

Schoenerer

Georg, knight von Schönerer

born July 17, 1842, Vienna, Austria
died Aug. 14, 1921, Rosenau bei
Zwettl

Austrian political extremist.

In 1873 he was elected to the federal parliament as a left-wing liberal. He became an ardent German nationalist and outspoken anti-Semite and in 1885 founded the Pan-German Party. Reelected to the parliament in 1897, he opposed the pro-Czech language ordinances and was credited with driving the prime minister from office. He helped 21 Pan-German candidates win election to the parliament in 1901. His violent temperament so disrupted the party that by 1907 it had virtually disappeared from Austrian politics, but his ideological influence continued undiminished.

Georg Ritter von Schönerer led the anti-semitic, anti-Catholic movement in Austria. Schönerer's German National Party developed a broad middle-class, anti-Catholic, anti-semitic platform in the 1880s. Schönerer directed his anti-Semitism at the economic activity of the Rothschilds; he advocated nationalization of their railroad assets. Later, he broadened his charges to attack Jewish merchants more generally. Ritter was an avid admirer of Schönerer, and as a young man even put Schönerer's signature over his bed.

1842 Birth of Georg Ritter von Schönerer, Austrian proto-nazi.

1842 "Rienzi" is produced by Wagner for first time at the Dresden Opera House.

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Hitler, like most radical Europeans, had no trouble accepting the idea that the Jews were a threat to the rich were greedy. But unlike the university students, Hitler refused to accept many of the racist beliefs. It was Schönerer's plea for union with Germany that held Hitler's admiration, not Schönerer's anti-Semitic stance. "Schönerer," Hitler would write, "expressed more clearly and more correctly than anyone else the movement of the Austrian Mass." But, Hitler also stated, "In Vienna, anti-Semitism could never have any foundation but a religious one. From the point of view of race, about 90 per cent of the population of Vienna was not German."

Hitler had no great love for anyone foreign, but he felt that people who called against those who spoke, looked and acted German, did so for selfish reasons. To the young Hitler, a man who spoke and looked German was German, and he was filled with "disdain" when someone slipped something out as a "Jew." "Concerning the Germans and Jews, he wrote, "I even looked upon them as Germans." He thought that attacks upon them were made out of "jealousy and envy." He also stated, "in the Jew I still saw only a man who was of a different religion, and therefore, on grounds of human tolerance, I was against the idea that he [or any other] should be attacked because he had a different faith." As an acquaintance would later write, Hitler did not associate the word Jew with race and "believed every religion to be good and ... didn't care much about anti-Semitism."

As Hitler would later write in *Mein Kampf* (and Klobash noted in his book), shortly after he arrived in Vienna, he began to believe the anti-Jewish theories he heard and read. Consequently, he turned to handbooks and magazines to relieve his "doubts," and now for the first time in his life bought himself some anti-Semitic pamphlets.

During Hitler's stay in Vienna, racist literature could be purchased almost anywhere, including the tobacco shop a few doors from where he lived. Although the idea of "pure racial stock" was already a familiar belief to many,

To von Schonerer

By the time Hitler arrived in Vienna, Schonerer had toned down his attacks against Jews, Slavs, and other non-Germans. He abandoned all hope of preserving the Austrian Empire.* With the backing of university intellectuals, he turned his main attention to the unity of Austria with Germany.

Hitler, like most central Europeans, had no trouble accepting the ideas that the Slavs were a threat or the rich were greedy. But unlike the university students, Hitler refused to accept many of the racist beliefs. It was Schonerer's pleas for union with Germany that held Hitler's admiration, not Schonerer's anti-Semitic stance.* "Schonerer," Hitler would write, "recognized more clearly and more correctly than anyone else the inevitable end of the Austrian State."* But, Hitler also stated: "In Vienna, anti-Semitism could never have any foundation but a religious one. From the point of view of race, about 50 per cent of the population of Vienna was not German."*

Hitler had no great love for anyone foreign, but he felt that people who railed against those who spoke, looked and acted German, did so for selfish reasons. To the young Hitler, a man who spoke and looked German was German* and he was filled with "distaste" when anyone singled someone out as a "Jew."* Concerning the Germanized Jews, he wrote: "I even looked upon them as Germans."* He thought that attacks upon them were made out of "jealousy and envy." He also stated: "in the Jew I still saw only a man who was of a different religion, and therefore, on grounds of human tolerance, I was against the idea that he [or any other] should be attacked because he had a different faith."* As an acquaintance would later write, Hitler did not associate the word Jew with race and "believed every religion to be good and ... didn't care much about anti-Semitism."*

As Hitler would later write in *Mein Kampf* (and Kubizek noted in his book), shortly after he arrived in Vienna, he began to believe the anti-Jewish rhetoric he heard and read. Consequently, he turned to handbooks and magazines to relieve his "doubts," and now for the first time in his life bought himself some anti-Semitic pamphlets.

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racialists books, pamphlets and newspapers were read by millions.* Hitler read many of these publications including the Schonerer movement's satirical magazine: *Politics and Entertainment in Art and Life* (which not only specialized in attacks on non-Germans, but also attacked the Church, members of parliament, and the decline of morals and the evils of alcoholism).* Hitler complained that these publications did not supply enough information on the Jewish question and added:

All began with the standpoint that the reader had a certain degree of information of the

Jewish question or was familiar with it. Moreover the tone of most of these pamphlets

was such that I became doubtful again because the statements made were partly

superficial and the proofs extraordinarily unscientific.*

One of the most prodigious racist writers at the time was a defrocked monk named Adolf Josef Lanz. His magazine, the *Ostara*, was a typical Viennese tabloid of the time. It damned assimilation, preached racial purity and looked forward to the day of a "German master race" led by a quasi-religious military leader.* To be sure the reader was of the right type himself, the magazine contained a question and answer section where one could find out where he fit within the great racial pool. A varied number of points were given for physical attributes such as color of hair, eyes and skin. One then added up the points and consulted the index to determine his "racial group." Naturally, the scoring was done in a way that anyone who found the tabloid congenial emerged as one qualified to participate in the struggle against inferior races.*

Featured articles like "The Sex and Love-Life of Blondes and Dark Ones"* boosted the *Ostara's* circulation for some issues to 100,000 in Austria and Germany. Although it "played down 'the Jewish Question,'"* it appealed to both the superiority of the Germans and their suspicion of the Jews, and also Slavs, Turks, Negroes, and other "dark ones." It contained material that urged the white or Aryan race to arm itself against "dark forces." In order to popularize the Aryan idea, racial beauty contests were even proposed. In its more malign moments it called for a systematic program of sterilization, deportation, or forced labor. By subjugating the dark races, the *Ostara* preached, the Aryans could rule the earth.*

Schonerer won his first post to parliament as a Liberal before Hitler was born. The liberals, who were closely allied with big industry and business, were looking for "reform." The reform they sought was personal--economic freedom, accompanied by freedom of speech and press to promote their ideals. Their leaders were normally recruited from the legal graduates of Austrian Universities and these would-be intellectuals (with their dogmatic assertiveness and sanctimonious airs) steadily widened the gap between themselves and the workers, the religious, and the population outside the large cities. As in all nations and generations they saw themselves as superior and thought that they knew better than their less liberally educated brethren. Schonerer turned against them.

Schonerer believed that the Liberals had completely deserted the "little people," as he saw it, and he became a champion of the workers. Because the masses in large cities can riot, while the thinly spread population living on farms or in small towns are easily ignored or silenced, Schonerer also took up the cause of the "rural" people. He saw these groups as a depressed population under the grip of cold-blooded financiers and unresponsive big city Liberal politicians. He spent his early years fighting for wage and labor reform, universal suffrage, and the right to strike. He also fought for more rural schools and for the conservation of forests and streams. His ideas along with his avowed contempt for the liberals love of "untrammeled individualism" (which they called "democracy") earned him their undying hatred.

Schonerer believed that uncontrolled individualism benefited the rich more than any other group. He saw liberalism and democracy deteriorating into republicanism (which stresses the rights of minorities) with eventual domination of the most powerful of all minorities--the rich. He understood that the wealthy and their money and newspapers had the power to silence most opposing values and he was soon arguing for legislation to curb the special favors which benefited the rich in not only capital but "opinion."

Schonerer went on to argue for a balanced budget and proposed reforms in income tax and increases in luxury taxes to shift a more proportional burden onto the rich. He demanded that transactions on the stock exchange be regulated to eliminate "moral and economic dangers." He opposed measures to help troubled banks which he termed "swindle enterprises." He also had the nerve to attack the legal profession (where most liberal politicians have their

roots) demanding lawyer fees be fixed. His demands for a more equitable distribution of wealth and his "aggressive anticapitalism" were, however, always subordinated to a passionate German nationalism.¹

Because of the unsettled conditions that existed throughout the Empire, many of the minority groups sought avenues to further their ambitions. Many influential Jews, consequently, had joined the liberal fold and "liberalism ... had strengthened the grip of educated Viennese Jews upon the press and literary production."² The Jews also had highly visible positions in banking, law, industry, and retailing. Schonerer, therefore, accepted the argument from many of his supporters that mass support against liberalism was impossible without a simultaneous campaign against wealthy and influential Jews.

He began to see powerful "Jewish businessmen Jewish coal barons," and other "Jewish speculators" (with their close connections in the financial affairs of Europe) as the chief proponent behind liberalism. Because the Jews controlled nearly all the major banks in Vienna, Schonerer believed that they--with their large scale loans to government, railroad companies, and other large enterprises--had an excessive amount of influence on German life and opinion. He believed that most politicians and even (referring to the royal family) "higher factors," bowed to these rich Jews. He came to believe that the Jews, because of their "liberal and materialistic tendencies," were responsible for much of the economic gloom of the rural and working classes. Seeking "reform," his attacks against wealthy Jews became constant. He railed against "Jewish-liberalism," "Jewish influence," "Jewish individualism," and their "immoral and injurious" dealings.³ In 1885 he added another point to his nationalist program which read: "The removal of the Jewish influence from all sections of public life is indispensable for carrying out the reforms aimed at."⁴

Like the students of Vienna a few years before, Schonerer made it clear that his attacks were not directed against the religion of the Jews, but against their "racial peculiarities"⁵ in favoring individual liberty over law and order, and liberalism over traditional German morals, values, and beliefs.

Many eminent individuals and political parties (of both the Left and Right) throughout Europe shared Schonerer's beliefs and there had been subdued attacks against the Jews in Germany, France and Great Britain. In Russia,

Romania, and Poland, however, the attacks were straightforward and often brutal. The large-scale immigration of Jewish refugees fleeing the eastern nations, and other "states" of the Austrian empire, for the more liberal Austrian zone, provoked Schonerer to demand a bill prohibiting Jewish immigration into Austria.

What Schonerer was attempting to accomplish was not much different than what the "white supremacist and Anglo-Saxon" groups in the U. S. wanted.⁶ Between 1880 and 1884 the US Congress passed a series of laws, known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese from entering America. Two years before Hitler was born, Schonerer took America's Chinese Exclusion Act, changed the word "Chinese" to "Jew" and submitted the Act to the Austrian parliament for approval. No doubt looking to the United States (and other European countries) for more inspiration, the following year, Schonerer opposed Jewish assimilation and wanted Jewish school students to be segregated from other students just as blacks were in the United States. To emphasize further that race was the issue and not religion,⁷ he also proposed that Jews, even if they had converted to Christianity, be barred from teaching school. Whereas, the Czech, Pole, and Hungarian states of the Empire had shut down Jewish schools, he proposed that the schools remain open but the teachers be "Aryan."

Because Hitler admired him, Schonerer would later become known as the "most violent exponent of anti-Semitism" by some authors. His attacks, however, against the internationalism of the Roman Catholic Church., the Hapsburg Monarchy, Slavs and other "races" entering Austria were just as "violent." His "anticapitalistic anti-Semitism"⁸ was mild compared to other political groups outside or within the Empire. The *Osterreichische Reformverein*, for example, wore and sold silver effigies which they hoped would become the symbol of the anti-Semitic movement--a hanged Jew. One of their members went so far as to propose in the Austrian parliament that a reward be paid to anyone who murdered a rich Jew and a portion of the "victim's property be awarded to the murderer."⁹ Schonerer, in reality, was echoing many of the beliefs of German (and European) intellectual thought that stretched back to the days of Martin Luther.