class, persecution of proletarians contained little or nothing that was new. Religious neutrality was included church-going population in Bavaria was an unobjectionable banality. in the Reich, and 'the unconditional though clearly implying authoritative indication that Hitler envisaged a personalized regime. There are no nor Bolshevism is mentioned. The over, apart from the brief reference programme cannot fully be clarified from several sources among the party 'slavery' obviously drew on Gottfried a favourite idea of Drexler. The four wordy DSP programme, sounds certainly worked on it.⁵⁰ But probably Certainly, Drexler himself claimed Hitler (though did not send) in January 'following all the basic points already composed with me – and with no Socialism, in long nights in the work

Despite worries about the attendance 2,000 people (perhaps a fifth of the into the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus chairman, opened the meeting.⁵² D Certainly, it was un-Hitler like in style mentioned. He blamed Germany's religion, and the rise of selfish, material 'order, work, and dutiful sacrifice for speech was well received and unlivened when Hitler came to speak. F less academic, than Dingfelder's. T direct, coarse, earthy – that used and – his sentences short and punchy. H the leading Centre Party politician a Erzberger (who had signed the Armistice acceptance of the detested Versailles

to listen to his speeches, it is hard to tell. On the other hand, it appears, opposed in early 1920, and accepted the personal animosity also played a role in Hitler as a speaker. Hitler was

He planned to take place in the Hofbräuhaus, just over the city centre) in January 1920, and a ban on public meetings at the Hofbräuhaus on 24 February. The fear of a possible disturbance by a party calling itself the 'German Workers' Party' was not new in meetings were nothing new in the Hofbräuhaus. A high-point of the party's activity in Munich in summer 1919 was the *Schutz- und Trutzbund* on 24 February, which provoked scenes of uproar.⁴² The party's discussion, cannot be of antisemitic agitation – or made by such a piece of political propaganda. Hitler was not that there would be an embarrassing small. This is the first time Hitler had any public role, not even a party member to deliver the main speech, on 24 February. Hitler's name was not even there any hint that the party's programme.⁴⁴

2 – which would in the course of the party's practice largely ignored – had in the weeks by Drexler and Hitler. In November 1919; Drexler had a further draft by 9 February, for the Hofbräuhaus meeting.⁴⁵ The programme of the DSP.⁴⁶ Its programme for Germany, land and colonies, citizenship to them, breaking

'interest slavery', confiscation of war profits, land reform, protection of the middle class, persecution of profiteers, and tight regulation of the press – contained little or nothing that was original or novel on the *völkisch* Right.⁴⁷ Religious neutrality was included in the attempt to avoid alienating a large church-going population in Bavaria. 'Common good before individual good' was an unobjectionable banality. The demand for 'a strong central power' in the Reich, and 'the unconditional authority' of a 'central parliament', though clearly implying authoritarian, not pluralistic, government, gives no indication that Hitler envisaged himself at this stage as the head of a personalized regime. There are some striking omissions. Neither Marxism nor Bolshevism is mentioned. The entire question of agriculture is passed over, apart from the brief reference to land reform. The authorship of the programme cannot fully be clarified.⁴⁸ Probably, the individual points derived from several sources among the party's leading figures. The attack on 'interest slavery' obviously drew on Gottfried Feder's pet theme. Profit-sharing was a favourite idea of Drexler. The forceful style, in comparison with the more wordy DSP programme, sounds like Hitler's.⁴⁹ As he later asserted, he certainly worked on it.⁵⁰ But probably the main author was Drexler himself. Certainly, Drexler himself claimed this in the private letter he wrote to Hitler (though did not send) in January 1940. In this letter, he stated that 'following all the basic points already written down by me, Adolf Hitler composed *with* me – and with no one else – the 25 theses of National Socialism, in long nights in the workers' canteen at Burghausenerstraße 6'.⁵¹

Despite worries about the attendance at the party's first big meeting, some 2,000 people (perhaps a fifth of them socialist opponents) were crammed into the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus on 24 February when Hitler, as chairman, opened the meeting.⁵² Dingfelder's speech was unremarkable. Certainly, it was un-Hitler like in style and tone. The word 'Jew' was never mentioned. He blamed Germany's fate on the decline of morality and religion, and the rise of selfish, material values. His recipe for recovery was 'order, work, and dutiful sacrifice for the salvation of the Fatherland'. The speech was well received and uninterrupted.⁵³ The atmosphere suddenly livened when Hitler came to speak. His tone was harsher, more aggressive, less academic, than Dingfelder's. The language he used was expressive, direct, coarse, earthy – that used and understood by most of his audience – his sentences short and punchy. He heaped insults on target-figures like the leading Centre Party politician and Reich Finance Minister Matthias Erzberger (who had signed the Armistice in 1918 and strongly advocated acceptance of the detested Versailles Treaty the following summer) or the

Munich capitalist Isidor Bach, sure of the enthusiastic applause of his audience. Verbal assaults on the Jews brought new cheers from the audience, while shrill attacks on profiteers produced cries of 'Flog them! Hang them!' When he came to read out the party programme, there was much applause for the individual points. But there were interruptions, too, from left-wing opponents, who had already been getting restless, and the police reporter of the meeting spoke of scenes of 'great tumult so that I often thought it would come to brawling at any minute'. Hitler announced, to storms of applause, what would remain the party's slogan: 'Our motto is only struggle. We will go our way unshakably to our goal.' The end of Hitler's speech, in which he read out a protest at an alleged decision to provide 40,000 hundredweight of flour for the Jewish community, again erupted into uproar following further opposition heckling, with people standing on tables and chairs yelling at each other. In the subsequent 'discussion', four others spoke briefly, two of them opponents. Remarks from the last speaker that a dictatorship from the Right would be met with a dictatorship from the Left were the signal for a further uproar, such that Hitler's words closing the meeting were drowned. Around 100 Independent Socialists and Communists poured out of the Hofbräuhaus on to the streets cheering for the International and the Räterepublik and booing the war-heroes Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and the German Nationalists.⁵⁴ The meeting had not exactly produced the 'hall full of people united by a new conviction, a new faith, a new will' that Hitler was later to describe.⁵⁵

Nor would anyone reading Munich newspapers in the days following the meeting have gained the impression that it was a landmark heralding the arrival of a new, dynamic party and a new political hero. The press's reaction was muted, to say the least. The newspapers concentrated in their brief reports on Dingfelder's speech and paid little attention to Hitler.⁵⁶ Even the *Völkischer Beobachter*, not yet under party control but sympathetic, was surprisingly low-key. It reported the meeting in a single column in an inside page four days later. Most of the report dealt with Dingfelder's speech. Hitler's contribution was summarized in a single sentence: 'Herr Hitler (DAP) presented some striking political points (*entwickelte einige treffende politische Bilder*) which evoked spirited applause, but also roused the numerous already prejudiced opponents present to contradiction; and he gave a survey of the party's programme, which in its basic features comes close to that of the Deutschsozialistische Partei.'⁵⁷

Despite this initial modest impact, it was already apparent that Hitler meetings meant political fireworks. Even in the hothouse of Munich politics,

the big meetings of the National Socialists as the movement henceforth called wanted above all else to make his point. 'It makes no difference whatever what later wrote, 'whether they represent anything is that they mention us, that and again . . .'⁵⁹ He observed the deadening effect of speeches read to elderly gentlemen. Nazi meetings, he wrote, were not peaceful. He learnt from the orators that they were orchestrated, the value of disruption, and how to deal with aimed to attract confrontation, and posters were drafted in vivid red to pique Hitler personally designed the party circle on a red background devised possible.⁶¹ The result was that meetings and the numbers of opponents present was potentially explosive.⁶² To counter this, the 'Sports Section' (Saalschutz) was fully organized by the 'Storm Section' (Sturmabteilung, or SA).⁶³

Only Hitler could bring in the crowd for his self-centred account in *Mein Kampf*, after feeling provoked into joining it on 12 September 1919 before his first meeting at the Hofbräukeller on 16 October 1919 had been seen, lasted with him. In *Mein Kampf*, the phrase with which he had already Lechfeld Camp: 'What before I had known it, was now proved by my own experience, as the double rendition of it no doubting the self-confidence that it confirmed, for the first time before he spoke could stir his audience.

In the company of an individual, totally off-putting. An acquaintance: activity as a Reichswehr spy, but for the future mission of German artists,

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the big meetings of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP),
 as the movement henceforth called itself, were something different.⁵⁸ Hitler
 wanted above all else to make his party noticed. In this he rapidly succeeded.
 'It makes no difference whatever whether they laugh at us or revile us,' he
 later wrote, 'whether they represent us as clowns or criminals; the main
 thing is that they mention us, that they concern themselves with us again
 and again . . .'⁵⁹ He observed the dull, lifeless meetings of bourgeois parties,
 the deadening effect of speeches read out like academic lectures by dignified,
 elderly gentlemen. Nazi meetings, he recorded with pride, were, by contrast,
 not peaceful. He learnt from the organization of meetings by the Left, how
 they were orchestrated, the value of intimidation of opponents, techniques
 of disruption, and how to deal with disturbances. The NSDAP's meetings
 aimed to attract confrontation, and as a result to make the party noticed.
Posters were drafted in vivid red to provoke the Left to attend.⁶⁰ In mid-1920
Hitler personally designed the party's banner with the swastika in a white
circle on a red background devised to make as striking a visual impact as
possible.⁶¹ The result was that meetings were packed long before the start,
 and the numbers of opponents present guaranteed that the atmosphere
 was potentially explosive.⁶² To combat trouble, a 'hall protection' squad
 (Saalschutz) was fully organized by mid-1920, became the 'Gymnastic and
 Sports Section' in August 1921, and eventually developed into the 'Storm
 Section' (Sturmabteilung, or SA).⁶³

Only Hitler could bring in the crowds for the NSDAP. To this extent,
 his self-centred account in *Mein Kampf* was perfectly correct. It was a month
 after feeling provoked into joining in the discussion at the DAP meeting
 on 12 September 1919 before his first 'performance' as a party speaker in
 the Hofbräukeller on 16 October 1919.⁶⁴ The memory of his success, as we
 have seen, lasted with him. In *Mein Kampf* he used the almost identical
 phrase with which he had already described his 'self-discovery' in the
 Lechfeld Camp: 'What before I had simply felt within me, without in any
 way knowing it, was now proved by reality: I could speak!'⁶⁵ Though plainly
 stylized, as the double rendition of this phrase demonstrates, there can be
 no doubting the self-confidence that flowed through Hitler as a result of the
 confirmation, for the first time before a non-captive audience, that the way
 he spoke could stir his audience.

In the company of an individual, Hitler's egocentric manner could be
 totally off-putting. An acquaintance at the time, contemptuous of Hitler's
 activity as a Reichswehr spy, but forced to suffer an involuntary lecture on
 the future mission of German artists, could eventually stand no more of the

* D.T. I hardly had to teach him -
 He was a brilliant pupil in his sleep
 he kept saying to me: "I know that. I know
 that already."

*a former sergeant acquaintance
(this is not factual?)
but May American?)*

peroration: 'Tell me, have they shit in your brain and forgotten to flush it?' he asked, leaving Hitler speechless.⁶⁶ But in front of a beerhall audience Hitler's style was electrifying.

While in his Nuremberg cell awaiting the hangman, Hans Frank, the ex-Governor General of Poland, recalled the moment, in January 1920, while he was still only nineteen years old (though already committed to the *völkisch* cause), that he had first heard Hitler speak. The large room was bursting at the seams. Middle-class citizens rubbed shoulders with workers, soldiers, and students. Whether old or young, the state of the nation weighed heavily on people. Germany's plight polarized opinions, but left few unmoved or disinterested. Most political meetings were packed. But, to Frank – young, idealistic, fervently anti-Marxist and nationalistic – speakers were generally disappointing, had little to offer. Hitler, in stark contrast, set him alight.

The man with whom Hans Frank's fate would be bound for the next quarter of a century was dressed in a shabby blue suit, his tie loosely fastened. He spoke clearly, in impassioned but not shrill tones, his blue eyes flashing, occasionally pushing back his hair with his right hand. Frank's most immediate feeling was how sincere Hitler was, how the words came from the heart and were not just a rhetorical device. 'He was at that time simply the grandiose popular speaker without precedent – and, for me, incomparable,' wrote Frank.

I was strongly impressed straight away. It was totally different from what was otherwise to be heard in meetings. His method was completely clear and simple. He took the overwhelmingly dominant topic of the day, the Versailles Diktat, and posed the question of all questions: What now German people? What's the true situation? What alone is now possible? He spoke for over two-and-a-half hours, often interrupted by frenetic torrents of applause – and one could have listened to him for much, much longer. Everything came from the heart, and he struck a chord with all of us . . . He uttered what was in the consciousness of all those present and linked general experiences to clear understanding and the common wishes of those who were suffering and hoping for a programme. In the matter itself he was certainly not original . . . but he was the one called to act as spokesman of the people . . . He concealed nothing . . . of the horror, the distress, the despair facing Germany. But not only that. He showed a way, the only way left to all ruined peoples in history, that of the grim new beginning from the most profound depths through courage, faith, readiness for action, hard work, and devotion to a great, shining, common goal . . . He placed before the protection of the Almighty in the most serious and

solemn exhortation the salvation of his life-task . . . When he finished this evening onwards, though not a p could do it, Hitler alone would be c

Whatever the pathos of these cor ability, singling him out from oth speak in the language of his liste and – however strange it might n his idealism.

Rising attendances, as he not weeks, between his first appearan topics, 'Brest-Litovsk and Versai 1919, and the big Hofbräuhaus r a prelude to Hitler's growing suc star speaker. By the end of 1920! – mostly of between 800 and 2, internal party gatherings.⁶⁸ In e biggest meeting so far – over 6,0 accommodate the biggest indoo to the west of the city centre.⁶⁹ I where the propaganda and org satisfactory turn-out, and wher not counting the speeches made October, he held ten speeches Rosenheim where the first local been founded. It was largely ov membership increased sharply f of the year and 3,300 by Aug indispensable to the movement

Hitler spoke from rough notes words underlined.⁷¹ As a rule more.⁷² In the Festsaal of the the long sides of the hall as hi crowd – a novel technique fo

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as his life-task . . . When he finished, the applause would not die down . . . From
this evening onwards, though not a party member, I was convinced that if one man
could do it, Hitler alone would be capable of mastering Germany's fate.⁶⁷

Whatever the pathos of these comments, they testify to Hitler's instinctive
ability, singling him out from other speakers relaying a similar message, to
speak in the language of his listeners, and to stir them through the passion
and – however strange it might now sound to us – the apparent sincerity of
his idealism.

Rising attendances, as he noted in *Mein Kampf*, followed in the next
weeks, between his first appearance as main speaker – on one of his favourite
topics, 'Brest-Litovsk and Versailles?' – in the Eberlbräukeller in November
1919, and the big Hofbräuhaus meeting in February 1920. This was merely
a prelude to Hitler's growing success and mounting reputation as the party's
star speaker. By the end of 1920 he had addressed over thirty mass meetings
– mostly of between 800 and 2,500 persons – and spoken at many smaller
internal party gatherings.⁶⁸ In early February 1921 he would speak at the
biggest meeting so far – over 6,000 people in the Circus Krone, which could
accommodate the biggest indoor crowds in Munich, near the Marsfeld just
to the west of the city centre.⁶⁹ Until mid-1921 he spoke mainly in Munich,
where the propaganda and organization of the meetings would ensure a
satisfactory turn-out, and where the right atmosphere was guaranteed. But,
not counting the speeches made during a fortnight's visit to Austria in early
October, he held ten speeches outside the city in 1920, including one in
Rosenheim where the first local group of the party outside Munich had just
been founded. It was largely owing to Hitler's public profile that the party
membership increased sharply from 190 in January 1920 to 2,000 by the end
of the year and 3,300 by August 1921.⁷⁰ He was rapidly making himself
indispensable to the movement.

IV

Hitler spoke from rough notes – mainly a series of jotted headings with key
words underlined.⁷¹ As a rule, a speech would last around two hours or
more.⁷² In the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus he used a beer table on one of
the long sides of the hall as his platform in order to be in the middle of the
crowd – a novel technique for a speaker which helped create what Hitler

regarded as a special mood in that hall.⁷³ The themes of his speeches varied little: the contrast of Germany's strength in a glorious past with its current weakness and national humiliation – a sick state in the hands of traitors and cowards who had betrayed the Fatherland to its powerful enemies; the reasons for the collapse in a lost war unleashed by these enemies, and behind them, the Jews; betrayal and revolution brought about by criminals and Jews.⁷⁴ English and French intentions of destroying Germany, as shown in the Treaty of Versailles – the 'Peace of shame', the instrument of Germany's slavery; the exploitation of ordinary Germans by Jewish racketeers and profiteers; a cheating and corrupt government and party system presiding over economic misery, social division, political conflict, and ethical collapse; the only way to recovery contained in the points of the party's programme – ruthless showdown with internal enemies and build-up of national consciousness and unity, leading to renewed strength and eventual restored greatness.⁷⁵ The combination of traditional Bavarian dislike of the Prussians and the experience of the Räterepublik in Munich meant that Hitler's repeated onslaught on the 'Marxist' government in Berlin was certain to meet with an enthusiastic response among the still small minority of the local population drawn to his meetings.

While Hitler basically appealed to negative feelings – anger, resentment, hatred – there was also a 'positive' element in the proposed remedy to the proclaimed ills. However platitudinous, the appeal to restoration of liberty through national unity, the need to work together of 'workers of the brain and hand' (*Zusammenarbeiten des Geistes- und Handarbeiters*),⁷⁶ the social harmony of a 'national community', and the protection of the 'little man' through the crushing of his exploiters, were, to go from the applause they invariably produced, undeniably attractive propositions to Hitler's audiences.⁷⁷ And Hitler's own passion and fervour successfully conveyed the message – to those already predisposed to it – that no other way was possible; that Germany's revival would and could be brought about; and that it lay in the power of ordinary Germans to make it happen through their own struggle, sacrifice, and will.⁷⁸ The effect was more that of a religious revivalist meeting than a normal political gathering.⁷⁹

What Hitler was saying had long belonged to the standard repertoire of nationalist and *völkisch* speakers. It was as good as indistinguishable from what the Pan-Germans had been preaching for years. And though Hitler was invariably up-to-date in finding easy targets in the daily politics of the crisis-ridden Republic, his main themes were tediously repetitive. Some, in fact, often taken for granted to be part of Hitler's allegedly unchanging

ideology were missing altogether at a single mention of the need for 'Europe'.⁸⁰ Britain and France were t Indeed, Hitler jotted among the no 1920, 'brotherhood towards the east' he clamour for a dictatorship. Such 1920, on 27 April, in which Hitler dec who is a genius' if it were to rise up ag himself was that person.⁸¹ Surprising on Marxism did not occur before his (though he had spoken on a number of effects of Bolshevism in Russia, for whi ably, even race theory – where Hitler known antisemitic tracts such as tho Adolf Währmünd, and, especially, tl (one of whose emphases was the alle; – was explicitly treated in only one sr

This scarcely meant, however, that On the contrary: the all-devouring ma all else is subordinated – not observabl – courses through almost every Hitle that had befallen or was threatening G In speech after speech he lashed the J language imaginable.

Genuine socialism, declared Hitler, i should be ready to enter into a pact w Jewry.⁸² But, as in his letter to Gemli see emotional antisemitism as the an concentration camps to prevent 'Jewish ing for racketeers,'⁸¹ but ultimately, as Gemlich letter – the 'removal of the Jew: as in his explicit demands with regard from Germany. This was undoubtedly some pre-war antisemites, the language genocidal in its biological similes.⁸⁴ 'Ye parasites (*Trichinen*) and bacilli. Paras They are as quickly and fully as possib not Hitler. It was Paul de Lagarde, lea in semitic languages, in 1887, writing

The themes of his speeches varied in a glorious past with its current dark state in the hands of traitors and to its powerful enemies; the hated by these enemies, and behind brought about by criminals and destroying Germany, as shown in 1918, the instrument of Germany's mans by Jewish racketeers and agent and party system presiding over racial conflict, and ethical collapse; points of the party's programme as build-up of national consciousness and strength and eventual restored Bavarian dislike of the Prussians in Munich meant that Hitler's environment in Berlin was certain to give the still small minority of the

ive feelings – anger, resentment, and in the proposed remedy to the appeal to restoration of liberty together of 'workers of the brain and Handarbeiters'),⁷⁶ the social protection of the 'little man' were, to go from the applause of reactive propositions to Hitler's fervour successfully conveyed to it – that no other way was and could be brought about; and plans to make it happen through The effect was more that of a political gathering.⁷⁹

ed to the standard repertoire of good as indistinguishable from for years. And though Hitler urges in the daily politics of the re tediously repetitive. Some, in f Hitler's allegedly unchanging

ideology were missing altogether at this stage. There was, for example, not a single mention of the need for 'living-space' (*Lebensraum*) in eastern Europe.⁸⁰ Britain and France were the foreign-policy targets at this time. Indeed, Hitler jotted among the notes of one of his speeches, in August 1920, 'brotherhood towards the east' (*Verbrüderung nach Osten*).⁸¹ Nor did he clamour for a dictatorship. Such a demand occurs in only one speech in 1920, on 27 April, in which Hitler declared that Germany needed 'a dictator who is a genius' if it were to rise up again.⁸² There was no implication that he himself was that person.⁸³ Surprisingly, too, his first outright public assault on Marxism did not occur before his speech at Rosenheim on 21 July 1920 (though he had spoken on a number of occasions before this of the catastrophic effects of Bolshevism in Russia, for which he blamed the Jews).⁸⁴ And, remarkably, even race theory – where Hitler drew heavily for his ideas from well-known antisemitic tracts such as those of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Adolf Wahrmond, and, especially, the arch-popularizer Theodor Fritsch (one of whose emphases was the alleged sexual abuse of women by Jews) – was explicitly treated in only one speech by Hitler during 1920.⁸⁵

This scarcely meant, however, that Hitler neglected to attack the Jews. On the contrary: the all-devouring manic obsession with the Jews to which all else is subordinated – not observable before 1919, never absent thereafter – courses through almost every Hitler speech at this time. Behind all evil that had befallen or was threatening Germany stood the figure of the Jew.⁸⁶ In speech after speech he lashed the Jews in the most vicious and barbaric language imaginable.

Genuine socialism, declared Hitler, meant to be an antisemite.⁸⁷ Germans should be ready to enter into a pact with the devil to eradicate the evil of Jewry.⁸⁸ But, as in his letter to Gemlich the previous autumn, he did not see emotional antisemitism as the answer.⁸⁹ He demanded internment in concentration camps to prevent 'Jewish undermining of our people',⁹⁰ hanging for racketeers,⁹¹ but ultimately, as the only solution – similar to the Gemlich letter – the 'removal of the Jews from our people'.⁹² The implication, as in his explicit demands with regard to *Ostjuden*,⁹³ was their expulsion from Germany. This was undoubtedly how it was understood. But, as with some pre-war antisemites, the language itself was both terrible and implicitly genocidal in its biological similes.⁹⁴ 'You don't talk about what to do with parasites (*Trichinen*) and bacilli. Parasites and bacilli are also not reared. They are as quickly and fully as possible destroyed (*vernichtet*).' This was not Hitler. It was Paul de Lagarde, leading oriental scholar and specialist in semitic languages, in 1887, writing of how, in his view, Jews should

be treated.⁹⁵ The atmosphere had become immeasurably more menacing towards the Jews when Hitler deployed similar terminology over thirty years later. 'Don't think that you can combat racial tuberculosis,' he declared in August 1920, 'without seeing to it that the people is freed from the causative organ of racial tuberculosis. The impact of Jewry will never pass away, and the poisoning of the people will not end, as long as the causal agent, the Jew, is not removed from our midst.'⁹⁶

His audiences loved it. More than anything else, these attacks evoked torrents of applause and cheering.⁹⁷ His technique – beginning slowly, plenty of sarcasm, personalized attacks on named targets, then a gradual crescendo to a climax – whipped his audiences into a frenzy.⁹⁸ His speech in the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus on 13 August 1920 on 'Why Are We Antisemites?' – his only speech that year *solely* relating to the Jews and probably intended as a basic statement on the topic – was interrupted fifty-eight times during its two hours' duration by ever wilder cheering from the 2,000 strong audience.⁹⁹ To go from a report on another Hitler speech a few weeks later, the audience would have been mainly drawn from white-collar workers, the lower-middle class, and better-off workers, with around a quarter women.¹⁰⁰

At first, Hitler's antisemitic tirades were invariably linked to anti-capitalism and attacks on 'Jewish' war profiteers and racketeers, whom he blamed for exploiting the German people and causing the loss of the war and the German war dead. He later claimed, in a horrific passage of *Mein Kampf*, that a million German lives lost at the front would have been saved if 'twelve to fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas'.¹⁰¹ The influence of Gottfried Feder can be seen in the distinction Hitler drew between essentially healthy 'industrial capital' and the real evil of 'Jewish finance capital'.¹⁰²

There was no link with Marxism or Bolshevism at this stage. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, Hitler's antisemitism was not prompted by his anti-Bolshevism; it long predated it.¹⁰³ There was no mention of Bolshevism in the Gemlich letter of September 1919, where the 'Jewish Question' is related to the rapacious nature of finance capital.¹⁰⁴ Hitler spoke in April and again in June 1920 of Russia being destroyed by the Jews, but it was only in his Rosenheim speech on 21 July that he explicitly married the images of Marxism, Bolshevism, and the Soviet system in Russia to the brutality of Jewish rule, for which he saw Social Democracy preparing the ground in Germany.¹⁰⁵ Hitler admitted in August 1920 that he knew little of the real situation in Russia.¹⁰⁶ But – perhaps influenced above all by Alfred Rosenberg,

who came from the Baltic and hand,¹⁰⁷ but probably also so a civil war which were filtering became preoccupied with Bols. The dissemination of the *Proto* Jewish world domination, with the time – probably also helped images appear to have provided anti-Marxism in his 'world-vic disappeared.

Hitler's speeches put him on the very much a local taste. And was still insignificant compared parties. Moreover, though it is the tool of powerful vested interest backers and the 'connections' they would not have got him very far.

Though Hitler had already since a political speaker, he was, in fact from the army. His first patron interest in him and, if his later funding towards the staging of was still serving both the party and Mayr had 'Herr Hitler' lecturing their Significance' in the comparison Alexander von Müller and Paul taking 'citizenship education course when a short-lived armed coup had forcing it to flee from the Reich to Berlin to instruct Wolfgang arrived too late. The Right's first collapsed. But Mayr was under Kapp and his interest in Hitler. months later, that the NSDAP – would become the 'organization

of a future, more successful, putsch.¹¹³ He wrote to Kapp, now exiled in Sweden:

The national workers' party must provide the basis for the strong assault-force (*Stoßtrupp*) that we are hoping for. The programme is still somewhat clumsy and also perhaps incomplete. We'll have to supplement it. Only one thing is certain: that under this banner we've already won a good number of supporters. Since July of last year I've been looking . . . to strengthen the movement . . . I've set up very capable young people. A Herr Hitler, for example, has become a motive force, a popular speaker (*Volksredner*) of the first rank. In the Munich branch we have over 2,000 members, compared with under 100 in summer 1919.¹¹⁴

Early in 1920, before Hitler had left the Reichswehr, Mayr had taken him along to meetings of the 'Iron Fist' club for radical nationalist officers, founded by Captain Ernst Röhm. Hitler had been introduced to Röhm by Mayr, probably the previous autumn.¹¹⁵ Interested in a variety of nationalist parties, particularly with a view to winning the workers to the nationalist cause, Röhm had attended the first meeting of the DAP addressed by Hitler on 16 October 1919 and had joined the party shortly afterwards. Now Hitler came into far closer contact with Röhm, who rapidly came to replace Mayr as the key link with the Reichswehr. Röhm had been responsible for arming the volunteers and 'civil defence' (*Einwohnerwehr*) units in Bavaria and had in the meantime become an important player in paramilitary politics, with excellent connections in the army, the 'patriotic associations', and throughout the *völkisch* Right. He was, in fact, at this time, along with his fellow officers on the Right, far more interested in the massive *Einwohnerwehren*, with a membership of over quarter of a million men, than he was in the tiny NSDAP. Even so, he provided the key contact between the NSDAP and the far larger 'patriotic associations' and offered avenues to funding which the constantly hard-up party desperately needed.¹¹⁶ His connections proved invaluable – increasingly so from 1921 onwards, when his interest in Hitler's party grew.

Another important patron at this time was the *völkisch* poet and publicist Dietrich Eckart.¹¹⁷ More than twenty years older than Hitler, Eckart, who had initially made his name with a translation of *Peer Gynt*, had not been notably successful before the war as a poet and critic. Possibly this stimulated his intense antisemitism. He became politically active in December 1918 with the publication of his antisemitic weekly *Auf gut deutsch* (*In Plain German*), which also featured contributions from Gottfried Feder and the young emigré from the Baltic, Alfred Rosenberg. He spoke at DAP meetings

in the summer of 1919, before the party's new recruit as his the attention paid to him by circles. In the early years, rela But for Hitler, as ever, it was self-importance grew, his need Eckart's death, the two had b

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The party leadership had l *bachter* since the summer to j But it was only in mid-Decem emerged, that Hitler moved. } party-chairman Oskar Körner flat at two o'clock in the morn was 'in danger', that it was a Drexler's mother was wakene table it was decided that Drex Eckart to persuade him to er financial backing to acquire tl out Dr Grandel in Augsburg irritable Eckart out of bed, d

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in the summer of 1919, before Hitler joined,¹¹⁸ and evidently came to regard the party's new recruit as his own protégé. Hitler himself was flattered by the attention paid to him by a figure of Eckart's reputation in *völkisch* circles. In the early years, relations between the two were good, even close. But for Hitler, as ever, it was Eckart's usefulness that counted. As Hitler's self-importance grew, his need for Eckart declined and by 1923, the year of Eckart's death, the two had become estranged.¹¹⁹

At first, however, there could be no doubt of Eckart's value to Hitler and the NSDAP. Through his well-heeled connections, Eckart afforded the beerhall demagogue an entrée into Munich 'society', opening for him the door to the salons of wealthy and influential members of the city's bourgeoisie. And through his financial support, and that of his contacts, he was able to offer vital assistance to the financially struggling small party. Since membership fees did not remotely cover outgoings, the party was dependent upon help from outside. It came in part from the owners of Munich firms and businesses, including the publisher Lehmann. Some aid continued to come from the Reichswehr. Mayr's office paid for the 3,000 brochures, attacking the detested Versailles Treaty (seen not just on the extreme Right as crippling punitive and humiliating for Germany), which Lehmann had published for the party in June 1920.¹²⁰ But Eckart's role was crucial. He arranged, for example, the funding from his friend, the Augsburg chemist and factory-owner Dr Gottfried Grandel, who also backed the periodical *Auf gut deutsch*, for the plane that took him and Hitler to Berlin at the time of the Kapp Putsch. Grandel later served as a guarantor for the funds used to purchase the *Völkischer Beobachter* and turn it into the party's own newspaper in December 1920.¹²¹

The party leadership had been looking to buy the near-bankrupt *Beobachter* since the summer to provide the wider publicity that was needed. But it was only in mid-December, when rival bidders for the newspaper emerged, that Hitler moved. Together with Hermann Esser and the deputy party-chairman Oskar Körner, he turned up in an agitated state at Drexler's flat at two o'clock in the morning on 17 December claiming the *Beobachter* was 'in danger', that it was about to fall into Bavarian separatists' hands. Drexler's mother was wakened up to make coffee, and around the kitchen table it was decided that Drexler would first thing the next morning call on Eckart to persuade him to encourage his wealthy contacts to provide the financial backing to acquire the newspaper. Hitler, meanwhile, would seek out Dr Grandel in Augsburg. Six hours later, Drexler was drumming an irritable Eckart out of bed, disgruntled at being awakened so early. They

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were soon on their way to see General von Epp. Eckart convinced the latter how vital it was to gain possession of the *Beobachter* and stood guarantor with his house and property for the 60,000 Marks which Epp provided from the funds of the Reichswehr. Other sources yielded a further 30,000 Marks, and Drexler himself, earning 35 Marks a week, took over the remaining debts of 113,000 Marks before, that afternoon, becoming the legal owner of the *Volksischer Beobachter*.¹²² Thanks to Eckart, the Reichswehr, and in no small measure to Drexler himself, Hitler now had his newspaper. His thanks to Eckart were suitably fulsome.¹²³

VI

To the Munich public, by 1921, Hitler was the NSDAP. He was its voice, its representative figure, its embodiment. Asked to name the party's chairman, perhaps even politically informed citizens might have guessed wrongly. But Hitler did not want the chairmanship. Drexler offered it him on a number of occasions. But Hitler refused.¹²⁴ Drexler wrote to Feder in spring 1921, stating 'that each revolutionary movement must have a dictatorial head, and therefore I also think our Hitler is the most suitable for our movement, without wanting to be pushed into the background myself'.¹²⁵ But for Hitler, the party chairmanship meant organizational responsibility. He had – this was to remain the case during the rise to power, and when he headed the German state – neither aptitude nor ability for organizational matters. Organization he could leave to others; propaganda – mobilization of the masses – was what he was good at, and what he wanted to do. For that, and that alone, he would take responsibility. Propaganda, for Hitler, was the highest form of political activity. He had learnt at first from the Social Democrats as well as from the antisemites of the Schutz- und Trutzbund. He probably also learnt from Gustave Le Bon's tract on crowd psychology – though most likely at second hand.¹²⁶ But most of all he learnt from his own experience of the power of the spoken word, given the right political climate, the right crisis atmosphere, and a public ready to trust in political faith more than reasoned argument. In Hitler's own conception, propaganda was the key to the nationalization of the masses, without which there could be no national salvation. It was not that propaganda and ideology (*Weltanschauung*) were distinctive entities for him. They were inseparable, and reinforced each other. An idea for Hitler was useless unless it mobilized. The self-confidence he gained from the rapturous reception of his speeches

assured him that his diagnosis of redemption was right – the on self-conviction that conveyed it well as those listening to his sj 'drummer' of the national cause was why, before the middle of and not to be bogged down in tl with the chairmanship of the p:

The outrage felt throughout C million Gold Marks to be paid i ence at the end of January 25 agitation.¹²⁸ This was the bac NSDAP had until then staged, risked going ahead with the me the usual advance publicity. In two lorries hired to drive round another technique borrowed fr Nazis had used it. Despite worri be half-empty and the meeting than 6,000 turned up to hear Hit oder Untergang), denounce the ' reparations, and castigate the v them.¹³⁰ 'The known leader of th days later when, as third speak the 'patriotic associations' in C 'party-political tendencies'.¹³¹

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assured him that his diagnosis of Germany's ills and the way to national redemption was right – the only one possible. This in turn gave him the self-conviction that conveyed itself to those in his immediate entourage as well as those listening to his speeches in the beerhalls. To see himself as 'drummer' of the national cause was, therefore, for Hitler a high calling. It was why, before the middle of 1921, he preferred to be free for this role, and not to be bogged down in the organizational work which he associated with the chairmanship of the party.¹²⁷

The outrage felt throughout Germany at the punitive sum of 226 thousand million Gold Marks to be paid in reparations, imposed by the Paris Conference at the end of January 1921, ensured there would be no let-up in agitation.¹²⁸ This was the background for the biggest meeting that the NSDAP had until then staged, on 3 February in the Circus Krone. Hitler risked going ahead with the meeting at only one day's notice, and without the usual advance publicity. In a rush, the huge hall was booked and two lorries hired to drive round the city throwing out leaflets.¹²⁹ This was another technique borrowed from the 'Marxists', and the first time the Nazis had used it. Despite worries until the last minute that the hall would be half-empty and the meeting would prove a propaganda débâcle, more than 6,000 turned up to hear Hitler, speaking on 'Future or Ruin' (*Zukunft oder Untergang*), denounce the 'slavery' imposed on Germans by the Allied reparations, and castigate the weakness of the government for accepting them.¹³⁰ 'The known leader of the antisemites, Hitler' had less success three days later when, as third speaker at a mass rally of 20,000 members of the 'patriotic associations' in Odeonsplatz, he made no impact with his 'party-political tendencies'.¹³¹

Hitler wrote that after the Circus Krone success he increased the NSDAP's propaganda activity in Munich still further.¹³² And indeed the propaganda output was impressive. Hitler spoke at twenty-eight major meetings in Munich and twelve elsewhere (nearly all still in Bavaria), apart from several contributions to 'discussions', and seven addresses to the newly-formed SA in the latter part of the year. Between January and June 1921 he also wrote thirty-nine articles for the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and from September onwards contributed a number of pieces to the party's internal information leaflets (*Mitteilungsblätter*).¹³³ Of course, he had the time in which to devote himself solely to propaganda. Unlike the other members of the party leadership, he had no other occupation or interest.

Politics consumed practically his entire existence. When he was not giving speeches, or preparing them, he spent time reading. As always, much of this

was the newspapers – giving him regular ammunition for his scourge of Weimar politicians. He had books – a lot of them popular editions – on history, geography, Germanic myths, and, especially, war (including Clausewitz) on the shelves of his shabby, sparsely furnished room at 41 Thierschstraße, down by the Isar.¹³⁴ But what, exactly, he read is impossible to know. His lifestyle scarcely lent itself to lengthy periods of systematic reading. He claimed, however, to have read up on his hero Frederick the Great, and pounced on the work of his rival in the *völkisch* camp, Otto Dickel, a 320-page treatise on *Die Auferstehung des Abendlandes* (*The Resurrection of the Western World*), a mystical tract attempting to turn Spengler's pessimism on its head, immediately on its appearance in 1921 in order to be able to castigate it.¹³⁵

Otherwise, as it had been since the Vienna days, much of his time was spent lounging around cafés in Munich. According to his photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, he specially liked the *Café Heck* in *Galeriestraße*, his favourite. In a quiet corner of the long, narrow room of this coffee-house, frequented by Munich's solid middle class, he could sit at his reserved table, his back to the wall, holding court among the new-found cronies that he had attracted to the NSDAP.¹³⁶ Among those coming to form an inner circle of Hitler's associates were the young student Rudolf Heß, the Baltic-Germans Alfred Rosenberg (who had worked on Eckart's periodical since 1919) and Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter (an engineer with excellent contacts to wealthy Russian emigrés).¹³⁷ Certainly by the time Putzi Hanfstaengl, the cultured half-American who became his Foreign Press Chief, came to know him, late in 1922, Hitler had a table booked every Monday evening at the old-fashioned *Café Neumaier* on the edge of the *Viktualienmarkt*.¹³⁸ His regular accompaniment formed a motley crew – mostly lower-middle class, some unsavoury characters among them. Christian Weber, former pub bouncer and horse-dealer, who, like Hitler, invariably carried a dog-whip and relished the brawls with Communists, was one. Another was Hermann Esser, formerly Mayr's press agent, himself an excellent agitator, and an even better gutter journalist. Max Amann, another roughneck, Hitler's former sergeant who became overlord of the Nazi press empire, was also usually there, as were Ulrich Graf, Hitler's personal bodyguard, and, frequently, the 'philosophers' of the party, Gottfried Feder and Dietrich Eckart. In the long room, with its rows of benches and tables, often occupied by elderly couples, Hitler's entourage would discuss politics, or listen to his monologues on art and architecture, while eating the snacks they had brought with them and drinking their litres of beer or cups of coffee.¹³⁹ At the end

of the evening, Weber, Amann of the Ehrhardt-Brigade who had as a bodyguard, escorting Hitler by that 'gave him the appearance in Thierschstraße.¹⁴⁰

Hitler scarcely cut the figure of the Bavarian establishment regular could not ignore him. The old government at the time, Minis had assumed office on 16 March to turn Bavaria into a 'cell of thought Hitler was a propagandist unjustifiable assessment at the 'forces' in Bavaria in protest at Wirth. And he felt certain that control the 'impetuous Austrian from the NSDAP, led by Hitler. It was the first meeting of the new Weimar democracy was putsch of November 1923 – a Kahr's murder in the 'Night of Whatever Kahr's disdain for Hitler amounted to recognition that the proof that he and his movement

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of the evening, Weber, Amann, Graf, and Lieutenant Klintzsch, a veteran of the Ehrhardt-Brigade who had taken part in the Kapp Putsch, would act as a bodyguard, escorting Hitler – wearing the long black overcoat and trilby that 'gave him the appearance of a conspirator' – back to his apartment in Thierschstraße.¹⁴⁰

Hitler scarcely cut the figure of a mainstream politician. Not surprisingly, the Bavarian establishment regarded him largely with contempt. But they could not ignore him. The old-fashioned monarchist head of the Bavarian government at the time, Minister President Gustav Ritter von Kahr, who had assumed office on 16 March 1920 following the Kapp Putsch and aimed to turn Bavaria into a 'cell of order' representing true national values, thought Hitler was a propagandist and nothing more. This was a not unjustifiable assessment at the time. But Kahr was keen to gather 'national forces' in Bavaria in protest at the 'fulfilment policy' of Reich Chancellor Wirth. And he felt certain that he could make use of Hitler, that he could control the 'impetuous Austrian'.¹⁴¹ On 14 May 1921 he invited a delegation from the NSDAP, led by Hitler, to discuss the political situation with him. It was the first meeting of the two men whose identical aim of destroying the new Weimar democracy was to link them, if fleetingly, in the ill-fated putsch of November 1923 – a chequered association that would end with Kahr's murder in the 'Night of the Long Knives' at the end of June 1934. Whatever Kahr's disdain for Hitler, his invitation to a meeting in May 1921 amounted to recognition that the latter was now a factor in Bavarian politics, proof that he and his movement had to be taken seriously.

Rudolf Heß, still studying at Munich under the geopolitician Professor Karl Haushofer, introverted and idealistic, and already besotted with Hitler, was part of the delegation. Three days later, unsolicited and unprompted by Hitler, he wrote a lengthy letter to Kahr, describing Hitler's early life and eulogizing about his political aims, ideals, and skills. Hitler, he wrote, was 'an unusually decent, sincere character, full of kind-heartedness, religious, a good Catholic', with only one aim: 'the welfare of his country'. Heß went on to laud Hitler's self-sacrifice in this cause, how he received not a penny from the movement itself but made his living purely from the fees he received for other speeches he occasionally made.¹⁴²

This was the official line that Hitler himself had put out the previous September in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. It was quite disingenuous. On no more than a handful of occasions did he speak at nationalist meetings other than those of the NSDAP.¹⁴³ The fees from these alone would certainly not have been enough to keep body and soul together. Rumours about his

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income and lifestyle were avidly taken up on the Left. Even on the *völkisch* Right there were remarks about him being chauffeured around Munich in a big car, and his enemies in the party raised questions about his personal financial irregularities and the amount of time the 'king of Munich' spent in an expensive lifestyle cavorting with women – even women smoking cigarettes.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Hitler was distinctly touchy about his financial affairs. He repeated in court in December 1921 in a libel case against the socialist *Münchener Post* that he had sought no fees from the party for sixty-five speeches delivered in Munich.¹⁴⁵ But he accepted that he was 'supported in a modest way' by party members and 'occasionally' provided with meals by them.¹⁴⁶ One of those who looked after him was the first 'Hitler-Mutti', Frau Carola Hofmann, the elderly widow of a headmaster, who plied Hitler with endless supplies of cakes and turned her house at Solln on the outskirts of Munich for a while into a sort of unofficial party headquarters.¹⁴⁷ A little later the Reichsbahn official Theodor Lauböck – founder of the Rosenheim branch of the NSDAP, but subsequently transferred to Munich – and his wife saw to Hitler's well-being, and could also be called upon to put up important guests of the party.¹⁴⁸ In reality, the miserable accommodation Hitler rented in Thierschstraße, and the shabby clothes he wore, belied the fact that even at this date he was not short of well-to-do party supporters. With the growth of the party and his own expanding reputation in 1922–3, he was able to gain new and wealthy patrons in Munich high society.

VII

The party was, however, perpetually short of money. It was on a fund-raising mission in June 1921 to Berlin by Hitler, to try (in the company of the man with the contacts, Dietrich Eckart) to find backing for the ailing *Völkischer Beobachter*, that the crisis which culminated in Hitler's takeover of the party leadership unfolded.¹⁴⁹

The background was shaped by moves to merge the NSDAP with the DSP. To go from the party programmes, despite some differences of accent, the two *völkisch* parties had more in common than separated them. And the DSP had a following in north Germany, which the Nazi Party, still scarcely more than a small local party, lacked. In itself, therefore, there was certainly an argument for joining forces. Talks about a possible merger had begun the previous August in a gathering in Salzburg, attended by Hitler,

of national socialist parties from Poland.¹⁵⁰ A number of overtun then and April 1921. At a meeting Drexler – presumably delegated Hitler's disapproval – even agr – anathema to Hitler – a move responded with fury to Drexler' party, and succeeded 'amid unb reached at Zeitz.¹⁵² Eventually, a great rancour and with Hitler in collapsed. The DSP was in no big shot', whose successes had the NSDAP's obstructionism. political programme to be imp mobilization, had set his face r merger. To Hitler, the similaritie to the way the DSP had rushed foundations, so that the party readiness to resort to parliame different one. Any merger was b but tightly-knit NSDAP. That is a further pointer probably to insecurity.

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of national socialist parties from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.¹⁵⁰ A number of overtures followed from the DSP leaders between then and April 1921. At a meeting in Zeitz in Thuringia at the end of March, Drexler – presumably delegated by the NSDAP, but plainly in the teeth of Hitler's disapproval – even agreed to tentative proposals for a merger and – anathema to Hitler – a move of the party headquarters to Berlin.¹⁵¹ Hitler responded with fury to Drexler's concessions, threatened to resign from the party, and succeeded 'amid unbelievable anger' in reversing the agreement reached at Zeitz.¹⁵² Eventually, at a meeting in Munich in mid-April, amidst great rancour and with Hitler in a towering rage, negotiations with the DSP collapsed. The DSP was in no doubt that Hitler, the 'fanatical would-be big shot', whose successes had gone to his head, was solely responsible for the NSDAP's obstructionism. Hitler, dismissive of notions of a specific political programme to be implemented, interested only in agitation and mobilization, had set his face rigidly from the outset against any possible merger. To Hitler, the similarities in programme were irrelevant. He objected to the way the DSP had rushed to set up numerous branches without solid foundations, so that the party was 'everywhere and nowhere', and to its readiness to resort to parliamentary tactics.¹⁵³ But the real reason was a different one. Any merger was bound to threaten his supremacy in the small but tightly-knit NSDAP. That he was so fearful of losing his dominance is a further pointer probably to Hitler's personal as well as to his political insecurity.

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Of importance for the crisis in the party that was to erupt three months later was the fact that, although he had succeeded in torpedoing the merger, Hitler had encountered significant opposition from within his own movement on the part of those who were by no means convinced that a strategy based on no more than a constant barrage of agitation would ultimately prove successful. It was not simply, as has often been claimed, a matter of the old party leadership against the Hitler clique, thrusting for power. There were genuine differences about political strategy. Four or five members of the committee were sceptical about Hitler's approach, and favoured more traditional *völkisch* methods. Gottfried Feder, no less, complained bitterly to Drexler about Hitler's crude style of propaganda and criticized the chairman's conciliatory attitude towards him. But Drexler replied by defending both Hitler and his approach.¹⁵⁴ Personal factors also played a part. Hitler knew he was the only star the party had, and was not reticent in exploiting the power this gave him. But, as the July crisis was to show, there were those on the party's committee who bitterly resented his special



July 1926: Hitler, standing in a car in
 front of the SA, whose banner carries
 'Tod dem Marxismus'. To Hitler's right is Wilhelm Frick
 holding the camera, Julius Streicher,
 August 1927: left to right, Julius Streicher,
 Rudolf Heß, Adolf Hitler, Ulrich Graf

Hitler, meanwhile, was still in Berlin. He failed to turn up at a meeting with a DSP representative on 1 July for further merger talks, and did not return to Bavaria until ten days later. He had evidently by then got wind of the alarming news that a delegation of the NSDAP's leaders was due to have talks there with Dickel and representatives of the Augsburg and Nuremberg branches of the Deutsche Werkgemeinschaft. He appeared before the NSDAP delegates themselves arrived, beside himself with rage, threatening the Augsburg and Nuremberg representatives that he would see that a merger was stopped. But when his own people eventually turned up, his uncontrolled fury subsided into sulky silence. Three hours of suggestions from Dickel for the formation of a loose confederation of the different groups and recommendations for improvements to the NSDAP's programme prompted numerous outbursts from Hitler before, being able to stand it no longer, he stormed out of the meeting.¹⁵⁸

If Hitler hoped his tantrums would convince his colleagues to drop the negotiations, he was mistaken. They were embarrassed by his behaviour and impressed by what Dickel had to offer. Even Dietrich Eckart thought Hitler had behaved badly. It was accepted that the party programme needed amending, and that Hitler 'as a simple man', was not up to doing this. They agreed to take back Dickel's proposals to Munich and put them to the full party committee.¹⁵⁹

Hitler resigned from the party in anger and disgust on 11 July. In a letter to the committee three days later, he justified his move on the grounds that the representatives in Augsburg had violated the party statutes and acted against the wishes of the members in handing over the movement to a man whose ideas were incompatible with those of the NSDAP. 'I will and can not be any longer a member of such a movement,' he declared.¹⁶⁰ Hitler had resigned 'for ever' from the party's committee in December 1920.¹⁶¹ As we have noted, he threatened resignation yet again following the Zeitz conference in late March 1921. The histrionics of the prima donna were part and parcel of Hitler's make-up – and would remain so. It would always be the same: he only knew all-or-nothing arguments; there was nothing in between, no possibility of reaching a compromise. Always from a maximalist position, with no other way out, he would go for broke. And if he could not get his way he would throw a temper-tantrum and threaten to quit. In power, in years to come, he would sometimes deliberately orchestrate an outburst of rage as a bullying tactic. But usually his tantrums were a sign of frustration, even desperation, not strength. It was to be the case in a number of future crises. And it was so on this occasion. The resignation

* D.T. Without me, he was absolutely
 dependable as a spoiled child

was not a carefully planned manoeuvre to use his position as the party's star performer to blackmail the committee into submission. It was an expression of fury and frustration at not getting his own way. His threat of resignation had worked before, after the Zeitz conference. Now he was risking his only trump card again. Defeat would have meant the party's amalgamation in Dickel's planned 'Western League' (Abendländischer Bund) and left Hitler with only the option – which he seems to have contemplated – of setting up a new party and beginning again.¹⁶² There were those who would have been glad, whatever his uses as an agitator, to have been rid of such a troublesome and egocentric entity. And the spread of the party that the merger with Dickel's organization presented offered more than a little compensation.

But the loss of its sole star performer would have been a major, perhaps fatal, blow to the NSDAP. His departure would have split the party. In the end, this was the decisive consideration. Dietrich Eckart was asked to intervene, and on 13 May Drexler sought the conditions under which Hitler would agree to rejoin the party. It was full capitulation from the party leadership. Hitler's conditions all stemmed from the recent turmoil in the party. His key demands – to be accepted by an extraordinary members' meeting – were 'the post of chairman with dictatorial power'; the party headquarters to be fixed once and for all as Munich; the party programme to be regarded as inviolate; and the end of all merger attempts.¹⁶³ All the demands centred upon securing Hitler's position in the party against any future challenges. A day later the party committee expressed its readiness in recognition of his 'immense knowledge', his services for the movement, and his 'unusual talent as a speaker' to give him 'dictatorial powers'. It welcomed his willingness, having turned down Drexler's offers in the past, now to take over the party chairmanship. Hitler rejoined the party, as member no. 3680, on 26 July.¹⁶⁴

Even now the conflict was not fully at an end. While Hitler and Drexler publicly demonstrated their unity at a members' meeting on 26 July,¹⁶⁵ Hitler's opponents in the leadership had his henchman Hermann Esser expelled from the party and prepared placards denouncing Hitler, and had printed 3,000 copies of an anonymous pamphlet attacking him in the most denigratory terms as the agent of sinister forces intent on damaging the party.¹⁶⁶ But Hitler, who had shown once more to great effect how irreplaceable he was as a speaker in a meeting, packed to the last seat, in Circus Krone on 20 July, was now in the driving seat.¹⁶⁷ Now there was no hesitancy. This was Hitler triumphant. To tumultuous applause from the 554 paid-up

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members attending the extraordinary members' meeting in the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus on 29 July, he defended himself and Esser and rounded on his opponents. He boasted that he had never sought party office, and had turned down the chairmanship on several occasions. But this time he was prepared to accept. The new party constitution, which Hitler had been forced to draft hurriedly, confirmed on three separate occasions the sole responsibility of the First Chairman for the party's actions (subject only to the membership meeting). There was only one vote against accepting the new dictatorial powers over the party granted to Hitler. His chairmanship was unanimously accepted.¹⁶⁸

The reform of the party statutes was necessary, stated the *Völkischer Beobachter*, in order to prevent any future attempt to dissipate the energies of the party through majority decisions.¹⁶⁹ It was the first step on transforming the NSDAP into a new-style party, a 'Führer party'. The move had come about not through careful planning, but through Hitler's reaction to events which were running out of his control. Rudolf Heß's subsequent assault on Hitler's opponents in the *Völkischer Beobachter* contained the early seeds of the later heroization of Hitler, but also revealed the initial base on which it rested. 'Are you truly blind,' wrote Heß, 'to the fact that this man is the leader personality who alone is able to carry through the struggle? Do you think that without him the masses would pile into the Circus Krone?'¹⁷⁰

When Hitler assumed the leadership of his party in July 1921, he was still no more than a beerhall agitator – a local celebrity, to be sure, but otherwise scarcely known. The takeover of the party leadership itself followed internal squabbles – of little moment to the outside world – within the intrinsically fractious *völkisch* movement. The NSDAP certainly made a great deal of noise, and had made its presence felt on the Munich political scene. But it was hardly yet a significant force. Without the extraordinary conditions in Bavaria – the self-proclaimed ‘cell of order’ – and without the backcloth nationwide of political instability, economic crisis, and social polarization, everything suggests it would have remained insignificant. As it was, while *völkisch* parties struggled to make much of a mark in most German states, including Prussia – by far the largest state – the NSDAP could become by 1923 a key player in the upsurge of nationalist opposition in Bavaria to Weimar democracy. And from a local beerhall agitator, the party’s leader emerged between 1921 and 1923 as the ‘drummer’ of the nationalist Right. That would be his role down to the ill-fated attempt in November 1923 to take over the state by force – the notorious ‘Beerhall Putsch’. Only in the light of those dramatic events and their aftermath would a crucial transformation in his self-image be sealed.

Hitler was content in the early 1920s to be the ‘drummer’ – whipping up the masses for the ‘national movement’. He saw himself at this time not, as portrayed in *Mein Kampf*, as Germany’s future leader in waiting, the political messiah whose turn would arise once the nation recognized his unique greatness. Rather, he was paving the way for the great leader whose day might not dawn for many years to come. ‘I am nothing more than a drummer and rallier (*Frommler und Sammler*),’ he told Arthur Moeller van den Bruck in 1922.¹ Some months earlier, he had reputedly stated in an interview in May 1921 with the chief editor of the Pan-German newspaper *Deutsche*

he lived in expectation of final triumph
— he would be the dictator and in 1923 not
of how little he felt ready for it when he could speak

* D.T.

* D.T. This was the proper public attitude for him to take and he even believed it some of the time but at his core — where he spoke —

Zeitung that he was not the leader and statesman who would 'save the Fatherland that was sinking into chaos', but only 'the agitator who understood how to rally (*sammeln*) the masses'. Nor, he allegedly went on, was he 'the architect who clearly pictured in his own eyes the plan and design of the new building and with calm sureness and creativity was able to lay one stone on the other. He needed the greater one behind him, on whose command he could lean.'²

To be the 'drummer' meant everything to Hitler at this time. It was the 'vocation' that replaced his dreams of becoming a great artist or architect. It was his main task, practically his sole concern. Not only did it allow full expression to his one real talent. It was also in his eyes the greatest and most important role he could play. For politics to Hitler – and so it would in all essence remain – was propaganda: ceaseless mass mobilization for a cause to be followed blindly, not the 'art of the possible'.

The art of the impossible

I

Hitler owed his rise to at least regional prominence on the nationalist Right in Bavaria not simply to his unparalleled ability as a mob-orator at mass meetings in Munich. As before, this was his chief asset. But linked to this, and of crucial importance, was the fact that he was the head of a movement which, in contrast to the earliest phase of the party's existence, now came to develop its own substantial paramilitary force and to enter the maelstrom of Bavarian paramilitary politics.

Acceptance of a high level of political violence was a hallmark of the political culture of Germany between the wars. The brutalization of society engendered by war and near-civil war together with the upheaval and turmoil of the revolution prepared the ground for a readiness to tolerate violence paradoxically seen to be serving the interests of a return to order and normality. It was a mentality which not only contributed to the rise of National Socialism, but also to the moral indifference to violence that was so widespread during the Third Reich itself.³ The exponents of the extreme political violence were for the most part the counter-revolutionary private armies – the Freikorps, the Volunteer Associations, the Citizens' Defence Forces – which sprang up in Germany after the war and were actively supported and deployed by state authorities. Gustav Noske had begun the use of non-state forces in the service of the state in the brutal suppression of the Spartacus Rising in January 1919. The Freikorps participated, as we

have already noted, in the smashing months later. A plethora of parties on the political spectrum, but most on the Right. It was above all in the province of Bavaria that the private armies, with the approval of the Bavarian authorities, could

The massive Citizens' Defence Force of 400,000 men with 2½ million weapons was immediately after the crushing of the revolution a mentality obsessed by the need for protection from the Left and ready, as the Freikorps showed, to use violence in spring 1919 showed, to protect itself. The *Einwohnerwehr*, a paramilitary organization that emerged alongside it, repulsed the Communists, and, as the name suggested, was more sinister paramilitary organization than the Bavarian 'cell of order' after the war. The vehemently anti-socialist, conservative President Gustav Ritter von Kahr turned to the extremists from all over Germany, and to extremists elsewhere in the country. From a new Captain Hermann Ehrhardt, a veteran of the Freikorps, including the suppression of the Kapp Putsch, was able to use a network of groups throughout the country. Out of many of the political murders – Right between 1919 and 1922 – the new democracy. And Kahr's strident support of the central government of the Reich, that had been acutely shored up during the diminished powers of Bavaria in the aftermath of the linking 'white-blue' particularist federalism and antagonism towards 'red' Berlin. The situation in September 1921:

Since Reich policy stood, and must stand, on this has continued to be identified with the torrents of particularism and antisemitism. In addition there is then the strong force

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have already noted, in the smashing of the Räterepublik in Munich four
 months later. A plethora of paramilitary organizations emerged across
 the political spectrum, but most prominently on the counter-revolutionary
 Right. It was above all in the peculiar conditions of post-revolutionary
 Bavaria that the private armies, with the toleration and often active support
 of the Bavarian authorities, could fully flourish.

The massive Citizens' Defence Force (Einwohnerwehr) – comprising up
 to 400,000 men with 2½ million weapons – that was established in Bavaria
 immediately after the crushing of the Räterepublik was the product of a
 mentality obsessed by the need for protection against a presumed threat
 from the Left and ready, as the popularity of the counter-revolutionary
 violence in spring 1919 showed, to resort to any measures to ensure that
 protection.⁴ The Einwohnerwehr, and a number of other, similar, organiza-
 tions that emerged alongside it, represented 'white-blue' Bavarian tradition-
 alism and, as the name suggested, was in essence defensively orientated. But
 more sinister paramilitary organizations found a welcome refuge in the
 Bavarian 'cell of order' after the collapse of the Kapp Putsch in 1920.
 The vehemently anti-socialist, counter-revolutionary regime of Minister
 President Gustav Ritter von Kahr turned Bavaria into a haven for right-wing
 extremists from all over Germany, including many under order of arrest
 elsewhere in the country. From a new protected base in Munich, for example,
 Captain Hermann Ehrhardt, a veteran of orchestrated anti-socialist violence
 in the Freikorps, including the suppression of the Räterepublik, and a leader
 of the Kapp Putsch, was able to use his Organisation Consul to build up a
 network of groups throughout the whole of the German Reich and carry
 out many of the political murders – there were 354 in all perpetrated by the
Right between 1919 and 1922 – that stained the early years of the troubled
 new democracy.⁵ And Kahr's strident line of Bavarian frontal opposition to
 the central government of the Reich – feeding the traditional hatred of Berlin
 that had been acutely shored up during the war, and the resentments at the
 diminished powers of Bavaria in the Reich constitution – had the effect of
 linking 'white-blue' particularist feeling with 'black-white-red' nationalist
 antagonism towards 'red' Berlin. The theologian Ernst Troeltsch commented
 in September 1921:

Since Reich policy stood, and must stand, strongly under the influence of socialism,
 this has continued to be identified with the hated Berlin and with Jewry, thus directing
 the torrents of particularism and antisemitism on to the mills of anti-socialism . . .
 In addition there is then the strong force of monarchism, the bitterness of former

members of the military, the collaboration of Prussian emigrants, and the very understandable disaffection of idealist patriots. All this is knotted together into the idea of allocating Bavaria the mission of saving the Reich from socialism, and seeing it as the cell of order and starting-point of reconstruction.⁶

By spring 1921 Kahr was no longer able to prevent the dissolution of the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr after holding out for a year against the Reich's insistence (under Allied pressure) on confiscation of weapons and dismantling of civilian defence units.⁷ The resulting fury towards Berlin prompted further radicalization. And out of the dissolved Einwohnerwehr arose a bewildering array of new or already existing but now strengthened 'patriotic associations' competing with each other in their activism and radicalism. The largest – and intended to be the successor to the Einwohnerwehr, though in reality a coalition of numerous fractions which would eventually split – was the Bund Bayern und Reich, a 'white-blue' Bavarian loyalist organization, combining strong monarchist and Christian traditionalist strains with vehement anti-Marxism and antisemitism, operating under the slogan 'First the Homeland, then the World!'⁸ It was run by the Regensburg public health inspector Dr Otto Pittinger, formerly prominent in the district leadership of the civil defence units in the Upper Palatinate province of Bavaria. Since Pittinger had difficulty in exercising authority over his organization, smaller but more radical associations moved in to fill the vacuum and expand their influence. Among them were the Bund Oberland, which had emerged from Epp's Freikorps Oberland, had been involved in the ending of the 'Councils Republic', and had further cut its teeth in the campaign against the Poles in Upper Silesia in 1921; the Reichsflagge, previously with a following mainly confined to Franconia but now, under the direction of Ernst Röhm (head of the Munich branch), expanding into southern Bavaria; the Vaterländische Vereine Münchens (VVM, Patriotic Associations of Munich), the successor to the Einwohnerwehr in the Bavarian capital; and a variety of organizations and sub-organizations, most prominent of them the Wiking-Bund, headed by Captain Ehrhardt.⁹ It was Ehrhardt, alongside Ernst Röhm, who was to play a leading role in establishing the NSDAP's own paramilitary organization, which was to emerge from 1921 onwards into a significant feature of the Nazi Movement and an important factor in paramilitary politics in Bavaria.¹⁰

The beginnings of the SA, as we have noted, reach back to the start of 1920, when the DAP set out to stage bigger meetings in the Munich beerhalls and, as was the practice in other parties, needed a squad of bouncers – a

'hall protection' (Saalschutz, turned in November 1920 into Sportabteilung). Following in July 1921, it was reshaped into the new party statutes for movement'.¹² Hitler regarded establishing his claim to lead the SA (Sturmabteilung, 'Storm 1921 onwards'¹³ – was not, solely a product of his will, power.¹⁴ The key figures in it into a paramilitary organization Ehrhardt.

Röhm was, more even than junior officer, he shared the d in the trenches – shared, too, those in staff headquarters be 'incapable' politicians, and a at home. Against these high community', the solidarity of deeds rather than status, and he wanted was a new 'warrior proved their right to rule. Th no return to pre-war bourge fighting men. As for so many paramilitary organizations, t of violence.¹⁵ Like so many, Rö suffered serious facial injury part of his nose, permanent company, but had been force badly injured at Verdun. His s and as the supply officer of a gave him experience in orga revolution drove him into co in the Freikorps Epp during its lik. After brief membership after Hitler, in autumn 1915 responsible for others from interest continued, however,

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have noted, reach back to the start of bigger meetings in the Munich beerhalls rties, needed a squad of bouncers – a

'hall protection' (Saalschutz) to deal with any disturbances.¹¹ This was turned in November 1920 into the party's 'Gym and Sport Section' (Turn- und Sportabteilung). Following Hitler's 'seizure of power' within the party in July 1921, it was reshaped and given a pivotal role, responsible according to the new party statutes for the 'bodily training of the male youth in the movement'.¹² Hitler regarded its quasi-military structure as valuable in establishing his claim to leadership throughout the movement. However, the SA (Sturmabteilung, 'Storm Section') – as it became known from October 1921 onwards¹³ – was not, as has been claimed, 'his personal creation', solely a product of his will, or designed as an instrument of his personal power.¹⁴ The key figures in transforming the party's hall protection squad into a paramilitary organization were Ernst Röhm and, initially, Captain Ehrhardt.

Röhm was, more even than Hitler, typical of the 'front generation'. As a junior officer, he shared the dangers, anxieties, and privations of the troops in the trenches – shared, too, the prejudice and mounting anger levelled at those in staff headquarters behind the lines, at the military bureaucracy, at 'incapable' politicians, and at those seen as shirkers, idlers and profiteers at home. Against these highly negative images, he heroicized the 'front community', the solidarity of the men in the trenches, leadership resting on deeds rather than status, and the blind obedience that this demanded. What he wanted was a new 'warrior' élite whose actions and achievements had proved their right to rule. Though a monarchist, there was for Röhm to be no return to pre-war bourgeois society. His ideal was the community of fighting men. As for so many who joined the Freikorps and their successor paramilitary organizations, this ideal combined male fantasy with the cult of violence.¹⁵ Like so many, Röhm had gone to war in 1914 in wild enthusiasm, suffered serious facial injury within weeks when shell fragments tore away part of his nose, permanently disfiguring him, had returned to lead his company, but had been forced out of service at the front after being again badly injured at Verdun. His subsequent duties in the Bavarian War Ministry, and as the supply officer of a division, sharpened his political antennae and gave him experience in organizational matters. The trauma of defeat and revolution drove him into counter-revolutionary activity – including service in the Freikorps Epp during its participation in the crushing of the Räterepublik. After brief membership of the DNVP, he joined the tiny DAP soon after Hitler, in autumn 1919, and, as he himself claimed, was probably responsible for others from the Reichswehr entering the party.¹⁶ Röhm's interest continued, however, to be dictated by military and paramilitary,

rather than party, politics. He showed no exclusive interest in the NSDAP before the SA became a significant element in paramilitary politics.

But Röhm's value to the party in engineering its paramilitary connections is hard to overrate. His access both to leading figures on the paramilitary scene and, especially, to weaponry was crucial. His position in control of weapon supplies for the Brigade Epp (the successor to the Freikorps unit, now integrated into the Reichswehr) gave him responsibility for providing the Einwohnerwehr with weapons. The semi-secrecy involved in concealing the extent of weaponry from Allied control – not difficult since there was no occupying army to carry out inspections – also gave Röhm a great deal of scope to build up a large stockpile of mainly small arms in 1920-21. After the dissolution of the Einwohnerwehr, and the official confiscation of weaponry, various paramilitary organizations entrusted him with their weapon supplies. Presiding over such an arsenal, deciding when and if weapons should be handed out, the 'machine-gun king' (*Maschinen-gewehr-könig*), as he became known, was thus in a pivotal position with regard to the demands of all paramilitary organizations. And, through the protection he gained from Epp, Kahr, and the Munich political police, he enjoyed influence beyond his rank on the politics of the nationalist Right.¹⁷

It was in all probability Röhm who arranged the agreement reached between Hitler and Ehrhardt in August 1921 which brought former members of Ehrhardt's naval brigade, seasoned campaigners in paramilitary activity, most of them just returned from the action in Upper Silesia, into the party's 'Sport Section'. This was placed under the leadership of the Ehrhardt veteran Leutnant Klitzsch (later suspected of having a hand in 1922 in the murder of Walter Rathenau – the Reich Foreign Minister, of Jewish background and, as main author of the 'fulfilment policy' towards the Versailles Treaty, a detested figure on the extreme Right),¹⁸ who was given the task of building up a fighting unit and provided by Ehrhardt with the funding to do this. During the first months, this was mainly a matter of sport (especially boxing), marching, exercises, and occasional sharpshooter practice. The members – there were around 300 by November 1921, all under the age of twenty-four and mainly from Munich's lower-middle class – combined this paramilitary training with political activism. They took the 'friend-foe' mentality of the front into what they saw as practically a civil war at home, preparing for violent combat with the political enemy, evoking the spirit of aggressive camaraderie and blind commitment to the leader.¹⁹ From the beginning, the dual role of paramilitary organization (initially linked to Ehrhardt) and party shock troops under Hitler's leadership contained the seeds of the

tension that was to accompany Röhm and Ehrhardt lay on the SA fully into the party, though independence before 1924.²² The latter, before the second half of 1919 rapidly mounting crisis in Bavaria swelled, making it a force to be

Hitler, meanwhile, now undisputed ceaseless agitation much as before between Bavaria and the Reich. Matthias Erzberger on 26 August 1919 an anarchism that still prevailed in validity for Bavaria of the state Friedrich Ebert, kept things on own part. Prices were already high. Foodstuffs were almost eight times at the end of the war. By the next And that was before the current 1923.²⁵

Hitler's provocation of his popularity was stepped up. In 1919 a disruption by his followers of the address by one of his arch-enemies the Bayernbund, Otto Ballerstedt the signal for his supporters, in the 'Sport Section' who had taken up seats to storm the podium, screaming Ballerstedt from speaking. Some to prevent a brawl. But this on lights went on again, Ballerstedt physically attacked and injured it seems, the police had to ask if was by this time happy enough won't speak any more today,' 1919. The matter did not, however,

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tension that was to accompany the SA down to 1934.²⁰ The interest of
 Röhm and Ehrhardt lay on the paramilitary side.²¹ Hitler tried to integrate
 the SA fully into the party, though organizationally it retained considerable
 independence before 1924.²² The build-up of the SA was steady, not spectacu-
 lar, before the second half of 1922. It was after that date, in conditions of
 rapidly mounting crisis in Bavaria and in the Reich, that the SA's numbers
 swelled, making it a force to be reckoned with on the nationalist Right.²³

II

Hitler, meanwhile, now undisputed leader of his party, carried on his
 ceaseless agitation much as before, able to exploit the continued tension
 between Bavaria and the Reich. The murder of Reich Finance Minister
 Matthias Erzberger on 26 August 1921 – an indication of the near-
 anarchism that still prevailed in Germany – and Kahr's refusal to accept the
 validity for Bavaria of the state of emergency declared by Reich President
 Friedrich Ebert, kept things on the boil.²⁴ Material discontent played its
 own part. Prices were already rising sharply as the currency depreciated.
 Foodstuffs were almost eight times more expensive in 1921 as they had been
 at the end of the war. By the next year they would be over 130 times dearer.
 And that was before the currency lost all its value in the hyperinflation of
 1923.²⁵

Hitler's provocation of his political enemies and of the authorities to gain
 publicity was stepped up. In mid-September he led the planned violent
 disruption by his followers of a meeting in the Löwenbraukeller, to be
 addressed by one of his arch-enemies at the time, the separatist leader of
 the Bayernbund, Otto Ballerstedt. Hitler's arrival in the packed hall was
 the signal for his supporters, many of them young thugs from the 'Sport
 Section' who had taken up seats around the platform early in the evening,
 to storm the podium, screaming 'Hitler' continually in chorus, and prevent
 Ballerstedt from speaking. Someone had the idea of switching off the lights
 to prevent a brawl. But this only made the disturbance worse. When the
 lights went on again, Ballerstedt and another member of his party were
 physically attacked and injured before the police could arrive.²⁶ Even then,
 it seems, the police had to ask Hitler's help in calling his men to order. He
 was by this time happy enough to do so. The aim had been met. 'Ballerstedt
 won't speak any more today,' he declared.²⁷

The matter did not, however, end there. Ballerstedt pressed charges against

Hitler, who was sentenced in January 1922 to three months' imprisonment for breach of the peace – two months suspended against future good behaviour (though conveniently forgotten about when the good behaviour did not materialize). Even his powerful friends could not prevent him serving the other month of his sentence. Between 24 June and 27 July 1922 he took up residence in Stadelheim prison in Munich.²⁸

Apart from this short interlude, Hitler did not let up with his agitation. Brushes with the police were commonplace. The police noted some thirty bans on publications, placards, and other Nazi publicity in 1921.²⁹ Even while awaiting trial in the Ballerstedt case, Hitler was warned by the police – in connection with Nazi disruption of an SPD meeting on 16 October and subsequent disturbances – that he could expect his expulsion from Bavaria if things carried on in the same way.³⁰ It was not to be the last time that expulsion was posed as a vain threat. Hitler simply commented that he could not be held responsible for the disturbances and promised to do what he could to prevent any in future.³¹ Within little over a week, on 4 November 1921, he was the centre of further riotous scenes, this time at a meeting he himself was addressing in the Hofbräuhaus. As a full-scale brawl broke out, Hitler continued speaking amid a hail of beer mugs that his opponents – socialists, but perhaps also including some veteran beerhall brawlers, spoiling for a fight – had been quietly storing beneath their tables as ammunition. He later idealized the scene in *Mein Kampf* as the 'baptism of fire' of his SA men, greatly outnumbered but triumphant over their socialist enemies.³² For Hitler, these violent clashes with his opponents were the lifeblood of his movement. They were above all good for publicity.

Hitler was still dissatisfied with the coverage – even of a negative kind – he received in the press.³³ Nevertheless, the actions of the NSDAP and its leader ensured that they remained in the public eye. Nor could the party any longer be ignored in the Bavarian Landtag. Following Kahr's resignation as Minister President in September 1921 – the consequence of his intransigence in the conflict with the Reich – the unpopularity and weaker stance towards Berlin of his successor, Hugo Graf Lerchenfeld-Koefering, an arch-conservative, from a non-party Catholic, aristocratic, and diplomatic background, provided an easy target for undiminished Nazi agitation throughout the first half of 1922.³⁴ This was no time for young Germans to spend studying philosophy and sitting behind a desk full of books, proclaimed Dietrich Eckart: it was a question now of 'into the stormtroops who must rescue Germany'. Open attacks on opponents became the order of the day. Rubber truncheons and knuckle-dusters were the main weapons, but pistols

and even, on occasion, home-made the campaign of violence.³⁵ Hitler directed at both the Reich and Bav. was booed, whistled at, insulted, when he visited Munich in summer, when he visited Munich in summer, President von Lerchenfeld – a man totally out of touch with reality and for genuine, born leaders.³⁷ While dire consequences if the Bavarian g Hitler made propaganda capital out of his war record, when he had for others had done no more than stay

On 16 August 1922, Hitler spoke at associations at a huge protest rally of Bayerns (United Patriotic Association Munich). The rally, held under the direction of 'the approaching Jewish Republic',³⁹ was the first time that paramilitary formation under its own 800 or so men about this time – were, men of Pittinger's Bund Bayern uniformations of Bund Oberland and against Lerchenfeld in favour of them. There were rumours that this would rally against Lerchenfeld, planned for involving Pittinger and Röhm, which ban on the rally and the prevention associations from other parts of Bavaria thousand National Socialists assembled around 5,000 made their way to a meeting Munich beerhalls where Hitler occurred running high. There were rumours. But nothing materialized. A thousand violence threatened. The police acted more against the Nazis than appeal to told his men that it was the duty of every agitator in order to bring the mass of the government.⁴¹ But at the request of They obeyed, quietly dispersing.⁴² Hitler

D.F. Yes, not ~~the~~ of the threat personal

122 to three months' imprisonment is suspended against future good behaviour about when the good behaviour ends could not prevent him serving on 24 June and 27 July 1922 he took Munich.²⁸

He did not let up with his agitation. The police noted some thirty further Nazi publicity in 1921.²⁹ Even so, Hitler was warned by the police of an SPD meeting on 16 October could expect his expulsion from way.³⁰ It was not to be the last time that Hitler simply commented that disturbances and promised to do so.³¹ Within little over a week, on 4 further riotous scenes, this time at a Hofbräuhaus. As a full-scale brawl amid a hail of beer mugs that his so including some veteran beerhall quietly stirring beneath their tables scene in *Mein Kampf* as the 'baptism numbered but triumphant over their ant clashes with his opponents were not above all good for publicity. Average – even of a negative kind – the actions of the NSDAP and its in the public eye. Nor could the party idtag. Following Kahr's resignation – the consequence of his intransigent unpopularity and weaker stance of Lerchenfeld-Koefering, an arch-, aristocratic, and diplomatic back-ninished Nazi agitation throughout me for young Germans to spend a desk full of books, proclaimed of 'into the stormtroops who must nents became the order of the day. were the main weapons, but pistols

and even, on occasion, home-made bombs and grenades were also used in the campaign of violence.³⁵ Hitler kept up unabated his torrent of abuse directed at both the Reich and Bavarian governments. Reich President Ebert was booed, whistled at, insulted, and spat upon by Nazi demonstrators when he visited Munich in summer 1922.³⁶ Hitler poured scorn on Minister President von Lerchenfeld – a man with the brain of a sheep, he ranted, totally out of touch with reality and the will of the people, who clamoured for genuine, born leaders.³⁷ While his leading supporters hinted darkly at dire consequences if the Bavarian government expelled him from Germany, Hitler made propaganda capital out of the threat of expulsion by pointing to his war record, when he had fought as a German for his country while others had done no more than stay at home and preach politics.³⁸

On 16 August 1922, Hitler spoke alongside other leaders of the nationalist associations at a huge protest rally of the Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns (United Patriotic Associations of Bavaria) on the Königsplatz in Munich. The rally, held under the slogan 'For Germany – Against Berlin', directed at 'the approaching Jewish Bolshevism under the protection of the Republic',³⁹ was the first time that the SA had appeared in public as a paramilitary formation under its own banners. Its numbers – no more than 800 or so men about this time – were, however, dwarfed by the 30,000 armed men of Pittinger's Bund Bayern und Reich, and by the large, well-armed formations of Bund Oberland and the Reichsflagge.⁴⁰ Talk of a putsch against Lerchenfeld in favour of the restoration of Kahr was in the air. There were rumours that this would take place at a further mass protest rally against Lerchenfeld, planned for 25 August. Indeed there *was* a plot, involving Pittinger and Röhm, which became known to the police, but a ban on the rally and the prevention of the armed bands of the nationalist associations from other parts of Bavaria travelling to Munich left only a few thousand National Socialists assembled on the Karolinenplatz. Eventually, around 5,000 made their way to a meeting in the Kindlkeller, one of the big Munich beerhalls where Hitler occasionally held speeches. Feelings were running high. There were rumours that a putsch was about to happen. But nothing materialized. A thousand Communists assembled outside, and violence threatened. The police acted against the Communists, but did no more against the Nazis than appeal to Hitler to calm things down. Hitler told his men that it was the duty of every single one of them 'to become an agitator in order to bring the mass of the people on to the street' against the government.⁴¹ But at the request of the police he called them to order. They obeyed, quietly dispersing.⁴² Hitler was said to be furious at the way

D.T. Yes, ~~no~~ limit to the derision of the threat. Large (riot) and personal (murder).

the day had fizzled out into such an anticlimax. Next time he would act – alone if necessary, he stated.⁴¹ The danger of a Hitler Putsch was not lost on the authorities. The Württemberg ambassador in Munich reported to Stuttgart, following discussions in the Bavarian foreign ministry on 31 August: 'The National Socialists especially were gaining enormous support and were capable of anything. . . The leader Hitler must be quite a fascinating personality. So it's not impossible that they will try a putsch here before long, using the mounting inflation as an excuse.'⁴²

Hitler's most notable propaganda success in 1922 was his party's participation in the so-called 'German Day' (*Deutscher Tag*) in Coburg on 14-15 October. Coburg, on the Thuringian border in the north of Upper Franconia and part of Bavaria for only two years, was virgin territory for the Nazis. Hitler had been invited to take part in the German Day with a small delegation by the organizational committee of the Schutz- und Trutzbund. He saw it as an opportunity not to be missed. He scraped together what funds the NSDAP had to hire a special train – in itself a novel propaganda stunt – to take 800 stormtroopers to Coburg. In Hitler's compartment were the hard-core of his entourage – Amann, Esser, Eckart, Christian Weber, Graf and Rosenberg. On arrival on the Saturday afternoon, the Nazis were greeted at the station with shouts of 'Heil' by a sizeable gathering of nationalists and with a torrent of abuse from 200-300 socialist workers and trade unionists who had assembled at the same spot. The SA men were instructed by Hitler to ignore explicit police orders, banning a formation march with unfurled banners and musical accompaniment, and marched with hoisted swastika flags through the town. Workers lining the streets insulted them and spat at them. Nazis in turn leapt out of the ranks beating their tormentors with sticks and rubber truncheons. A furious battle with the socialists ensued. After ten minutes of mayhem, in which they had police support, the stormtroopers triumphantly claimed the streets of Coburg as theirs. The local authorities blamed the workers of Coburg for provoking the violence, but, with some contradiction, acknowledged that the other nationalists would have caused no problems and 'that the German Day would have passed by completely peacefully if the Hitler people (*Hitlerleute*) had not come to Coburg'.⁴³ For Hitler, the propaganda victory was what counted. The German Day in Coburg went down in the party's annals. The NSDAP had made its mark in northern Bavaria.

It was Hitler's second major success in Franconia within a few days. On 8 October, Julius Streicher, head of the sizeable Nuremberg branch of the *Deutsche Werkgemeinschaft*, had written to Hitler offering to take his

sizeable following, together with into the NSDAP.⁴⁶ In the wake place on 20 October. Streicher, in 1885 in the Augsburg area, father had been, and, like Hitler Cross, First Class, was utterly poor after the war he had been one of the *tische Partei* (German-Socialist) as we noted in the previous chapter. *Der Stürmer*, established obscene caricatures of evil-looking and ritual-murder allegations, with comments, and view that 'the Jew picture – for a while be banned eventually tried at Nuremberg, a of vital importance for the development of the northern regions of Bavaria Hitler'.⁴⁴ The arch-rival DSP was Nazi Party practically doubled its about the beginning of 1921 and 6 some 20,000 strong.⁴⁹ More than Protestant, fervently nationalist, a the NSDAP with a stronghold of city of Munich in the Catholic south Nuremberg – later designated the little wonder that Hitler was kept publicly in *Mein Kampf*.⁵⁰

Even so, it was striking that, power was still limited. He showed his authority on the internecine struggle of the NSDAP over the coming year nor even Hitler's personal intervention power-struggle erupting in the early his rival in Nuremberg, Walther I naval officer, good publicist and of *Deutscher Volkswille* (German & pretensions to running the branch Streicher proved victorious. This was not keen to alienate, for a time

* P.T. a complete and calculated move which was made after much deliberation and anxiety. A regard to hero or a bold move?

max. Next time he would act – of a Hitler Putsch was not lost assador in Munich reported to varian foreign ministry on 31 were gaining enormous support Hitler must be quite a fascinating y will try a putsch here before cuse.”⁴⁴

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sizeable following, together with his newspaper the *Deutscher Volkswille*, into the NSDAP.⁴⁶ In the wake of the Coburg triumph, the transfer took place on 20 October. Streicher, a short, squat, shaven-headed bully, born in 1885 in the Augsburg area, for a time a primary schoolteacher as his father had been, and, like Hitler, a war veteran decorated with the Iron Cross, First Class, was utterly possessed by demonic images of Jews. Shortly after the war he had been one of the founding members of the Deutschsozialistische Partei (German-Socialist Party), as antisemitic as the NSDAP and, as we noted in the previous chapter, with a similar programme. His newspaper *Der Stürmer*, established in 1923 and becoming notorious for its obscene caricatures of evil-looking Jews seducing pure German maidens and ritual-murder allegations, would – despite Hitler's personal approving comments, and view that 'the Jew' was far worse than Streicher's 'idealized' picture – for a while be banned even in the Third Reich.⁴⁷ Streicher was eventually tried at Nuremberg, and hanged. Now, back in 1922, in a step of vital importance for the development of the NSDAP in Franconia, in the northern regions of Bavaria, he subordinated himself personally to Hitler.⁴⁸ The arch-rival DSP was now fatally weakened in Franconia. The Nazi Party practically doubled its membership. From around 2,000 members about the beginning of 1921 and 6,000 a year later, the party was overnight some 20,000 strong.⁴⁹ More than that: the Franconian countryside – piously Protestant, fervently nationalist, and stridently antisemitic – was to provide the NSDAP with a stronghold far greater than was offered by its home city of Munich in the Catholic south of Bavaria, and a symbolic capital in Nuremberg – later designated the 'city of the Reich Party Rallies'. It was little wonder that Hitler was keen to express his gratitude to Streicher publicly in *Mein Kampf*.⁵⁰

Even so, it was striking that, away from his Munich citadel, Hitler's power was still limited. He showed himself quite incapable of exercising his authority on the internecine strife that dominated the Nuremberg branch of the NSDAP over the coming year. Neither arbitrary decree from Munich nor even Hitler's personal intervention could impose a solution on the bitter power-struggle erupting in the early months of 1923 between Streicher and his rival in Nuremberg, Walther Kellerbauer, nine years older, a former naval officer, good publicist and speaker, editor of a party newspaper, the *Deutscher Volkswille* (German Will of the People), and with his own pretensions to running the branch. After months of bitter wrangling, Streicher proved victorious. This was despite Kellerbauer, someone Hitler was not keen to alienate, for a time being able to call upon the party leader's

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support.⁵¹ Hitler was the undisputed propaganda champion of the party. But away from his Munich base, his writ still did not always run.

This was in itself ample reason for the interest which his Munich following began to show in building up the leadership cult around Hitler. A significant boost to the aura of a man of destiny attaching itself to Hitler came from outside Germany. On 28 October 1922, Mussolini's Blackshirts had marched on Rome and seized power. At least that was the myth that was propagated. In reality, around 20,000 badly-armed, ill-equipped and hungry Fascists, approaching Rome from four directions, had halted around twenty miles from the city, some of them leaving for home in streaming rain. There was, in fact, no 'March on Rome', which the Italian army could in any case easily have crushed if necessary. On 29 October, King Victor Emmanuel III simply invited Mussolini to form a government. When the Fascist Leader arrived in Rome the following day he was wearing a black shirt, black trousers, and a bowler hat.⁵²

Mussolini's so-called 'March on Rome' on 28 October 1922 – fictitious though it was in the Fascist legend of a heroic 'seizure of power' – nevertheless deeply stirred the Nazi Party. It suggested the model of a dynamic and heroic nationalist leader marching to the salvation of his strife-torn country. The Duce provided an image to be copied. Less than a week after the *coup d'état* in Italy, on 3 November 1922, Hermann Esser proclaimed to a packed Festsaal in the Hofbräuhaus: 'Germany's Mussolini is called Adolf Hitler.'⁵³ It marked the symbolic moment when Hitler's followers invented the Führer cult.

III

Notions of 'heroic' leadership had been part of the political culture of the nationalist Right in the years before the First World War. The Bismarck cult, exaggerated hopes invested in the Kaiser and then dashed, grandiose images of Imperial grandeur and military glory contrasting starkly with counter-images of weak and puny party-politicians squabbling in the Reichstag, helped, as we have seen, to advance the idea of national salvation. A rebirth of the nation was promised through the subordination to a 'great leader' who would invoke the values of a 'heroic' (and mythical) past. The nationalist associations, most prominently the Pan-German League, popularized and disseminated such notions. The Protestant 'educated' middle classes were affected more than most by them. Germanic myths and

* The key was legend, the key to myths. Any little that helps to create or protect a myth is invaluable. "You are a good"

romantic imagery in the bourgeois their cultivation among the young occupied a central position in Germany.

However, war and revolution leadership. The subsequent ideal trenches, and the 'great deeds' and for national survival – undermine provided a mass of new potential Right to the idea of a coming 'great' Ernst Röhm, whose background thousands in his idolization of the For the neo-conservative Right, the of the detested Social Democratic parliamentary government, and (weakness meant an evocation of 'statesman'. Literary figures were 'heroic' leadership. The author of the future' as a 'modern man of profound outstanding intelligence', perhaps 'above parties and divisions', who the right path and overcome all of linked his vision of a coming Leader notions of 'renewal' arising from the threat from Asia.⁵⁵ Within the Protestant looked to the coming Leader to the revival. The fall of the monarchy a secularization of society, and the Protestantism all contributed to leadership which could reinvoke the various leadership images came publicist Wilhelm Stapel, a former leader of the Hamburg group of neo-conservative Moeller van den Bruck, who depicted the same time ruler, warrior, and belief in salvation, wrapped up in

Whatever the particular emphasis juxtaposed the negative view of a true leader as a man of destiny, but by conventional rules and laws, 'he

liar already," I must believe it to say, because

propaganda champion of the party. It still did not always run. Interest which his Munich following had built up around Hitler. A significant fact attaching itself to Hitler came from Mussolini's Blackshirts had marched was the myth that was propagated. Ill-equipped and hungry Fascists, they had halted around twenty miles from Rome in streaming rain. There was, in any case, no German army which could in any case easily be defeated. King Victor Emmanuel III simply abdicated. When the Fascist Leader arrived wearing a black shirt, black trousers,

on 28 October 1922 – fictitious 'seizure of power' – nevertheless the model of a dynamic and heroic leader of his strife-torn country. The day was less than a week after the *coup d'état* in Esser proclaimed to a packed assembly that Mussolini is called Adolf Hitler.⁵³ Hitler's followers invented the Führer

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romantic imagery in the bourgeois youth movement provided a base for their cultivation among the younger generation. Even so, such ideas hardly occupied a central position in German political culture before 1914.

However, war and revolution gave new substance to images of 'heroic' leadership. The subsequent idealization of the 'community of fate' in the trenches, and the 'great deeds' and heroism of 'true' leadership in the struggle for national survival – undermined, according to the legend, from within – provided a mass of new potential adherents on the counter-revolutionary Right to the idea of a coming 'great leader'. Images of leadership varied. Ernst Röhm, whose background we have briefly glimpsed, stands proxy for thousands in his idolization of the leadership of the military 'man of action'. For the neo-conservative Right, the shock of the Revolution and the dominance of the detested Social Democrats, contempt for the 'party system' and parliamentary government, and Germany's international humiliation and weakness meant an evocation of Bismarck in the yearning for a great 'statesman'. Literary figures were among the most expressive advocates of 'heroic' leadership. The author Ernst Jünger saw 'the great politician of the future' as a 'modern man of power' in the 'machine era' – 'a man of outstanding intelligence', perhaps emerging from a party, but standing 'above parties and divisions', whose natural instinct and will would select the right path and overcome all obstacles.⁵⁴ The Bonn writer Ernst Bertram linked his vision of a coming Leader, in a poem composed in 1922, with notions of 'renewal' arising from the banks of the Rhine and staving off the threat from Asia.⁵⁵ Within the Protestant Church, there were those who looked to the coming Leader to bring about spiritual renewal and moral revival. The fall of the monarchy and collapse of 'God-given' authority, the secularization of society, and the perceived 'crisis of faith' in German Protestantism all contributed to a readiness to look to a new form of leadership which could reinvolve 'true' Christian values. The shadings of the various leadership images came together in the tract of the nationalist publicist Wilhelm Stapel, a former liberal turned *völkisch* enthusiast, member of the Hamburg group of neo-conservatives associated with the ideas of Moeller van den Bruck, who depicted the 'true statesman' as 'at one and the same time ruler, warrior, and priest'.⁵⁶ It amounted to a secularized belief in salvation, wrapped up in pseudo-religious language. *And this is the*

Whatever the particular emphasis, the conservative and *völkisch* Right juxtaposed the negative view of a 'leaderless democracy' with a concept of a true leader as a man of destiny, born not elected to leadership, not bound by conventional rules and laws, 'hard, straightforward, and ruthless', but

→ *lie already; "I told him" "But you must become a genius at it, which is to say, be able to lie"*

→ fanatically requires the courage of a genius.

embodying the will of God in his actions. 'God give us leaders and help us to true following,' ran one text.⁵⁷ Devotion, loyalty, obedience, and duty were the corresponding values demanded of the followers.

The spread of fascist and militaristic ideas in post-war Europe meant that 'heroic leadership' images were 'in the air' and by no means confined to Germany. The emergence of the Duce cult in Italy provides an obvious parallel. But the German images naturally had their own flavour, drawing on the particular elements of the political culture of the nationalist Right. And the crisis-ridden nature of the Weimar state, detested by so many powerful groups in society and unable to win the popularity and support of the masses, guaranteed that such ideas, which in a more stable environment might have been regarded with derision and confined to the lunatic fringe of politics, were never short of a hearing. Ideas put into circulation by neo-conservative publicists, writers, and intellectuals were, in more vulgarized form, taken up in paramilitary formations and in the varied groupings of the bourgeois youth movement. The model of Mussolini's triumph in Italy now offered the opening for such ideas to be incorporated into the vision of national revival preached by the National Socialists.

The Führer cult was not yet the pivot of the party's ideology and organization. But the beginnings of a conscious public profiling of Hitler's leadership qualities by his entourage, with strong hints in his own speeches, dates back to the period following Mussolini's 'March on Rome'.⁵⁸ Hitler was beginning to attract fawning excesses of adulation - even stretching to grotesque comparisons with Napoleon - from admirers on the nationalist Right. The ground for the later rapid spread of the Führer cult was already well fertilized.⁵⁹

There had been no trace of a leadership cult in the first years of the Nazi Party. The word 'leader' ('Führer') had no special meaning attached to it. Every political party or organization had a leader - or more than one. The NSDAP was no different. Drexler was referred to as the party's 'Führer', as was Hitler; or sometimes both in practically the same breath.⁶⁰ Once Hitler had taken over the party leadership in July 1921, the term 'our leader' ('*unser Führer*') became gradually more common.⁶¹ But its meaning was still interchangeable with the purely functional 'chairman of the NSDAP'. There was nothing 'heroic' about it. Nor had Hitler endeavoured to build up a personality cult around himself. But Mussolini's triumph evidently made a deep impression on him. It gave him a role-model. Referring to Mussolini, less than a month after the 'March on Rome', Hitler reportedly stated: 'So will it be with us. We only have to have the courage to act.

Without struggle, no victory!' also reflected how his support followers portrayed him, in fact came to see himself in that light. The new way he was being portrayed in December 1922 that the *Völk* to claim that Hitler was a spokesman whom Germany was waiting. I were said 'to have found so a leader'.⁶³ By Hitler's thirty-fourth birthday, Hermann Göring, head of the SA, at the time of his military training (this time), wildly egocentric, the glamour of the World War, links to the aristocracy to the leader of the German freedom takable.⁶⁴ Political opponents: on Hitler himself is plain. Eckart Krippner near Berchtesgaden in the 1920s, that Hitler had 'megalomania and Neroism', after he had left Berlin with Christ throwing signs can be read into the letter to his party leader on 10 Aug 'anarchy in the allocation of placing himself above the people we have no understanding of concluded'.⁶⁷

During 1923 there are indications perception was changing. He had been in earlier years with leadership. Leader of Germany. At no time he unambiguously claim those in his speeches hint that the ideal of the 'Leader' might be starting.

In November 1922, Hitler spoke. According to the police report however, he went on to speak and could, if found wanting, be

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Without struggle, no victory!⁶² However, the reshaping of his self-image also reflected how his supporters were beginning to see their leader. His followers portrayed him, in fact, as Germany's 'heroic' leader before he came to see himself in that light. Not that he did anything to discourage the new way he was being portrayed from autumn 1922 onwards. It was in December 1922 that the *Völkischer Beobachter* for the first time appeared to claim that Hitler was a special kind of leader – indeed *the* Leader for whom Germany was waiting. Followers of Hitler leaving a parade in Munich were said 'to have found something which millions are yearning for, a leader'.⁶³ By Hitler's thirty-fourth birthday, on 20 April 1923, when the new head of the SA, Hermann Göring – thirty years old, Bavarian born but from the time of his military training in Berlin a self-styled Prussian, handsome (at this time), wildly egocentric, well connected and power-hungry, bringing the glamour of the World-War-decorated flying ace as well as important links to the aristocracy to the Nazi Movement – labelled him the 'beloved leader of the German freedom-movement', the personality cult was unmistakable.⁶⁴ Political opponents scorned it.⁶⁵ That it was not without its mark on Hitler himself is plain. Eckart told Hanfstaengl, while on holiday with Hitler near Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps bordering on Austria in May 1923, that Hitler had 'megomania halfway between a Messiah complex and Neroism', after he had allegedly compared the way he would deal with Berlin with Christ throwing money-changers out of the temple.⁶⁶ Similar signs can be read into the letter no less a figure than Gottfried Feder addressed to his party leader on 10 August 1923, strongly criticizing his lifestyle, his 'anarchy in the allocation of time', and not least the way Hitler was now placing himself above the party. 'We gladly yield first place to you. But we have no understanding for tyrannical tendencies,' Feder witheringly concluded.⁶⁷

During 1923 there are indications in Hitler's speeches that his self-perception was changing. He was now much more preoccupied than he had been in earlier years with leadership, and the qualities needed in the coming Leader of Germany. At no time before his imprisonment in Landsberg did he unambiguously claim those qualities for himself. But a number of passages in his speeches hint that the edges of what distinguished the 'drummer' from the 'Leader' might be starting to blur.

In November 1922, Hitler spoke of obedience to the leader as the first duty. According to the police report of his speech in Munich's Bürgerbräukeller, however, he went on to speak in the plural of 'leaders' who were elected and could, if found wanting, be rejected.⁶⁸ A few days later, he emphasized

scare?

that only the leader was answerable to the masses, that commissions and committees were a hindrance to a movement.⁶⁹ Such comments were no different from views expressed by Hitler at the time that he took over the party leadership. But before 1923 he had rarely spoken of a dictatorship in Germany, and then in somewhat veiled terms which did not necessarily imply the rule of a single individual.⁷⁰ By 1923, in the wake of Mussolini's success, with mounting crisis in the Reich, and with adulation being heaped on him by his own supporters, Hitler looked increasingly to 'a strong man who would rescue Germany'.⁷¹ He continued to speak in the plural, however, of the need for leaders - of a non-parliamentary kind - who would rule if necessary against the will of the majority in the interests of the nation.⁷² 'The people don't want ministers any longer, but leaders,' he proclaimed.⁷³ On 4 May 1923, in a speech castigating the parliamentary system as the 'downfall and end of the German nation',⁷⁴ Hitler gave the clearest hint to date of how he saw his own role. With reference to Frederick the Great and Bismarck, 'giants' whose deeds contrasted with those of the Reichstag, 'Germany's grave-digger', he declared: 'What can save Germany is the dictatorship of the national will and national determination. The question arises: is the suitable personality to hand? Our task is not to look for such a person. He is a gift from heaven, or is not there. Our task is to create the sword that this person will need when he is there. Our task is to give the dictator, when he comes, a people ready for him!'⁷⁵

By July he was saying that only the value of personality, not majority decisions of parliament, could save Germany: 'as Leader of the National Socialist Party I see my task in accepting the responsibility'.⁷⁶ His call for a dictatorship met with great applause.⁷⁷ As his remarks show, he saw himself still as the 'drummer'.⁷⁸ But there was an element of ambiguity. In an interview with the British *Daily Mail* on 2 October 1923, Hitler was reported as saying: 'If a German Mussolini is given to Germany . . . people would fall down on their knees and worship him more than Mussolini has ever been worshipped.'⁷⁹ If he was seeing himself - as his followers were seeing him - as the 'German Mussolini', then he was apparently beginning to associate the greatness of national leadership with his own person.⁸⁰ In Nuremberg, asking whether Kahr deserved support, he denied the Bavarian ruler any claim to true leadership. He located 'greatness' solely in heroic qualities of the individual, and found these in 'three of our greatest Germans': Martin Luther, Frederick the Great and Richard Wagner. All three were 'pioneers' (*Wegbereiter*) in the national cause and thereby 'heroes of their people'. Kahr was 'decent', and a capable administrator. But these were

things to be taken for granted terms, and was incapable of liberation.⁸² 'A freedom-fighter will and nothing more than its denial to Kahr, and the suggestion that Hitler was beginning of supreme (and heroic) nation his own aim as that of the 'pi German freedom-movement'. 'drummer'.⁸⁵ On the other, a pioneer with the great nation this time, so he said, 'the call to detected 'outright Napoleonism

The lack of clarity in Hitler in part, presumably tactical. possible support through a supreme leader. As Hitler had could be left unanswered until possess'. Only then would he give us the right leader'.⁸⁷ B concept of politics as essential: Organizational forms remain freedom of action was not the leadership of the 'political self-confidence in this field and not subsequently have meant of the 'national movement'. in the crisis-ridden year of 19 a process of change. He still calling there was in his eyes triumph in the trial after the the presumption that he was

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things to be taken for granted.⁸¹ Kahr thought only in Bavarian defensive terms, and was incapable of leading from Munich the struggle for national liberation.⁸² 'A freedom-fighter must have the right instinct, he must have will and nothing more than will.'⁸³ The juxtaposition of heroic leadership, its denial to Kahr, and the qualities required of the 'freedom-fighter' again suggest that Hitler was beginning to stake a claim for himself to the position of supreme (and heroic) national leader. The ambiguity remained. He saw his own aim as that of the 'pioneer', the one 'paving the way for the great German freedom-movement'.⁸⁴ On the one hand, this still suggested the 'drummer'.⁸⁵ On the other, he had already just linked the path-breaking pioneer with the great national heroes of the past. At any rate, he felt by this time, so he said, 'the call to Germany's salvation within him', and others detected 'outright Napoleonic and messianic allures' in what he said.⁸⁶

The lack of clarity in Hitler's comments about the future leadership was, in part, presumably tactical. There was nothing to be gained by alienating possible support through a premature conflict about who would later be supreme leader. As Hitler had stated in October, the leadership question could be left unanswered until 'the weapon is created which the leader must possess'. Only then would the time be ripe to 'pray to our Lord God that he give us the right leader'.⁸⁷ But it was predominantly a reflection of Hitler's concept of politics as essentially agitation, propaganda, and 'struggle'.⁸⁸ Organizational forms remained of little concern to him as long as his own freedom of action was not constrained by them. The crucial issue was the leadership of the 'political struggle'. But it is hard to imagine that Hitler's self-confidence in this field and his ingrained refusal to compromise would not subsequently have meant his demand for total, unconstrained leadership of the 'national movement'. At any rate, Hitler's comments on leadership in the crisis-ridden year of 1923 seem to indicate that his self-image was in a process of change. He still saw himself as the 'drummer', the highest calling there was in his eyes. But it would not take much, following his triumph in the trial after the failed putsch, to convert that self-image into the presumption that he was the 'heroic leader' himself.

IV

That was all in the future. Around the beginning of 1923, few, if any, outside the ranks of his most fervent devotees thought seriously of Hitler as Germany's coming 'great leader'. But his rise to star status on Munich's

like them and for them, but tell them what to do. Steal from the Jews. Develop the idea of a messianic idea is coming.

Democracy - they drags out with nobody thinks

political scene – alongside the Hofbrauhaus, the city's only notable curiosity, as one newspaper put it⁸⁹ – meant that individuals from quite outside his normal social circles began to take a keen interest in him.

Two were converts to the party who were able to open up useful new contacts for Hitler. Kurt Lüdecke, a well-connected former gambler, play-boy, and commercial adventurer, a widely-travelled 'man of the world', was 'looking for a leader and a cause' when he first heard Hitler speak at the rally of the 'Patriotic Associations' in Munich in August 1922.⁹⁰ Lüdecke was enthralled. 'My critical faculty was swept away,' he later wrote. 'He was holding the masses, and me with them, under a hypnotic spell by the sheer force of his conviction . . . His appeal to German manhood was like a call to arms, the gospel he preached a sacred truth. He seemed another Luther . . . I experienced an exaltation that could be likened only to religious conversion . . . I had found myself, my leader, and my cause.'⁹¹ According to his own account, Lüdecke used his connections to promote Hitler's standing with General Ludendorff, a war-hero since repulsing the Russian advance into East Prussia in 1914, in effect Germany's dictator during the last two war years, and now the outstanding figure on the radical Right, whose name alone was sufficient to open further doors to Hitler. He also sang Hitler's praises to the former Munich chief of police, already an important Nazi sympathizer and protector, Ernst Pöhner.⁹² Abroad Lüdecke was able to establish contacts just before the 'March on Rome' with Mussolini (who at that time had never heard of Hitler), and in 1923 with Gömbös and other leading figures in Hungary.⁹³ His foreign bank accounts, and sizeable donations he was able to acquire abroad, proved valuable to the party during the hyperinflation of 1923.⁹⁴ He also fitted out and accommodated at his own cost an entire stormtrooper company. Even so, many of Lüdecke's well-placed contacts were impatient at his constant proselytizing for the NSDAP, and quietly dropped him. And within the party, he was unable to overcome dislike and distrust. He was even denounced to the police by Max Amann as a French spy and jailed under false pretences for two months.⁹⁵ By the end of 1923, Lüdecke had used up almost his entire income on behalf of the party.⁹⁶

An even more useful convert was Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl, a six-foot-four-inch-tall, cultured part-American – his mother, a Sedgwick-Heine, was a descendant of two generals who had fought in the Civil War – from an upper-middle-class art-dealer family, Harvard graduate, partner in an art-print publishing firm, and extremely well-connected in Munich *salon* society. Like Lüdecke, his first experience of Hitler was hearing him speak.⁹⁷

Hanfstaengl was greatly impressed. 'Far beyond his electrifying rhetoric he possessed the uncanny gift of combining that every conceivable element – an astonishing spectacle of Hanfstaengl was plainly fascinated in his shabby blue suit, looking with awkward mannerisms, but addressing a mass audience.'⁹⁸ Hitler – not least of his habits and culture (where Hanfstaengl opinionated know-all).¹⁰⁰ On Hitler's awkward use of knife and fork (but snobbishly) his host.¹⁰¹ At the time this virtuoso on the keyboard was catching Hitler sugaring a vintage Hanfstaengl, 'he could have perceived belief in his homespun sincerity'.

Soon, Hitler was a regular guest, gorged himself on cream-cakes, wife, Helena, in his quaint Viennese stride. 'Believe me, he's an husband.'¹⁰⁵ Putzi himself believed sexually impotent, gaining substance from the 'feminine' masses.¹⁰⁶ Hitler especially his ability to play Wagner the tune, marching up and down an orchestra, relaxing visibly in the – his wife even more so. But the above all Hanfstaengl was useful providing openings to circles far removed from Hitler's entourage with Neumaier.¹⁰⁹

Hanfstaengl introduced Hitler to publisher Hugo Bruckmann, a man who had published the works of ingratiating manners and social graces.¹¹⁰ Whether it was the wish to

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o were able to open up useful new all-connected former gambler, playfully-travelled 'man of the world', was when he first heard Hitler speak at the Munich in August 1922.⁹⁰ Lüdecke was swept away,' he later wrote. 'He them, under a hypnotic spell by the appeal to German manhood was like a sacred truth. He seemed another that could be likened only to religious leader, and my cause.'⁹¹ According to connections to promote Hitler's 'war-hero since repulsing the Russian effect Germany's dictator during the ending figure on the radical Right, then further doors to Hitler. He also Munich chief of police, already an actor, Ernst Pohner.⁹² Abroad Lüdecke the 'March on Rome' with Mussolini (Hitler), and in 1923 with Gombös.⁹³ His foreign bank accounts, and abroad, proved valuable to the party also fitted out and accommodated at company. Even so, many of Lüdecke's and his constant proselytizing for the end within the party, he was unable as even denounced to the police by filed under false pretences for two had used up almost his entire income

t 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl, a six-foot-four-inch mother, a Sedgwick-Heine, was a soldier fought in the Civil War – from a lawyer, Harvard graduate, partner in an extremely well-connected in Munich *salon* of Hitler was hearing him speak.⁹⁷

Hanfstaengl was greatly impressed by Hitler's power to sway the masses. 'Far beyond his electrifying rhetoric,' he later wrote, 'this man seemed to possess the uncanny gift of coupling the gnostic yearning of the era for a strong leader-figure with his own missionary claim and to suggest in this merging that every conceivable hope and expectation was capable of fulfilment – an astonishing spectacle of suggestive influence of the mass psyche'⁹⁸

Hanfstaengl was plainly fascinated by the subaltern, petty-bourgeois Hitler in his shabby blue suit, looking part-way between an NCO and a clerk, with awkward mannerisms, but possessing such power as a speaker when addressing a mass audience.⁹⁹ Hanfstaengl remained in part contemptuous of Hitler – not least of his half-baked cliché-ridden judgements on art and culture (where Hanfstaengl was truly at home and Hitler merely an opinionated know-all).¹⁰⁰ On Hitler's first visit to the Hanfstaengl home, 'his awkward use of knife and fork betrayed his background,' wrote (somewhat snobbishly) his host.¹⁰¹ At the same time, Putzi was plainly captivated by this 'virtuoso on the keyboard of the mass psyche'.¹⁰² He was appalled at catching Hitler sugaring a vintage wine he had offered him. But, added Hanfstaengl, 'he could have peppered it, for each naive act increased my belief in his homespun sincerity'.¹⁰³

Soon, Hitler was a regular guest at Hanfstaengl's home, where he regularly gorged himself on cream-cakes, paying court to Hanfstaengl's attractive wife, Helena, in his quaint Viennese style.¹⁰⁴ She took Hitler's attentions in her stride. 'Believe me, he's an absolute neuter, not a man,' she told her husband.¹⁰⁵ Putzi himself believed, for what it was worth, that Hitler was sexually impotent, gaining substitute gratification from his intercourse with the 'feminine' masses.¹⁰⁶ Hitler was taken by Putzi's skills as a pianist, especially his ability to play Wagner. He would accompany Putzi by whistling the tune, marching up and down swinging his arms like the conductor of an orchestra, relaxing visibly in the process.¹⁰⁷ He plainly liked Hanfstaengl – his wife even more so. But the criterion, as always, was usefulness. And above all Hanfstaengl was useful. He became a type of 'social secretary',¹⁰⁸ providing openings to circles far different from the petty-bourgeois rough-necks in Hitler's entourage who gathered each Monday in the Café Neumaier.¹⁰⁹

Hanfstaengl introduced Hitler to Frau Elsa Bruckmann, the wife of the publisher Hugo Bruckmann, a Pan-German sympathizer and antisemite who had published the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Hitler's ingratiating manners and social naivety brought out the mother instinct in her.¹¹⁰ Whether it was the wish to afford him some protection against his

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enemies that persuaded her to make him a present of one of the dog-whips he invariably carried around is not clear. (Oddly, his other dog-whip – the first he possessed – had been given to him by a rival patroness, Frau Helene Bechstein, while a third heavy whip, made from hippopotamus hide, which he later carried, was given to him by Frau Buchner, the landlady of the Platterhof, the hotel where he stayed on the Obersalzberg.¹¹¹) Everyone who was someone in Munich would be invited at some stage to the soirées of Frau Bruckmann, by birth a Rumanian princess, so that Hitler was brought into contact here with industrialists, members of the army and aristocracy, and academics.¹¹² In his gangster hat and trenchcoat over his dinner jacket, touting a pistol and carrying as usual his dog-whip, he cut a bizarre figure in the salons of Munich's upper-crust. But his very eccentricity of dress and exaggerated mannerisms – the affected excessive politeness of one aware of his social inferiority – saw him lionized by condescending hosts and fellow-guests. His social awkwardness and uncertainty, often covered by either silence or tendency to monologues, but at the same time the consciousness of his public success that one could read in his face, made him an oddity, affording him curiosity value among the patronizing cultured and well-to-do pillars of the establishment.¹¹³ 'Weak but wanting to be hard, half-educated wishing to be an all-rounder (universell), a Bohemian who had to be a soldier if he wanted to impress true soldiers. A man mistrustful towards himself and what he was capable of (seine Möglichkeiten), and so full of inferiority-complex towards all who were anything or were on the way to outflank him . . . He was never a gentleman, even later in evening dress,' was how one contemporary, the Freikorps leader Gerhard Roßbach, described Hitler around this time.¹¹⁴

Hitler was also a guest from time to time of the publisher Lehmann, for long a party sympathizer. And the wife of piano manufacturer Bechstein – to whom he had been introduced by Eckart – was another to 'mother' Hitler, as well as lending the party her jewellery as surety against 60,000 Swiss Francs which Hitler was able to borrow from a Berlin coffee merchant in September 1923. The Bechsteins, who usually wintered in Bavaria, used to invite Hitler to their suite in the 'Bayerischer Hof', or to their country residence near Berchtesgaden. Through the Bechsteins, Hitler was introduced to the Wagner circle at Bayreuth.¹¹⁵ He was transfixed at the first visit, in October 1923, to the shrine of his ultimate hero at Haus Wahnfried, where he tiptoed around the former possessions of Richard Wagner in the music-room and library 'as though he were viewing relics in a cathedral'. The Wagners had mixed views of their unusual guest, who had turned up looking

'rather common' in his trad woollen socks, red and blue Winifred, the English-born wife 'destined to be the saviour of fraud and an upstart'.¹¹⁶

The rapid growth in the party in 1923 that had made it a power with the 'patriotic associations' arose meant that funding flow been the case in its first years party's finances relied heavily entrance-fees and collections the more were recruited as means to permit yet more meetings to

But even now, the party's funding was not easy to drum fund-raising trip that Hitler appointing in its yield.¹¹⁹ Party mouth operation.¹²⁰ Hitler was supporters for donations. But immediately devalued through was a premium, therefore, on Lüdecke and Hanfstaengl, a Hanfstaengl also financed with fortune in inflation-ridden Germany that enabled the *Völkischer I* format.¹²² Rumours, some false were repeatedly aired by opponents in 1923 revealed considerable benefactors.

One important go-between in Riga, linguistically able, a war, and later imprisoned in the Baltic. After the war he had many counter-revolutionaries the NSDAP in autumn 1920 Nazi Party, he used his excellent Princess Alexandra, wife of the acquire funds directed at Lu-

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Winifred, the English-born wife of Wagner's son Siegfried, thought he was
'destined to be the saviour of Germany'. Siegfried himself saw Hitler as 'a
fraud and an upstart'.¹¹⁶

The rapid growth in the party during the latter part of 1922 and especially
in 1923 that had made it a political force in Munich, its closer connections
with the 'patriotic associations', and the wider social contacts which now
arose meant that funding flowed more readily to the NSDAP than had
been the case in its first years. Now, as would be the case later, the
party's finances relied heavily upon members' subscriptions together with
entrance-fees and collections at meetings.¹¹⁷ The more came to meetings,
the more were recruited as members, the more income came to the party,
to permit yet more meetings to be held. Propaganda financed propaganda.¹¹⁸

But even now, the party's heavy outgoings were difficult to meet, and
funding was not easy to drum up in conditions of rip-roaring inflation. A
fund-raising trip that Hitler made to Berlin in April 1922 proved dis-
appointing in its yield.¹¹⁹ Party finances were still in many respects a hand-to-
mouth operation.¹²⁰ Hitler was constantly seeking to tap party friends and
supporters for donations. But any payment in Marks, however large, was
immediately devalued through the galloping currency depreciation.¹²¹ There
was a premium, therefore, on donations made in hard foreign currency
Lüdecke and Hanfstaengl, as already noted, were useful in this regard.
Hanfstaengl also financed with an interest-free loan of 1,000 dollars – a
fortune in inflation-ridden Germany – the purchase of two rotary presses
that enabled the *Völkischer Beobachter* to appear in larger, American-style
format.¹²² Rumours, some far wide of the mark, about the party's finances
were repeatedly aired by opponents in the press. Even so, official inquiries
in 1923 revealed considerable sums raised from an increasing array of
benefactors.

One important go-between was Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, born
in Riga, linguistically able, with diplomatic service in Turkey during the
war, and later imprisoned for a time by Communists on his return to the
Baltic. After the war he had participated in the Kapp Putsch, then, like so
many counter-revolutionaries, made his way to Munich, where he joined
the NSDAP in autumn 1920.¹²³ A significant, if shadowy, figure in the early
Nazi Party, he used his excellent connections with Russian emigrés, such as
Princess Alexandra, wife of the Russian heir to the throne Prince Kyrill, to
acquire funds directed at Ludendorff and, through him, deflected in part to

* "He's awful, he's ersatz, he is so vulgar."
"You are wrong darling, he will be
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His movie dealer.

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the NSDAP. Other members of the aristocracy, including Frau Gertrud von Seidlitz, who used monies from foreign stocks and shares, also contributed to Nazi funds.¹²⁴ Hitler was almost certainly a co-beneficiary (though probably in a minor way) of the generous gift of 100,000 Gold Marks made by Fritz Thyssen, heir to the family's Ruhr steelworks, to Ludendorff, but Germany's leading industrialists, apart from Ernst von Borsig, head of the Berlin locomotive and machine-building firm, showed little direct interest in the Nazis at this time.¹²⁵ Police inquiries which remained inconclusive suggested that Borsig and car-manufacturers Daimler were among other firms contributing to the party.¹²⁶ Some Bavarian industrialists and businessmen, too, were persuaded by Hitler to make donations to the movement.¹²⁷

Valuable funds were also obtained abroad. Anti-Marxism and the hopes in a strong Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism often provided motive enough for such donations. The *Völkischer Beobachter's* new offices were financed with Czech Kronen.¹²⁸ An important link with Swiss funds was Dr Emil Gansser, a Berlin chemist and long-standing Nazi supporter, who engineered a gift of 33,000 Swiss Francs from right-wing Swiss benefactors.¹²⁹ Further Swiss donations followed a visit from Hitler himself to Zürich in the summer of 1923.¹³⁰ And from right-wing circles in the arch-enemy France, 90,000 Gold Marks were passed to Captain Karl Mayr, Hitler's first patron, and from him to the 'patriotic associations'. It can be presumed that the NSDAP was among the beneficiaries. In addition to monetary donations, Rohm saw to it that the SA, along with other paramilitary organizations, was well provided with equipment and weapons from his secret arsenal.¹³¹ Whatever the financial support, without Rohm's supplies an armed putsch would scarcely have been possible.

In November 1922, rumours were already circulating that Hitler was planning a putsch.¹³² By January 1923, in the explosive climate following the French march into the Ruhr, the rumours in Munich of a Hitler putsch were even stronger.¹³³ The crisis, without which Hitler would have been nothing, was deepening by the day. In its wake, the Nazi movement was expanding rapidly. Some 35,000 were to join between February and November 1923, giving a strength of around 55,000 on the eve of the putsch.

Recruits came from all sections of society. Around a third were workers, a tenth or more came from the upper-middle and professional classes, but more than half belonged to the crafts, commercial, white-collar, and farming lower-middle class.¹³⁴ Most had joined the party out of protest, anger, and bitterness as the economic and political crisis mounted. The same was true

of the thousands flocking to promising them action. The revolution would be overtaken indefinitely without unleashing was not simply a characteristic leadership, his political aim control of events as they unfolded: the leading player in the drama and organizations to contend had no stage on which to act and reactions – have to be

Hitler's incessant barrage undermined by an event that involved occupation of the Ruhr. C seemed to be acting firmly

The request by the government a moratorium for two years turned down by the allied powers of December. Germany had wood – it owed 200,000 marks 65,000 metres – and coal compared with payments of amount. But 135,000 metres and Belgian troops on 11 January coal deliveries. Germany was that crossed all social and political from Social Democrats to invoking the 'Burgfrieden' fever class conflict and in sense of national accord – had expression of the depth of government declared a coal occupation. 14 January was The gunning-down by French nationalists – of workers

of the thousands flocking into the SA. Hitler had won their support by promising them action. The sacrifices of the war would be avenged. The revolution would be overturned.¹³⁵ He could not hold them at fever-pitch indefinitely without unleashing such action. The tendency to 'go for broke' was not simply a character-trait of Hitler; it was built into the nature of his leadership, his political aims, and the party he led. But Hitler was not in control of events as they unfolded in 1923. Nor was he, before 8 November, the leading player in the drama. Without the readiness of powerful figures and organizations to contemplate a putsch against Berlin, Hitler would have had no stage on which to act so disastrously. His own role, his actions – and reactions – have to be seen in that light.

V

Hitler's incessant barrage of anti-government propaganda was nearly undermined by an event that invoked national unity in January 1923: the French occupation of the Ruhr. On this occasion at least, the Reich government seemed to be acting firmly – and acting with mass popular support.

The request by the government of Reich Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno for a moratorium for two years on reparations payments in money had been turned down by the allied heads of government meeting in Paris at the end of December. Germany had fallen behind in its reparations payments in wood – it owed 200,000 metres of telegraph poles and had delivered only 65,000 metres – and coal deliveries to the tune of 24 million Gold Marks. Compared with payments made of 1,480 million Gold Marks it was a trivial amount. But 135,000 metres of missing telegraph poles sufficed for French and Belgian troops on 11 January to march into the Ruhr district to ensure coal deliveries. Germany was gripped by an elemental wave of national fury that crossed all social and political divides. A 'national unity front' stretching from Social Democrats to German Nationals was founded.¹³⁶ The unity – invoking the '*Burgfrieden*' (civil truce) of 1914, when in the wake of war fever class conflict and internal disputes had temporarily given way to a sense of national accord – had little chance of lasting. But it was an immediate expression of the depth of feeling in the country. On 13 January the Reich government declared a campaign of 'passive resistance' against the Ruhr occupation. 14 January was to be a day of mourning throughout Germany. The gunning-down by French soldiers – possibly provoked by German nationalists – of workers in the Krupp factory at Essen on 31 March,

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leaving thirteen dead and forty-one wounded, was the worst of numerous confrontations that wildly inflamed an already overheated situation.¹³⁷ The policy of 'passive resistance' was, therefore, certain of widespread public support. For radical nationalists, it did not, however, go nearly far enough. Disbanded *Freikorps* groups were reinstated again, with the clandestine help of the *Reichswehr*. Acts of sabotage were carried out in the occupied zone, again supported by the army.¹³⁸ The extent and vehemence of the opposition to the Ruhr occupation posed, nevertheless, a problem for the National Socialists. The popular protest threatened to take the wind out of their sails. Attacks on a Berlin government engaged in protest at the Ruhr occupation were not guaranteed to have mass appeal.¹³⁹ Undeterred, Hitler saw advantage to be gained from the French occupation.¹⁴⁰ As usual, he went on a propaganda offensive.

On the very day of the French march into the Ruhr he spoke in a packed Circus Krone. 'Down with the November Criminals' was the title of his speech. It was not the first time he had used the term 'November Criminals' to describe the Social Democrat revolutionaries of 1918. But from now on, the slogan was seldom far from his lips.¹⁴¹ It showed the line he would take towards the Ruhr occupation. The real enemy was within. 'The German rebirth is externally only possible when the criminals are faced with their responsibility and delivered to their just fate,' he declared.¹⁴² Marxism, democracy, parliamentarism, internationalism, and, of course, behind it all the power of the Jews, were held by Hitler to blame for the national defencelessness that allowed the French to treat Germany like a colony.¹⁴³ Hitler poured scorn on the newly proclaimed 'national unity'. He announced that any party members involved in active resistance to the occupation would be expelled.¹⁴⁴ His own supporters were temporarily taken aback. 'But the tactic worked.

The propaganda offensive was stepped up with preparations for the NSDAP's first 'Reich Party Rally', scheduled to take place in Munich on 27–9 January. It brought confrontation with the Bavarian government, so frightened about rumours of a putsch that on 26 January it declared a state of emergency in Munich, but so weak that it lacked the power to carry through its intended ban on the rally.¹⁴⁵ Hitler was beside himself with rage when told the rally was prohibited. For him, as usual, there could be no retreat. He promised to go ahead despite the ban, and threatened disturbances of the peace and possibly bloodshed. He was prepared, he declared, somewhat melodramatically, to stand in the front row when the shots were fired.¹⁴⁶ It needed Röhm to calm him down and put forward a

more constructive approach. aid. Röhm persuaded Epp Reichswehr Division, station Lossow, to come down on Hitler to an audience with Lossow. rally, and promised on his attempted. Hitler and Röhm President of Upper Bavaria, w President Eduard Nortz. Hitler twelve mass meetings – all of that had been arranged as well SA standards on the Marsfeld Munich, on 28 January in front the party had fewer friends in firm, it would, as Ernst Röhm prestige.¹⁴⁸ As it was, thanks to another propaganda triumph.

At the meetings during the confident, certain of success, rally had been devised in the fi of the German freedom-mov. devised to sustain maximum off. According to a newspaper when he entered the Festsaal o speeches in the evening of 27 J Löwenbräukeller the same eve as he entered the hall, deliber outstretched in the salute – pr (and by them from Imperial Rc Movement by 1926.¹⁵¹ It was an von Müller, to the diffident gatherings.¹⁵²

Hitler's near-exclusive concentration on the SA as the main paramilitary approach, while the latter's emergence as a threat to Hitler's authority.¹⁵³ In breaking with Pittringer, Rohm and the Patriotic Fighting Associations' (Kampfverbände) comprising, Reichsflagge, Wikingbund, and

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more constructive approach. The Reichswehr once more came to Hitler's aid. Röhm persuaded Epp to prevail upon the commander of the 7th Reichswehr Division, stationed in Bavaria, General Otto Hermann von Lossow, to come down on Hitler's side. Röhm was ordered to bring Hitler to an audience with Lossow. Hitler guaranteed the peaceful conduct of the rally, and promised on his 'word of honour' that no putsch would be attempted. Hitler and Röhm then hastened to Kahr, at the time Government President of Upper Bavaria, who also offered his support, as did the Police President Eduard Nortz. Hitler was given permission to go ahead with the twelve mass meetings – all of which he addressed on the same evening – that had been arranged as well as the theatrical display of the dedication of SA standards on the Marsfeld, a big parade-ground close to the centre of Munich, on 28 January in front of 6,000 uniformed stormtroopers.¹⁴⁷ Had the party had fewer friends in high places, and had the government held firm, it would, as Ernst Röhm recognized, have been a heavy blow to Hitler's prestige.¹⁴⁸ As it was, thanks to the Bavarian authorities, he could celebrate another propaganda triumph.

At the meetings during the rally, Hitler could once more appear self-confident, certain of success, to the masses of his supporters. The whole rally had been devised in the form of a ritual homage-paying to the 'leader of the German freedom-movement'.¹⁴⁹ The leadership cult, consciously devised to sustain maximum cohesion within the party, was taking off. According to a newspaper report, Hitler was greeted 'like a saviour' when he entered the Festsaal of the Hofbräuhaus during one of his twelve speeches in the evening of 27 January.¹⁵⁰ In the feverish atmosphere in the Löwenbräukeller the same evening, he was given a similar hero's welcome as he entered the hall, deliberately late, shielded by his bodyguard, arm outstretched in the salute – probably borrowed from the Italian Fascists (and by them from Imperial Rome) – which would become standard in the Movement by 1926.¹⁵¹ It was an unrecognizable Hitler, noted Karl Alexander von Müller, to the diffident individual he had encountered in private gatherings.¹⁵²

Hitler's near-exclusive concentration on propaganda was not Röhm's approach, while the latter's emphasis on the paramilitary posed a latent threat to Hitler's authority.¹⁵³ At the beginning of February, directly after breaking with Pittinger, Röhm founded a 'Working Community of the Patriotic Fighting Associations' (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Vaterländischen Kampfverbände) comprising, alongside the SA, the Bund Oberland, Reichsflagge, Wikingbund, and Kampfverband Niederbayern.¹⁵⁴ The direct

* O.T. I had pondered this gesture for
some time. It needed to be splendid
and just slightly absurd + suited
to the occasion.

Röhm

P. T.

military control was in the hands of retired Oberstleutnant Hermann Kriebel, previously a chief of staff in the Bavarian Einwohnerwehr and Organisation Escherich (or Orgesch).¹⁵⁵ The formations were trained by the Bavarian Reichswehr – not for incorporation in any defence against further inroads by the French and Belgians (the threat of which was by this time plainly receding), but evidently for the eventuality of conflict with Berlin.¹⁵⁶ Once subsumed in this umbrella organization, the SA was far from the biggest paramilitary grouping and there was little to distinguish it from the other bodies.¹⁵⁷ In a purely military organization, it had only a subordinate role.¹⁵⁸ The conversion of the SA to a paramilitary organization now not directly or

* solely under his own control was not to Hitler's liking. But there was nothing he could do about it.¹⁵⁹ However, Hitler was pushed by Röhm into the fore-

ground of the political leadership of the 'Working Community'. He it was who was asked by Röhm to define the political aims of the 'Working Community'.¹⁶⁰ He was now moving in high circles indeed. In early 1923 he was brought into contact by Röhm with no less than the Chief of the Army Command (*Chef der Heeresleitung*) of the Reichswehr, General Hans von Seeckt (who remained, however, distinctly unimpressed by the Munich demagogue, and unprepared to commit himself to the demands for radical action in the Ruhr conflict for which Hitler was pressing).¹⁶¹ Röhm also insisted to the new Bavarian Commander, Lossow, that Hitler's movement, with its aim of winning over the workers to the national cause, offered the best potential for building a 'patriotic fighting front' to overturn the November Revolution.¹⁶²

reclm
Connected with all the strands of nationalist paramilitary politics, if openly directing none, was the figure of General Ludendorff, regarded generally as the symbolic leader of the radical nationalist Right. The former war-hero had returned to Germany from his Swedish exile in February 1919, taking up residence in Munich. His radical *volkisch* nationalism, detestation of the new Republic, and prominent advocacy of the 'stab-in-the-back' legend, had already taken him effortlessly into the slipstream of the Pan-Germans, brought him fringe participation in the Kapp Putsch, and now led to his close involvement with the counter-revolutionary extreme Right, for whom his reputation and standing were a notable asset. The horbed of Munich's *volkisch* and paramilitary politics provided the setting within which, remarkably, the famous Quartermaster-General, virtual dictator of Germany and chief driving-force of the war effort between 1916 and 1918, could come into close contact and direct collaboration with the former army corporal, Adolf Hitler. Even more remarkable was the rapidity with which, in the new world of rabble-rousing politics to which General Ludendorff

was ill-attuned, the ex-corporal commander as the leading spok

Hitler had been first brought in May 1921, since when the g doors for him.¹⁶³ At a meeting brought the leaders of the north with Hitler and Röhm's spokes Heiß, leader of the Reichsflagge French imminent, demanded si Despite his public stance, Hi Jungdeutscher Orden, rejecte organizations at the behest of away nevertheless sorely disaj non-committal Seeckt in Marc of the Reichswehr, Lossow, a latter that Bavaria should then the Reich.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the which Hitler had agreed with with other paramilitary band preparation for mobilization.

The paramilitary politics occupation of the Ruhr, were c But, largely through Röhm's had been brought into the ar military as well as paramilita Reich. He was now a player moves of other, more powerfu agitation could mobilize su at fever-pitch indefinitely. In 'all-or-nothing' stance, was described the military trainin the 'motive of absolute attra factors that finally forced a restraining people whose hea after night, morning after 1 "When's it going to happen, that lot (*die Bande*) out?" T week out, and that was one (*(unseres späteren Auswirke*

* How sleepless this made him, Röhm frightened him at both ends — his heart and his asshole

make itself felt (*sich auswirken*)

confrontation with the Bavarian time a serious loss of face for parade of the socialists through d been approved by the police, right provocation. In Munich, mbolic day of socialism. It was liberation' of the city from the c), the short-lived Soviet-style as trouble could, therefore, be uch a clash seemed very likely. een a serious shooting incident nists and National Socialists on tion, the Social Democrats had d, though their proposal, put to een duly defeated. But above all, As Georg Escherich, the former Radicals in Munich are looking

could not be kept in a state of He proposed a national demon- ck on the 'Reds'.¹⁷⁰ Increasingly nces, the Munich police revoked , and now confined permission ition on the spacious Theresien- 1 putsch from the Left, almost erved as a pretext for a 'defence' ided 'their' weapons back from hswehr. But on the afternoon of aders, Lossow, concerned about sed to hand over the armaments. breach of trust.¹⁷² But there was nfident. And this time, for once, ll that could be salvaged was a 2,000 men from the paramilitary d Socialists – on the Oberwiesen- , well away from the May Day rdon of police. Tame exercises

carried out with arms distributed from Röhm's arsenal were no substitute for the planned assault on the Left. After standing around for much of the time since dawn holding their rifles and facing the police, the men handed back their arms around two o'clock and dispersed. Many had left already. There were one or two skirmishes reported in the city. In the most serious, a group of workers on their way home from the left-wing demonstration were set upon and beaten up by SA men leaving the Oberwiesenfeld. The police did not intervene.¹⁷³ Compared with the bloodshed that might have taken place, it was of minor significance. The May Day rally on the Theresienwiese, with its 25,000 participants, had ended without incident around midday.

Most of those taking part had already left to attend the May Day celebrations in the Hirschgarten, a large beer-garden two or three miles to the west of the city centre, that afternoon. Attended by an estimated 30,000 socialists, these passed without incident.¹⁷⁴ Hitler made virtue out of necessity at a packed meeting that evening in the Circus Krone. He announced to huge applause that the day had been a special one in bringing about an alliance of National Socialists with Bund Oberland, Bund Blücher, Reichsflagge, and Wikingbund. Otherwise he had to resort to his usual attacks on Jews, socialists and the International, appealing, according to a police report, to the basest instincts of the masses in such an antisemitic tirade – denouncing the Jews as 'racial tuberculosis' – that it prompted a 'pogrom mood'.¹⁷⁵ That was Hitler's way of rebounding from a setback. It fooled few people outside Nazi fanatics. Most recognized the events of May Day to have been a severe embarrassment for Hitler and his followers. The Württemberg ambassador reported the frequently expressed view that Hitler's star was now on the wane.¹⁷⁶

The Bavarian Minister President, Eugen von Knilling, had commented in April that 'the enemy stands Left, but the danger [stands] on the Right'.¹⁷⁷ The remark typified the hopeless attempt by the BVP-led government to steer a middling course in the crisis. Its weak and vacillating stance was, as Knilling's comment suggests, based upon the need to head off the menace of a right-wing putsch, but at the same time on a rooted fear of the Left – even of the moderate Majority Social Democrats. The May Day affair ought to have shown the government that firm and resolute action could defeat Hitler. But by this time, the Bavarian government had long since ruled out any potential for working together with the democratic forces on the Left. It was permanently at loggerheads with the Reich government. And it had no effective control over its own army leaders, who were playing their own

game. It was little wonder in this context that it was buffered in all directions. Incapable of tackling the problem of the radical Right because both will and power were ultimately lacking to do so, it allowed the Hitler movement the space to recover from the temporary setback of 1 May.¹⁷⁸

But above all, the lesson of 1 May was that Hitler was powerless without the support of the Reichswehr. In January, when the Party Rally had been initially banned, then allowed to go ahead, Lossow's permission had given Hitler the chance to escape the blow to his prestige. Now, on 1 May, Lossow's refusal had prevented Hitler's planned propaganda triumph. Deprived of his lifeblood – regular outlets for his propaganda – the main base of Hitler's effectiveness would have been undermined. But the Bavarian Reichswehr was to remain largely an independent variable in the equation of Bavarian politics in the latter part of 1923. And the part accommodating, part vacillating attitude of the Bavarian authorities to the radical Right, driven by fierce anti-socialism linked to its antagonism towards Berlin, ensured that the momentum of Hitler's movement was not seriously checked by the May Day events.¹⁷⁹ Hitler could, in fact, have been taken out of circulation altogether for up to two years, had charges of breach of the peace, arising from the May Day incidents, been pressed. But the Bavarian Justice Minister Franz Gürtner saw to it that the inquiries never came to formal charges – after Hitler had threatened to reveal details of Reichswehr complicity in the training and arming of the paramilitaries in preparation for a war against France – and the matter was quietly dropped.¹⁸⁰

For his part, Hitler continued unabated his relentless agitation against the 'November criminals' during the summer of 1923. The fierce animosity towards Berlin, now as before providing a bond between the otherwise competing sections of the Right, ensured that his message of hatred and revenge towards internal as well as external enemies would not be short of an audience.¹⁸¹ He alone remained able to fill the cavernous Circus Krone. Between May and the beginning of August he addressed five overfilled meetings there, and also spoke at another ten party meetings elsewhere in Bavaria.¹⁸² Relations with the Bavarian authorities, for all their tolerance towards the NSDAP, remained tense. Unlike the leaders of some of the paramilitary organizations, Hitler refused to let the SA serve as auxiliary police. That would have been to compromise his freedom of action towards the Bavarian state.¹⁸³ At the Deutsches Turnfest (Rally of German Gymnastic Organizations) in Munich on 14 July, it came to violent clashes between the SA and the police as the Nazi formations, leaving the meeting at the Circus Krone, disobeyed police orders prohibiting the display of party

banners.¹⁸⁴ Such confrontations themselves of alleged assassins their purpose of keeping the 1 Hitler was aware that agitation indefinitely. Outside observers to activism to which so many does not come to action with ambassador in Munich on 30 1 He needed most of all the support the cooperation of the other 1 of paramilitary politics, he was continued to pour into the SA 1 ment of 1 May, Hitler was for the end of May for a while to Berchtesgaden.¹⁸⁸ Among the 'national associations', Ludendorff the 'national struggle'. Hitler spokesmen. In the case of disagreement superiority.¹⁸⁹

The former World War hero (German Day) in Nuremberg 1 police reckoned 100,000 were and veterans' associations 1 German victory over France 1 the Reichsflagge, the National 1 The enormous propaganda 1 of the speakers, to repair the 1 At the two-hour march-past 1 General Ludendorff, Prinz Lud 1 head of the 'patriotic association

What came out of the rally Oberland, and the Reichsflagge (German Combat League). When Hitler's man Scheubner-Richter later, thanks to Röhm's machinations of the heads of the other paramilitary of the Kampfbund.¹⁹⁴

What this meant in practice dictator in the umbrella organization

notions about a future dictator in the 'coming Germany', that position was envisaged as Ludendorff's.¹⁹⁵ For Hitler, 'political leadership' seems to have indicated the subordination of paramilitary politics to the building of a revolutionary mass movement through nationalist propaganda and agitation. But for the leaders of the formations, the 'primacy of the soldier' – the professionals like Rohm and Kriebel – was what still counted. Hitler was seen as a type of 'political instructor'.¹⁹⁶ He could whip up the feelings of the masses like no one else. But beyond that he had no clear idea of the mechanics of attaining power. Cooler heads were needed for that. As an 'Action Programme' of the Kampfbund drawn up by Scheubner-Richter on 24 September made plain, the 'national revolution' in Bavaria had to follow, not precede, the winning over of the army and police, the forces that sustained the power of the state. Scheubner-Richter concluded that it was necessary to take over the police in a formally legal fashion by placing Kampfbund leaders in charge of the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior and the Munich police.¹⁹⁷ Hitler, like his partners in the Kampfbund, knew that an attempt at a putsch in the teeth of opposition from the forces of the military and police in Bavaria stood little chance of success.¹⁹⁸ But for the time being his approach, as ever, was to go on a frontal propaganda offensive against the Bavarian government. His position within the Kampfbund now ensured that the pressure to act – even without a clear strategy for the practical steps needed to gain control of the state – would not relent.

VI

Crisis was Hitler's oxygen. He needed it to survive. And the deteriorating conditions in Germany (with their distinctive flavour in Bavaria) as summer turned to autumn, and the currency collapsed totally under the impact of the 'passive resistance' policy, guaranteed an increasing appeal for Hitler's brand of agitation. By the time he took over the political leadership of the Kampfbund, Germany's searing crisis was heading for its denouement.

By 13 August, when the leader of the DVP Gustav Stresemann – former ardent monarchist and wartime annexationist turned pragmatic Republican – replaced Cuno as Reich Chancellor, taking over the Foreign Ministry at the same time – it was obvious that passive resistance by the shaky Republic had to be ended. It was an inevitable capitulation to the French. The country was bankrupt, its currency ruined. Inflation had gone into a dizzy tailspin. Where there had been 4.20 Marks to the dollar on the eve of the First World

War, there were 17,972 Marks in 98,860,000 Marks in September, credible 4,200,000 million Mark kilo of butter was costing 168 r buying the *Völkischer Beobachter* Marks.¹⁹⁹

Speculators and profiteers thrived on hyper-inflation for ordinary people's effects incalculable. Savings of insurance policies were not worth pensions and fixed incomes into worthlessness. Workers were to prevent social unrest, agreed wages. Even so, it was little wonder that sharp political radicalization on the inspired strikes rocked the country. Democrats into the Stresemann 'g' effect on the working class, which the most part loyal to the SPD. In this was seen as another provocation: strength and potential, the Communist Thuringia and Saxony after they had of these states. In Hamburg, where and keen to become the centre of the – manifesting itself mainly in attacks take place between 23 and 26 C Communists and seventeen police Germany, the Reich government in danger of Communist insurgency sent in by the Reich government extreme Right.²⁰¹ The Thuringian gisters withdrew from government. refused to disband the paramilitary force was needed. Twenty-three per in one Saxon town when troops of shooting in a number of other towns allegedly at gunpoint.²⁰² The proclamation at the first show of government 'German October' did not, however

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ming Germany', that position was political leadership' seems to have tary politics to the building of a rationalist propaganda and agita- i, the 'primacy of the soldier' - the /as what still counted. Hitler was He could whip up the feelings of that he had no clear idea of the ads were needed for that. As an rawn up by Scheubner-Richter on volution' in Bavaria had to follow, rmy and police, the forces that er-Richter concluded that it was omally legal fashion by placing rian Ministry of the Interior and ers in the Kampfbund, knew that pposition from the forces of the : chance of success.¹⁹⁸ But for the on a frontal propaganda offensive ition within the Kampfbund now without a clear strategy for the he state - would not relent.

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War, there were 17,972 Marks in January 1923, 4,620,455 Marks in August, 98,860,000 Marks in September, 25,260,280,000 in October, and a barely credible 4,200,000 million Marks by 15 November. By mid-September, a kilo of butter was costing 168 million Marks. For Nazi Party members, buying the *Volkscher Beobachter* on the day of the putsch cost 5,000 million Marks.¹⁹⁹

Speculators and profiteers thrived. But the material consequences of the hyper-inflation for ordinary people were devastating, the psychological effects incalculable. Savings of a lifetime were wiped out within hours. Insurance policies were not worth the paper they were written on. Those with pensions and fixed incomes saw their only source of support dissolve into worthlessness. Workers were initially less badly hit. Employers, eager to prevent social unrest, agreed with trade unions to index wages to living costs. Even so, it was little wonder that the massive discontent brought sharp political radicalization on the Left as well as on the Right. Communist-inspired strikes rocked the country in the summer. The entry of the Social Democrats into the Stresemann 'grand coalition' had a temporary calming effect on the working class, which remained despite the radicalization for the most part loyal to the SPD. But for nationalists, not least in Bavaria, this was seen as another provocation. On the Left, overestimating their strength and potential, the Communists planned revolutionary uprisings in Thuringia and Saxony after they had quite legally entered the governments of these states. In Hamburg, where the local party was thirsting for action and keen to become the centre of the German revolution, a short-lived rising - manifesting itself mainly in attacks on police stations - did actually take place between 23 and 26 October. It ended bloodily: twenty-four Communists and seventeen policemen were left its victims.²⁰⁰ In central Germany, the Reich government moved swiftly. By the end of October, any danger of Communist insurgency had been suppressed by the Reichswehr, sent in by the Reich government with an alacrity not shown against the extreme Right.²⁰¹ The Thuringian government yielded; the Communist ministers withdrew from government. In Saxony, where the state government refused to disband the paramilitary units that had been set up, a show of force was needed. Twenty-three persons were left dead and thirty-one injured in one Saxon town when troops opened fire on demonstrators. There was shooting in a number of other towns. The elected government was deposed, allegedly at gunpoint.²⁰² The proclaimed threat from the Left had fizzled out at the first show of government force. The failure of the KPD's planned 'German October' did not, however, prevent the extreme Right, especially

in Bavaria, continuing to use the 'red threat' in Middle Germany as a pretext for schemes to march on Berlin.

Bavaria's immediate response to the ending of passive resistance on 26 September was to proclaim a state of emergency and make Gustav Ritter von Kahr General State Commissar with near-dictatorial powers. Knilling hoped to take the wind out of Hitler's sails by putting the so-called Bavarian strong man Kahr in charge.²⁰¹ The reaction of the NSDAP indicated that the party felt Kahr's appointment to have been in reality a blow to its hopes of seizing power.²⁰⁴ The Reich responded with the declaration of a general state of emergency and the granting of emergency powers to the Reichswehr. One of Kahr's first acts was to ban – amid renewed putsch rumours – the fourteen meetings which the NSDAP had planned for the evening of 27 September. Hitler was in a frenzy of rage.²⁰⁵ He felt bypassed by the manoeuvre to bring in Kahr, and certain that the head of the Bavarian state was not the man to lead a national revolution. Alongside attacks on the Reich government for betraying the national resistance – a contrary, though more popular, line to that he had taken earlier in the year towards the policy of passive resistance – Hitler now turned his fire on Kahr.²⁰⁶

The weeks following Kahr's appointment were filled with plot, intrigue, and tension which mounted to fever-pitch. The mood of the people, according to police reports, was one of expectancy. Conditions were appalling in Bavaria, as in the rest of the country. 'Unemployment and hunger stand like threatening ghosts at many doors,' ran a report from Swabia in the second half of August.²⁰⁷ A report from Franconia indicated the level of distress there: black bread cost 1,000 million Marks a pound; unemployment was rapidly rising; industry had no orders; large numbers of people were unable to feed themselves; the government could not even pay its own employees.²⁰⁸ It was reported from Upper Bavaria that the mood was comparable with that of November 1918 and April 1919.²⁰⁹ Growing hatred of foreigners, profiteers and those in government was noted in the same region.²¹⁰ The Munich police registered a worsening mood by September, looking for an outlet in some sort of action. Political meetings were, however, not well attended because of the high entry charges and the price of beer. Only the Nazis could continue to fill the beerhalls.²¹¹ As rumours of a forthcoming putsch continued to circulate, there was a feeling that something would have to happen soon.²¹²

Hitler was under pressure to act. The leader of the Munich SA regiment, Wilhelm Bruckner, told him: 'The day is coming when I can no longer hold my people. If nothing happens now the men will sneak away.'²¹³

Scheubner-Richter said much the one must finally undertake some Left radicals.²¹⁴ Hitler himself wrote to the Landespolizei Colonel in November: 'Economic pressure: or our followers will swing to fashion retrospectively, days after the fact in Landsberg: 'The Kam have been held back any longer for so long, and been trained to see something really tangible... become discontented. There was falling apart.'²¹⁶ Hitler's instinct as possible. The favourable circle could not last indefinitely. He was And his own prestige would have dissipated, or if the movement May.

However, the cards were in the hands of the triumvirate which chief Seißer and Reichswehr which differed in significant details. In extensive negotiations with the triumvirate was looking to based on a directorate, with or without the inclusion of Luder of the Reichswehr. The Kampf a directorate in Munich, centred on Kahr, which would take Berlin granted that any move against by the military, the Kampf operation with Reichswehr by military leader, Oberstleutnant any attempts by the Bavarian 'patriotic associations'. Hitler subjecting the latter on 24 October Neither was persuaded to the position of Lossow – with a ambiguous and wavering.²¹⁷

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the men will sneak away.²¹³

Scheubner-Richter said much the same: 'In order to keep the men together, one must finally undertake something. Otherwise the people will become Left radicals.'²¹⁴ Hitler himself used almost the identical argument with head of the Landespolizei Colonel Hans Ritter von Seißer at the beginning of November: 'Economic pressures drive our people so that we must either act or our followers will swing to the Communists.'²¹⁵ He argued in similar fashion retrospectively, days after the putsch's failure, during his first interrogation in Landsberg: 'The Kampfbund people had pressed. They could not have been held back any longer. They had been given prospect of action for so long, and been trained for so long, that finally they had wanted to see something really tangible . . . There was also no more money. People had become discontented. There would have been the danger of the Kampfbund falling apart.'²¹⁶ Hitler's instincts were in any case to force the issue as soon as possible. The favourable circumstances of the comprehensive state crisis could not last indefinitely. He was determined not to be outflanked by Kahr. And his own prestige would wane if nothing was attempted and enthusiasm dissipated, or if the movement were faced down again as it had been on 1 May.

However, the cards were not in his hands. Kahr and the two other members of the triumvirate which was effectively ruling Bavaria (State Police chief Seißer and Reichswehr commander Lossow) had their own agenda, which differed in significant detail from that of the Kampfbund leadership. In extensive negotiations with north German contacts throughout October, the triumvirate was looking to install a nationalist dictatorship in Berlin based on a directorate, with or without Kahr as a member but certainly without the inclusion of Ludendorff or Hitler, and resting on the support of the Reichswehr. The Kampfbund leadership, on the other hand, wanted a directorate in Munich, centring on Ludendorff and Hitler, certainly without Kahr, which would take Berlin by force. And while Lossow took it for granted that any move against the Berlin government would be carried out by the military, the Kampfbund presumed that it would be a paramilitary operation with Reichswehr backing. If need be, declared the Kampfbund military leader, Oberstleutnant Kriebel, the Kampfbund would even resist any attempts by the Bavarian government to use armed force against the 'patriotic associations'. Hitler did his best to win over Lossow and Seißer, subjecting the latter on 24 October to a four-hour lecture on his aims. Neither was persuaded to throw in his lot with the Kampfbund, though the position of Lossow – with chief responsibility for order in Bavaria – was ambiguous and wavering.²¹⁷

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At a meeting he called of paramilitary leaders on 24 October, Lossow spoke – presumably with Mussolini's 'March on Rome' in mind – in favour of a march on Berlin and the proclamation of a national dictatorship.²¹⁸ But actually, both he and Seißer temporized – offering token and conditional support to the Kampfbund, though in reality reserving their position.²¹⁹ By the end of October, the stand-off between the triumvirate and the Kampfbund was much as it had been at the beginning of the month.²²⁰ But the atmosphere was even more fevered. The Bavarian authorities regarded the dangers of a putsch by Hitler as particularly great, and feared that disillusioned supporters of Kahr would swing over to him, that he would take over the government in Munich, and would immediately set out on his march on Berlin.²²¹ The authorities were not over-reacting. There were indications that the Kampfbund intended to act on 4 November, the day when Munich's war memorial would be dedicated before civic and military dignitaries.²²² However, if such plans were seriously envisaged, they were rapidly called off.²²³

At the beginning of November, Seißer was sent to Berlin to conduct negotiations on behalf of the triumvirate with a number of important contacts, most vitally with Seeckt. The Reichswehr chief made plain at the meeting on 3 November that he would not move against the legal government in Berlin.²²⁴ With that, any plans of the triumvirate were effectively scuppered. At a crucial meeting in Munich three days later with the heads of the 'patriotic associations', including Kriebel of the Kampfbund, Kahr warned the 'patriotic associations' – by which he meant the Kampfbund – against independent action. Any attempt to impose a national government in Berlin had to be unified and follow prepared plans. Lossow stated he would go along with a rightist dictatorship if the chances of success were 51 per cent, but would have no truck with an ill-devised putsch. Seißer also underlined his support for Kahr and his readiness to put down a putsch by force.²²⁵ It was plain that the triumvirate was not prepared to act against Berlin.

Lossow later claimed he told Hitler to wait two to three weeks until the other defence district commanders could be won over. Then the coup would be undertaken.²²⁶ But Hitler was now faced with the thread slipping through his fingers. He was not prepared to wait any longer and risk losing the initiative. On the evening of 6 November, in direct response to the meeting addressed by Kahr (which he had not attended), Hitler met Kriebel (military head of the Kampfbund) and Dr Friedrich Weber (head of Bund Oberland), to discuss an attempt to persuade Kahr to reverse the opposition to the Kampfbund which he had shown since the beginning of November. Weber was commissioned to ask Ludendorff to arrange a meeting between Hitler

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and Kahr. But on 7 November, Kahr refused to meet Hitler either the following day, or after the meeting on 8 November in the Bürgerbräukeller which the General State Commissar would address.²²⁷ It was plain, now as before, that a putsch would only be successful with the support of police and army. But whatever the outcome of the intended deliberations with Kahr, Hitler was determined to delay no longer.

At another meeting on the evening of 6 November with Scheubner-Richter, Theodor von der Pfordten (a member of the supreme court in Bavaria and shadowy figure in pre-putsch Nazi circles), and probably other advisers (though this is not certain), he decided to act – in the hope more than the certainty of forcing the triumvirate to support the coup.²²⁸ The decision to strike was confirmed the next day, 7 November, at a meeting of Kampfbund leaders. Ludendorff later denied being present at the meeting, but apart from the Kampfbund leadership attending the meeting – Hitler, Weber, Kriebel, Scheubner-Richter and Göring – he was the only person fully initiated into what was to happen.²²⁹ The number of people in the know was to be kept, at Hitler's insistence, to an absolute minimum. Plans were laid down for the action. Priority was given to the seizure of communications and takeover of police stations and town halls in the major cities of Bavaria. Communist, socialist, and trade union leaders were to be arrested.²³⁰ Kriebel argued for the night of 10–11 November. Members of the government would be arrested in their beds, and the triumvirate forced to take up the offices foreseen for them in the national government.²³¹ The others rejected the suggestion because, it seems, of the difficulty of ensuring the arrest of all members of the government. Instead, after a good deal of discussion, Hitler's alternative plan was adopted. It was decided that the strike would be carried out on the following day, 8 November, when all the prominent figures in Munich would be assembled in the Bürgerbräukeller to hear an address from Kahr on the fifth anniversary of the November Revolution, fiercely denouncing Marxism. The meeting, arranged at short notice, was seen by the Kampfbund leadership as a threat, all the more so in the light of Kahr's refusal to meet Hitler before it took place. At the very least the meeting was seen as an attempt to strengthen Kahr's position and weaken the power of the Kampfbund. Whether they believed that Kahr intended to seal the breach with the nationalists by proclaiming the restoration of the Bavarian monarchy is uncertain. They were probably more concerned about the possibility of Kahr instigating the 'action' against Berlin without the Kampfbund's involvement – all the more since Hitler was aware of Lossow's comment on 24 October, that the 'march on Berlin' to erect a national

dictatorship would take place at the latest within fourteen days.²³² At any rate, Hitler felt his hand forced by Kahr's meeting. If the Kampfbund were to lead the 'national revolution', there was nothing for it but to act on its own initiative immediately.²³³ Much later, Hitler stated: 'Our opponents intended to proclaim a Bavarian revolution around the 12th of November ... I took the decision to strike four days earlier.'²³⁴

Late on the evening of 7 November, Hitler discussed the plans with his SA leaders, telling his bodyguard, Ulrich Graf, as he left the meeting, 'tomorrow at 8 o'clock it's happening'.²³⁵ He returned to his apartment in Thierschstraße around 11 a.m. Some eleven hours later, wearing his long trenchcoat and carrying his dog-whip, he was in excited mood in Rosenberg's office, looking for Göring. Hanfstaengl was there with Rosenberg, discussing the next edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Hitler told them 'the moment for action has arrived', swore them to secrecy, and ordered them to be at his side that evening in the Bürgerbräukeller. They were to bring pistols.²³⁶ Heß had been told earlier that morning what was planned. Pöhner, too, had been put in the picture.²³⁷ Other Hitler intimates such as Hoffmann were left in the dark.²³⁸ Drexler, the NSDAP's founder and honorary chairman, was actually on his way to Freising in the early evening of 8 November (where he thought he was appearing on the same speakers' platform as Hitler), when he bumped into Amann and Esser and was told that he did not need bother going to Freising; the meeting had been cancelled.²³⁹

Kahr had been reading out his prepared speech to the 3,000 or so packed into the Bürgerbräukeller for around half an hour when, around 8.30 p.m., there was a disturbance at the entrance. Kahr broke off his speech. A body of men in steel helmets appeared. Hitler's stormtroopers had arrived. A heavy machine-gun was pushed into the hall.²⁴⁰ People were standing on their seats trying to see what was happening as Hitler advanced through the hall, accompanied by two armed bodyguards, their pistols pointing at the ceiling. Hitler stood on a chair but, unable to make himself heard in the tumult, took out his Browning pistol and fired a shot through the ceiling.²⁴¹ He then announced that the national revolution had broken out, and that the hall was surrounded by 600 armed men. If there was trouble, he said, he would bring a machine-gun into the gallery.²⁴² The Bavarian government was deposed; a provisional Reich government would be formed. It was by this time around 8.45 p.m. Hitler requested – though it was really an order – Kahr, Lossov, and Seißer to accompany him into the adjoining room. He guaranteed their safety. After some hesitation, they complied.²⁴³ There was bedlam in the hall, but eventually Göring managed to make

himself heard. He said the army and police. People shout 'got your beer,' he added.²⁴⁴ I still critical of what they will happen in Latin American countries.

In the adjoining room, Hitler no one would leave without a new Reich government, head of the national army, Lossov Minister, Kahr himself would Minister President with dictatorial having to force the pace, but triumvirate to act. If things went three for his collaborators, did

Hitler returned to the hall. He repeated Göring's assurance police and Reichswehr, but November criminals of 1918 governments in Berlin and Munich and chief with dictatorial power the crowded hall that man predicted. 'Outside are Kahr, struggling hard to reach a decision behind them?' As the crowd pronounced sense of the theatre say this to you: Either the Germans be dead by dawn!²⁴⁷ By the 'rhetorical masterpiece' in the eye-witness – the mood in the

About an hour had passed: he and Ludendorff (who had left the Imperial Army), together went to the podium. Kahr, calm, faced tumultuous applause that he left monarchy.²⁴⁹ Hitler, with a euphoric declared that he would direct and warmly clasped Kahr's hand mentioning his surprise at the impenetrable expression, and

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himself heard. He said the action was directed neither at Kahr nor at the army and police. People should stay calm and remain in their places. 'You've got your beer,' he added.²⁴⁴ This quietened things somewhat, but most were still critical of what they were comparing with the theatricals that might happen in Latin American countries.

In the adjoining room, Hitler announced, waving his pistol about, that no one would leave without his permission. He declared the formation of a new Reich government, headed by himself. Ludendorff was to be in charge of the national army, Lossow would be Reichswehr Minister, Seißer Police Minister, Kahr himself would be head of state (*Landesverweser*), and Pöhner Minister President with dictatorial powers in Bavaria. He apologized for having to force the pace, but it had to be done: he had had to enable the triumvirate to act. If things went wrong, he had four bullets in his pistol – three for his collaborators, the last for himself.²⁴⁵

Hitler returned to the hall after about ten minutes amid renewed tumult. He repeated Göring's assurances that the action was not directed at the police and Reichswehr, but 'solely at the Berlin Jew government and the November criminals of 1918'. He put forward his proposals for the new governments in Berlin and Munich, now mentioning Ludendorff as 'leader, and chief with dictatorial power, of the German national army'.²⁴⁶ He told the crowded hall that matters were taking longer than he had earlier predicted. 'Outside are Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer,' he declared. 'They are struggling hard to reach a decision. May I say to them that you will stand behind them?' As the crowd bellowed back its approval, Hitler, with his pronounced sense of the theatrical, announced in emotional terms: 'I can say this to you: Either the German revolution begins tonight or we will all be dead by dawn!'²⁴⁷ By the time he had finished his short address – a 'rhetorical masterpiece' in the opinion of Karl Alexander von Müller, an eye-witness – the mood in the hall had swung completely in his favour.²⁴⁸

About an hour had passed since Hitler's initial entry into the hall before he and Ludendorff (who had meanwhile arrived, dressed in full uniform of the Imperial Army), together with the Bavarian ruling triumvirate, returned to the podium. Kahr, calm, face like a mask, spoke first, announcing to tumultuous applause that he had agreed to serve Bavaria as regent for the monarchy.²⁴⁹ Hitler, with a euphoric expression resembling childlike delight, declared that he would direct the policy of the new Reich government, and warmly clasped Kahr's hand. Ludendorff, deadly earnest, spoke next, mentioning his surprise at the whole business. Lossow, wearing a somewhat impenetrable expression, and Seißer, the most agitated of the group, were

promised cooperation with the whole ensemble.²⁵⁰ He was in his night.

Long. The hurried improvisation at only a day's notice, that putsch should be advanced, took its toll, determining before the hall was cleared, the Bürgerbräukeller tamely out of names given to him, led to the meeting at the centre, where Kampfbund. There was delirium in the night. Röhm did manage to amazingly failed to take order the transport to the. Frick and Pöhner were headquarters. Elsewhere, out of chaos, the putschists organization, to take control early and partial successes over the army nor the state

making his first mistake putschists were encountered there himself in what was left in charge at the and gentlemen, promptly when free to renege on the Hitler.²⁵²

hotel that night recalled young men in high spirits arian revolution had been Hitler as Reich Chancellor – him.²⁵⁴ Surprisingly, and tion of the putsch, Hitler onal dictatorship' until 9 ced Julius Streicher, the in charge of the party's

organization and propaganda – presumably because he was expecting his hands to be more than full if developments went according to plan.²⁵⁶ The reality was that by midnight, even if the putschist leaders had not by then fully realized it themselves, the ill-fated attempt to take control of the state had failed.

By late evening, Kahr, Lossow and Seißer were in positions to ensure the state authorities that they repudiated the putsch. All German radio stations were informed of this by Lossow at 2.55 a.m.²⁵⁷ By the early hours, it was becoming clear to the putschists themselves that the triumvirate and – far more importantly – the Reichswehr and state police opposed the coup.²⁵⁸ At 5 a.m. Hitler was still giving assurances that he was determined to fight and die for the cause – a sign that by this time at the latest he, too, had lost confidence in the success of the putsch.²⁵⁹ Shortly before, on the way back to the Bürgerbräukeller from the Wehrkreiskommando, he had in fact already told Ulrich Graf that 'it's looking very serious for us'.²⁶⁰ From what he later said, it was on returning to find that Ludendorff had let Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer go that he had immediately had the feeling that the cause was lost.²⁶¹ The mood in the beerhall itself was dispirited. The pall of stale tobacco smoke hung over the hundreds who listlessly lounged around the tables or stretched out wearily on chairs they had dragged together.²⁶² The mountains of bread rolls and gallons of beer which contributed in good measure to the bill of 11,347,000 Marks eventually sent to the Nazi Party for the evening's entertainment had by now largely been consumed.²⁶³ And still there were no orders. No one knew what was happening.

The putschist leaders were themselves by this time unclear what to do next. They sat around arguing, while the government forces regrouped. There was no fall-back position. Hitler was as clueless as the others. He was far from in control of the situation. Clutching wildly at straws, he even contemplated driving to Berchtesgaden to win over Prinz Rupprecht, known to be hostile to the putschists.²⁶⁴ Kriebel argued for armed resistance, organized from Rosenheim. Ludendorff said he was not prepared to see the affair end in the slush of a country road. Hitler, too, favoured armed resistance, but had few practical suggestions to offer, and was cut short in mid-peroration by Ludendorff. For hours, the putschist troops in the city received no orders from their leaders.²⁶⁵ As the bitterly cold morning dawned, depressed troops began to drift off from the Bürgerbräukeller.²⁶⁶ Around 8 a.m. Hitler sent some of his SA men to seize bundles of 50-billion Mark notes direct from the printing press to keep his troops paid.²⁶⁷ It was more or less the only practical action taken as the putsch started rapidly to crumble.

Only during the course of the morning did Hitler and Ludendorff come up with the idea of a demonstration march through the city. Ludendorff apparently made the initial suggestion.²⁶⁸ The aim was predictably confused and unclear. 'In Munich, Nuremberg, Bayreuth, an immeasurable jubilation, an enormous enthusiasm would have broken out in the German Reich,' Hitler later remarked. 'And when the first division of the German national army had left the last square metre of Bavarian soil and stepped for the first time on to Thuringian land, we would have experienced the jubilation of the people there. People would have had to recognize that the German misery has an end, that redemption could only come about through a rising.'²⁶⁹ It amounted to a vague hope that the march would stir popular enthusiasm for the putsch, and that the army, faced with the fervour of the mobilized masses and the prospect of firing on the war-hero Ludendorff, would change its mind.²⁷⁰ The gathering acclaim of the masses and the support of the army would then pave the way for a triumphant march on Berlin.²⁷¹ Such was the wild illusion – gesture politics born out of pessimism, depression, and despair. Reality did not take long to assert itself.

Around noon, the column of around 2,000 men – many of them, including Hitler, armed – set out from the Bürgerbräukeller. Pistols at the ready, they confronted a small police cordon on the Ludwigsbrücke and under threat swept it aside, headed through Isartor and up the Tal to Marienplatz, in the centre of the city, and decided then to march to the War Ministry. They gained encouragement from throngs of shouting and waving supporters on the pavements. Some thought they were witnessing the arrival of the new government.²⁷² The putschists could not help but note, however, that many of the posters proclaiming the national revolution had already been ripped down or papered over with new directions from the ruling triumvirate. Earlier in the morning some bystanders had already started to make fun of the putsch. 'Has your mummy given you permission to play with such dangerous things here on the street?' one worker had asked, as Hans Frank's unit had taken up position with machine-guns not far from the Bürgerbräukeller.²⁷³ The participants on the march knew the cause was lost. One of them remarked that it was like a funeral procession.²⁷⁴

At the top of the Residenzstraße, as it approaches Odeonsplatz, the marchers, accompanied by the occasional 'Heil' from the crowd and trying to keep up their spirits by singing the 'Sturm-Lied' (Storming Song) composed by Dietrich Eckart, encountered the second, and larger, police cordon. 'Here they come. Heil Hitler!' a bystander cried out.²⁷⁵ Then shots rang out. Who fired the first shot was never fully clarified, but the evidence points to it

being one of the putschists.²⁷⁶ minute followed. When the policemen lay dead.²⁷⁷

The dead included one of Richter, who had been in the with Hitler, just behind the Scheubner-Richter been a for different course. As it was, Hi wrenched to the ground by Sch his left shoulder.²⁷⁹ Göring w. and a number of other lead Austrian border.²⁸⁰ Some, incl Röhm, were immediately arrested – shoot-out totally unscathed, ga word.²⁸¹

Hitler himself was attended by SA medical corps, pushed into from the scene of the action. He near the Staffelsee, south of Munich, November, found and arrested had taken flight to Austria – he replacing the party chairmanship deputy.²⁸¹ Hitler, according to wife's testimony, was desolate he had to be restrained from depressed but calm, dressed in a sling, when the police arrived at Landsberg am Lech, a picture of Munich. Thirty-nine guards were residence. Graf Arco, the killer of in February 1919, was evicted for the new, high-ranking prison

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being one of the putschists.²⁷⁶ A furious gun-battle lasting almost half a minute followed. When the firing ceased, fourteen putschists and four policemen lay dead.²⁷⁷

The dead included one of the putsch architects, Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, who had been in the front line of the putsch leaders, linking arms with Hitler, just behind the standard-bearers. Had the bullet which killed Scheubner-Richter been a foot to the right, history would have taken a different course. As it was, Hitler either took instant evasive action, or was wrenched to the ground by Scheubner-Richter.²⁷⁸ In any event, he dislocated his left shoulder.²⁷⁹ Göring was among those injured, shot in the leg. He and a number of other leading putschists were able to escape over the Austrian border.²⁸⁰ Some, including Streicher, Frick, Pöhner, Amann and Röhm, were immediately arrested. Ludendorff, who had emerged from the shoot-out totally unscathed, gave himself up and was released on his officer's word.²⁸¹

Hitler himself was attended to by Dr Walter Schultze, chief of the Munich SA medical corps, pushed into his car, stationed nearby, and driven at speed from the scene of the action. He ended up at Hanfstaengl's home in Uffing, near the Staffelsee, south of Munich, where the police, on the evening of 11 November, found and arrested him.²⁸² While at Hanfstaengl's – Putzi himself had taken flight to Austria – he composed the first of his 'political testaments', placing the party chairmanship in Rosenberg's hands, with Amann as his deputy.²⁸³ Hitler, according to Hanfstaengl's later account, based on his wife's testimony, was desolate on arrival in Uffing.²⁸⁴ But later stories that he had to be restrained from suicide have no firm backing.²⁸⁵ He was depressed but calm, dressed in a white nightgown, his injured left arm in a sling, when the police arrived to escort him to prison in the old fortress at Landsberg am Lech, a picturesque little town some forty miles west of Munich. Thirty-nine guards were on hand to greet him in his new place of residence. Graf Arco, the killer of Kurt Eisner, the Bavarian premier murdered in February 1919, was evicted from his spacious Cell no.7 to make room for the new, high-ranking prisoner.²⁸⁶

In Munich and other parts of Bavaria, the putsch fizzled out as rapidly as it had started. With the sympathies of a good part of the population in Munich behind the putschists, there were initial demonstrations there and elsewhere against the 'treachery' of Kahr.²⁸⁷ But the adventure was over. Hitler was finished. At least, he should have been. The American consular representative in Munich, Robert Murphy, presumed Hitler would serve his sentence then be deported from Germany.²⁸⁸ The author Stefan Zweig

later remarked: 'In this year 1923, the swastikas and stormtroops disappeared, and the name of Adolf Hitler fell back almost into oblivion. Nobody thought of him any longer as a possible in terms of power.'²⁸⁹

VII

Like the high-point of a dangerous fever, the crisis had passed, then rapidly subsided. The following months brought currency stabilization with the introduction of the Rentenmark, regulation of the reparations issue through the Dawes Plan (named after the American banker Charles G. Dawes, head of the committee which established in 1924 a provisional framework for the phased repayment of reparations, commencing at a low level and linked to foreign loans for Germany), and the beginning of the political stabilization that marked the end of the post-war turbulence and was to last until the new economic shock-waves of the late 1920s. With Hitler in jail, the NSDAP banned, and the *völkisch* movement split into its component factions, the threat from the extreme Right lost its immediate potency.

Sympathies with the radical Right by no means disappeared. With 33 per cent of the votes in Munich, the Völkischer Block (the largest grouping in the now fractured *völkisch* movement) was the strongest party in the city at the Landtag elections on 6 April 1924, gaining more votes than both the Socialists and Communists put together.²⁹⁰ At the Reichstag election on 4 May, the result was little different. The Völkischer Block won 28.5 per cent of the vote in Munich, 17 per cent overall in the electoral region of Upper Bavaria and Swabia, and 20.8 per cent in Franconia.²⁹¹ But the bubble had burst. As Germany recovered and the Right remained in disarray, voters deserted the *völkisch* movement. By the second Reichstag elections of 1924, a fortnight before Hitler's release from Landsberg, the vote for the Völkischer Block had dwindled to residual limits of 7.5 per cent in Franconia, 4.8 per cent in Upper Bavaria/Swabia, and 3.0 per cent in Lower Bavaria (compared with 10.2 per cent there seven months earlier).²⁹²

Bavaria, for all its continuing ingrained oddities, was no longer the boiling cauldron of radical Right insurgency it had been between 1920 and 1923. The paramilitary organizations had had their teeth drawn in the confrontation with the legal forces of the state. Without the support of the army, they were shown to be little more than a paper tiger. In the aftermath of the putsch, the Kampfbund organizations were dissolved, and the 'patriotic associations' in general had their weaponry confiscated, a ban imposed

on their military exercises, a triumvirate installed by the Bavarian government to contain the wilder and even more powerful and credible through all ousted by early 1924.²⁹⁴ With conventional cabinet government rich Held – the leading figure in the BVP – and with it a degree

Even now, however, the force of politics and enabled him to devise contrived to save him when his 'Hitler-Putsch' was, as we have seen, Hitler had provided the frenetic reflection of his 'all-or-nothing' to the dynamism of his movement dilettante improvisation, lack of characteristic impulse to act without a fall-back position. But the putsch would not have been possible nor been kept alive within the Bavarian well as among the different and formations for months before the the dogmatic anti-Berlin stance of anti-democratic, anti-socialist, and together otherwise antagonistic revolution, Hitler's all-or-nothing never have occurred. The Bavarian the training and preparation of the state. And important personages had. Whatever their subsequent defence Lossow, and Seißer were dirty, who been the spiritual figurehead of the therefore, in the trial of the putsch February and 27 March 1924 – the on 1 April – to let the spotlight fall too glad to play the role assigned.

Hitler's first reaction to his indicative triumphalist performance in the Munich say anything, and announced that

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on their military exercises, and their activities greatly curtailed.²⁹³ The triumvirate installed by the Bavarian government as a force on the Right to contain the wilder and even more extreme nationalist paramilitaries lost power and credibility through the putsch. Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer were all ousted by early 1924.²⁹⁴ With the General State Commissariat terminated, conventional cabinet government under a new Minister President, Dr Heinrich Held – the leading figure in the Catholic establishment party in Bavaria, the BVP – and with it a degree of calm, returned to Bavarian politics.

Even now, however, the forces which had given Hitler his entrée into politics and enabled him to develop into a key factor on the Bavarian Right contrived to save him when his 'career' ought to have been over. The 'Hitler-Putsch' was, as we have seen, by no means merely Hitler's putsch. Hitler had provided the frenetic pressure for action without delay – a reflection of his 'all-or-nothing' temperament, but also of the need to prevent the dynamism of his movement ebbing away. The half-baked planning, dilettante improvisation, lack of care for detail all bore the imprint of Hitler's characteristic impulse to act without clear thought for the consequences, and without a fall-back position. But Hitler's influence on the undertaking of the putsch would not have been possible had the idea of a strike against Berlin not been kept alive within the Bavarian government and army leadership as well as among the different and competing factions of the paramilitary formations for months before the actual events of November 1923. Without the dogmatic anti-Berlin stance of the ruling groups in Bavaria, where shrill anti-democratic, anti-socialist, and anti-Prussian feeling combined to bracket together otherwise antagonistic forces to the general aim of counter-revolution, Hitler's all-or-nothing gamble in the Bürgerbräukeller could never have occurred. The Bavarian Reichswehr had colluded massively in the training and preparation of the forces which had tried to take over the state. And important personages had been implicated in the putsch attempt. Whatever their subsequent defence of their actions, the hands of Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer were dirty, while the war-hero General Ludendorff had been the spiritual figurehead of the entire enterprise. There was every reason, therefore, in the trial of the putsch leaders held in Munich between 26 February and 27 March 1924 – the sentences were read out four days later, on 1 April – to let the spotlight fall completely on Hitler.²⁹⁵ He was only too glad to play the role assigned to him.

Hitler's first reaction to his indictment had been very different to his later triumphalist performance in the Munich court. He had initially refused to say anything, and announced that he was going on hunger-strike. At this

time, he plainly saw everything as lost. According to the prison psychologist – though speaking many years after the event – Hitler stated: 'I've had enough. I'm finished. If I had a revolver, I would take it.'²⁹⁶ Drexler later claimed that he himself had dissuaded Hitler from his intention to commit suicide.²⁹⁷

By the time the trial opened, Hitler's stance had changed diametrically. He was allowed to turn the court-room into a stage for his own propaganda, accepting full responsibility for what had happened, not merely justifying but glorifying his role in attempting to overthrow the Weimar state. This was in no small measure owing to his threats to expose the complicity in treasonable activity of Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer – and in particular the role of the Bavarian Reichswehr.

The way Hitler would exploit his trial could scarcely have come as a surprise to the Bavarian authorities. It was signalled as early as two days after his arrest, during his interrogation by Hans Ehard, a brilliant lawyer who, after 1945, became Minister President of Bavaria. At first, Hitler had refused all comment on the putsch attempt. Ehard had said that his silence might prolong his internment and that of his fellow-prisoners. Hitler had replied that there was more at stake for him than for the others. 'It was a matter for him of justifying before history his action and his mission (*sein Tun und seine Sendung*); what the court's position would be was a matter of indifference to him. He denied the court any right to pass judgement on him.' He then issued a veiled threat. He would save his best trump cards to play in the court-room. And he would call numerous witnesses, summoning them only during the trial to prevent prior notification.

Ehard rapidly gave up the idea of taking an official statement. The typewriter that had been brought in was taken away. In five hours of patient questioning and listening to lengthy political speeches in reply, the subtle lawyer gradually prompted Hitler to open up to a degree, even if remaining cautious and reserved. When he spoke, Hitler added – acknowledging his major strength – he would find the right words, whereas he could not do so by writing it down. His responses to Ehard gave plain clues to the way he would behave before the court.

He denied that he had committed high treason, since 'the crime of November 1918' had not been expunged and the constitution based on this 'crime' could have no validity. But if the constitution *were* taken to have legal force, then acts such as the deposition of the Bavarian government of Hoffmann in 1920 or the creation in 1923 of the General State Commissariat of Kahr with near dictatorial powers ought also to be considered high

treason. Ultimately, however, there than the formal right of a constituent an incapable parliament.

Hitler now turned to the role of putsch, and hinted strongly at what he claimed, willingly cooperated in they had not been feigning consent full intention of implementing the the agreement through persuasion left the beerhall. He had foreseen had given the order that they should trust in an officer's word, during Bürgerbräukeller, had then seen the never have allowed. This had disappeared and he had in that moment had the triumvirate had not only gone in November. What they had agreed together with him for months. The Berlin', down to points of fine detail he had wanted and worked for it. Ehard, 'of opening up the end – the support and training of the Reichswehr in preparation for the

This was a telling point. The rule to limit potential damage. The first was held under Bavarian jurisdiction to have taken place in Munich at Hitler even initially favoured this, so be biased in favour of the triumvirate gentlemen would enter the court-room, certainly leave it as prisoners. In fact. However, the Reich government government. The trial was set for Hitler's early apprehension turned

Kahr had hoped to avoid any perfunctory one where the indicted grounds of patriotism. Since some this course of action had to be done, the accused were offered leniency

* D.T. Intense efforts in preparation for the trial

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He was making an official statement. The trial was taken away. In five hours of patient and tactical speeches in reply, the subtle and cunning up to a degree, even if remaining silent, Hitler added – acknowledging his words, whereas he could not do so. Ehard gave plain clues to the way

in which treason, since 'the crime of treason' and the constitution based on this constitution were taken to have been on of the Bavarian government of the General State Commissariat might also to be considered high

treason. Ultimately, however, there was a natural right of a people, higher than the formal right of a constitution, to self-defence against the wishes of an incapable parliament.

Hitler now turned to the role played by Kahr, Lössow and Seißer in the putsch, and hinted strongly at damaging revelations. The triumvirate had, he claimed, willingly cooperated in 'his' high treason. He would prove that they had not been feigning consent in the Bürgerbräukeller, but had had the full intention of implementing the agreement reached, and had only broken the agreement through persuasion and, in part, compulsion once they had left the beerhall. He had foreseen the possibility of this, which is why he had given the order that they should not be permitted to leave. Ludendorff's trust in an officer's word, during his own temporary absence from the Bürgerbräukeller, had then seen them released – something he himself would never have allowed. This had dismayed him on his return to the beerhall, and he had in that moment had the feeling that the cause was lost. But the triumvirate had not only gone along with his action on the evening of 8 November. What they had agreed with him that evening had been prepared together with him for months. They had discussed at length the 'march to Berlin', down to points of fine detail. There was full agreement. They and he had wanted and worked for identical aims. 'Hitler offers the prospect,' noted Ehard, 'of opening up the entire question of the "secret mobilization"' – the support and training of the paramilitary forces by the Bavarian Reichswehr in preparation for the planned *coup d'état*.²⁹⁸

This was a telling point. The ruling forces in Bavaria did what they could to limit potential damage. The first priority was to make sure that the trial was held under Bavarian jurisdiction. In strict legality, the trial ought not to have taken place in Munich at all, but at the Reich Court in Leipzig. Hitler even initially favoured this, since he thought the Bavarian court would be biased in favour of the triumvirate. 'In Leipzig,' he told Ehard, 'various gentlemen would enter the court-room perhaps still as witnesses, but would certainly leave it as prisoners. In Munich that will naturally not happen.'²⁹⁹ However, the Reich government gave way to pressure from the Bavarian government. The trial was set for the People's Court in Munich.³⁰⁰ And Hitler's early apprehension turned out to be entirely misconceived.

Kahr had hoped to avoid any trial, or at least have no more than a perfunctory one where the indicted would plead guilty but claim mitigating grounds of patriotism. Since some at least of the putschists would not agree, this course of action had to be dropped. But it seems highly probable that the accused were offered leniency for such a proposal even to have been

preparation for the trial

considered.³⁰¹ Hitler had, at any rate, become confident about the outcome. He still held a trump card in his hand. When Hanfstaengl visited him in his cell in the courthouse, during the trial, he showed no fear of the verdict. 'What can they do to me?' he asked. 'I only need to come out with a bit more, especially about Lossow, and there's the big scandal. Those in the know are well aware of that.'³⁰² This, and the attitude of the presiding judge and his fellow judges, explains Hitler's self-confident appearance at the trial.

Among those indicted alongside Hitler were Ludendorff, Pöhner, Frick, Weber (of Bund Oberland), Röhm and Kriebel. But the indictment itself was emphatic that 'Hitler was the soul of the entire enterprise'.³⁰³ Judge Neithardt, the president of the court, had reputedly stated before the trial that Ludendorff – 'still the only plus' that Germany possessed – would be acquitted. The judge replaced a damaging record of Ludendorff's first interrogation by one which indicated his ignorance about the putsch preparations.³⁰⁴ Hitler, meanwhile, was given the freedom of the court-room. One journalist attending the trial described it as a 'political carnival'. He compared the deference shown to the defendants with the brusque way those arraigned for their actions in the Räterepublik had been handled. He heard one of the judges, after Hitler's first speech, remark: 'What a tremendous chap, this Hitler!' Hitler was allowed to appear in his suit, not prison garb, sporting his Iron Cross, First Class. Ludendorff, not held in prison, arrived in a luxury limousine.³⁰⁵ Dr Weber, though under arrest, was allowed to take a Sunday afternoon walk round Munich. The extraordinary bias of the presiding judge was later most severely criticized both in Berlin and by the Bavarian government, irritated at the way attacks on the Reichswehr and state police had been allowed without contradiction. Judge Neithardt was informed in no uncertain terms during the trial of the 'embarrassing impression' left by allowing Hitler to speak for four hours. His only response was that it was impossible to interrupt his torrent of words. Hitler was also allowed the freedom to interrogate witnesses – above all Kahr, Lossow, and Seißer – at length, frequently deviating into politically loaded statements.³⁰⁶

When the verdicts were read out, on 1 April 1924, Ludendorff was duly acquitted – which he took as an insult. Hitler, along with Weber, Kriebel and Pöhner, was sentenced to a mere five years' imprisonment for high treason (less the four months and two weeks he had already been in custody), and a fine of 200 Gold Marks (or a further twenty days' imprisonment). The others indicted received even milder sentences.³⁰⁷ The lay judges, as Hitler later hinted, had only been prepared to accept a verdict of 'guilty' on condition that he received the mildest sentence, with the prospect of early

release.³⁰⁸ The court explained under the terms of the 'Protection Austrian. He considers himself to the meaning and intention of the the Protection of the Republic as German as Hitler, who volunteered the German army at war, who outstanding bravery in the face of damage to his health, and was released from the District Command Munich.

Even on the conservative Right sentences prompted amazement was nothing short of scandalous the four policemen shot by the paper Marks (the equivalent of played down; the destruction of the Post and the taking of a number of hostages were not blamed on Hitler a new constitution, found in Ludwigsburg, Pforzheim, and Stuttgart.³¹¹ Nor did the judge's reference to the fact that Hitler was still free for good behaviour imposed on him in January 1922. Legally, he was

The judge in that first Hitler presiding over his trial for high treason Georg Neithardt.³¹³

Hitler returned to Landsberg more akin to those of a hotel than a comfortably furnished room on the edge of the attractive countryside. In his cell, a newspaper in an easy wicker chair by admirers, or sit at a large desk where he received. He was treated to whom secretly greeted him with privilege. Gifts, flowers, letters often in. He received more visitors than before he eventually felt compelled to release prisoners, some of them voluntary comforts of normal daily life, few

* D.T. I encourage his mind to dwell on the complexity of contamination between patriotism & the Kahr government – and his unwillingness for the trial was there.

ome confident about the outcome. When Hanfstaengl visited him in his cell, he showed no fear of the verdict. He only need to come out with a bit of style to be the big scandal. Those in the court had the attitude of the presiding judge of a confident appearance at the trial. There were Ludendorff, Pöhner, Frick, and Siebel. But the indictment itself was a 'fire enterprise'.³⁰³ Judge Neithardt, presiding before the trial that Ludendorff and Siebel would be acquitted. The judge's first interrogation by one which compared the deference shown to the defendants with the actions in the case of the judges, after Hitler's first trial, 'this Hitler!' Hitler was allowed to wear his Iron Cross, First Class. He had a luxury limousine.³⁰⁵ Dr Weber, on a Sunday afternoon walk round the court, found the judge was later most severely criticized by the Weimar government, irritated at the fact that the police had been allowed without restriction in no uncertain terms during the trial, left by allowing Hitler to speak at will, as it was impossible to interrupt him. He was given the freedom to interrogate Siebel – at length, frequently.

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In April 1924, Ludendorff was duly sentenced, along with Weber, Kriebel and others, to 'years' imprisonment for high treason (he had already been in custody), and for twenty days' imprisonment. The sentences.³⁰⁷ The lay judges, as they were called, to accept a verdict of 'guilty' on the defendants, with the prospect of early release.

*He had a luxury limousine
and a chauffeur
and a butler
at the trial was there.*

release.³⁰⁸ The court explained why it rejected the deportation of Hitler under the terms of the 'Protection of the Republic Act': 'Hitler is a German-Austrian. He considers himself to be a German. In the opinion of the court, the meaning and intention of the terms of section 9, para II of the Law for the Protection of the Republic cannot apply to a man who thinks and feels as German as Hitler, who voluntarily served for four and a half years in the German army at war, who attained high military honours through outstanding bravery in the face of the enemy, was wounded, suffered other damage to his health, and was released from the military into the control of the District Command Munich I.'³⁰⁹

Even on the conservative Right in Bavaria, the conduct of the trial and the sentences prompted amazement and disgust.³¹⁰ In legal terms, the sentence was nothing short of scandalous. No mention was made in the verdict of the four policemen shot by the putschists; the robbery of 14,605 billion paper Marks (the equivalent of around 28,000 Gold Marks) was entirely played down; the destruction of the offices of the SPD newspaper *Münchener Post* and the taking of a number of Social Democratic city councillors as hostages were not blamed on Hitler; and no word was made of the text of a new constitution, found in the pocket of the dead putschist von der Pfordten.³¹¹ Nor did the judge's reasons for the sentence make any reference to the fact that Hitler was still technically within the probationary period for good behaviour imposed on him in the sentence for breach of the peace in January 1922. Legally, he was not eligible for any further probation.³¹²

The judge in that first Hitler trial was the same person as the judge presiding over his trial for high treason in 1924: the nationalist sympathizer Georg Neithardt.³¹³

Hitler returned to Landsberg to begin his light sentence in conditions more akin to those of a hotel than a penitentiary. The windows of his large, comfortably furnished room on the first floor afforded an expansive view over the attractive countryside. Dressed in lederhosen, he could relax with a newspaper in an easy wickerchair, his back to a laurel wreath provided by admirers, or sit at a large desk sifting through the mounds of correspondence he received. He was treated with great respect by his jailers, some of whom secretly greeted him with 'Heil Hitler', and accorded every possible privilege. Gifts, flowers, letters of support, encomiums of praise, all poured in. He received more visitors than he could cope with – over 500 of them before he eventually felt compelled to restrict access. Around forty fellow-prisoners, some of them volunteer internees, able to enjoy almost all the comforts of normal daily life, fawned on him.³¹⁴ He read of the demonstration

on 23 April, to celebrate his thirty-fifth birthday three days earlier, of 3,000 National Socialists, former front soldiers, and supporters of the *volkisch* movement in the Bürgerbräukeller 'in honour of the man who had lit the present flame of liberation and *volkisch* consciousness in the German people'.³¹⁵ Under the impact of the star-status that the trial had brought him, and the Führer cult that his supporters had begun to form around him, he began to reflect on his political ideas, his 'mission', his 'restart' in politics once his short sentence was over, and pondered the lessons to be learnt from the putsch.

The *débâcle* at the Bürgerbräukeller and its denouement next day at the Feldherrnhalle taught Hitler once and for all that an attempt to seize power in the face of opposition from the armed forces was doomed. He felt justified in his belief that propaganda and mass mobilization, not paramilitary putschism, would open the path to the 'national revolution'. Consequently, he distanced himself from Röhm's attempts to revitalize in new guise the Kampfbund and to build a type of people's militia.³¹⁶ Ultimately, the different approaches, as well as power-ambitions, of Hitler and Röhm would lead to the murderous split in 1934. It would be going too far, however, to presume that Hitler had renounced the idea of a takeover of the state by force in favour of the 'legal path'. Certainly, he subsequently had to profess a commitment to legality in order to involve himself in politics again. And later, electoral success appeared in any case to offer the best strategy to win power. But the putschist approach was never given up. It continued, as the lingering problems with the SA would indicate, to coexist alongside the proclaimed 'legal' way. But, Hitler was adamant, on any future occasion it could only be with, not against, the Reichswehr.

Hitler's experience was to lead to the last, and not least, of the lessons he would draw from his 'apprenticeship years': that to be the 'drummer' was not enough; and that to be more than that meant he needed not only complete mastery in his own movement but, above all, greater freedom from external dependencies, from competing groupings on the Right, from paramilitary organizations he could not fully control, from the bourgeois politicians and army figures who had smoothed his political rise, used him, then dropped him when it suited them.³¹⁷

The ambivalence about his intended role after the 'national revolution' was still present in his comments during his trial. He insisted that he saw Ludendorff as the 'military leader of the coming Germany' and 'leader of the coming great showdown'. But he claimed that he himself was 'the political leader of this young Germany'. The precise division of labour had,

he said, not been determined.³¹ returned to the leadership ques indeterminate fashion. He refer during discussions in spring 192 'as propagandist and awakener petty do small men think,' wen of a ministerial post as worthy was to be the destroyer of Marx did I want at that time to be the *Höchste*). The rest is unimporta he had demanded two things: th political struggle; and that the c hero . . . who in the eyes of the e hinted - though did not state Ludendorff.³²⁰ On the other har fortnight before the putsch, he more than the reorganizer of th proclamation put up during the Chancellor appeared to indicate position he foresaw for himself, as head of state (*Reichsverweser*

Whatever the ambivalence, rea remarks at the trial, it soon gave Landsberg the realization dawned all; he was the predestined Lead

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he said, not been determined.³¹⁸ In his closing address to the court, Hitler
returned to the leadership question – though still in somewhat vague and
indeterminate fashion. He referred to Lossow's remarks to the court that
during discussions in spring 1923 he had thought Hitler had merely wanted
'as propagandist and awakener (*Weckrufer*) to arouse the people'. 'How
petty do small men think,' went on Hitler. He did not see the attainment
of a ministerial post as, worthy of a great man. What he wanted, he said,
was to be the destroyer of Marxism. *That* was his task. 'Not from modesty
did I want at that time to be the drummer. That is the highest there is (*das*
Höchste). The rest is unimportant (*eine Kleinigkeit*).'³¹⁹ When it came to it,
he had demanded two things: that he should be given the leadership of the
political struggle; and that the organizational leadership should go to 'the
hero . . . who in the eyes of the entire young Germany is called to it'. Hitler
hinted – though did not state explicitly – that this was to have been
Ludendorff.³²⁰ On the other hand, in his address to Kampfbund leaders a
fortnight before the putsch, he had seemed to envisage Ludendorff as no
more than the reorganizer of the future national army.³²¹ Then again, the
proclamation put up during the putsch itself over Hitler's name as Reich
Chancellor appeared to indicate that the headship of government was the
position he foresaw for himself, sharing dictatorial power with Ludendorff
as head of state (*Reichsverweser*, or regent).³²²

Whatever the ambivalence, real or simply tactical, still present in Hitler's
remarks at the trial, it soon gave way to clarity about his self-image. For in
Landsberg the realization dawned on Hitler: he was not the 'drummer' after
all; he was the predestined Leader himself. ✱

✱ D.T. It was the perfect situation for
me - Now I knew when and where
and how to reach him about my mission!

EMERGENCE OF THE LEADER

'The secret of this personality resides in the fact that in it the deepest of what lies dormant in the soul of the German people has taken shape in full living features . . . That has appeared in Adolf Hitler: the living incarnation of the nation's yearning.'

Georg Schott, *Das Volksbuch vom Hitler*, 1924

'The combination of theoretician, organizer, and leader in one person is the rarest thing that can be found on this earth; this combination makes the great man.'

Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*

* the Jews
to his own
continuing
press of D.T. Every month of his stay in
honor. I know, ~~in~~ Landsberg was
only, ~~invaluable~~ invaluable to my purposes.
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that came to me from at last convinced that
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One, that man, but the Great One
this was, hummed by Providence
the whisper to save the German people,
as a corollary, his anti-Semite
was now genuine deep-seated
and inescapable for he had
equalled the calculation of *

included sub-headings such as: 'The Prophetic Person', 'The Genius', 'The Religious Person', 'The Humble One', 'The Loyal One', 'The Man of Will', 'The Political Leader', 'The Educator', 'The Awakener', and 'The Liberator'. In a dense text full of literary and religious allusions, Hitler was turned into nothing short of a demi-god. 'There are words,' wrote Schott, 'which a person does not draw from within himself, which a god gave him to declare. To these words belongs this confession of Adolf Hitler . . . "I am the political leader of the young Germany"'. Just as mystically, Schott rhapsodized in equally pseudo-religious terminology about the person of Hitler: 'The secret of this personality resides in the fact that in it the deepest of what lies dormant in the soul of the German people has taken shape in full living features . . . That has appeared in Adolf Hitler: the living incarnation of the nation's yearning.'¹

As his movement was dissolving into the myriad of rival factions that offered apparent proof of his indispensability, the enforced idleness in Landsberg and his inability to direct events outside led Hitler to the writing of *Mein Kampf* and the 'rationalization' and partial modification of his political ideas. The process of writing the first volume of his book cemented and rounded off his 'world-view'. It also reinforced his unbounded, narcissistic self-belief. It gave him absolute conviction in his own near-messianic qualities and mission, the feeling of certainty that he was destined to become the 'Great Leader' the nation awaited, who would expunge the 'criminal betrayal' of 1918, restore Germany's might and power, and create a reborn 'Germanic State of the German nation'.² By the time he left Landsberg, the transition - in his own mind, as in that of his followers - from 'drummer' to 'leader' was complete.

The fragmentation of the *völkisch* movement in Hitler's absence, the extraordinary adulation he received from those who already saw greatness in him, and the recognition in himself of 'great' leadership were closely interlinked. By the date of his release from Landsberg, on 20 December 1924, the basis for his later incontestable position as Leader had been laid.

I

Nothing could have demonstrated more plainly how indispensable Hitler was to the *völkisch* Right than the thirteen months of his imprisonment, the 'leaderless time' of the movement. With Hitler removed from the scene and, from June 1924, withdrawing from all involvement in politics to

concentrate on the writing of *Mein Kampf* into squabbling factionalism and justice, Hitler had been allowed as the hero of the Right for his actions. But in Hitler's absence, his movement was in his views on developments. He was ignored, and was not in a position to be, however, upheld. And as long as Hitler was in the narrow core of his fervent *völkisch* Right, often strategy, and ideology. By the Reichstag elections of that month, support for the *völkisch* movement was less than a group of disunited nations of the political spectrum.

Just before his arrest on 30 April 1933, Rosenberg, editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* during his absence, to be like a number of leading Nazis (Hitler himself), Rosenberg's German Reich. Born into a wealthy Estonian family, the introverted self-arrogant and cold, one of the leaders, united other party. Distinctly lacking in leadership and was as surprised as others usually surmised, it was precisely what he had recommended himself to Hitler. Scarcely be imagined. But the aftermath of the failed putsch that he anticipated what was his movement to fall apart in he made a hasty and ill-conceived frame of mind, to entrust a coterie whose loyalty was based on the few leading figures in the

phetic Person', 'The Genius', 'The The Loyal One', 'The Man of Will', 'The Awakener', and 'The Liberator'. In his allusions, Hitler was turned into words,' wrote Schott, 'which a self, which a god gave him to declare. Adolf Hitler. . . "I am the political s mystically, Schott rhapsodized in out the person of Hitler: 'The secret that in it the deepest of what lies ople has taken shape in full living Hitler: the living incarnation of the

o the myriad of rival factions that nsability, the enforced idleness in nts outside led Hitler to the writing n' and partial modification of his e first volume of his book cemented reinforced his unbounded, narciss- nviction in his own near-messianic inty that he was destined to become who would expunge the 'criminal ght and power, and create a reborn ² By the time he left Landsberg, the of his followers - from 'drummer'

ovement in Hitler's absence, the n those who already saw greatness of 'great' leadership were closely from Landsberg, on 20 December e position as Leader had been laid.

e plainly how indispensable Hitler teen months of his imprisonment, ith Hitler removed from the scene om all involvement in politics to

concentrate on the writing of *Mein Kampf*, the *völkisch* movement descended into squabbling factionalism and internecine strife. By courtesy of Bavarian justice, Hitler had been allowed to use the court-room to portray himself as the hero of the Right for his role in the putsch. Competing individuals and groups felt compelled to assert Hitler's authority and backing for their actions. But in Hitler's absence, this was insufficient in itself to ensure success.³ Moreover, Hitler was often inconsistent, contradictory, or unclear in his views on developments. His claim to a leadership position could not be ignored, and was not disputed. Any claim to an exclusive leadership position was, however, upheld only by a minority in the *völkisch* movement. And as long as Hitler was in no position directly to influence developments, the narrow core of his fervent devotees was largely marginalized even within the broad *völkisch* Right, often at war with each other, and split on tactics, strategy, and ideology. By the time of his release in December 1924, the Reichstag elections of that month had reflected the catastrophic decline of support for the *völkisch* movement, which had come to form little more than a group of disunited nationalist and racist sects on the extreme fringe of the political spectrum.

Just before his arrest on 11 November 1923, Hitler had placed Alfred Rosenberg, editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, in charge of the banned party during his absence, to be supported by Esser, Streicher, and Amann.⁴ Like a number of leading Nazis (including Heß, Scheubner-Richter, and Hitler himself), Rosenberg's origins did not lie within the boundaries of the German Reich. Born into a well-off bourgeois family in Reval (now Tallinn), Estonia, the introverted self-styled party 'philosopher', dogmatic but dull, arrogant and cold, one of the least charismatic and least popular of Nazi leaders, united other party bigwigs only in their intense dislike of him.⁵ Distinctly lacking in leadership qualities, he was scarcely an obvious choice, and was as surprised as others were by Hitler's nomination.⁶ Possibly, as is usually surmised, it was precisely Rosenberg's lack of leadership ability that commended itself to Hitler.⁷ Certainly, a less likely rival to Hitler could scarcely be imagined. But this would presume that Hitler, in the traumatic aftermath of the failed putsch, was capable of lucid, machiavellian planning, that he anticipated what would happen and actually wanted and expected his movement to fall apart in his absence.⁸ A more likely explanation is that he made a hasty and ill-conceived decision, under pressure and in a depressed frame of mind, to entrust the party's affairs to a member of his Munich coterie whose loyalty was beyond question. Rosenberg was, in fact, one of the few leading figures in the Movement still available.⁹ Scheubner-Richter

was dead. Others had scattered in the post-putsch turmoil, or had been arrested. Even – though Hitler could scarcely have known this – the three trusted lieutenants he had designated to support Rosenberg were temporarily out of action. Esser had fled to Austria, Amann was in jail, and Streicher was preoccupied with matters in Nuremberg. Rosenberg was probably no more than a hastily chosen least bad option.

Whatever the reasoning, Rosenberg soon found that his writ did not run: simply calling on Hitler's authority did not help. One immediate sign was the insistence of the acting head of the now illegal SA, Major Walter Buch, that the organization of the Storm Section, while retaining its loyalty to Hitler, would not be subjected to the party's leadership and would keep out of party-political conflict.¹⁰ This was the direct opposite of Hitler's instructions, that the SA would be subordinated to the party.¹¹ Rosenberg also found in any case that there was no party organization to speak of. The haphazard way in which the party had developed before the putsch had left it unprepared for illegality. Close coordination even of groups in southern Bavaria was now impossible. Rosenberg devised the code-name 'Rolf Eidhalt' – 'Keep the Oath' – as an anagram of 'Adolf Hitler', and used it in letters passed on by courier.¹² Camouflage organizations – hiking clubs and the like – were established. Local party groups were sent copies of postcards carrying a picture of Hitler which, they were told, had to be sold in millions 'as a symbol of our Leader', since 'the name of Adolf Hitler must always be kept alive for the German people'.¹³ Successor newspapers to the banned *Völkischer Beobachter* attempted to keep the flame alight among Nazi followers. Hitler himself contributed articles and drawings to one clandestine production smuggled out of Landsberg.¹⁴ Whatever the difficulties of communication at first, any cloak-and-dagger activity was soon shown to be unnecessary. The authorities proved willing to permit the creation of obvious successor organizations to the banned NSDAP.¹⁵

On 1 January 1924, Rosenberg founded the *Großdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft* (GVG, 'Greater German National Community'), intended to serve, during the NSDAP's ban, as its successor organization.¹⁶ By the summer, Rosenberg had been ousted and the GVG had fallen under the control of Hermann Esser (returned in May from his exile in Austria) and Julius Streicher.¹⁷ But the coarse personalities, insulting behaviour and clumsy methods of Esser and Streicher merely succeeded in alienating many Hitler followers. Far from all Hitler loyalists, in any case, had joined the GVG. Gregor Strasser, for example, a Landshut apothecary who was to emerge in the post-putsch era as the leading figure in the party after Hitler, joined

the *Deutschvölkische Freiheit* headed by Albrecht Graefe, for with its stronghold in Meckle

Graefe and two other dissidents Wilhelm Henning, all members former officers and businessmen late autumn of 1922, wanting by the DNVP. Hitler had left Graefe in March 1923, allowing with the south retained for that of March and recommended had been signed by Hermann claimed by Rosenberg and knowledge, and that the latter face. But since Hitler had agreed scarcely probable that Esser's approval, this is unlikely.

The agreement had not in fact, Graefe had taken part in. But conflict was not long delayed had been less affected by pressure to the disarray within the leaders were still at liberty in place. And though the DVF in an attempt to win over the advantage of the situation as DVFP leaders advocated else added to the growing conflict alienated many Nazis, and in northern Germany. The Göttingen branch, was increasingly above all keen to keep the Graefe. Rosenberg's position agreement with Graefe, all combined leadership, which the meeting in Salzburg at the Ludendorff's insistence, on permission (though stipulated months). It was a further sign

those left trying to run a party banned and in disarray were given by their imprisoned leader. Immediately after this, on the day before the trial of the putschists began, Ludendorff publicly recommended support for Graefe as his representative in north Germany, thereby lending his prestige to the DVFP and at the same time tacitly claiming leadership of the *völkisch* movement.¹⁹

Those *völkisch* groups that were prepared, however reluctantly, to enter parliament in order to be in a position one day to destroy it, decided to enter into electoral alliances to allow them to contest the series of regional (Landtag) elections that began in February, and the Reichstag election – the first of two that year – on 4 May 1924. Hitler was opposed to this strategy. As Rudolf Heß, on Hitler's behalf, was still explaining over a year later: 'Herr H. was against participating in the elections from the first moment onwards, and said this clearly and plainly to a number of gentlemen, including His Excellency L[udendorff]. He was convinced that the Movement was not mature enough, that we also had to stay true to our principle of anti-parliamentarism, and that money was only squandered pointlessly.'²⁰ Hitler's opposition made no difference. The decision to participate went ahead. It seemed to be borne out by the results. In the February Landtag elections in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Graefe's stronghold, the DVFP won thirteen out of sixty-four seats. And on 6 April in the Bavarian Landtag elections, the Völkischer Block, as the electoral alliance called itself there, won 17 per cent of the vote.²¹

Even after these results, Hitler was still letting it be known that he opposed the activities of the Völkischer Block in the forthcoming Reichstag elections. Yet at the very same time he allowed his name to go over an electoral proclamation of the Block. And soon after the election, he told Kurt Lüdecke that policy would have to change, and that 'we shall have to hold our noses and enter the Reichstag against the Catholic and Marxist deputies'.²² How he viewed this was made plain a year or so later by Rudolf Heß, replying for Hitler to a letter from a party member: 'Herr Hitler is of the view that, after parliament was entered against his will, participation in parliament has to be seen as one of many methods of combating the present system, including parliamentarism. But participation should not be "positive cooperation", as was unfortunately carried out; the *völkisch* parliamentarists with very little success, but only be through the fiercest opposition and obstruction, through constant criticism of the existing system in parliament. Parliament, or better still parliamentarism, should be taken to absurdity in parliament.'²³

The Reichstag election resulted in the parliamentary tactic, pragmatic to pay dividends. The *völkisch* of the Hitler trial, had stood up to two seats in the Reichstag.²⁴ The (20.8 per cent) and Bavaria (11 only ten of the *völkisch* Reichs twenty-two from the DVFP gave weakness of the remnants of the

In the first of two visits he paid contacts in north Germany were near Munich, seized the moment of the merger of the NSDAP and DVFP at a second meeting even to full unity agreed in principle, but stipulated with Graefe. One of these, it transpired, the movement would be based in Munich, to take place, however, before the meeting in Berlin on 24 May and under the name of the Nationalistische Freiheitspartei, NSFP). By announcing in a press release a single, unified party. Hitler was insisted on a separate and unique danger, following the electoral success, an uncompromising stance would be required. Moreover, the DVFP was the strongest, as had shown, and Ludendorff was a figure in the *völkisch* movement

Hitler's weakness, reflected in what he heard, was revealed in a hastily formed north German Nazi delegation, insisted that the agreement with Ludendorff to him as a *fait accompli*, that he had been unable to prevent it, and that the combining of the Reichstag seats, doubt on Hitler's sincerity in contradicting such a version, and for a merger.³⁰ However, the re-

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The Reichstag election results had, it seems, helped persuade Hitler that the parliamentary tactic, pragmatically and purposefully deployed, promised to pay dividends. The *völkisch* vote, bolstered by the publicity and outcome of the Hitler trial, had stood up well, with a result of 6.5 per cent and thirty-two seats in the Reichstag.²⁴ The results in Graefe's territory of Mecklenburg (20.8 per cent) and Bavaria (16 per cent) were particularly good.²⁵ That only ten of the *völkisch* Reichstag members were from the NSDAP and twenty-two from the DVFP gave some indication, however, of the relative weakness of the remnants of the Hitler Movement at the time.²⁶

In the first of two visits he paid to Landsberg in May, Ludendorff, whose contacts in north Germany were extensive despite his continued residence near Munich, seized the moment to try to persuade Hitler to agree to a merger of the NSDAP and DVFP fractions in the Reichstag, and in the second meeting even to full unity of the two parties. Hitler equivocated. He agreed in principle, but stipulated preconditions that needed to be discussed with Graefe. One of these, it transpired, was that the headquarters of the movement would be based in Munich.²⁷ The meeting with Graefe did not take place, however, before the Reichstag deputies of the two parties came together in Berlin on 24 May and agreed to merge for parliamentary purposes under the name of the National Socialist Freedom Party (Nationalsozialistische Freiheitspartei, NSFP). Ludendorff compromised Hitler's position by announcing in a press release that the latter supported the creation of a single, unified party. Hitler was in difficulties because, though he had always insisted on a separate and unique identity for the NSDAP, there was the danger, following the electoral success of the *Völkischer Block*, that such an uncompromising stance would seem less than compelling to his supporters. Moreover, the DVFP was the stronger of the two parties, as the election had shown, and Ludendorff was now generally regarded as the leading figure in the *völkisch* movement.²⁸

Hitler's weakness, reflected in his habit of telling people what they wanted to hear, was revealed in a hastily arranged visit to Landsberg by a four-man north German Nazi delegation, led by Haase, at the end of May. Hitler insisted that the agreement with the DVFP of 24 February had been presented to him as a *fait accompli*, that he had opposed electoral participation but had been unable to prevent it, and that unity with the DVFP went no further than the combining of the Reichstag fractions.²⁹ Ludendorff immediately cast doubt on Hitler's sincerity in a published statement on 11 June flatly contradicting such a version, and stressing Hitler's acceptance of the need for a merger.³⁰ However, the result of the visit by Haase's delegation was

the establishment on 3 June 1924 in Hamburg by the north German Hitler loyalists of a 'Directorate' under the leadership of Dr Adalbert Volck, a lawyer based in Lüneburg whose embracing of the *völkisch* movement was strongly coloured by his Baltic origins.³¹ The Directorate totally rejected any notion of a merger with the DVFP which, it felt, would lead to it being sucked into 'parliamentarism' and becoming a party like others. Consequently, the Directorate aimed to be a tightly knit, centrally controlled organization, loyal to Hitler and holding to his principles until he could be released to take up the reins again.³²

Even so, some north German Nazis were, not surprisingly, confused and uncertain about Hitler's position regarding any merger. In a letter of 14 June, Haase sought confirmation that Hitler rejected a merger of the two parties. Replying two days later, Hitler denied that he had fundamentally rejected a merger, though he had stipulated preconditions for such a step. He acknowledged the opposition among many Nazi loyalists to a merger with the DVFP, which, he also pointed out, had made plain its rejection of some of the old guard of the party. Under the circumstances, he went on, he could no longer intervene or accept responsibility. He had decided, therefore, to withdraw from politics until he could properly lead again. He refused henceforth to allow his name to be used in support of any political position, and asked for no further political letters to be sent to him.³³ A week later, Hermann Fobke, a young Nazi from the Göttingen area, imprisoned with Hitler in Landsberg and acting as his general factotum and go-between with the north German faction, tried to assuage Haase by assuring him of Hitler's support for the opposition of the north German National Socialists to the DVFP. 'All in all,' Fobke summed up, 'H[itle]r thinks things have gone so hopelessly off the rails that he is in no doubt that he will have to begin completely afresh when he is free. But in such a case, he is very optimistic and of the view that he will have firm control again within a few days.' Fobke could not resist, however, pointing out his own disappointment at Hitler's indifference to the 'cries of distress' of the north German NSDAP.³⁴

Hitler announced his decision to withdraw from politics in the press on 7 July. He requested no further visits to Landsberg by his supporters, a request he felt compelled to repeat a month later. The press announcement gave as his reasons the impossibility of accepting practical responsibility for developments while he was in Landsberg, 'general overwork', and the need to concentrate on the writing of his book (the first volume of *Mein Kampf*).³⁵ A not insignificant additional factor, as the opposition press emphasized,

was Hitler's anxiety to do no could be granted from 1 C Ludendorff's press statement Hitler by claiming, despite openly supported the merge June that the decision to wit anger over this statement'.³⁸ the one he had given Haase: l within Landsberg. The Lud- indication of this impotent strategy to exacerbate the confusion, and thereby bols the outcome, not the cause. foreseen. Hitler acted from from all sides to take a sta frustrated his supporters. B side or the other. His deci: habitually rationalizes his ch to risk everything rather tha while he remained confined.

Hitler's frustration was al: disapproval, to curtail Roh paramilitary organization ca and unify other existing pa including the SA and the o and to be placed under the allergic to the inevitable loss follow and concerned to av on leaders of paramilitary (what might be seen as his would hinder his chances o him back to Austria. Unab bound over on probation, hi part in the putsch set aside (their last meeting before he having laid down the leade wished to hear no more ab ignored Hitler and pressed patronage and protection.⁴¹

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was Hitler's anxiety to do nothing to jeopardize his chances of parole, which
 could be granted from 1 October.³⁶ The occasion for his decision was
 Ludendorff's press statement on 11 June which had embarrassed and angered
 Hitler by claiming, despite the latter's caution and equivocation, that he
 openly supported the merger of the two parties.³⁷ Fobke told Haase on 23
 June that the decision to withdraw from politics had been 'born out of the
 anger over this statement'.³⁸ However, the dominant reason was doubtless
 the one he had given Haase: his impotence at controlling developments from
 within Landsberg. The Ludendorff press release had simply been the last
 indication of this impotence. His withdrawal was not a machiavellian
 strategy to exacerbate the split that was already taking place, increase
 confusion, and thereby bolster his image as a symbol of unity.³⁹ This was
 the outcome, not the cause. In June 1924, the outcome could not be clearly
 foreseen. Hitler acted from weakness, not strength. He was being pressed
 from all sides to take a stance on the growing schism. His equivocation
 frustrated his supporters. But any clear stance would have alienated one
 side or the other. His decision not to decide was characteristic. 'Hitler
 habitually rationalizes his choices,' commented Lüdecke. 'He was prepared
 to risk everything rather than delegate a portion of his personal authority
 while he remained confined.'⁴⁰

Hitler's frustration was also increased by his inability, despite his outright
 disapproval, to curtail Röhm's determination to build up a nationwide
 paramilitary organization called the Frontbann. This was intended to absorb
 and unify other existing paramilitary leagues of the *völkisch* movement,
 including the SA and the other banned units of the former Kampfbund,
 and to be placed under the military leadership of Ludendorff. Hitler was
 allergic to the inevitable loss of control over the SA which would certainly
 follow and concerned to avoid his own dependence, as before the putsch,
 on leaders of paramilitary organizations. Above all, he was anxious that
 what might be seen as his renewed involvement in paramilitary politics
 would hinder his chances of early parole and encourage moves to deport
 him back to Austria. Unable to deter Röhm – already freed on 1 April,
 bound over on probation, his derisory fifteen-month prison sentence for his
 part in the putsch set aside on condition of good behaviour – Hitler ended
 their last meeting before he left Landsberg, on 17 June, by telling him that,
 having laid down the leadership of the National Socialist Movement, he
 wished to hear no more about the Frontbann. Röhm nevertheless simply
 ignored Hitler and pressed on with his plans, looking to Ludendorff for
 patronage and protection.⁴¹

Following Hitler's press statement about his withdrawal from all political involvement, Ludendorff and Graefe moved quickly, with their own press release two days later, to claim the leadership of the *völkisch* movement 'until the liberated hero of Munich can again step into their circle as the third leader'. Hitler, they stated, had asked them to take over the leadership in his place. At the same time, Rosenberg had resigned his position, and Gregor Strasser had been brought into the Reich Leadership (*Reichsführerschaft*) of the NSFP along with Ludendorff and Graefe for the duration of Hitler's internment. A conference planned to take place in Weimar in mid-August would bring unity in the *völkisch* movement, they added.⁴² This horrified the northern Nazis. The Directorate sought clarification from Fobke. They were told that Hitler had given up his leadership only during his imprisonment, had delegated his powers to no one, and had had no part in the appointment of Strasser to the Reich Leadership, though this step had met with his approval.⁴³ The Directorate's leader, Volck, once more, on 18 July, made plain where the northern National Socialists stood on questions of a merger: 'Our programme consists of two words: "Adolf Hitler"'.⁴⁴ But a meeting of eighty NSDAP representatives from across Germany at Weimar on 20 July, gathered to discuss the merger issue (which would explicitly arise in the conference in the same town the following month) and the question of a parliamentary strategy, and with Ludendorff as guest of honour, ended in acrimony, recrimination, disorder, and greater division than ever.⁴⁵

Volck immediately compiled a highly critical report of events, which he sent to Landsberg.⁴⁶ Hitler's reply, through his intermediary Fobke, offered some encouragement to the northern group. He said they were 'on the right track'. He strongly criticized Ludendorff, who, he commented, should concentrate solely on the military side of the movement. He was also critical of Esser and Streicher. However, he refused adamantly to deviate from his position of neutrality towards the various rival factions. At the same time he regarded the merger issue as finished, and played down the significance of the conflict. He had scant sensitivity for the north German National Socialists in their 'despairing struggle'. He knew what he had to do on release, and the rebuilding of the movement could only start from Bavaria.⁴⁷ Volck was unenthusiastic about Hitler's response which, he thought, showed little understanding for the NSDAP's position in the north. It was the first sign of Volck's growing criticism of Hitler. 'When leaders in the first place think they can judge everything alone and better,' he commented, 'we won't get any farther.'⁴⁸

The much-vaunted conference cement the organizational merge only the most superficial unity in the Freedom Movement (Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung). The high-point of the conference was Adolf Hitler's that was read out onstage Ludendorff (though he had no part in the conference). But Hitler's leadership was, it became increasingly apparent, a failure. Once more the embattled north rejected Hitler's greetings telegram to the north for unambiguous guidance. Once more he tried to reassure his northern comrades two parties had completely merged 'parliamentarized'. But he accepted no action. Hitler, through his intermediary, refrain from any statement of priority on release (which he failed to restore order in Bavaria. He still held out until then. The north G

By the end of the summer, the *völkisch* movement in general, was advancing rather than receding. The bullying style of Streicher and the EGVG, caused great antagonism in Bavaria, Gregor Strasser, was the Leadership of the NSFB), and the Socialists. They in turn rejected the merger for its part refused to accept that Hitler's position was emerging significant warfare.

As summer dragged into autumn the *völkisch* movement widened still further. A faction in mid-September that would summon all those in leading positions would be: who should lead behind Hitler as sole leader? 'Hitler

Fobke's letter stated, 'and will never be part of such a soldiers' council construction.' So there was no question of him joining Ludendorff and Graefe in a combined Reich Leadership. But he refused to make a public statement to that effect. The frustration and impatience of his northern supporters mounted. His failure to gain the release on parole from 1 October that his supporters had been anticipating further complicated the situation. From the NSFB's point of view, unity without Hitler, and in the face of his continued refusal to commit himself publicly to a unified organization, was impossible.⁵² In Bavaria, the *völkisch* feud surrounding the figures of Esser and Streicher widened into open breach. On 26 October, the Völkischer Block decided to join the NSFB to create a united organization to fight the coming elections. With this, it accepted the NSFB's Reich Leadership. Gregor Strasser, the spokesman of the Völkischer Block, hoped that the Großdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft would also soon join the NSFB, but at the same time openly condemned its leaders, Esser and Streicher. Esser's reply in a letter to all GVG affiliations, a bitter attack on the leaders of the Völkischer Block, with a side-swipe at Ludendorff for his support of the Block's position, reaffirmed the Munich loyalist position: 'the only man who has a right to exclude someone who has fought for years for his place in the Movement of National Socialists is solely and singly Adolf Hitler'.⁵³ But Esser's bravado, and the brash attacks of Streicher, supported by the Thuringian National Socialist Artur Dinter, could not conceal the sharp decline of the GVG.⁵⁴

The Reichstag elections that took place on 7 December demonstrated just how marginal this perpetual squabbling in the *völkisch* movement was to the overall shaping of German politics. The NSFB won only 3 per cent of the vote. It had lost over a million votes compared with the *völkisch* showing in the May election. Its Reichstag representation fell from thirty-two to fourteen seats, only four of whom were National Socialists. It was a disastrous result. But it pleased Hitler.⁵⁵ In his absence, *völkisch* politics had collapsed, but his own claims to leadership had, in the process, been strengthened. The election result also had the advantage of encouraging the Bavarian government to regard the danger from the extreme Right as past. There was now, it seemed, no need for undue concern about Hitler's release from Landsberg, for which his supporters had been clamouring since October.⁵⁶

The hopes of Hitler and his once the stipulated six months on attestation of his good after release.⁵⁷ In a report prison, Oberregierungsrat warmly sympathetic to Hitler inmate:

Hitler shows himself to be a his own person, but also towards accommodating. He makes without any abusiveness, sentence. He is a man with the institution, does not smoke to command a certain authority female sex. He meets women great politeness without becoming. He is always polite and never who at the beginning had a great is well known, as far as possible mainly notes of thanks. He drafted of his book, which she autobiography, thoughts on the nation and Bolshevism, on the the 8th of November 1923. . . he has without doubt become return to liberty with threats who oppose him and frustrate against the government, no one emphasizes how convinced he and firm government.⁵⁸

This paean of praise convicted prosecutor's office, both of for rejecting Hitler's early

The report of the Deputy Friedrich Tenner, of 23 Se

part of such a soldiers' council of him joining Ludendorff and . But he refused to make a public on and impatience of his northern he release on parole from 1 October g further complicated the situation. without Hitler, and in the face of publicly to a unified organization, ch feud surrounding the figures of each. On 26 October, the Völkischer te a united organization to fight the d the NSFB's Reich Leadership. Völkischer Block, hoped that the d also soon join the NSFB, but at aders, Esser and Streicher. Esser's a bitter attack on the leaders of the : Ludendorff for his support of the ch loyalist position: 'the only man to has fought for years for his place is solely and singly Adolf Hitler'.⁵³ acks of Streicher, supported by the inter, could not conceal the sharp

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II

The hopes of Hitler and his supporters for his early parole on 1 October, once the stipulated six months since his sentence had elapsed, had depended on attestation of his good conduct while in prison, and on his intentions after release.⁵⁷ In a report on 15 September, the governor of Landsberg prison, Oberregierungsrat Otto Leybold – along with most of the warders warmly sympathetic to Hitler – painted a eulogistic picture of his prize inmate:

Hitler shows himself to be a man of order, of discipline, not only with regard to his own person, but also towards his fellow internees. He is contented, modest, and accommodating. He makes no demands, is quiet, and reasonable, serious and without any abusiveness, scrupulously concerned to obey the confinements of the sentence. He is a man without personal vanity, is content with the catering of the institution, does not smoke or drink, and, despite all comradeship, knows how to command a certain authority with his fellow inmates . . . He is not drawn to the female sex. He meets women with whom he comes into contact on visits here with great politeness without becoming engaged with them in serious political discussions. He is always polite and never insulting towards the officials of the institution. Hitler, who at the beginning had a great number of visitors, has kept for some months, as is well known, as far as possible from political visits, and writes only few letters, mainly notes of thanks. He occupies himself every day for many hours with the draft of his book, which should appear in the next weeks and will contain his autobiography, thoughts on the bourgeois, Jewry and Marxism, German revolution and Bolshevism, on the National Socialist Movement and the prehistory of the 8th of November 1923 . . . During the ten months of his remand and sentence he has without doubt become more mature and quiet than he had been. He will not return to liberty with threats and thoughts of revenge against those in public office who oppose him and frustrated his plans in November 1923. He will be no agitator against the government, no enemy of other parties with a nationalist leaning. He emphasizes how convinced he is that a state cannot exist without firm internal order and firm government.⁵⁸

This paean of praise convinced neither the Munich police nor the state prosecutor's office, both of which provided clear and compelling reasons for rejecting Hitler's early release.

The report of the Deputy Police President of Munich, Oberregierungsrat Friedrich Tenner, of 23 September 1923, warned in the strongest terms

Police Direction on 8 May then recommended his deportation in the interest of Bavarian state security.⁷⁰ But no steps were taken then, or at any other time before late September. Presumably, the matter had simply been deferred as non-urgent. By September, when a sense of urgency was certainly present, the Bavarian cabinet was divided on Hitler's deportation.⁷¹ In any case, by then the Passau border authorities were reporting that they had received orders from Vienna not to accept Hitler.⁷² The directive had been sent on the instructions of no less authority than that of the Federal Chancellor, Ignaz Seipel, himself.⁷³ Subsequent Bavarian attempts to use legal arguments – in themselves persuasive – to pressurize the Austrian government to take back Hitler were to no avail. Seipel simply refused to take him, remaining adamant that Hitler's service in the German army incurred loss of Austrian citizenship. It was legally not a sound argument. But it sufficed.⁷⁴ Despite Hitler's fears, nothing more came of the attempt to deport him.⁷⁵ Following his release from Landsberg, Hitler inquired in March 1925 how he could relinquish his Austrian citizenship. He was told to put in a formal request, which he then did on the grounds of his war service in the German army and desire to acquire German citizenship. On 30 April 1925, he received the anxiously awaited authorization that his Austrian citizenship was terminated.⁷⁶ This removal of any fear of deportation at a future date cost him the grand sum of 7.50 Austrian Schillings.⁷⁷ It would be seven years before he acquired German citizenship. Until then, he would remain stateless.

Meanwhile, on 6 October, the Bavarian Supreme Court gave its judgement, rejecting the state prosecutor's plea opposing Hitler's parole. The court took the view that the strong suspicion against Hitler, Kriebel and Weber for involvement with banned paramilitary organizations had still to be proved. The decision on parole hinged on this evidence, and could only be taken when it was available. The judgement paved the way for the eventual order of 19 December which would grant Hitler's release. The state prosecution office had still not given up. It made a last attempt to prevent Hitler's release in a carefully argued appeal of 5 December. Even if the evidence assembled might not suffice for a court conviction, it claimed, it *did* suffice to demonstrate the 'strong suspicion' that Hitler and Kriebel, whatever their protestations to the contrary, were guilty of actions in the same context as those for which they had been sentenced, and that they were unlikely to be of good conduct after release. The Bavarian Supreme Court then requested, on 12 December, a report from the Governor of Landsberg on the conduct of Hitler and Kriebel since his earlier report of 15 September. Reading the signals, Leybold replied within two days with another glowing account of

Hitler's character and behaviour his sentence,' Leybold concluded this new documentation of Hitler Court, on 19 December, finally early release, and ordered his parole in the *völkisch* press since October of the way, and appeared to doubtless helped. But only persuaded the Bavarian judiciary to insist on well-reasoned opposition of the office.

State Prosecutor Stenglein, with Hitler's parole, now passed on to the Governor, his voice faltering, him there would be no demons collected by Adolf Müller, printer of the party's printer. Müller drove Daimler-Benz together with the December, at 12.15 p.m., Hitler the state prosecution office noted one hours, fifty minutes of his sentence have taken a different course here.

The prison staff, all sympathetic to the prisoner, an emotional farewell. In the old fortress town, hurrying Hitler. Within two hours he was back, greeted by friends with garlands, dog, Wolf.⁸³ Hitler said later that evening of freedom.⁸⁴ Politically non-committal. He needed to months of internecine warfare in it was necessary in order to create conditions for his re-entry into NSDAP was lifted. Now that party's new start could begin.

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Hitler's character and behaviour in the prison. 'He is in his conduct during his sentence,' Leybold concluded, 'quite especially worthy of parole.'⁷⁸ With this new documentation of Hitler's good conduct, the Bavarian Supreme Court, on 19 December, finally rejected the state prosecution's case against early release, and ordered his parole – the clamour for which had not ceased in the *völkisch* press since October.⁷⁹ That the December elections were out of the way, and appeared to show National Socialism in steep decline, doubtless helped. But only political bias explains the determination of the Bavarian judiciary to insist upon Hitler's early release, despite the well-reasoned opposition of the Munich police and the state prosecutor's office.

State Prosecutor Stenglein, who had himself done what he could to hinder Hitler's parole, now passed on the court order to Landsberg by telegram.⁸⁰ The Governor, his voice faltering, gave his prisoner the news. Hitler assured him there would be no demonstrations outside the prison and asked to be collected by Adolf Müller, proprietor of a Munich publishing firm and the party's printer. Müller drove the next morning to Landsberg in his Daimler-Benz together with the photographer Heinrich Hoffmann.⁸¹ On 20 December, at 12.15 p.m., Hitler was released. A calculation in the files of the state prosecution office noted that he had three years, 333 days, twenty-one hours, fifty minutes of his short sentence still to serve.⁸² History would have taken a different course had he been made to serve it.

The prison staff, all sympathetic to Hitler, gathered to bid their famous prisoner an emotional farewell. He paused for photographs by the gates of the old fortress town, hurrying Hoffmann because of the cold, then was gone. Within two hours he was back at his Munich apartment in Thierschstraße, greeted by friends with garlands of flowers, and nearly knocked over by his dog, Wolf.⁸³ Hitler said later that he did not know what to do with his first evening of freedom.⁸⁴ Politically, he continued at first to remain publicly non-committal. He needed to take stock of the situation in view of the months of internecine warfare in the *völkisch* movement. More important, it was necessary in order to establish with the Bavarian authorities the conditions for his re-entry into politics and to ensure that the ban on the NSDAP was lifted. Now that he was released, serious preparation for his party's new start could begin.

III

'Landsberg', Hitler told Hans Frank, was his 'university paid for by the state'. He read, he said, everything he could get hold of: Nietzsche, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Ranke, Treitschke, Marx, Bismarck's *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* (*Thoughts and Memories*), and the war memoirs of German and allied generals and statesmen.⁸⁵ Other than dealing with visitors and answering correspondence – neither of which preoccupied him much once he had withdrawn from public involvement in politics in the summer – the long days of enforced idleness in Landsberg were ideal for reading and reflection.⁸⁶ But Hitler's reading and reflection were anything but academic. Doubtless he did read much. However, as we noted in an earlier chapter, he made clear in *Mein Kampf* that reading, for him, had purely an instrumental purpose.⁸⁷ He read not for knowledge or enlightenment, but for confirmation of his own preconceptions. He found what he was looking for. As he told Hans Frank – the party's legal expert who would eventually become Governor General in occupied Poland – through the reading he did in Landsberg, 'I recognized the correctness of my views.'⁸⁸

Sitting in his cell in Nuremberg many years later, Frank adjudged the year 1924 to have been one of the most decisive turning-points in Hitler's life.⁸⁹ This was an exaggeration. Landsberg was not so much a turning-point as a period in which Hitler inwardly consolidated and rationalized for himself the world-view he had been developing since 1919 and, in some significant ways, modifying in the year or so before the putsch. As the Nazi Movement fell apart in his absence, and with time on his hands, away from the hurly-burly of active politics, Hitler could scarcely avoid ruminating on past mistakes. And, expecting his release within months, he was even more strongly compelled to look to the way forward for himself and his broken movement. During this time, he revised in certain respects his views on how to attain power. In so doing, his perception of himself changed. He came to think of his own role in a different way. In the wake of the triumph of his trial, he began to see himself, as his followers had started to portray him from the end of 1922 onwards, as Germany's saviour. In the light of the putsch, one might have expected his self-belief to be crushed once and for all. On the contrary: it was elevated beyond measure. His almost mystical faith in himself as walking with destiny, with a 'mission' to rescue Germany, dates from this time.

At the same time, there was an important adjustment to another aspect

of his world-view. Ideas which, in 1922, if not earlier, on the elaborated into the notion of the expense of Russia. Blended destruction of 'Jewish Bolshevism' – an idea which Hitler would round off his 'world-view' for Hitler.⁹⁰ In the to the few basic *idées fixes* taking shape in the years before

The modifications in Hitler's shape in the year before the Hitler's book offered nothing statement of his world-view without his stay in Landsberg would sell in its millions would altogether clear. If Otto Strasser's source – is to be believed, it was his he spent in Landsberg, had the that he write his 'memoirs' in inmates of having to listen to the floor'. Hitler was taken with the prisoners on the ground floor eating and drinking.⁹¹ At least, the story has any substance to it, the Hitler took to reading out each captive audience.⁹² More likely, the explanation, is that the suggestion from Max Amann, persuading him his trial.⁹³ Amann was expecting putsch.⁹⁴ Instead, he and many edition of what Hitler had said superficial and triumphalist account

Hitler was already at work on Haase and the north German delegation called his book at that time by *Years of Struggle against Lies*. Its pithy title seems to have been successful

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of his world-view. Ideas which had been taking shape in his mind since late 1922, if not earlier, on the direction of future foreign policy were now elaborated into the notion of a quest for 'living-space', to be gained at the expense of Russia. Blended into his obsessive antisemitism, aimed at the destruction of 'Jewish Bolshevism', the concept of a war for 'living-space' – an idea which Hitler would repeatedly emphasize in the following years – rounded off his 'world-view'. Thereafter, there would be tactical adjustments, but no further alteration of substance. Landsberg was no 'Jordan conversion' for Hitler.⁹⁰ In the main, it was a matter of adding new emphases to the few basic *idées fixes* already formed, at least in embryo, or clearly taking shape in the years before the putsch.⁹¹

The modifications in Hitler's world-view that had already been taking shape in the year before the putsch are clearly evident in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler's book offered nothing new. But it was the plainest and most expansive statement of his world-view that he had presented. He acknowledged that without his stay in Landsberg the book which after 1933 (though not before) would sell in its millions would never have been written.⁹² Its genesis is not altogether clear. If Otto Strasser – admittedly a biased and often unreliable source – is to be believed, it was his brother, Gregor, who, during the short time he spent in Landsberg, had the 'machievellian idea' of suggesting to Hitler that he write his 'memoirs' in order to relieve the burden on the other inmates of having to listen to endless monologues from 'the man on the first floor'. Hitler was taken with the idea, began work on it straight away, and the prisoners on the ground floor were left in peace to return to playing cards, eating and drinking.⁹³ At least, they thought they would be left in peace. If the story has any substance to it, they must have been sorely disappointed when Hitler took to reading out each day the sections he had written to a literally captive audience.⁹⁴ More likely, if more prosaic than Otto Strasser's colourful explanation, is that the suggestion to Hitler to write his autobiography came from Max Amann, persuading him to cash in on the publicity stirred up by his trial.⁹⁵ Amann was expecting revelations about the background to the putsch.⁹⁶ Instead, he and many disappointed readers found largely a repetition of what Hitler had said in countless speeches, interspersed with superficial and triumphalist accounts of parts of his own life story.⁹⁷

Hitler was already at work on what would become the first volume when Haase and the north German delegation visited him on 26–7 May 1924. He called his book at that time by the scarcely catchy title: 'Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity, and Cowardice'.⁹⁸ The eventual pithy title seems to have been suggested by Max Amann.⁹⁹ The book was

dictated by Hitler to chauffeur and general dogsbody Emil Maurice, then, from July onwards, to Rudolf Heß (both of whom were also serving sentences for their part in the putsch).¹⁰⁰ The first volume, which appeared on 18 July 1925, was largely autobiographical – though, as we have noted, with many distortions and inaccuracies. It ended with Hitler's triumph at the announcement of the party programme in the Hofbräuhaus on 24 February 1920. The second volume, which Hitler wrote only after his release, and which was published on 11 December 1926, dealt more extensively with his ideas on the nature of the *volkisch* state, questions of ideology, propaganda and organization, concluding with chapters on foreign policy.

Badly written and rambling as the published version of *Mein Kampf* was, it was a considerable improvement on what Hitler had initially produced, thanks to editorial interventions from a number of people. 'A veritable chaos of banalities, schoolboy reminiscences, subjective judgements, and personal hatred' was how Otto Strasser described the draft.¹⁰¹ Amann, the party printer Müller, Heß, and Hanfstaengl (whose brother turned down flat the prospect of *Mein Kampf* appearing in the family publishing house) all had a hand in altering and revising the text.¹⁰² The music critic of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Stolzinger-Cerny, together with a former Hieronymite, Father Bernard Stempfle, one-time editor-in-chief of the *Miesbacher Anzeiger*, a provincial Bavarian newspaper that sympathized with the Nazi Movement, played the main role in re-couching whole sections into a style still inimitably Hitlerian, often barely readable, but nonetheless more literate than the original.¹⁰³ Even then, there were many later alterations before the volume appeared in print.¹⁰⁴ Hitler himself, according to Hans Frank, accepted that it was badly written, and described it as no more than a collection of leading articles for the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹⁰⁵

Before Hitler came to power, *Mein Kampf*, brought out in the party's own publishing house, the Franz Eher-Verlag, run by Max Amann, was scarcely the runaway bestseller he had apparently expected it to be. Its turgid content, dreadful style, and relatively high price of 12 Reich Marks a volume evidently deterred many potential readers.¹⁰⁶ By 1929, the first volume had sold around 23,000 copies, the second only 13,000. Sales increased sharply following the NSDAP's electoral successes after 1930, and reached 80,000 in 1932. From 1933, they rose stratospherically. One and a half million copies were sold that year. Even the blind could read it – should they have wished to do so – once a braille version had been published in 1936. And from that year, a copy of the people's edition of both volumes bound together was given to each happy couple on their wedding day. Some

10 million copies were sold by where *Mein Kampf* was trans people actually read it is unknown. Having from the early 1920s d 'writer', he could well afford in (in contrast, he pointed out, to him a very rich man).¹⁰⁹

No policy outline was offered however garbled the presentation: political principles, his 'world-vision' of society, and his long-b of the Führer myth. For in *Mein K* qualified to lead Germany from

Mein Kampf gives an import 1920s.¹¹⁰ By then, he had devel complete interpretation of histo overcome them. Tersely summari chaeen view of history as racial s the Aryan, was being undermined Jew.¹¹¹ The racial question, he history but to all human culture. taken to be the brutal rule of the J, the 'blood Jew' had, 'partly amic death around 30 million people in the rule over a great people of a b bandits'.¹¹³ The 'mission' of the N destroy 'Jewish Bolshevism'. At the conveniently into a justification f would provide the German people 'master race' to sustain itself.¹¹⁴ He rest of his life. Nothing of substz inflexibility and quasi-messianic co that were unalterable, simple, intern Hitler the strength of will and sense mark on all those who came into co: entourage derived in no small measu tions that he could so forcefully expre of black and white, victory or total d And, like all ideologues and 'convi

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10 million copies were sold by 1945, not counting the millions sold abroad, where *Mein Kampf* was translated into sixteen languages.¹⁰⁷ How many people actually read it is unknown.¹⁰⁸ For Hitler, it was of little importance. Having from the early 1920s described himself in official documents as a 'writer', he could well afford in 1933 to refuse his Reich Chancellor's salary (in contrast, he pointed out, to his predecessors): *Mein Kampf* had made him a very rich man.¹⁰⁹

No policy outline was offered in *Mein Kampf*. But the book did provide, however garbled the presentation, an uncompromising statement of Hitler's political principles, his 'world-view', his sense of his own 'mission', his 'vision' of society, and his long-term aims. Not least, it established the basis of the Führer myth. For in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler portrayed himself as uniquely qualified to lead Germany from its existing misery to greatness.

Mein Kampf gives an important insight into his thinking in the mid-1920s.¹¹⁰ By then, he had developed a philosophy that afforded him a complete interpretation of history, of the ills of the world, and how to overcome them. Tersely summarized, it boiled down to a simplistic, Manichean view of history as racial struggle, in which the highest racial entity, the Aryan, was being undermined and destroyed by the lowest, the parasitic Jew.¹¹¹ 'The racial question,' he wrote, 'gives the key not only to world history but to all human culture.'¹¹² The culmination of this process was taken to be the brutal rule of the Jews through Bolshevism in Russia, where the 'blood Jew' had, 'partly amid inhuman torture killed or let starve to death around 30 million people in truly satanic savagery in order to secure the rule over a great people of a bunch of Jewish *literati* and stock-market bandits'.¹¹³ The 'mission' of the Nazi Movement was, therefore, clear: to destroy 'Jewish Bolshevism'. At the same time – a leap of logic that moved conveniently into a justification for outright imperialist conquest – this would provide the German people with the 'living-space' needed for the 'master race' to sustain itself.¹¹⁴ He held rigidly to these basic tenets for the rest of his life. Nothing of substance changed in later years. The very inflexibility and quasi-messianic commitment to an 'idea', a set of beliefs that were unalterable, simple, internally consistent and comprehensive, gave Hitler the strength of will and sense of knowing his own destiny that left its mark on all those who came into contact with him. Hitler's authority in his entourage derived in no small measure from the certainty in his own convictions that he could so forcefully express. Everything could be couched in terms of black and white, victory or total destruction. There were no alternatives. And, like all ideologues and 'conviction politicians', the self-reinforcing

components of his 'world-view' meant that he was always in a position to deride or dismiss out of hand any 'rational' arguments of opponents. Once head of state, Hitler's personalized 'world-view' would serve as 'guidelines for action' for policy-makers in all areas of the Third Reich.¹¹⁵

Hitler's book was not a prescriptive programme in the sense of a short-term political manifesto. But many contemporaries made a mistake in treating *Mein Kampf* with ridicule and not taking the ideas Hitler expressed there extremely seriously. However base and repellent they were, they amounted to a set of clearly established and rigidly upheld political principles.¹¹⁶ Hitler never saw any reason to alter the content of what he had written.¹¹⁷ Their internal coherence (given the irrational premises) allows them to be described as an ideology (or, in Hitler's own terminology, a 'world-view').¹¹⁸ Hitler's 'world-view' in *Mein Kampf* can now be more clearly seen than used to be possible in the context of his ideas as they unfolded between his entry into politics and the writing of his 'Second Book' in 1928.

On Hitler's central, overriding and all-embracing obsession, the 'removal of the Jews', *Mein Kampf* added nothing to the ideas he had already formulated by 1919-20. Extreme though the language of *Mein Kampf* was, it was no different to that which Hitler had been proclaiming for years. Nor, for that matter, did the inherently genocidal terminology substantially vary from that of other writers and speakers on the *völkisch* Right, extending, as we have already seen, well back beyond the First World War.¹¹⁹ His bacterial imagery implied that Jews should be treated in the way germs were dealt with: by extermination. Already in August 1920, Hitler had spoken of combating 'racial tuberculosis' through removal of the 'causal agent, the Jew'.¹²⁰ And there could be little doubt whom Hitler had in mind when, four years later in *Mein Kampf*, he wrote: 'The nationalization of our masses will succeed only when, aside from all the positive struggle for the soul of our people, their international poisoners are exterminated.'¹²¹ The notion of poisoning the poisoners ran through another, notorious, passage of *Mein Kampf*, already cited in Chapter 5, in which Hitler suggested that if 12-15,000 'Hebrew corrupters of the people' had been held under poison gas at the start of the First World War, then 'the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain'.¹²² These terrible passages are not the beginning of a one-way track to the 'Final Solution'. The road there was 'twisted', not straight.¹²³ But however little he had thought out the practical implications of what he was saying, its inherent genocidal thrust is undeniable. However indistinctly, the connection between destruction of the Jews, war, and national salvation had been forged in Hitler's mind.

D.P. *Order to - one idea. Poison the poisoners*

As we saw in Chapter 1, antisemitism had given way to the Jews with the evil: substituted the image of it behind capitalism. Both profound that it could only figure in his imagination: international finance capital 'Jewish world conspiracy' National Socialism.

Once the link with Bols central and lasting vision of against a foe of ruthless brutality 1922, was a fight to the death and the materialistic. The Bolshevism, and with it 'our year he was writing of a life incapable of existing alongside would seal Germany's destruction and the annihilated. It means Marxist idea signifies the c remarked. 'The Bolshevization of the entire Christian-National Socialism could be of the Marxist *Weltanschauung* By now Marxism and the end of his trial, on 27 March wanted to be was the break only one enemy, he had emphasized of the whole of mankind: M. Some newspapers picked up and altered his position on the 'J who were also puzzled. One, asked Hitler whether he had a characteristic reply. Indeed he altered, Hitler remarked. He that he had up to then been to could be deployed if success was declared, was an existential

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c. Poison the poisoners

As we saw in Chapter 5, the initial anti-capitalist colouring of Hitler's antisemitism had given way by mid-1920 to the connection in his thinking of the Jews with the evils of Soviet Bolshevism. It was not that Hitler substituted the image of the Jews behind Marxism for that of the Jews behind capitalism. Both coexisted in his fixated loathing. It was a hatred so profound that it could only have been based on deep fear. This was of a figure in his imagination so powerful that it was the force behind both international finance capital and Soviet Communism. It was the image of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' that was almost unconquerable – even for National Socialism.

Once the link with Bolshevism was made, Hitler had established his central and lasting vision of a titanic battle for supremacy, a racial struggle against a foe of ruthless brutality. What he visualized, he had stated in June 1922, was a fight to the death between two competing ideologies, the idealistic and the materialistic. The mission of the German people was to destroy Bolshevism, and with it 'our mortal enemy: the Jew'.¹²² By October the same year he was writing of a life and death struggle of two opposed 'world-views', incapable of existing alongside one another. Defeat in this great showdown would seal Germany's destruction. The struggle would leave only victors and the annihilated. It meant a war of extermination. 'A victory of the Marxist idea signifies the complete extermination of the opponents,' he remarked. 'The Bolshevization of Germany . . . means the complete annihilation of the entire Christian-western culture.' Correspondingly, the aim of National Socialism could be simply defined: 'Annihilation and extermination of the Marxist *Weltanschauung*.'¹²³

By now Marxism and the Jew were synonymous in Hitler's mind. At the end of his trial, on 27 March 1924, he had told the court that what he wanted to be was the breaker of Marxism.¹²⁴ The Nazi Movement knew only one enemy, he had emphasized the following month – the mortal enemy of the whole of mankind: Marxism.¹²⁵ There was no mention of the Jews. Some newspapers picked up the change of emphasis and claimed Hitler had altered his position on the 'Jewish Question'. There were Nazi followers who were also puzzled. One, visiting him in Landsberg at the end of July, asked Hitler whether he had changed his views about Jewry. He received a characteristic reply. Indeed his position on the struggle against Jewry had altered, Hitler remarked. He had realized while at work on *Mein Kampf* that he had up to then been too mild. In future, only the toughest measures could be deployed if success were to be attained. The 'Jewish Question', he declared, was an existential matter for all peoples, not just the German

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August 1920, Hitler had spoken of
removal of the 'causal agent, the
whom Hitler had in mind when,
the nationalization of our masses
positive struggle for the soul of
were exterminated.¹²¹ The notion
other, notorious, passage of *Mein*
which Hitler suggested that if
role' had been held under poison
in 'the sacrifice of millions at the
these terrible passages are not the
'Solution'. The road there was
he had thought out the practical
inherent genocidal thrust is unde-
nion between destruction of the
forged in Hitler's mind.

Poison the poisoners

As we saw in Chapter 5, the initial anti-capitalist colouring of Hitler's antisemitism had given way by mid-1920 to the connection in his thinking of the Jews with the evils of Soviet Bolshevism. It was not that Hitler substituted the image of the Jews behind Marxism for that of the Jews behind capitalism. Both coexisted in his fixated loathing. It was a hatred so profound that it could only have been based on deep fear. This was of a figure in his imagination so powerful that it was the force behind both international finance capital and Soviet Communism. It was the image of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' that was almost unconquerable – even for National Socialism.

Once the link with Bolshevism was made, Hitler had established his central and lasting vision of a titanic battle for supremacy, a racial struggle against a foe of ruthless brutality. What he visualized, he had stated in June 1922, was a fight to the death between two competing ideologies, the idealistic and the materialistic. The mission of the German people was to destroy Bolshevism, and with it 'our mortal enemy: the Jew'.¹²⁴ By October the same year he was writing of a life and death struggle of two opposed 'world-views', incapable of existing alongside one another. Defeat in this great showdown would seal Germany's destruction. The struggle would leave only victors and the annihilated. It meant a war of extermination. 'A victory of the Marxist idea signifies the complete extermination of the opponents,' he remarked. 'The Bolshevization of Germany . . . means the complete annihilation of the entire Christian-western culture.' Correspondingly, the aim of National Socialism could be simply defined: 'Annihilation and extermination of the Marxist *Weltanschauung*.'¹²⁵

By now Marxism and the Jew were synonymous in Hitler's mind. At the end of his trial, on 27 March 1924, he had told the court that what he wanted to be was the breaker of Marxism.¹²⁶ The Nazi Movement knew only one enemy, he had emphasized the following month – the mortal enemy of the whole of mankind: Marxism.¹²⁷ There was no mention of the Jews. Some newspapers picked up the change of emphasis and claimed Hitler had altered his position on the 'Jewish Question'. There were Nazi followers who were also puzzled. One, visiting him in Landsberg at the end of July, asked Hitler whether he had changed his views about Jewry. He received a characteristic reply. Indeed his position on the struggle against Jewry had altered, Hitler remarked. He had realized while at work on *Mein Kampf* that he had up to then been too mild. In future, only the toughest measures could be deployed if success were to be attained. The 'Jewish Question', he declared, was an existential matter for all peoples, not just the German

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exponent of 'geopolitics',

by 1922 at the latest.¹⁴⁷ Haushofer's influence was probably greater than the Munich professor was later prepared to acknowledge.¹⁴⁸ If he was not acquainted with them before, Hitler certainly had time on his hands while in prison to read his works, as well as those of Friedrich Ratzel, the other foremost geopolitics theorist. Whether he did so or not cannot be proved. But it seems at the very least likely that the broad lines of their arguments were made known to him by Haushofer's former pupil, Rudolf Heß.¹⁴⁹

At any rate, by the time of the Scharrer discussion at the end of 1922, Hitler's thinking on Russia and the 'living-space' question was essentially in place. And by spring 1924, his views were effectively fully formed. What Landsberg and the writing of *Mein Kampf* did was to provide elaboration. Beyond that, it showed that Hitler had by then firmly established the link between the destruction of the Jews and a war against Russia to acquire *Lebensraum*.¹⁵⁰

Already in the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, the choice – which Hitler had still rhetorically left open in his article of April 1924 – of a land-policy directed against Russia, with Britain's support, or a world trading policy upheld by sea-power directed against Britain with Russia's support, was emphatically determined.¹⁵¹ By the second volume, mainly written in 1925 (and published at the end of the following year), the enemy in the short term was still seen as France. But in the baldest language, the long-term goal was now stated to be the attaining of 'living-space' at the expense of Russia.

The right to possess soil can become a duty if without extension of its soil a great nation seems doomed to destruction [wrote Hitler] . . . Germany will either be a world power or there will be no Germany. And for world power she needs that magnitude which will give her the position she needs in the present period, and life to her citizens.

And so we National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our pre-War period. We take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze towards the land in the east. At long last we break off the colonial and commercial policy of the pre-War period and shift to the soil policy of the future.

If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states . . . For centuries Russia drew nourishment from [the] Germanic nucleus of its upper leading strata. Today it can be regarded as almost totally exterminated and extinguished. It has been replaced by the Jew . . . He himself is no element of organization, but a ferment of decomposition. The giant empire in the east is ripe for collapse. And the end of Jewish rule in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state . . .

The mission of the National Socialist Movement was to prepare the German people for this task. 'We have been chosen by Fate,' wrote Hitler, 'as witnesses of a catastrophe which will be the mightiest confirmation of the soundness of the *völkisch* theory.'¹⁵²

With this passage, the two key components of Hitler's personalized 'world-view' – destruction of the Jews and acquisition of 'living-space' – came together. War against Russia would, through its annihilation of 'Jewish Bolshevism', at the same time deliver Germany its salvation by providing new 'living-space'. Crude, simplistic, barbaric: but this invocation of the most brutal tenets of late nineteenth-century imperialism, racism and anti-semitism, transposed into eastern Europe in the twentieth century, was a heady brew for those ready to consume it.

Hitler himself repeatedly returned to the 'living-space' notion, which became a dominant theme of his writings and speeches in the following years. His foreign policy ideas were to be more clearly laid out, but in no significant way altered, in his 'Second Book', written in 1928 (though left unpublished in Hitler's own lifetime).¹⁵³ Once established, the quest for *Lebensraum* – and with it the destruction of 'Jewish Bolshevism' – would remain a keystone of Hitler's ideology. One element remained to complete the 'world-view': the leader of genius who would accomplish this quest. In Landsberg, Hitler found the answer.

IV

Many years later, Hitler regarded 'the self-confidence, optimism, and belief that simply could not be shaken by anything more' as deriving from his time in Landsberg.¹⁵⁴ Hitler's self-perception did indeed alter while he was in prison. Even at his trial, as we have seen, he had been proud to be the 'drummer' of the national cause. Anything else was a triviality, he had declared.¹⁵⁵ In Landsberg this changed – though, as we have noted, the change had already been under way during the year preceding the putsch.

Hitler was preoccupied from the beginning of his sentence with the question of his own future and that of his party after his release. Since he expected his release within six months, the question was an urgent one. For Hitler, there was no turning back. His political 'career', which had developed into his political 'mission', left him nowhere to go but forwards. He could not return to anonymity, even had he wanted to do so. A conventional 'bourgeois' lifestyle was out of the question. Any retreat, after the acclaim

he had won on the nationalist impression of his opponents have exposed him to ridicule, transforming it in his mind into have its central place in Nazi blame to the mistakes, weakness to whom he was at the time national cause: this was his cor trial; the torrents of adulation unabated from letters sent to the *völkisch* movement in his and the growing conflict with all these contributed towards importance and of his unique forming in 1923, took firm hold Surrounded by sycophants and Heß, Hitler now became certain leader'.

Such a notion in its full implication at the trial and the acclaim claimed for himself was an investment in that role. But the role fitted failures in early life had found admiration for heroic figures, an extraordinary depth of self-belief an abnormal elevation of self-elevation is a matter best left to private reasons, for such a narcissistic others directed towards him, fault or error in himself, now of monumental proportions. No outside the tiny and fractured have taken seriously the change was of no consequence. But for and for his own self-justification

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler pictures the qualities of the 'programme' of a movement was the theoretical practical realities, but with 'et

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he had won on the nationalist Right at his trial, would have confirmed the impression of his opponents that he was a figure of farce, and would have exposed him to ridicule. And as he pondered over the failed putsch, transforming it in his mind into the martyrs' triumph that would come to have its central place in Nazi mythology, he had no trouble in assigning the blame to the mistakes, weakness, and lack of resolve of all the leading figures to whom he was at the time bound.¹⁵⁶ They had betrayed him, and the national cause: this was his conclusion. More than that: the triumph at his trial; the torrents of adulation ever-present in the *völkisch* press or pouring unabated from letters sent to Landsberg; and not least the collapse of the *völkisch* movement in his absence into derisory sectarian squabbling, and the growing conflict with Ludendorff and the other *völkisch* leaders; all these contributed towards giving him an elevated sense of his own importance and of his unique historic 'mission'. The idea, embryonically forming in 1923, took firm hold in the strange atmosphere of Landsberg. Surrounded by sycophants and devotees, foremost among them the fawning Heß, Hitler now became certain: he himself was Germany's coming 'great leader'.

Such a notion in its full implications was unimaginable before his triumph at the trial and the acclaim that followed. The 'heroic' leadership he now claimed for himself was an invention of his followers before he saw himself in that role. But the role fitted the temperament of one whose personal failures in early life had found an exaggerated wish-fulfilment in unbound admiration for heroic figures, above all the artist-hero Wagner.¹⁵⁷ Whether an extraordinary depth of self-loathing is a necessary precondition for such an abnormal elevation of self-esteem into that of the heroic saviour of the nation is a matter best left to psychologists. But whatever the deep-seated reasons, for such a narcissistic egomaniac as Hitler, the hero-worship which others directed towards him, combined with his own inability to find fault or error in himself, now produced a 'heroic'-leadership self-image of monumental proportions. No one in mainstream German political life, outside the tiny and fractured *völkisch* movement, was aware of or would have taken seriously the change in Hitler's self-perception. At the time it was of no consequence. But for Hitler's demands on the *völkisch* movement, and for his own self-justification, it was a vital development.¹⁵⁸

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler pictured himself as a rare genius who combined the qualities of the 'programmatist' and the 'politician'. The 'programmatist' of a movement was the theoretician who did not concern himself with practical realities, but with 'eternal truth', as the great religious leaders

had done. The 'greatness' of the 'politician' lay in the successful practical implementation of the 'idea' advanced by the 'programmatist'. 'Over long periods of humanity,' he wrote, 'it can once happen that the politician is wedded to the programmatist.' His work did not concern short-term demands that any petty bourgeois could grasp, but looked to the future, with 'aims which only the fewest grasp'. Among the 'great men' in history, Hitler singled out at this point Luther, Frederick the Great, and Wagner.¹⁵⁹ Seldom was it the case, in his view, that 'a great theoretician' was also 'a great leader'. The latter was far more frequently an 'agitator': 'For leading means: being able to move masses.' He concluded: 'the combination of theoretician, organizer, and leader in one person is the rarest thing that can be found on this earth; this combination makes the great man.'¹⁶⁰ Unmistakably, Hitler meant himself.

The 'idea' he stood for was not a matter of short-term objectives. It was a 'mission', a 'vision' of long-term future goals, and of his own part in the accomplishment of them. Certainly, these goals - national salvation through 'removal' of the Jews and acquisition of 'living-space' in the east - did not amount to short-term practical policy guidelines. But, incorporated into the notion of the 'heroic' leader, they did amount to a dynamic 'world-view'. This 'world-view' gave Hitler his unremitting drive. He spoke repeatedly of his 'mission'. He saw the hand of 'Providence' in his work: He regarded his fight against the Jew as 'the work of the Lord'.¹⁶¹ He saw his life's work as a crusade. The invasion of the Soviet Union, when it was launched many years later, was for him - and not just for him - the culmination of this crusade. It would be a serious error to underestimate the ideological driving-force of Hitler's few central ideas. He was no mere propagandist or 'unprincipled opportunist'.¹⁶² He was indeed both a masterly propagandist and an ideologue. There was no contradiction between the two.

Hitler's conviction of his own uniqueness conveyed itself to some, if not all, of those imprisoned alongside him in Landsberg. It was only in Landsberg, wrote Rudolf Heß, that he fully grasped the 'mighty significance' of Hitler's personality.¹⁶³ Some of the inmates, like Heß, would, on release, be instrumental in transmitting the 'heroic' image of Hitler within the party. Hermann Fobke, Hitler's liaison with the north German faction and an internee in Landsberg along with around two dozen other young members of Hitler's bodyguard, gave an indication of the impression Hitler was making on him in one of his letters to the Göttingen leader of the National Socialists, Ludolf Haase:

It is my rock solid conviction that Socialist thinking . . . And if it then it is only for the sake of me programmatist and the politician accomplish it. My stay here has faith in Hitler's political instinct

When he left Landsberg, leadership claims were, the *völkisch* movement, but had into a new perception of h realism had by no means claims. He had no concrete still imagined that his goals future.¹⁶⁵ Since it consisted 'world-view' was compatible had the advantage of accommodating conflicting positions on par by subordinate Nazi leader. Hitler himself was flexible which could obsess his fellow commentators, frequently because of its diffuseness, a Ideology was often regarded and tyranny.¹⁶⁷ This was basic ideas, few and crude those basic ideas came to within the Nazi state. W power. He was prepared and those were for him that They formed the essence of was always itself ultimate notion of power.

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1915-29

Between the refoundation of the NSDAP in February 1925 and the beginnings of the new political and economic turmoil that was to usher in the shattering impact of the world economic crisis, the Nazi Movement was no more than a fringe irritant in German politics. Its leader, Hitler, faced with the rebuilding of his party from scratch after it had fractured into warring factions during his imprisonment in 1924, and banned from speaking in public in most of Germany until 1927 (in the biggest state of all, Prussia, until 1928), was confined to the political wilderness. A confidential report by the Reich Minister of the Interior in 1927, pointing out that the NSDAP 'was not advancing', realistically described the party as 'a numerically insignificant . . . radical-revolutionary splinter group incapable of exerting any noticeable influence on the great mass of the population and the course of political events'.¹

In the conditions of economic recovery and apparent consolidation that prevailed in the four years following the currency stabilization the major props of Nazi success before 1923 were removed. A semblance of 'normality' came over the Weimar Republic. These were Weimar's 'golden years'. With Stresemann at the helm, the Locarno Treaty of 1925 (recognizing the western borders of the Reich as determined in the Versailles Treaty) and Germany's entry into the League of Nations the following year brought the country back into the international fold. At home, despite nationalist opposition, the Dawes Plan took much of the heat out of the reparations issue by regulating and substantially easing the rate of German repayment. It would be five years before the issue became sensitive again, when a further attempt – the Young Plan – in 1929 to establish terms for clearing the reparations burden stirred a new wave of nationalist agitation. Meanwhile, despite governmental instability, the new Republic seemed to be settling down. Beneath the four changes of administration between 1925 and 1927, there

was a good deal of continuity in government coalitions.² In the economy, after a sharp but short-lived recession in 1926, industrial production for the first time came to surpass the pre-war level. Real wages did the same. The welfare state made impressive progress. Health provision was far superior to the pre-war period. Public spending on housing increased massively. By the later 1920s, over 300,000 new houses a year were being built – a level to be reached in only two years during the Third Reich. Industrial disturbances fell. So did crime levels. The first glimmers of a mass-consumer society were visible. More people had radios, telephones, even cars.³ Shopping was increasingly carried out in big department stores. In all this, Germany in the mid-1920s followed patterns recognizable in much of Europe. America was the model, though Germany lagged far behind. These years also marked the high-point of Weimar culture, of *neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and the thriving of an extraordinary cultural avant-garde. The modernist architectural experiments of the Bauhaus, the Expressionist painting of leading artists such as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, the biting social commentaries in the pictures of Otto Dix and caricatures of Georg Grosz, the bold new musical forms attained by Arnold Schönberg and Paul Hindemith, the cynical genius of Bertolt Brecht's plays: all became synonymous with Germany's cultural pre-eminence in the 1920s.⁴ Mass entertainment also flourished. Sporting events drew increasing numbers of spectators. Boxing, football, and motor-sports were especially popular.⁵ Cinemas and dance-halls sprouted up on urban street-corners. The Charleston, shimmy and jitterbug were the rage. Young people in big cities were more likely to be attracted to hot jazz than to *Heimatlieder*.⁶ In the countryside, life continued at a more leisurely pace. 'Apart from a few cases of fire, there are no notable disturbances of public safety to report,' began the sleepy half-monthly dispatch of the Government President of Upper Bavaria in February 1928.⁷ Five years earlier, his reports had been dominated by the activities of Hitler and his Movement. It was as if a storm had burst in 1923. The calm that followed held out little hope of future success for the Nazi Party.

The *völkisch* Right's residual support had dwindled to around 3 per cent of the population by late 1924. In the 1928 Reichstag election this fell still further: the NSDAP (campaigning in a Reichstag election for the first time under its own name) gained a mere 2.6 per cent of the vote. Over 97 per cent of the electorate did not want Hitler. Under the present-day constitution of the Federal Republic, the Nazis' percentage of the vote would have gained them no seats at all. Even under the Weimar electoral system, only twelve

Nazis took their seats among Growing unrest in farming Young Plan helped the NSDAP in regional elections in 1925 calamitous effect upon Germany may well have broken up and as a passing phenomenon of have been recalled as a one-tin putsch attempt and never again

As long as the German economy prospered, the fragile political Without such a collapse, and leverage on power – particularly landowners, many of the civil service – retained their little or nothing that Hitler as mainstream of politics, let alone as well not to be dismissive between 1924 and 1929 in the of Hitler and the Nazi Party. Established as the leader of it was transformed into a 'leader' it was to retain, and later to it was no conventional party *primus inter pares*. He was first with some difficulty, he over his movement.

By 1929, the organization accompany its nationwide ex little comparison with the hard party, and placed it in a far descended on Germany from had also grown in strength. The party's own figures of 100,000 as high as the membership rolls were still few in number, the relatively large.¹⁰ Finally, though movements still simmered just through into open conflict, the

Geli Raubach in 1919

ment coalitions.² In the economy, by 1926, industrial production for the first time had reached the level of 1913. Real wages did the same. The standard of living was far superior to that of the previous decade. Housing provision was far superior to that of the previous decade. By 1926, housing had increased massively. By 1926, a million houses were being built – a record for the Third Reich. Industrial production had reached the first glimmers of a mass-consumer society. Radios, telephones, even cars.³ Shopping had become a pleasure. Department stores. In all this, Germany was recognizable in much of Europe. The standard of living lagged far behind. These years saw the birth of a new culture, of *neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), an extraordinary cultural avant-garde. The Bauhaus, the Expressionist movement, the works of Otto Dix and caricatures of the Weimar Republic by Arnold Schönberg and Bertolt Brecht's plays: all became part of the new culture. Mass events drew increasing numbers of people. Sports were especially popular.⁴ In the urban street-corners. The Charles-Louis square in big cities were more crowded than in the countryside, like in the case of fire, there was a sense of report, began the sleepy days of Bavaria in 1923. The ports had been dominated by the Weimar Republic as if a storm had burst in 1923. The hope of future success for the Nazi

movement had dwindled to around 3 per cent in the 1928 Reichstag election this fell still further. In the Reichstag election for the first time the Nazis won 2.6 per cent of the vote. Over 97 per cent of the vote. Under the present-day constitution the majority of the vote would have gained under the electoral system, only twelve

Nazis took their seats among the 491 deputies returned to the Reichstag.⁸ Growing unrest in farming communities and agitation surrounding the Young Plan helped the NSDAP to improve on this disastrous performance in regional elections in 1929. Even so, without the Depression and the calamitous effect upon Germany from the end of that year, the Nazi Party may well have broken up and faded into oblivion, remembered essentially as a passing phenomenon of the post-war upheaval. Hitler himself would have been recalled as a one-time firebrand who burnt his fingers in an absurd putsch attempt and never again became a force in German politics.

As long as the German economy offered prospects of recovery and future prosperity, the fragile political fabric of the new democracy did not collapse. Without such a collapse, and as long as the anti-democratic élites with a leverage on power – particularly the army leadership, but also the big landowners, many of the captains of industry, and the top echelon of the civil service – retained their detached loyalty to the Republic, there was little or nothing that Hitler and his party could do to gain a foothold in the mainstream of politics, let alone to stake a claim to power. However, it is as well not to be dismissive of the importance of these 'wilderness years' between 1924 and 1929 in laying the platform for the later triumphant rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party. During this period, Hitler became incontestably established as the leader of the radical Right. In the process, the NSDAP was transformed into a 'leader party' of a unique kind, with the character it was to retain, and later to impart to the German state. Hitler by this time was no conventional party chairman, nor even a leader among others, *primus inter pares*. He was now 'the Leader'. Between 1925 and 1929, at first with some difficulty, he had established outright and complete mastery over his movement.

By 1929, the organization of the party, which had been built up to accompany its nationwide expansion (however thinly spread at first), bore little comparison with the hand-to-mouth administration of the pre-putsch party, and placed it in a far stronger position to exploit the new crises that descended on Germany from the autumn of that year. The activist cadres had also grown in strength. Despite its miserable showing at the polls, the party's own figures of 100,000 members in October 1928 were almost twice as high as the membership rolls on the eve of the putsch.⁹ Though the voters were still few in number, the activist core of mainly dedicated fanatics was relatively large.¹⁰ Finally, though the factionalism inherent in radical rightist movements still simmered just below the surface, not infrequently breaking through into open conflict, the NSDAP was a far more cohesive force by

1929 than it had been before the putsch. And by then, its rivals on the extreme Right had disappeared, lost all significance, or been absorbed into the Nazi Movement.

These developments were strongly influenced by Hitler's changed leadership position. As we have noted, Hitler was before the putsch only one of the leaders of the Right, and, with the main emphasis in 1923 on paramilitary politics, heavily dependent upon forces outside his own movement. Despite the beginnings of the leadership cult which some of his followers attached to him, he was still regarded at that time as merely one exponent – however important – of National Socialism (with its myriad forms of emphasis and interpretation). By 1929, his dominance in the movement was absolute, the 'idea' now as good as inseparable from the Leader. The Hitler cult had caught hold among the party faithful in ways scarcely imaginable before 1923, and was now well on the way to elevating the Leader above the party. For some leading figures in the party, the cult was encouraged, or at least tolerated, because it served successfully as the focus of growing support. Above all, it was accepted because it was a crucial adhesive, alone capable of holding together the party which otherwise, as 1924 had shown, was likely to splinter into feuding factions. But for opponents and for supporters alike, National Socialism came in these years to mean exclusively 'the Hitler Movement'. The platform was created for the subsequent rapid spread of the Leader cult, once the breakthrough of popular support had been attained in 1930, and for the later near deification of Hitler in the Third Reich itself.

Hitler's own contribution to the transformation of the NSDAP in these years should not be exaggerated. What is remarkable, indeed, is not how much, but how little, Hitler personally had to do to bring about the restructuring of the NSDAP in these years so that it was in a position to challenge for power once circumstances again began to favour it.

In essence, Hitler's crude scheme of the path to national redemption and rebirth remained as it had been since his entry into politics: mobilization of the masses, takeover of the state, destruction of internal enemies, preparation for external conquest.¹¹ His ideological 'vision' was, at this stage at least, of importance mainly in further 'rationalizing' to himself the prejudices and phobias he had long carried with him, and in conveying a compelling image of a political 'visionary' to his followers. His sole recipe, as always, was to work for the 'nationalization' of the masses through ceaseless propaganda and agitation, and to wait for events to turn in his favour. The certainty that they would do so – the certainty of the fanatic – impressed those drawn to his message. It helped to shape the aura around Hitler, the 'messianic',

'visionary' image. However, that did nothing to prevent it, other – was brought about by his fol the party's organization was la indispensability to the völkisch I grated during his time in Landsl it together as he could. And no s Beyond that, his main contributi in this period amounted to an – towards all potential threats unique leadership position to b: the single-minded pursuit of po

Despite the modest growth (neither Hitler nor any other leadi which the political breakthrough came, the party was, following in a position to exploit the new c

Hitler spent Christmas Eve 192 new villa in Munich's Herzogp: in prison, and looked a little flab on the collar and shoulders. Fo see his 'Uncle Dolf' again.¹² Wit Isolde's 'Liebestod' on Hanfstaer music, as Hanfstaengl had ofte: His initial nervousness and ten: cheerful. He admired the new ho: glanced over his shoulder, and e: prison of imagining he was bein: Hanfstaengl realized, a pathetic in Landsberg, relaxed and comf: his room. He noticed that Hitl: turkey followed by his favourite: touched the wine. Hitler subse: leaving Landsberg to cut out me: had convinced himself that mea

And by then, its rivals on the significance, or been absorbed into

enced by Hitler's changed leadership before the putsch only one of emphasis in 1923 on paramilitary beside his own movement. Despite h some of his followers attached merely one exponent – however s myriad forms of emphasis and the movement was absolute, the he Leader. The Hitler cult had ways scarcely imaginable before uting the Leader above the party. cult was encouraged, or at least the focus of growing support. crucial adhesive, alone capable wise, as 1924 had shown, was or opponents and for supporters s to mean exclusively 'the Hitler the subsequent rapid spread of pular support had been attained Hitler in the Third Reich itself. nation of the NSDAP in these remarkable, indeed, is not how do to bring about the restructuring was in a position to challenge to favour it.

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'visionary' image. However, the growth of the Führer cult – though Hitler did nothing to prevent it, other than prohibiting its most tasteless excesses – was brought about by his followers. And the important restructuring of the party's organization was largely the work of Gregor Strasser. Hitler's indispensability to the *völkisch* Right had been demonstrated when it disintegrated during his time in Landsberg. No other leader could rally it and hold it together as he could. And no speaker could draw the crowds like he could. Beyond that, his main contribution to the inner strengthening of the NSDAP in this period amounted to an uncompromising stance – even in adversity – towards all potential threats to his authority, and the utilization of his unique leadership position to bypass or override all ideological conflicts in the single-minded pursuit of power.

Despite the modest growth (from a low base) in party support in 1929, neither Hitler nor any other leading Nazi had any inkling about the speed with which the political breakthrough was to follow. But once the breakthrough came, the party was, following the changes since its refoundation in 1925, in a position to exploit the new conditions it had been powerless to produce.

I

Hitler spent Christmas Eve 1924 with the Hanfstaengls in their splendid new villa in Munich's Herzogpark. He had put on weight during his time in prison, and looked a little flabby. His blue suit was flecked with dandruff on the collar and shoulders. Four-year-old Egon Hanfstaengl was glad to see his 'Uncle Dolf' again.¹² Within two minutes, Hitler was asking to hear Isolde's 'Liebestod' on Hanfstaengl's elegant Blüthner grand piano. Wagner's music, as Hanfstaengl had often noticed, could transform Hitler's mood. His initial nervousness and tension disappeared. He became relaxed and cheerful. He admired the new house, then suddenly stopped in mid-sentence, glanced over his shoulder, and explained that he had not lost his habit from prison of imagining he was being observed through the peephole. It was, as Hanfstaengl realized, a pathetic piece of play-acting. Putzi had seen Hitler in Landsberg, relaxed and comfortable; and there had been no peephole in his room. He noticed that Hitler had a good appetite during the meal of turkey followed by his favourite Viennese sweet pastries, but that he scarcely touched the wine. Hitler subsequently explained that he had begun on leaving Landsberg to cut out meat and alcohol in order to lose weight.¹³ He had convinced himself that meat and alcohol were harmful for him, and,

'in his fanatical way,' went on Hanfstaengl, 'finally made a dogma out of it and from then on only took vegetarian meals and alcohol-free drinks.'¹⁴ After the meal, Hitler treated the family to his war-memories, marching up and down the room, imitating the sounds of different sorts of artillery fire at the battle of the Somme. Late in the evening, a well-connected artist, Wilhelm Funk, dropped in at the Hanfstaengls. He had known Hitler for quite some time, and now ventured his views on how the party could be built up again. Hitler replied in a familiar, and revealing, tone. For one who had 'come up from the bottom', he said, 'without name, special position, or connection', it was less a matter of programmes than hard endeavour until the public was ready to see 'a nameless one' as identical with a political line. Hitler thought he had now reached that position, and that the putsch had been of value to the movement: 'I'm no longer an unknown, and that provides us with the best basis for a new start.'¹⁵

The new start was Hitler's priority. The immediate aim was to have the ban on the NSDAP lifted. His first political act was to call on his old ally Pöhner, the former Munich Police President. Through a well-placed intermediary, Theodor Freiherr von Cramer-Klett, a meeting with the Bavarian Minister President Heinrich Held was arranged for 4 January. Pöhner was also influential in persuading Gürtner, the Bavarian Minister of Justice (whom Hitler was to make Reich Minister of Justice in 1933), to have the other Nazis detained in Landsberg released, among them Rudolf Heß.¹⁶

The meeting with Minister President Held on 4 January, only a fortnight after Hitler's release and the first of three meetings between the two, went well. No one else was present. Hitler was prepared to act humbly. It was his 'journey to Canossa'. He agreed to respect the authority of the state without condition, and to support it in the struggle against Communism. He distanced himself sharply from Ludendorff's attacks on the Catholic Church, a necessary step since the General's vociferous anti-clericalism – scarcely a winning formula in Bavaria – had recently become notably strident, and linked to an all too public row (involving a court case for libel, which Ludendorff lost) with Rupprecht, the Crown Prince of Bavaria.¹⁷ Behind the public façade of continued reverence for the figurehead of the *völkisch* movement, Hitler's willingness during his meeting with the Bavarian premier to dissociate himself from Ludendorff was not only shrewd, but also a sign of his increasing estrangement from the General, which would rapidly accelerate into complete alienation by 1927.

Not least, Hitler promised Held – an easy promise to make in the circumstances – that he would not again attempt a putsch.¹⁸ Held told Hitler

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in the most forthright terms that times had changed. He would not tolerate any return to the sort of circumstances that had prevailed before the putsch. Nor would the constitutional government treat the 'revolutionaries of yesterday' as an equal partner.¹⁹ But Hitler got what he wanted. With Gürtner's backing, the way was now paved for the removal of the ban on the NSDAP and the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 16 February.²⁰ By that time, Hitler's relations with his rivals in the NSFB had been clarified.

A meeting of the NSFB in Berlin on 17 January marked the effective end of the attempt to create a unified *völkisch* movement. Reinhold Wulle, one of the original DVFP founders, sought to undermine Hitler's authority, especially among the strong north German contingent present. He accused Hitler of being worn-out through his imprisonment and of giving in to the international power of the Catholic Church. Wulle reckoned this to be a bigger threat than 'the Jewish danger'. The point carried some weight among *völkisch* leaders in the Protestant North. He also suggested that under Hitler's weakened leadership Bavarian particularism would come to dominate. It would be South against North. Playing to his audience, Wulle emphasized his own Prussian orientation. Clever politicians were needed in the present conditions. Hitler was not one of them. Henning, another co-founder of the DVFP, was even plainer. Hitler was 'perhaps the drummer, but no politician'. Another vehement critic claimed that Hitler wanted to be 'pope' of the movement, to which he had contributed nothing, and accused him of breaking his word of honour. Graefe reinforced the accusation. He said he passed no judgement on Hitler. The facts spoke for themselves. The alleged breach of trust was seen as Hitler's refusal to answer a letter by Graefe earlier in January, effectively posing him an ultimatum to break his links with the Streicher and Esser faction, or the DVFP would go its own way. The accusations produced a tumult. The National Socialists present were outraged. The meeting ended with the swapping of insults and all hopes of unity in the *völkisch* movement dead.²¹

A glimpse of National Socialist thinking at the meeting can be gleaned from the comments of Walther von Corswant-Cuntzow, later Gauleiter of Pomerania. 'Rather,' he said, 'that the *one* leader in whom one has most trust fails, than this hither and thither of the many from whom everybody wants something different. I now believe in the godly grace of Hitler, whom I have personally never seen, and believe that God will enlighten him now to find the correct way out of this chaos.'²² The patent inability to reach any basis of unity in the *völkisch* movement over the previous year made increasing numbers now susceptible to such sentiments.

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At eight o'clock on the evening of 27 February 1925, Hitler, with his usual sense of theatre, made his re-entry to the Munich political scene where he had left it sixteen months earlier: at the Bürgerbräukeller. The meeting had originally been envisaged for the 24th. But that was Fasching-Tuesday.³⁷ So the Friday was settled upon. Just as before the putsch, red placards advertising the speech had been plastered around Munich for days. People began to take up their seats in the early afternoon. Three hours before the scheduled start, the huge beerhall was packed. Over 3,000 were jammed inside, 2,000 more turned away, and police cordons set up to block off the surrounding area.³⁸ Some prominent faces were missing. Rosenberg was one. He was irritated at being excluded from Hitler's inner circle in the weeks since his return from Landsberg.³⁹ He told Ludecke: 'I won't take part in that comedy . . . I know the sort of brother-kissing Hitler intends to call for.'⁴⁰ Ludendorff, Strasser and Röhm were also absent.⁴¹ Hitler wanted the first party-leader, Drexler, to chair the meeting. But Drexler insisted that Hermann Esser be evicted from the party.⁴² Hitler would accept no conditions. And for him, Esser had 'more political sense in his fingertips than the whole bunch of his accusers in their buttocks'.⁴³ So one of Hitler's most trusted Munich followers, his business-manager Max Amann, opened the meeting.

Hitler spoke for almost two hours.⁴⁴ The first three-quarters of his speech offered his standard account of Germany's plight since 1918, the Jews as the cause of it, the weakness of bourgeois parties, and the aims of Marxism (which, he stated, could only be combated by a doctrine of higher truth but 'similar brutality of execution'). Hitler was frank about the need to focus all energy on one goal, on attacking a single enemy to avoid fragmentation and disunity. 'The art of all great popular leaders,' he proclaimed, 'consisted at all times in concentrating the attention of the masses on a single enemy.' From the context, it was plain that he meant the Jews. Only in the last quarter of the speech did Hitler arrive at his real theme of the evening. No one should expect him, he said, to take sides in the bitter dispute still raging in the *völkisch* movement. He saw in each party comrade only the supporter of the common idea, he declared, to lasting applause. His task as leader was not to explore what had happened in the past, but to bring together those pulling apart. At last he came to the climactic. The dispute was at an end. Those prepared to join should sink their differences. For nine months, others had had time to 'look after' the interests of the party, he pointed out with sarcasm. To great and lasting applause, he added: 'Gentlemen, let the representation of the interests of the movement from now on be my concern!' His leadership had, however, to be accepted

D.T. 8

unconditionally. 'I am not personally the responsibility. I complete responsibility for e . . . After a year, he would hold cheers and cries of 'Heil'. Ev über alles'.⁴⁶

Then came the finale. It was meaning, not lost on those present more - Hermann Esser, Julius Rudolf Buttman, Gottfried F. Völkischer Block - mounted with many standing on chairs from the back of the hall, sh undying loyalty to the leader.⁴⁶ to their overlord. Others followed of unity, it was plain, could on He could with some justice claim party.⁴⁸ In the following years, Hitler, and the 'idea' increasing the sole, indispensable force of potential to tear itself apart. H y over the party owed much to th

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that you need for years to come.
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unconditionally. 'I am not prepared to allow conditions as long as I carry personally the responsibility,' he concluded. 'And I now carry again the complete responsibility for everything that takes place in this movement.' After a year, he would hold himself to account.³⁹ There were tumultuous cheers and cries of 'Heil'. Everyone stood for the singing of 'Deutschland über alles'.⁴⁰

Then came the finale. It was a piece of pure theatre. But it had symbolic meaning, not lost on those present. Arch-enemies over the past year and more – Hermann Esser, Julius Streicher, Artur Dinter from the GVG, Rudolf Buttman, Gottfried Feder, Wilhelm Frick from the 'parliamentary' Volkischer Block – mounted the platform and, among emotional scenes, with many standing on chairs and tables and the crowd pressing forward from the back of the hall, shook hands, forgave each other, and swore undying loyalty to the leader.⁴¹ It was like medieval vassals swearing fealty to their overlord. Others followed. Whatever the hypocrisy, the public show of unity, it was plain, could only have been attained under Hitler as leader. He could with some justice claim to have restored the 'homogeneity' of the party.⁴² In the following years, it would become more and more apparent: Hitler, and the 'idea' increasingly embodied in his leadership, constituted the sole, indispensable force of integration in a movement that retained the potential to tear itself apart. Hitler's position as supreme leader standing over the party owed much to the recognition of this fact.

Outside loyalist circles, the immediate response to Hitler's speech on the *völkisch* Right was often one of disappointment. This was mainly because of the way Hitler was plainly distancing himself from Ludendorff, still seen by many as the leader of the *völkisch* movement. In his proclamation of 26 February, Hitler had referred merely in bland terms to the General as 'the most loyal and selfless friend' of the National Socialist Movement. In his speech, he had not mentioned Ludendorff at all. Only in the scenes that followed, as calls of 'Heil' to the General were heard in the hall, had he spoken – diplomatically, but vaguely – of belonging to him 'in heart' even though he had not referred to his name.⁴³ Ludendorff's supporters saw Hitler's treatment of him as a calculated insult. Ludendorff's standing remained a potential problem.⁴⁴ But as so often, luck came to Hitler's aid.

On 28 February 1925, the day after the refoundation of the NSDAP, the first Reich President of the Weimar Republic, the Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, died at the age of fifty-four from the effects of an appendicitis operation. The Right had so persistently tried to defame him for his participation in the munitions strike of January 1918 – when the SPD leadership

had become involved in the unrest (demanding democratization and peace without annexations) that spread from the Berlin armaments factories, bringing a million workers out on strike, temporarily threatening war production, and later fostering the 'stab-in-the-back' legend – that he had been forced to defend himself in 170 libel cases.⁵¹ Such was the feeling against Ebert, and such was the level of anti-socialism in conservative Catholic as well as in nationalist circles, that the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Faulhaber, who had notoriously on one occasion dubbed the 1918 Revolution 'high treason', refused to have the church bells rung in his diocese in honour of the dead President.⁵² The NSDAP had no expectation of having any significant influence on the election of Ebert's successor. Hitler openly as good as admitted this. He told a party meeting that it was immaterial who became Reich President. Whoever it was would be 'only a man who is in reality no "man" at all'.⁵³ But against the arguments of some of his advisers, Hitler insisted on putting forward Ludendorff as the National Socialist candidate, and persuaded the General to stand.⁵⁴ He regarded the General as no more than a token candidate, without a chance of winning.⁵⁵ Why Ludendorff agreed to stand is less easy to understand than why Hitler wanted the candidacy of a rival of whom he was by now in private extremely scathing.⁵⁶ It seems that Hitler persuaded the General that the conservative candidate of the Right, Karl Jarres, had to be stopped, and, flattering Ludendorff's prestige, inveigled him into standing. 'Hitler knows perfectly well that although he has a great following in Bavaria he can count on very few votes in North Germany and East of Berlin,' the General told his dismayed wife, who immediately foresaw the likely consequences to which the arrogant former warlord was blind. 'In particular, the East Prussians and Silesians have been bound to me by gratitude and devotion ever since the war,' he went on, his mind made up. They, in fact, showed their gratitude and devotion by almost completely ignoring him in the poll.⁵⁷ Probably Ludendorff reckoned, too, with the backing of his *völkisch* friends. But when the DVFB decided – in order not to split the right-wing vote – to put their support behind Jarres, the General's fate was effectively sealed.⁵⁸ What had seemed to some in Hitler's entourage a risky strategy was, in fact, no great risk at all, and was more or less guaranteed to damage Ludendorff. That this was the intention was scarcely concealed, even by some leading Nazis.⁵⁹

For Ludendorff, the election on 29 March was a catastrophe. He polled only 286,000 votes, 1.1 per cent of the votes cast. This was 600,000 fewer than the *völkisch* Right had gained at the Reichstag election in December 1924, itself a disastrous result.⁶⁰ Hitler was anything but distressed at the

outcome. 'That's all right finished him.'⁶¹ The election of the war-hero, Field Marshal Hindenburg, one of the pillar hands of one of the conservative Right vote for the Centre Party's candidate, supporting the candidature of with Ernst Thälmann, Hitler paid heavily in 1933.

Ludendorff never recovered his leadership of the *völkisch* movement on his way into the political limelight. Who in 1926 would become increasingly susceptible to conspiracy theories, which Hitler, his increasing eccentricity – now took him in himself scarcely renowned for his role in the *völkisch* movement founded in 1925 literature which was so hated by Nazi ideologues rejected it. Hitler, he was outrightly attacking his former ally – and which was never countered.

The *völkisch* movement it was not only weakened but also called more widespread than was not only weakened but also head.⁶² At first, especially in local party leaders refused their ties with *völkisch* associations his leadership. But increasingly the wind was blowing in Hitler's favour. Hitler was particularly successful in local party branches in Bavaria which the Bavarian authorities in subsequent months by : Prussia) gave him more time and a handshake with individual symbolically cemented the

A sturdy platform of support for Hitler's leadership was thus laid in Bavaria. In the north, the path was less even.

II

On 11 March, two days after the speaking ban had been imposed, Hitler commissioned Gregor Strasser to organize the party in north Germany.⁶⁶ Strasser, a Landshut apothecary, a big, bluff Bavarian, in the pre-putsch days SA chief in Lower Bavaria, a diabetic who mixed it with the roughest in beerhall brawls but relaxed by reading Homer in the original, was probably the most able of the leading Nazis. Above all he was a superb organizer. It was largely Gregor Strasser's work, building on the contacts he had established while in the Reich Leadership of the NSFB, that resulted in the rapid construction of the NSDAP's organization in north Germany.⁶⁷ Most of the local branches in the north had to be created from scratch. By the end of 1925, these branches numbered 262, compared with only seventy-one on the eve of the putsch.⁶⁸ While Hitler spent much of the summer of 1925 in the mountains near Berchtesgaden, working on the second volume of his book, and taking time out to enjoy the Bayreuth Festival, bothering little about the party outside Bavaria, Strasser was unceasing in his efforts in the north. His own views on a 'national socialism' had been formed in the trenches. He was more idealistic, less purely instrumentalist, than Hitler in his aim to win over the working class. And, though of course strongly antisemitic, he thought little of the obsessive, near-exclusive emphasis on Jew-baiting that characterized Hitler and his entourage in the Munich party. In fact, dating from the period of the rancorous split in 1924, he could barely tolerate the leading lights in the Bavarian NSDAP, Esser and Streicher. Even if he expressed them somewhat differently, however, he shared Hitler's basic aims. And though he never succumbed to Hitler-worship, he recognized Hitler's indispensability to the movement, and remained a Hitler loyalist.⁶⁹

Strasser's views, and his approach, fitted well into the way the party had developed in north Germany, far away from the Bavarian heartlands. A central issue there was the intense derestation, deriving from the deep clashes of the 'leaderless time' of 1924, of the three individuals they saw as dominating affairs in Bavaria - Esser, Streicher and Amann. The rejection of these figures had been practically the sole area of agreement between the Directorate and the NSFB leaders in 1924. It was to remain a point of tension between the

north German NSDAP. This went hand in hand with headquarters, where they imposed centralized control and complete authority over the factor was the concern of the NSDAP deepened. Its leaders, that allowed the much under the unsavoury for them remained a so Hitler had also disappointed since the refoundation. If about electoral participation remained wholly hostile to in the 'movement' being there were different accents Socialist 'idea'. Some of a more 'socialist' emphasis the big industrial regions. type of appeal than that

But it was not just a few activists in the north, like of the Ruhr, were attracted of a sharp mind and bit most intelligent of the the NSDAP at the end of means, from Rheydt, a right foot exposed his feelings of physical inadequacy with little recognition for to me what it gives to out the diary he would keep years later, adding, self-my God, why hast Thou driving ambition and the agility in a movement wuals'. Not least, it produced

Goebbels showed his exchange in mid-September

Theodor Vahlen, a professor at Greifswald University and owner of a small printing-house in the town, whose incompetence alongside the animosity he attracted from the future Propaganda Leader led to his replacement as Gauleiter by 1927.⁷⁶ 'National and socialist! What goes first, and what comes afterwards? With us in the west, there can be no doubt. First socialist redemption, then comes national liberation like a whirlwind. Professor Vahlen takes a different view. First nationalize the workers. But the question is, how?' Goebbels had gained a false impression of Hitler's position. 'Hitler stands between both opinions,' he wrote. 'But he is on the way to coming over to us completely.'⁷⁷ Goebbels and some other northern leaders thought of themselves as revolutionaries, with more in common with the Communists than with the hated bourgeoisie. There were some sympathies for Russia. And there was talk of a party trade union.⁷⁸

Finally, there was the attitude towards Hitler and towards the party's programme. The north German Directorate had been fanatically pro-Hitler during the time of his imprisonment. But it had been disappointed at his equivocal stance towards the NSFB, and the issue of elections. And its leaders, Adalbert Volck and then Ludolf Haase, had shied away from the way a personality cult was being built around Hitler, and its implications for the party. All the north German leaders accepted Hitler's position, and his right to head the party. They recognized him as the 'hero of Munich' for his part in the putsch, and for his stance at the trial. His standing and reputation needed no emphasis, and faults were attributed to those around him – especially Esser and Streicher.⁷⁹ But many of the north German party faithful did not know Hitler personally, had not even met him.⁸⁰ Their relationship to him was, therefore, quite different than that of Bavarian party members, especially those in Munich. Hitler was their leader; that was not in question. But Hitler, too, in their eyes, was bound to the 'idea'. Moreover, the 1920 Programme that outlined the 'idea' in terms of the aims of the party was itself in their view deficient and in need of reform.⁸¹

By late summer 1925, the northern leaders, differing among themselves in matters of interpretation and emphasis on points of the programme, aims, and meaning of National Socialism, were at least agreed that the party was undergoing a crisis. This was reflected in declining membership and stagnation. It was associated by them, above all, with the state of the party in Munich.⁸² Hitler himself was totally taken up with work on *Mein Kampf* and, they felt, prepared to do nothing. In the circumstances, this amounted to support for Esser. Hitler defended Esser and his clique on the grounds that their usefulness was the decisive factor, ignoring how limited this

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It was to create a count described by Fobke as 'th collaborator of Hitler', su Hagen in Westphalia on out at the last minute be result, the discussions did northern and western par intention (which had no forming a block to comb fulfilled. Divisions were qu there was resistance to a unanimous rejection of p: Hitler, simply papered o could be achieved was th loose organization of no exchange of speakers.⁸⁴

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t do without him.⁹⁴ The meeting
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Hitler plainly recognized the
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journey to Bamberg, Feder had
ine to Hitler the threat to his
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policy and future alliances. His position was wholly opposed to that of the Working Community. Alliances were never ideal, he said, but always 'purely a matter of political business'. Britain and Italy, both distancing themselves from Germany's arch-enemy France, offered the best potential. Any thought of an alliance with Russia could be ruled out. It would mean 'the immediate political bolshevization of Germany', and with it 'national suicide'. Germany's future could be secured solely by acquiring land, by eastern colonization as in the Middle Ages, by a colonial policy not overseas but in Europe. On the question of the expropriation of the princes, Hitler again ruled out the position of the Working Community. 'For us there are today no princes, only Germans,' he declared. 'We stand on the basis of the law, and will not give a Jewish system of exploitation a legal pretext for the complete plundering of our people.' Such a rhetorical slant could not conceal the outright rejection of the views of the northern leaders. Finally, Hitler repeated his insistence that religious problems had no part to play in the National Socialist Movement.¹⁰⁰

Goebbels was appalled.

I feel devastated. What sort of Hitler? A reactionary? Amazingly clumsy and uncertain. Russian question: completely by the way. Italy and England natural allies. Terrible! Our task is the smashing of Bolshevism. Bolshevism is a Jewish creation! We must be Russia's heir! 180 Millions! Expropriation of the princes! Law is law. Also for the princes. Don't shake the question of private property! (sic!)¹⁰¹ Dreadful! Programme is sufficient! Content with it. Feder nods. Ley nods.¹⁰² Streicher nods. Esser nods. I'm sick at heart when I see you in such company!!! Short discussion. Strasser speaks. Hesitant, trembling, clumsy, the good, honest Strasser. God, how poor a match we are for those swine down there! . . . Probably one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I no longer believe fully in Hitler. That's the terrible thing: my inner support has been taken away.¹⁰³

The potential threat from the Working Community had evaporated. Hitler had reasserted his authority. Despite some initial signs of defiance, the fate of the Community had been sealed at Bamberg. Gregor Strasser promised Hitler to collect all copies of the draft programme he had distributed, and wrote to members of the Community on 5 March asking for them to be returned.¹⁰⁴ The Community now petered out into non-existence. On 1 July 1926, Hitler signed a directive stating that 'since the NSDAP represents a large working community, there is no justification for smaller working communities as a combination of individual *Gaue*'.¹⁰⁵ By that time, Strasser's Working Community of northern and western *Gauleiter* was

finished. With it went the last obstacle to the complete establishment of Hitler's supreme mastery over the party.

Hitler was shrewd enough to be generous after his Bamberg triumph. He voiced no objection to the creation in March of a greatly enlarged Gau in the Ruhr under the combined leadership of the Working Community members Goebbels, Karl Kaufmann (an energetic activist in his mid-twenties, later Gauleiter of Hamburg, who had cut his teeth through organizing sabotage in the French-occupied Ruhr), and Franz Pfeffer von Salomon (Gauleiter of Westphalia, a former army officer who had subsequently joined the Freikorps, participated in the Kapp Putsch, and been active in opposition to the French in the Ruhr).¹⁰⁶ He paid Gregor Strasser, recovering from a car accident, a surprise visit at his Landshut home. Following discussions with Strasser, he excluded Esser from the Reich Leadership of the NSDAP in April.¹⁰⁷ And by September, Strasser had himself been called to the Reich Leadership as Propaganda Leader of the party, while Franz Pfeffer von Salomon was appointed head of the SA.¹⁰⁸ Most important of all, the impressionable Goebbels was openly courted by Hitler and completely won over.

To bring about what has often been called Goebbels's 'Damascus' in fact took little doing.¹⁰⁹ Goebbels had idolized Hitler from the beginning. 'Who is this man? Half plebian, half God! Actually Christ, or only John [the Baptist]?' he had written in his diary in October 1925 on finishing reading the first volume of *Mein Kampf*.¹¹⁰ 'This man has everything to be a king. The born tribune of the people. The coming dictator,' he added a few weeks later. 'How I love him.'¹¹¹ Like others in the Working Community, he had wanted only to liberate Hitler from the clutches of the Esser clique.¹¹² Bamberg was a bitter blow. But his belief in Hitler was dented, not destroyed. It needed only a sign from Hitler to restore it. And the sign was not long in coming.

In mid-March Goebbels made his peace with Streicher after a long talk in Nuremberg.¹¹³ At the end of the month he received a letter from Hitler inviting him to speak in Munich on 8 April.¹¹⁴ Hitler's car was there to meet him at the station in Munich to take him to his hotel. 'What a noble reception,' noted Goebbels in his diary.¹¹⁵ Hitler's car was again provided the next day to take Goebbels to visit Lake Starnberg, a few miles outside Munich. In the evening after Goebbels's speech in the Bürgerbräukeller, in which he evidently retreated from his more radical version of socialism, Hitler embraced him, tears in his eyes. His north German colleagues, Kaufmann and Pfeffer, were less impressed. Disappointed at his sudden reversal of the opposition to Munich he had up to then so vehemently

advocated, they told Goebbels that Goebbels was taken to party he summoned to Hitler's room. They for their parts in the Working Community promptly offered to wipe the slate clean for Goebbels. 'Hitler is great. He gives Hitler spent three hours going to Bamberg. Then, Goebbels had it was 'brilliant'. 'I love him Goebbels continued. 'He's a man can be my leader. I bow to the great conversion was complete. A fight in Stuttgart. 'I believe he has wrote. 'Adolf Hitler, I love you the same time. What one call Hitler appointed Goebbels as party were to advance in the would remain so, adoring and 'like a father', down to the last

The Bamberg meeting had NSDAP. The Working Community rebellion against Hitler's lead draft programme, a clash was to a programme, or to its National Socialism was to in the *volksisch* movement had Twenty-Five-Point Programm 'It stays as it is,' Hitler was full of contradictions, but that Its symbolic significance, not Any more precise policy stating inner dissension. It would subordinated him to abstract and alteration. As it was, his position inviolable.

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advocated, they told Goebbels his speech was 'rubbish'.¹¹⁶ The next morning Goebbels was taken to party headquarters. He, Kaufmann, and Pfeffer were summoned to Hitler's room. There they were subjected to a dressing-down for their parts in the Working Community and Gau Ruhr. But Hitler promptly offered to wipe the slate clean. 'At the end unity follows,' wrote Goebbels. 'Hitler is great. He gives us all a warm handshake.' In the afternoon Hitler spent three hours going over the same ground he had covered at Bamberg. Then, Goebbels had been sorely disappointed. Now, he thought it was 'brilliant'. 'I love him ... He has thought through everything,' Goebbels continued. 'He's a man, taking it all round. Such a sparkling mind can be my leader. I bow to the greater one, the political genius.'¹¹⁷ Goebbels's conversion was complete. A few days later, he met Hitler again, this time in Stuttgart. 'I believe he has taken me to his heart like no one else,' he wrote. 'Adolf Hitler, I love you because you are both great and simple at the same time. What one calls a genius.'¹¹⁸ Towards the end of the year, Hitler appointed Goebbels as Gaulleiter of Berlin – a key position if the party were to advance in the capital.¹¹⁹ Goebbels was Hitler's man. He would remain so, adoring and subservient alike to the man he said he loved 'like a father', down to the last days in the bunker.¹²⁰

The Bamberg meeting had been a milestone in the development of the NSDAP. The Working Community had neither wanted nor attempted a rebellion against Hitler's leadership. But once Strasser had composed his draft programme, a clash was inevitable. Was the party to be subordinated to a programme, or to its leader? The Bamberg meeting decided what National Socialism was to mean. It was not to mean a party torn, as the *volkisch* movement had been in 1924, over points of dogma. The Twenty-Five-Point Programme of 1920 was therefore regarded as sufficient. 'It stays as it is,' Hitler was reported as saying. 'The New Testament is also full of contradictions, but that hasn't prevented the spread of Christianity.'¹²¹

Its symbolic significance, not any practical feasibility, was what mattered. Any more precise policy statement would not merely have produced continuing inner dissension. It would have bound Hitler himself to the programme, subordinated him to abstract tenets of doctrine that were open to dispute and alteration. As it was, his position as leader over the movement was now inviolable.

At Bamberg, too, an important ideological issue – the anti-Russian thrust of foreign policy – had been reaffirmed. The alternative approach of the northern group had been rejected. The 'idea' and the Leader were coming to be inseparable. But the 'idea' amounted to a set of distant goals, a mission

for the future. The only way to it was through the attainment of power. For that, maximum flexibility was needed. No ideological or organizational disputes should in future be allowed to divert from the path. Fanatical willpower, converted into organized mass force, was what was required. That demanded freedom of action for the leader; and total obedience from the following. What emerged in the aftermath of Bamberg was, therefore, the growth of a new type of political organization: one subjected to the will of the Leader, who stood over and above the party, the embodiment in his own person of the 'idea' of National Socialism.¹²²

By the time of the General Members' Meeting on 22 May, attended by 657 party members,¹²³ Hitler's leadership had emerged inordinately strengthened. He frankly admitted that he attributed no value to the meeting, which had been called simply to meet the legal requirements of a public association. The forthcoming Party Rally in Weimar – the opportunity for a visual display of the new-found unity – was what counted in his eyes.¹²⁴ Following his 'report' on the party's activities since its refoundation, Hitler was unanimously 're-elected' as party chairman.¹²⁵ The party administration remained in the hands of those close to Hitler.¹²⁶ A few amendments were made to the party statutes. Altered five times since 1920, these were now couched in their finalized form. They assured Hitler of the control of the party machine. The appointment of his most important subordinates, the Gauleiter, was in his hands. In effect, the statutes reflected the leader party which the NSDAP had become.¹²⁷ In the light of the conflict with the Working Community over a new programme, not least significant was the reaffirmation of the Twenty-Five Points of 24 February 1920. 'This Programme is immutable,' the statutes unambiguously declared.¹²⁸

A few weeks later, the Party Rally held at Weimar – where Hitler was permitted to speak in public – on 3-4 July 1926 provided the intended show of unity behind the leader. The rally was intended as 'a great display of the youthful strength of our movement'. What was expected was 'an image of disciplined force ... visible proof of the regained inner health of the movement'. The events of 1924 were held up as a warning. All potential for discord was to be avoided. Matters of substance were referred to special commissions. Discussion was to be kept to a minimum. The chairman of each commission was to be held personally responsible for any resolutions, which were then subject to Hitler's own veto.¹²⁹ Otherwise, the rally consisted of speeches, ritual, and marching. An estimated 7-8,000, including 3,600 stormtroopers and 116 SS men, attended.¹³⁰ It was the first time that the Schutzstaffel (SS, Protection Squad), founded in April 1925 and arising

initially out of Hitler's personal guard (Adolf Hitler Assault Squad) for the first time, and handing over his new élite organization, the procession to the Feldherrnhalle, the personal oath of loyalty to Hitler, the reception from delegates after a gospel ... I thank fate, that

The Nazi Party was still far from insignificant. In the overall framework of the crisis period was over. The well as geographically more widely its image of unity and strength of organizations to throw in their lot with the new type of politics had established the basis of its future, while still in the political process.

Few people saw Hitler on a regular basis – the trusted and devoted family – the trusted and devoted formed his coterie of bodyguards and constant touch with him. Some, like Rudolf Heß (his secretary), had their part in the putsch. This 'hot shielded him from the increasing number of people who saw Hitler was difficult.¹³¹ Those who had to wait for days before they could see Hitler were referred to special leading figures in the movement, too at a time.¹³² Even on public occasions a speech, he would remain closed reported as full would he set out. After would immediately return to his hotel see him for a few minutes, if an interview anyone else was allowed an audience.

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initially out of Hitler's personal bodyguard, the Stoßtrupp Adolf Hitler (Adolf Hitler Assault Squad), had been on public display.¹³¹ Also on display for the first time, and handed to the SS as a sign of Hitler's approbation of his new élite organization, was the 'Blood Flag' of 1923, which had led the procession to the Feldherrnhalle. Every stormtrooper present swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler.¹³² The party leader received a rapturous reception from delegates after his speech.¹³³ 'Deep and mystical. Almost like a gospel . . . I thank fate, that it gave us this man,' wrote Goebbels.¹³⁴

The Nazi Party was still far smaller than it had been at the time of the putsch.¹³⁵ In the overall framework of national politics, it was wholly insignificant. To outside observers, its prospects seemed bleak. But internally, the crisis period was over. Though small, the party was better organized as well as geographically more widespread than the pre-putsch party had been. Its image of unity and strength was beginning to persuade other *völkisch* organizations to throw in their lot with the NSDAP.¹³⁶ Above all, it was turning into a new type of political organization - a Leader Party. Hitler had established the basis of his mastery over the movement. In the next years, while still in the political wilderness, that mastery would become complete.

III

Few people saw Hitler on a regular basis in these years. Only his substitute family - the trusted and devotedly loyal group of Munich cronies who formed his coterie of bodyguards, chauffeurs, and secretaries - were in constant touch with him. Some, like Julius Schaub (his general factotum) and Rudolf Heß (his secretary), had served in Landsberg with Hitler for their part in the putsch. This 'houseguard' escorted him, protected him, shielded him from the increasing numbers wanting an audience. Getting to see Hitler was difficult.¹³⁷ Those running party business in Munich often had to wait for days before they could sort out some matter with him. For leading figures in the movement, too, he could prove inaccessible for weeks at a time.¹³⁸ Even on public occasions he was largely unapproachable. Before a speech, he would remain closeted in his room. Only once the hall was reported as full would he set out. Afterwards, when away from Munich, he would immediately return to his hotel. Journalists might be permitted to see him for a few minutes, if an interview had been prearranged. But scarcely anyone else was allowed an audience.¹³⁹

very
tiny

Hitler's pronounced sense of 'mission', his heroic self-image of 'greatness', the necessity of upholding the aura increasingly attached to him by his supporters, and the olympian detachment from the intrigues and in-fighting of his subordinates demanded a high degree of isolation.¹⁴⁰ Beyond this, the distance he deliberately placed between himself and even high-ranking members of his movement was calculated to emphasize the sense of awe and admiration in those admitted to his presence, or encountering him at a theatrically staged mass meeting or rally. At the same time, it enhanced the enigmatic in him. Even those who knew him found it hard to dissect and understand his personality.¹⁴¹ Hitler was happy to encourage the sense of mystery and fascination.

He was above all a consummate actor. This certainly applied to the stage-managed occasions – the delayed entry to the packed hall, the careful construction of his speeches, the choice of colourful phrases, the gestures and body-language.¹⁴² Here, his natural rhetorical talent was harnessed to well-honed performing skills. A pause at the beginning to allow the tension to mount; a low-key, even hesitant, start; undulations and variations of diction, not melodious certainly, but vivid and highly expressive; almost staccato bursts of sentences, followed by well-timed *rallentando* to expose the emphasis of a key point; theatrical use of the hands as the speech rose in crescendo; sarcastic wit aimed at opponents: all were devices carefully nurtured to maximize effect. As in the meticulous attention to detail in the preparations for the party rallies at Weimar in 1926 and Nuremberg in 1927 and 1929, Hitler was preoccupied with impact and impression. His clothing was also selected to match the occasion: the light-brown uniform with swastika armband, belt, attached diagonal strap crossing over the right shoulder, and knee-high leather boots when among the faithful at big party meetings and rallies; dark suit, white shirt, and tie, when appropriate to conveying a less martial, more 'respectable', appearance to a wider audience.

But the acting was not confined to such occasions. Those who came into contact with Hitler, while retaining a critical distance from him, were convinced that he was acting much of the time. He could play the parts as required. 'He was a kindly conversationalist kissing the hands of ladies, a friendly uncle giving chocolate to children, a simple man of the people shaking the calloused hands of peasants and workers.'¹⁴³ He could be the model of friendliness in public to someone he was privately castigating and deriding. The play-acting and hypocrisy did not mean that he was solely a cynical manipulator, that he did not believe in the central tenets of his 'world-view'. This fervent belief, coupled with the strength of his domineering

personality, carried conviction, one perceptive and critical (Albert Krebs, Hitler's ability conscious art' of manipulative and truthfulness'.¹⁴⁴ Krebs's isolation should not be forgotten Hitler's being.¹⁴⁵

The irresistible fascination educated, and intelligent – doubtless owed much to his could be charming – particularly amusing. Much of the time it be true of his rages and outbursts were in reality often contrived contact which Hitler cultivated party members was, for the a forgotten. For Hitler, it was reinforcement of the personal bonding force between Leac remarkably little human inter supporters accused him of 'ce in 1928'.¹⁴⁸ His egocentrism was image of 'fatherliness' conce of interest to him only in so f

Hitler's 'coffee-house tirade possible rivals in the party less paranoid outbursts of hatred' sexual deficiency.¹⁴⁹ This was r with women were indeed odd surmised. Yet here, too, he w he took advantage of Putzi H fall on his knees in front of H slave and bemoaning the fate i told him of the incident, Putzi of the languishing troubadour In physical appearance, Hi the putsch. Away from the spea ive.¹⁵¹ His face had hardened. case, he soon lost the weight

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personality, carried conviction among those drawn to his message. But for one perceptive and critical observer, the one-time Gauleiter of Hamburg, Albert Krebs, Hitler's ability to sway the masses rested essentially on a 'very conscious art' of manipulation – cool calculation, 'without inner sympathy and truthfulness'.¹⁴⁴ Krebs summed up: 'The art of the mask and dissimulation should not be forgotten. It made it so difficult to grasp the core of Hitler's being'.¹⁴⁵

The irresistible fascination that many – not a few of them cultured, educated, and intelligent – found in his extraordinary personality-traits doubtless owed much to his ability to play parts.¹⁴⁶ As many attested, he could be charming – particularly to women – and was often witty and amusing. Much of the time it was show, put on for effect. The same could be true of his rages and outbursts of apparently uncontrollable anger, which were in reality often contrived. The firm handshake and 'manly' eye-to-eye contact which Hitler cultivated on occasions when he had to meet ordinary party members was, for the awestruck lowly activist, a moment never to be forgotten. For Hitler, it was merely acting; it meant no more than the reinforcement of the personality cult, the cement of the movement, the bonding force between Leader and followers. In reality, Hitler showed remarkably little human interest in his followers.¹⁴⁷ Even one of his leading supporters accused him of 'contempt for mankind' (*Menschenverachtung*) in 1928.¹⁴⁸ His egocentrism was of monumental proportions. The propaganda image of 'fatherliness' concealed inner emptiness. Other individuals were of interest to him only in so far as they were useful.

Hitler's 'coffee-house tirades, his restlessness, his resentments against possible rivals in the party leadership, his distaste for systematic work, his paranoid outbursts of hatred' were seen by Putzi Hanfstaengl as a sign of sexual deficiency.¹⁴⁹ This was no more than guesswork. But Hitler's relations with women were indeed odd in some ways. Why this was so can only be surmised. Yet here, too, he was often acting out a role. On one occasion, he took advantage of Putzi Hanfstaengl's brief absence from the room to fall on his knees in front of Helene Hanfstaengl, describing himself as her slave and bemoaning the fate that had led him to her too late. When Helene told him of the incident, Putzi put it down to Hitler's need to play the role of the languishing troubadour from time to time.¹⁵⁰

In physical appearance, Hitler was little changed from the time before the putsch. Away from the speaker's podium he looked anything but impressive.¹⁵¹ His face had hardened.¹⁵² But, as he told Hanfstaengl would be the case, he soon lost the weight he had put on in Landsberg once he started

a point in my telegraph, he became very good, even getting involved at getting that same point across.

100. Joachimsthaler, 120-21, 124.
 101. *Monologe*, 71 (25-6 September 1941).
 102. Joachimsthaler, 159-60.
 103. Wiedemann, 26.
 104. Joachimsthaler, 159-60.
 105. Joachimsthaler, 126-7, 135, 277 n.339; Heinz, 65.
 106. *MK*, 181-2; see Joachimsthaler, 129.
 107. Examples cited in Joachimsthaler, 125, 128, 152-3, 155-6.
 108. The regimental command post at Fromelles, from where military operations were directed, was about three kilometres behind the front. The regimental staff, forming the administrative support, were based an hour's walk away at Fournes. Hitler and the other dispatch runners worked in shifts of three days at Fromelles followed by three rest days at Fournes. (For Hitler's time there, see Joachimsthaler, 123, 126-7, 135-40.) Hitler claimed in 1944 that he had carried around with him throughout the entire First World War the five volumes of Schopenhauer's work (*Monologe*, 411 (19 May 1944)). Hans Frank remembered him saying much the same thing (Frank, 46).
 109. Wiedemann, 24-5.
 110. Balthasar Brandmayer, *Meldegänger Hitler 1914-18*, 2nd edn, Munich/Kolbemoor, 1933, 51-2. Brandmayer remained one of the few people allowed to address Hitler with the familiar 'Du'. This did not prevent him receiving a warning in 1939, passed on by the Kanzlei des Führers, to avoid meddling in Party matters and 'sowing discontent among the people' through his complaints about the closure of a Catholic Kindergarten in his home town of Bruckmühl in Bavaria. Two years earlier, the Munich branch of the Reichsschrifttumskammer had sought permission to drop any reference to Hitler in the title of Brandmayer's book (BDC, Personal File of Balthasar Brandmayer, letters of Kanzlei des Führers, 18 October 1939, and Reichsschrifttumskammer München-Oberbayern, 12 November 1937).
 111. *JK*, 68; Joachimsthaler, 130-31. The British journalist Ward Price much later recorded Hitler's characteristic embellishment of the story, claiming that he followed an inner voice as clear as a military command, telling him to leave the room immediately (G. Ward Price, *I Know These Dictators*, London, 1937, 38).
 112. *JK*, 60.
 113. *JK*, 68.
 114. *JK*, 61.
 115. Wiedemann, 25-6; Brandmayer, 61, 68; Joachimsthaler, 140-44, 155-6. Two of those who knew Hitler during the war - Hans Mend and Korbinian Rutz - and subsequently published less than flattering recollections of him landed after 1933 in Dachau. See Joachimsthaler, 113, 143, 152-4, 271 n.193, 284 n.430. Rutz was dismissed from his teaching post after Hitler had been consulted but had declined to intervene on behalf of his former wartime comrade, declaring him to be 'inferior' (*minderviertig*) (BDC, Personal File, Korbinian Rutz, Hans-Heinrich Lammers to the Reich Governor of Bavaria, 17 March 1934).

116. Brandmayer, 105. For Loret, during his time in Sohnes', *Zeitgeschichte*, 5 emphasized by Joachimsthaler to produce (in collaboration with Hitler, Paris, 1981. They in her relationship with Hitler German historian Werner himself, in correspondence authenticity of a number of works of Hitler (*IFZ*, ZS 3).
 117. Joachimsthaler, 144-made major careers for that. Amann's property in not in that league, Wiedemann Mercedes, and 'loans' and Third Reich (Joachimsthaler, 144).
 118. Brandmayer, 72, 105;
 119. See Joachimsthaler, 140.
 120. Brandmayer, 52-6.
 121. Brandmayer, 43-4.
 122. Brandmayer, 102.
 123. *Monologe*, 219 (22-3). Hitler told Albert Speer friends, Fraulein Braun at remarked in his diary: 'He has become a true companion living being who is constantly'.
 125. *Monologe*, 219.
 126. Heinrich Lugautes Joachimsthaler, 134.
 127. Brandmayer, 66-8.
 128. *JK*, 69; Maser, *Hitlers*.
 129. But see the comment of admittedly rosy-coloured politics.
 130. *MK*, 182 (trans., *MK*).
 131. Joachimsthaler, 159. E later remarked: 'He didn't time' (Heinz, 98).
 132. Toland, 66.
 133. Brandmayer, 115. See things seemed to get his goal

* D.T. I want that voice. We have
 such this ability and can about
 employ it, provided we do not
 the process

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