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The Creation Of A Worldview:
The Influences Of Fin-De-Siècle Vienna
And Karl Lueger On Adolf Hitler

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in History

by
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December 2003

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Keywords: Adolf Hitler, Karl Lueger, Vienna, anti-Semitism,
Austria, Christian Socialism, Jews

ABSTRACT

The Creation Of A Worldview: The Influences Of Fin-de-Siècle

Vienna And Karl Lueger On Adolf Hitler

by

Jamie Bryan Price

This is an analysis of how fin-de-siècle Vienna and its mayor, Karl Lueger, influenced the development of Adolf Hitler's worldview.

The works of many authors were consulted in conjunction with newspapers and memoirs of the period in order to gain a better understanding of what the environment of the Austrian capital was like in the fin-de-siècle period.

Several of Vienna's political, social, and artistic facets are analyzed in an attempt to prove that the general atmosphere of the city influenced Adolf Hitler greatly during his formative years.

It is concluded that while Adolf Hitler's *Weltanschauung* did not completely crystallize until after World War I, much of what contributed to his personal and political ideology resulted from his personal experiences in Vienna.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, David and Dollie, who have supported me along my educational journey, and to my loving wife, Rebekah, whose unselfish compassion for enduring my long nights and dark hours has allowed this work to be completed. Thank you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank those who have been of immeasurable help in the completion of this work. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Stephen Fritz, who not only inspired me to become a student of Germany and its rich history, but whose professorship has inspired me to attempt to become a scholar of the highest caliber. In addition, Professor Fritz's insights and advice while writing this thesis have been of incalculable value. I would also like to thank Professor Christa Hungate for introducing me to the beauty of the German language and for allowing me to broaden my horizons by sharing with me her knowledge of German culture. Her patience, compassion, and understanding as a teacher are without equal. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. William Burgess whose easy-going manner made me feel comfortable with the study of history and whose knowledge of antiquity has provided me with a greater understanding of the world. I am deeply indebted to them all, for through them, I am a richer and better person.

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CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING NATURE OF EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Dr. Karl Lueger is a name that conjures few images in the minds of many. Adolf Hitler is a name that invokes images of war, genocide, and tyranny for nearly everyone. But without Karl Lueger, the *Bürgermeister* of Vienna, Austria, from 1897 to his death in 1910, there may well have been no Hitler as we remember him today. Lueger, as mayor of Vienna, inspired Hitler with his mastery of the social question, his political use of anti-Semitism, and his ability to win the support of the common man by appealing to what concerned the masses most. Hitler would later develop his own political skills, refine them, and use them to attain the leadership of the German people. It was in Lueger's Vienna that Hitler received his first lessons in mass politics and anti-Semitism; influential factors that would help guide him to Berlin and beyond.

Before assessing how Karl Lueger, a man who never met the future *Führer*, influenced Adolf Hitler so immensely, it is first important to gain an understanding of Europe as it entered an era where scientific rationalism usurped traditional, religious explanations of worldly and heavenly phenomenon. Of particular importance to this study is the changing nature of anti-Semitism in Europe, especially its adoption of a more scientific, racial tone as opposed to its traditional, religious one. The noted historian Peter Gay writes that

Jew-hatred is an old and familiar disease. Only the word "anti-Semitism," a mid-nineteenth-century coinage, was new. Through the ages, Christians had scorned, or at least

isolated, Jews as the killers of Christ, desecrators of holy objects, and (in the muddled minds of fanatics including some princes of the church) slaughterers of Christian babies to draw their blood for making the Passover matzoh.... By that time [the mid-nineteenth century] the brew of religious anti-Semitism had been enriched with an even deadlier antagonism: the racial variety.¹

Indeed, Europe was no stranger to anti-Semitism, though it reached its most destructive heights under the banner of Nazism. After the Diaspora, the Jews settled across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East as Christians, Muslims, and other lesser known religious peoples occupied their ethnic homeland of Israel. Some Jewish population remained, but its numbers were insignificant. Medieval Christian Europe "ascribed to the Jews...a collective guilt" that had dramatic and lasting effects: "not only the Jews who lived at the time of Jesus' crucifixion were deemed guilty, but all the seed of Israel, for ever and ever."² St. Augustine of Hippo, whose works have helped form the foundations of Christian theology, discriminated against Jews so that an eternal reminder of their guilt would be ascribed to them in the Christian tradition. Years of upheaval in Medieval Europe, either because of man or nature, saw the Jews targeted as a people who were held responsible for the misery that befell whomever they were nearest to at the moment. "The Jew [was] suspected as having a hand in natural disasters, epidemics, and

¹Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002), 114-5.

²Israel Gutman, "Anti-Semitism," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1990), 55-6.

other crises, and there [was] no need to look for a rational explanation or pertinent evidence to prove his complicity in such events."³

In addition to the burden of collective guilt, Jews were stigmatized as a group who survived by leeching off the communities they inhabited. In this case, much blame can be placed on Catholic doctrine and secular legislation that limited the occupations available to Jews.⁴ Christian Europe had come to view Jews as a "closed and unified community" that despised "physical work, especially farming, and worship[ed] money and moneylending for interest."⁵ Having little recourse but to become moneylenders as few other occupations were open to them, Jews were stereotyped as manipulators who prospered from the plight of good and honest Christians. "Jews were never the only moneylenders in the Middle Ages...but they handled much of the petty lending on agricultural crops and small enterprises...."⁶

Despite the perception of the Jew as the moneylender, it must be noted that Jews were key players in the emergence of a capitalist, merchant economy of Europe. The renowned Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer writes:

In the early modern period, Jewish traders and craftsmen played an important role in the economic and social developments that set the stage for the birth of capitalism. Though they were not found among the great

³Ibid, 56.

⁴James Parkes, *Antisemitism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 66.

⁵Isreal Gutman, "AntiSemitism," 56-7.

⁶James Parkes, *Anitsemitism*, 67.

early captains of industry and banking in Western Europe, they were instrumental in the development of commerce.⁷

Their role, no matter how significant, was never recognized for the good during the Medieval Period. Because they were accused of hurting Christians with the economic changes they brought about, Jews suffered a stigma as capitalist manipulators, one from which they have not yet been able to shake free.

Even though gentile Europeans had condemned Jews over the centuries, the economic theories of Karl Marx did much in the modern period to cement further the image of the Jew as a rapacious moneylender. Marx did not exalt the achievements of Jews but instead condemned their actions as destructive in that they allegedly helped ruin the very fabric of Christian European society. Marx himself was descended from a Jewish family and was in fact a baptized Jew, but he became attuned to Europe's long tradition of Jewish hatred. Marx explicitly identified Jews with the miseries associated with capitalism, specifically the alienation of man from spirit. Also, Marx theorized that when capitalism vanished, the Jews would also vanish, as the two were inseparable. In his essay *Die Judenfrage* (The Jewish Question), he writes:

What is the profane basis of Judaism? *Practical* need, *self-interest*. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? *Huckstering*. What is his worldly god? *Money*.... Money is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist. Money abases all the gods of mankind and changes them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-sufficient *value* of all things.... The god of the Jews has been secularized and has become the god of this world. The

⁷Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury: Franklin Watts, 1982): 22.

bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange.⁸

It is perhaps one of History's cruelest ironies that the founder of Communism was a converted Jew, a fact that Hitler later added to his own anti-Semitism, racial theories, and belief in an alleged Jewish world conspiracy.

As Europe entered the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and became more secular and scientific, Europe's hatred of Jews also mirrored this transformation. The nineteenth century, and much of the succeeding century, was dominated by the theories of Charles Darwin. His *The Origins of Species*, published in 1859, was perhaps the most profound writing of the period, influencing Europeans for decades afterwards. Darwin detailed a vision of the natural world in which "some animal species survived and evolved by virtue of being better adapted to living conditions, while others disappeared because they were less 'fit.'"⁹ Contemporary Europeans quickly made the leap from nature to human society and began to perceive their world as one of struggle in which each person had to fight for survival. Thus the fundamentals of Social Darwinism had been born. Such notions

⁸Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," *The Marx-Engles Reader* 2nd ed., ed. by Robert C. Tucker, (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1978), 48, 50.

⁹John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, vol. 2, *From the French Revolution to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996), 791.

were hammer-blows on the mind of Hitler, who believed that he had discovered the true meaning of history: struggle.¹⁰

Social Darwinism as a program to improve the structure of society was not perceived as a regressive, negative, or inhuman system. Instead, it was hailed by many intellectuals and social reformers as progressive, positive, and in the best interests of mankind as it was based on the merits of science. Richard Weikart writes that

in the pre-World War I decades, racial ideologies gained prominence, which argued that the educational efforts of religious and secular-humanitarian emissaries were in vain. Instead, scientific racism suggested a different path to progress.... Some social Darwinist thinkers...argue[d] that racial extermination, even if carried out by bloody means, would result in moral progress for humanity.¹¹

Darwin had inadvertently unleashed a social movement that would later be a contributor to the murder of countless millions. However, in his time, the immediate effect was "a damaging blow in the struggle between science and religion in the nineteenth century."¹² As religious perceptions of the world and the cosmos began to give way to a rising tide of scientific explanations, the millennia-old hatred of the Jews also became secularized and racialized. Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist who is given credit most often for coining the term "anti-Semitism," published

¹⁰Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971).

¹¹Richard Weikart, "Progress through Racial Extermination: Social Darwinism, Eugenics, and Pacifism in Germany, 1860-1918," *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 273-4.

¹²John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe*, vol. 2, *From the French Revolution to the Present*, 791.

his most noted work, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* (*The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*), in the 1870s. A devout atheist, he despised Christianity to such a degree that he sought a term to describe his hatred of Jews without being forced to draw on Christian sources. Yehuda Bauer illustrates this position well:

Prior to that term (anti-Semitism) *Judenhass* was current in German, Jew-hatred in English, and *Judophobia* in intellectual circles, terms essentially inherited from the Christian period. But in an increasingly secularized society in which there was no belief in Jesus, the question of who was responsible for his death seemed irrelevant. Marr...[was] violently anti-Christian [and] saw Christianity - quite rightly, of course - as derived from Judaism and therefore utterly condemnable. [He] needed a "modern," "scientific" term, hygienic, neutral, one that would not include the word *Jew*. Antisemitism was such a term....¹³

Marr thought that Christianity represented part of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy whose aim was total domination of the world. During the 1860s he wrote that "Christianity was an attempt to seize world rule" and "its rule was immoral...."¹⁴ In addition to these ideas, Marr thought that Christianity's "growth was based on the social insecurity and ignorance of the population" and that "humanity was Judaized by Christianity."¹⁵ Permeating Marr's writing was the idea of a Jewish conspiracy aimed at world rule through political, economic, and social

¹³Yahuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury: Franklin Watts, 1982), 43.

¹⁴Moshe Zimmerman, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 74.

¹⁵Idid, 74.

revolutions. Such ideas would be building blocks of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* in later decades.

Not only did a secularization of European society alter the nature of Jewish hatred, but waves of nationalism did so as well. Beginning with the French Revolution, nationalism was thrust across the continent, eventually fueling the Revolutions of 1848. Though liberal in nature, the Revolutions contained within them the underlying concept of ethnic uniqueness as based on national identity. The great German poet Goethe wrote in his immortal epic *Faust* that "blood is an entirely special juice."¹⁶ Goethe was writing from a point of view dominated by Romanticism in a time when Germans were searching for something unique in themselves. This uniqueness in the German character would allow them to be separate from other ethnic groups in Europe.

Jews, of course, were without a nation of their own and were thus labeled as a race without a nation. Racial thinkers in the nineteenth century argued that Jewish blood polluted whatever ethnic nations they inhabited, resulting in that particular race being brought down. A man of tremendous influence in upper Austria, especially on the mind of young Hitler, was Guido von List, a near-quack racial theorist who argued that "Aryans were from a continent near the north pole, from where the Ice Age had driven them away; they had moved southward and brought culture to

¹⁶Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), line 1740, 186. "Blut ist ein ganz besonderer Saft."

all mankind."¹⁷ The scientific rationales behind List's theories were ludicrous, but the ideas of Aryan supremacy were important. Furthermore, List demanded, "this pure Aryan master race should be regained by 'demixing' and strict segregation from mixed peoples."¹⁸ It is not difficult to see how List's ideas concerning racial purity were translated into Nazi policy after Hitler's ascension to power. In September 1935 with the proclamation of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, marriage and sexual intercourse were prohibited between Aryans and Jews.¹⁹ These were a

series of laws [that] made marriage subject to intense eugenic vetting, with marriage between healthy 'Aryans' and racial 'aliens' prohibited.... Ideology rather than human affection ultimately determined who could marry whom, or who had the right to reproduce, a novum in human history.²⁰

List's racial theories did not stop there, however, and his influence over Hitler can be further observed. Evident in Hitler's ideology was the notion of the Jewish world conspiracy, an international idea expounded on by List as well as others. List argued that "the master race's worst enemies were the 'internationals': the Catholic church, Jews, and Freemasons, who

¹⁷Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship*, trans. Thomas Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207.

¹⁸Ibid, 207.

¹⁹Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 294.

²⁰Ibid, 233.

were waging a war of extermination against the Aryan race."²¹ In *Mein Kampf* Hitler comments on the boundless existence of the Jewish state, alluding to the alleged international Jewish conspiracy. "The Jewish state - which should be the living organism for preserving and increasing a race - is completely unlimited as to territory."²²

Such was the nature of European anti-Semitism at the time Adolf Hitler entered his formative years and visited Vienna for the first time in spring 1906. Europe was entering a novel era of intellectual constructs, many of which shed traditional religious explanations for new, scientific ones. Southern Germany and Upper Austria in particular were gripped with a neo-romantic movement that, when coupled with a developing racial anti-Semitism, made a dangerous mix. Though he was hardly an anti-Semite before arriving in the Austrian capital, Hitler left with a knowledge of anti-Semitism that would later constitute a large percentage of his world view. In order to understand what factors helped Hitler formulate his *Weltanschauung*, a deeper analysis of Vienna, its politics and society, are in order.

²¹Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 208.

²²Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 302.

CHAPTER 2

POPULAR ANTI-SEMITISM AND MUNICIPAL POPULISM

Between the years of 1895 and 1910 Dr. Karl Lueger, the Lord Mayor of Vienna, personified the notion that anti-Semitism could be used as a vehicle to political power. Immortalized by his "I decide who is a Jew" declaration, Lueger embodied in his mayoralty the tradition of the ethnic German political leader who employed anti-Semitism as a grassroots, cohesive force through which varied sectors of a voting population could rally.²³ Though anti-Semitism served Lueger as a tool with which he could identify with different constituents who maintained their separate agendas, Lueger himself was not an ardent, radical, and convinced anti-Semite. In stark contrast, Lueger's most noted protégé, Adolf Hitler, was so intoxicated by his anti-Semitism that it dominated his thoughts until his last days alive in April 1945. Unlike Mayor Lueger, however, Hitler's use of anti-Semitism served a more sinister purpose than simple political gain; Hitler sought the alienation, expulsion, and annihilation of European Jewry. Anti-Semitism was not merely an instrument that Hitler used to achieve power; it was a cornerstone of his *Weltanschauung*. This dichotomy is the key to understanding the differences between Karl Lueger and Adolf Hitler: the latter

²³Otto von Bismarck was not above the use of anti-Semitism as a political weapon. He is reported to have said that "I expressed my disapproval of it, but I did nothing more, as it was a most useful means of attacking the progressives." Cf. James Parkes, *Antisemitism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 27.

being a hardened anti-Semite while the former only half-heartedly believed in Jew-hating.



Figure 1. Dr. Karl Lueger. (Photo from <http://www.aeiou.at/aeiou.encyclop.1/1936666.htm>.)

In beginning to understand the nature of Karl Lueger's and Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitism, it is of importance to first discuss Georg von Schönerer. A key German nationalist with influence in the combined Austro-Hungarian Empire, Schönerer certainly held a commanding authority through his Pan-German party, a radically nationalist group whose aims included a merging of Austria and Germany. He too influenced Hitler greatly, perhaps even more so than Guido von List.²⁴ Schönerer was trying to save the Austria-Hungary of the late nineteenth century, especially the capital city of Vienna, from alleged Jewish destruction. The noted historian Paul Johnson writes that

in the 1870s anti-Semitism was fueled by the financial crisis and scandals; in the 1880s by the arrival of the *Ostjuden*, fleeing from Russian territories; by the 1890s it

²⁴List is mentioned nowhere in *Mein Kampf*, where as Schönerer commands five entries.

was a parliamentary presence, threatening anti-Jewish laws.²⁵

Most important in Schönerer's mind was the influx of the *Ostjuden*, or Eastern Jews, who made little effort to assimilate to German culture. They represented to him a detrimental element in the city, as well as in the empire, whose seemingly endless migrations from the East should stop. "Schönerer's struggle 'for the German people' turned into a bitter fight against 'the Jews,' initially mainly Russian Jews, who had been fleeing the pogroms in the Czarist empire since 1881."²⁶ Schönerer's political slogan was "Through Purity to Unity" and the manner in which he operated his political party points directly to the future *Führer* of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler. Schönerer was paid tribute as the absolute *Führer* of his movement; none of his followers could offer any alterations to the party program or go against the *Führer's* will, and only a select few assisted their leader.²⁷ This *Führer* concept was borrowed from List, who argued that a "political system that [was] sanctioned by natural and ancient custom would revitalize the Volk and institute [an] appropriately Germanic form of government."²⁸ In Schönerer's mind, an

²⁵Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1987), 395.

²⁶Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship*, trans. Thomas Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 241.

²⁷*Ibid*, 244.

²⁸George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 74.

Anschluss (union) of Germany and Austria would transform abstract ideas into tangible realities: an Aryan, Germanic government to rule all ethnic Germans. Hitler realized that idea in 1938 with the annexation of Austria. Similarly, the structure of the Nazi Reich is paralleled in Schönerer's notions, especially the *Führer Prinzip* (leadership principle), a doctrine in that whatever the *Führer* said became law and which natural leaders rose to the top.²⁹

In turning our attention to Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna from 1897 until his death in 1910, it must be noted that at the outset he came to despise Georg von Schönerer with much zeal. Schönerer had acquired some power in Vienna with his nationalist, anti-Semitic platform, and had managed to win a seat in the Parliament. Early on in his career, Lueger had maintained some grudging admiration for Schönerer, but after the latter's release from prison, Lueger thought he had become too erratic. Thus, in 1889, Schönerer and Lueger disavowed each other; Schönerer on the grounds that Lueger was too Catholic and Lueger on the grounds that Schönerer had become mentally unstable.³⁰

Precipitating this breakup was the fact that in March 1888 Schönerer had been sentenced to four months imprisonment because he led an assault on the Jewish newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* in which he and "some of his friends forced their way into the editorial offices...and physically attacked the editors with

²⁹Michael Burliegh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 165.

³⁰Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger: Mayor of Fin de Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 82.

clubs. The reason for this was that they had announced ninety-one-year-old Emperor William I's death a few hours too soon."³¹ Even though Schönerer's imprisonment was not lengthy, the effects of his absence from the political scene were long lasting. As part of his punishment, Schönerer lost his title of nobility as well as his seat in the Parliament. The party that he had fought to create fell into disarray: "Lueger lost no time in turning this to his advantage by appealing to Schönerer's followers...in the name of anti-Semitism and unity," two of the core pillars of Schönerer's Pan-Nationalist Party.³²

Lueger's incorporated the tattered remnants of the Pan-Nationalists into his Christian Socialist Party and initiated in Vienna his rise to the office of *Bürgermeister* of Vienna and the beginning of the end of liberalism in the Austrian capital. It had become evident that Lueger was a man who had "developed the most finely attuned political antennae in Austria" and "exploited innovative campaign methods and unexpected opportunities."³³ However, he seemed to lack an essential ability as a political leader, one not found lacking in Hitler. Richard Geehr, a noted Lueger biographer, writes:

Lueger was never an ideologist.... Neither he nor any of his followers or successors proved capable of creating a coherent ideology, let alone an original one. Viennese Christian Socialism served as a vehicle for Lueger's dynamic leadership but little else. Its emptiness

³¹Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 246.

³²Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 82.

³³*Ibid*, 37.

as a political philosophy became apparent as his leadership weakened with the deterioration of his health.³⁴

If Hitler had molded his future political career in the exact fashion of Lueger's, a movement with no ideology but based only on popular public support, the world would now be a different place. It must be noted that Hitler did praise Karl Lueger in *Mein Kampf*, but not for the ideologies that he failed to formulate. "Compared as to abilities, Schönerer seemed to me even then the better and more profound thinker in questions of principle," but, "Dr. Lueger conjured up one amazing achievement after another in...every field of economic and cultural municipal politics...."³⁵ It is clear that Hitler believed Schönerer to be more attuned to the alleged reasons for the collapse of the Austrian Empire but incapable of relating to his fellow man; he thought Lueger was the more able of the two in relating to others but was unable to see the larger picture, the factors leading to the disintegration of the Empire.³⁶

It is in this context that Hitler admired Lueger as the mayor of Vienna: his ability to connect with the masses. In the same token, it must be noted that in his ability to connect with the masses, Lueger's flippant use of anti-Semitism was what Hitler admired least. There is little doubt that Karl Lueger used anti-Semitism for his own electoral purposes and simply did

³⁴Ibid, 38.

³⁵Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 98, 69.

³⁶Ibid, 99.

not believe seriously in its racial aspects and social implications. He used it to get votes, unite different sectors of Vienna, and maintain the image of a politician supported by the masses. In November 1895, Lueger gave an interview with a Hungarian newspaper in which he made conciliatory remarks toward the Jews of Vienna in his bid for confirmation as mayor. A translation of that interview appeared in *The Times* (London). "It must not be imagined that under [my] regime that the Jews [will] be massacred or driven away."³⁷ A clear deviation from everything that Schönerer stood for and what Hitler later authorized, Lueger's comment seemed to indicate that Vienna's Jews were safe. Lueger noted further that the Jews "would, on the contrary, be better off than they were at [the] present. They [will] be happier than they ever [have] been before."³⁸ In fact, under the Lueger administration, several Jewish firms did in fact prosper, especially concerning the construction of municipal projects such as Vienna's Gas Works and improved railway lines.

Lueger's use of the "social question" as a political tool served him well in his journey to the *Rathaus* (city hall). In order to solidify control over Vienna, he realized that he needed more than just the support of the city's old elites: he needed the backing of the common man. Before entering politics, Lueger maintained a career as a lawyer; one whose clientele included a large number of poor, indigent, and otherwise helpless persons

³⁷*The Times* (London), 5 November 1895, 5.

³⁸*Ibid*, 5.

who were unable to defend themselves legally. Richard Geehr notes that

Lueger could have earned a tidy income from a smoothly functioning legal practice, because his professional skills were superior to those of most other attorneys. Instead, he preferred to assist his fellow men without remuneration, even for the necessary legal taxes out of his own pocket..., but it [was] also possible that [Lueger] had a sense of social obligation toward the poor.³⁹

It is at least probable that Lueger's fierce sense of duty towards those less fortunate than himself stemmed from his father, Leopold, an Austrian civil servant, whose post-military occupation was roughly the equivalent of a janitor. Despite having learned to read and write as a soldier and continually working to better himself through education as a civil servant, Leopold never made any great social advances in terms of status.⁴⁰ He "had clear ambitions for his son and imagined him becoming a member of the upper class. Karl was consistently dressed in fine clothes [and] strangers who saw them walking together occasionally expressed surprise" that the two, Leopold and Karl, were actually father and son.⁴¹

When Lueger assumed the mayoralship of Vienna, he did so as a populist leader whose platform included both aspects of social reform and anti-Semitism, though the latter never came to any significant conclusion. He was greatly influenced by the Englishman Joseph Chamberlain, major of Birmingham. In the

³⁹Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 38-39.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, 22.

⁴¹*Ibid*, 22.

1870s, Chamberlain advocated the virtues of municipal socialism based on public works that included gas and water projects. Chamberlain may have formulated this political program, but Lueger and the Christian Socials best put it in action when they consolidated control over Vienna in the 1890s. Lueger realized that "the elimination of private foreign ownership and diversion of gasworks revenues to the municipal treasury were aims the landlords and all taxpayers could approve during rising nationalism and hard times."⁴² Also, the wresting away of the gas works from foreign, often Jewish-owned firms would satisfy the anti-Semites and further broaden Lueger's popular support.

Perhaps one of the most significant events in Lueger's career as a populist leader occurred when he openly refused to accept the mayoralship because he lacked a clear majority of votes. In May 1895, Lueger was elected mayor, receiving seventy of one hundred thirty two votes, but this was not enough for Lueger.⁴³ *The New York Times* carried an article concerning the results, noting that

Dr. Lueger, the Anti-Semite leader in the Reichsrath, and Vice Burgomaster of Vienna, to-day refused to accept the office of Burgomaster to which he was elected, because his majority was the smallest permissible by the law for an election. The refusal caused an excited mob to attack the Town Hall.... The mob occupied the galleries of the Town Hall, lustily cheered Dr. Lueger, and hooted his opponents, while the Council re-voted.⁴⁴

⁴²Ibid, 97.

⁴³Ibid, 88.

⁴⁴*The New York Times*, 29 May 1895, 5.

It must be noted that only in 1897 did Lueger finally realize his goal of an overwhelming majority: he received ninety-three of one hundred thirty-two votes.

Between the years of 1895 and 1897, Lueger was elected mayor on five different occasions but never received the most coveted award of Vienna's mayors: confirmation from the Emperor.

Austrian Emperor Franz Josef repeatedly refused to confirm Lueger as mayor, despite having received the appropriate number of votes during each election. In 1895, Emperor Franz Josef said that as long as he ruled Austria, Lueger would never be confirmed as mayor of Vienna, but by 1897, Lueger had attained a great majority of votes in the *Rathaus* while at the same time, he maintained vast popularity with the citizen body of Vienna.⁴⁵

Lueger was attuned to the anti-Semitic pulse of Vienna and used it to his advantage during his bid for confirmation. He and the Christian Socialists would often argue that there was a pro-Jewish conspiracy to keep him from confirmation or that it was Emperor Franz Joseph himself who opposed extreme anti-Semitism.⁴⁶

In his acceptance speech as the confirmed mayor of Vienna in April 1897, Lueger spelled out his plans for social reforms in Vienna. In a rather lengthy discourse, Lueger thanked Emperor Franz Josef for confirmation and explained that he would work in the best interests of Vienna's citizens. Lueger was careful to word his ideas in such a way as to please his supporters while at the same time bait the anti-Semites. When referring to the

⁴⁵Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 92.

⁴⁶*Ibid*, 364.

city's inadequate transportation system, Lueger said "for years I have led the struggle against a company that in monopolistic fashion has exploited public transportation needs and that practically grew into a state within a state."⁴⁷ Lueger and the Christian Socials had worked fruitlessly to municipalize Vienna's rail system, and he pointed his finger directly at foreign capitalists who controlled it. To the anti-Semites, this meant Jewish financiers and manipulators.

An additional segment of his speech is perhaps even more accusatory than the above statement. In referring to Vienna's food shortages, Lueger said that

A long-standing complaint is the deficient food provisioning system.... I have always been of the opinion that the problem is with the unauthorized middle man who enriches himself at the expense of the producers and consumers and who represents an apparently invincible power who once before defeated the city.... By organizing the farmers, may they create channels for enabling direct trade with the producers? The state authorities may count on my willing support and the community will gladly create all institutions and take all measures necessary to establish order once and for all in this area.⁴⁸

Once again the anti-Semites would have immediately recognized Jews as the alleged middlemen who enriched themselves by artificially inflating prices. Farmers suffered from this and would have backed Lueger, as would have those citizens of Vienna who desperately needed affordable foodstuffs.

⁴⁷Richard S. Geehr, *"I Decide Who is a Jew!": The Papers of Dr. Karl Lueger*, trans. Richard Geehr (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 208.

⁴⁸Ibid, 209.

In a key political maneuver, Lueger decided not to buy out foreign gasworks, but instead build a new facility to eclipse the foreign firms in Vienna. This provided jobs for the unemployed workers as well as increased the property value for whose districts were supplied by gas. Richard Geehr notes that

despite Liberal predictions of failure, the gasworks was completed on time on October 31, 1899, without interruption in service, and ultimately fulfilled the hopes of its creators by increasing municipal revenues without drastically raising taxes. Refused credit for this project by leading Austrian banks, the gasworks was eventually financed by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, prompting Lueger's comment that "the dependence on Jewish capital had only changed its location."⁴⁹

Lueger blamed Jewish bankers in Vienna and Austria for forcing him to seek financial assistance in Germany, apparently an indication of his anti-Semitism, but as already noted above, he enlisted the aid of Jewish-owned construction firms in the actual building of the gasworks, an indication of how superficial his anti-Semitism truly was.

Lueger had finally realized one of his greatest visions: a triumph of Christian Socialism over the old, established elite. George L. Mosse, in his study of nationalism and its symbolic effect on the masses writes that the "Christian Social Party possessed a dynamic. It was popular, and had won its victory over the Establishment of the Empire when the emperor was forced

⁴⁹Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 97.

by public pressure into naming Lueger as lord mayor of Vienna."⁵⁰ Outside the *Rathaus*, as Lueger was being sworn in, a pro-Lueger mob chanted, "*Der Dr. Lueger soll regieren und die Juden sollen krepieren!*"⁵¹ It was this dynamism as a populist leader that inspired the young Hitler. Karl Lueger was indeed popular with Vienna's citizens, and homage was not paid to him out of custom as the case was with the emperor. A cult developed around him, and served as a testament to his popularity. Again, George L. Mosse writes that Lueger

saw himself as the general of a popular army. Indeed, a Lueger cult came into existence, spawning medals of the leader, photographs of him, and busts; at meetings he was presented with laurel crowns and silver vessels. He organized his followers not so much through bureaucratic means as by continual rounds of meetings which took place on the appearance of popular festivals. Here were symbols both living and dead, the living symbol provided by Lueger himself.⁵²

A parallel with Hitler can be drawn here, especially when one examines the extent of jubilation that surrounded Hitler's forty-fourth birthday, April 20, 1933. Having been installed as Chancellor and champion of the people, the whole of Germany seemed to be behind the *Führer* in much the same fashion as the

⁵⁰George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 120.

⁵¹*Neue Freie Presse*, 21 April 1897. "Dr. Lueger should rule and the Jews should die."

⁵²George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 118-9.

Viennese supported Mayor Lueger decades before. Ian Kershaw, noted Hitler biographer and German historian, writes

just how far the personality cult had developed...was shown by the celebrations for Hitler's forty-fourth birthday...already going beyond any 'normal' honouring of a Head of Government. The streets and squares of practically every German town and city were festooned with the outward signs of adulation and public admiration of the 'People's Chancellor'.... The 'Hitler Day' had proceeded in Bavaria much as in the rest of Germany, as a 'joyful celebration of the people'.... In the city centre of Munich, shop windows displayed pictures and busts of Hitler garlanded with flowers and laurel wreaths [and] houses were richly decorated....⁵³

Hitler understood all too well the importance of mass populism, a lesson he carried from Vienna and Lueger's mayoralship to Munich where he began rabble-rousing in the beer halls and slowly started to construct his popular base.

Despite Lueger's promise to protect Jewish interests in Vienna, when violent anti-Semitic demonstrations broke out, he did nothing to stop them. One such incident occurred in March 1897. The riot, as it quickly became, was precipitated by the election of a Liberal representative who had defeated a Christian Socialist in the *Reichsrat* election that year. The *New York Times* reported that

the Christian Socialists, which party includes all the Jew baiters under the leadership of the notorious Dr. Lueger, were indignant when they learned of the defeat of their candidate, and to give vent to their ill-feeling, a large crowd, composed principally of anti-Semites, made attacks upon the stores kept by Jews in the district. They smashed windows and assaulted several of the shopkeepers, three of whom were seriously injured.

⁵³Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 57-58.

The crowd had things all their own way for a time, but the police suddenly swooped down upon them....⁵⁴

By 1897, Lueger was the *Bürgermeister*, but his reaction to this incident seemed rather slow. A mayor cannot anticipate every demonstration in his city, but he certainly would have been aware of one that was conducted by members of his own political party.

Decades later, Hitler and the Nazi elite would preside over a pogrom of such proportions that it engulfed the whole of Germany, not merely an electoral district. When an angry and distraught Jewish student shot Ernst von Rath, a secretary at the German Embassy in Paris on November 7, 1938, the Night of Broken Glass, or *Kristallnacht*, ensued two days later. As was the case in 1897, this was supposedly a spontaneous outburst of popular anger but was in reality a carefully orchestrated action. In addition, Hitler's hostility was fueled by that explosive mixture of anger at alleged Jewish exploitation and fear of the supposed Jewish world conspiracy that he imbibed years earlier in Vienna. Anti-Semitic radicalism under Hitler had steadily worsened over the previous years. Now, as Yehuda Bauer notes,

In an attempt to seize control of the Jewish question from his Nazi competitors, Göring and Himmler, Goebbels activated the SA and tens of thousands of loyal party members to burn all the synagogues in Germany, destroy and loot Jewish shops, and physically abuse large numbers of Jews. Ninety-one Jews were reported dead....⁵⁵ In the panic that followed the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, thousands of Jews emigrated....⁵⁶

⁵⁴*The New York Times*, 23 March 1897, p. 5.

⁵⁵Yahuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury: Franklin Watta, 1982), 108.

⁵⁶*Ibid*, 129.

No such exodus occurred in Vienna despite the anti-Semitic attitude of the city's gentile inhabitants. In the absence of a purposeful, sustained anti-Semitic program, Jews themselves came to understand that Lueger's anti-Semitism was superficial and episodic. In fact, the Jewish population grew as the numbers of Jews fleeing Eastern Europe increased.⁵⁷

Ironically, it was this constant influx of *Ostjuden* into an ostensibly anti-Jewish city that weighed on Hitler's mind as he constantly came face-to-face with an ever-growing population of outsiders who refused to assimilate into German culture. Hitler records in *Mein Kampf*, in a revealing passage whether true or not, his self-confessed first encounter with an Orthodox Jew from the East:

Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black 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?⁵⁸

Hitler's encounter with this particular Jew would serve as a major turning point in his life, a fact he also notes in *Mein Kampf*. By his own admission, Hitler was ignorant of the perceived ethnic battle raging around him in Vienna until his

⁵⁷Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews: 1867-1938, A Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 165.

⁵⁸Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 56.

encounter in Vienna's Jewish Inner City district. He sought to present this Jewish encounter to the reader as one that provided him with illumination, a moment when he finally saw the light and true nature of the Jewish Question. To fill this void in his understanding, he began to pour over anti-Semitic pamphlets in order to better comprehend the so-called "Jewish Question" that the ethnic German elites were trying to answer.⁵⁹ Whatever Hitler's reasoning, one thing remains certain: he put anti-Semitism at the core of his ideology.

It is at this point that Hitler's anti-Semitism, even though only in its infancy, took a major departure from the superficial and purely opportunistic anti-Semitism of Karl Lueger. Hitler slowly began to perceive Jews not as a religious group but as a distinctive race, moreover, a people who were parasitic, destructive, and inherently evil. Hitler would eventually "charge that Jews, having no nation of their own, continually mingled with and lived like parasites among other peoples and nations, seeking to poison their racial 'purity'" with their vile, contaminated blood.⁶⁰ These are notions that can easily be traced back to a number of racial theorists popular in pre-war Vienna who influenced Hitler, including such notables as Georg von Schönerer, Guido von List, and the Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

Mayor Lueger, on the other hand, apparently did not fall into the trap of radical anti-Semitism despite being an early

⁵⁹Ibid, 56.

⁶⁰Donald M. McKale, *Hitler's Shadow War: The Holocaust and World War II* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), 18.

follower of the extremely anti-Semitic Schönerer. Still, Lueger might unwittingly have taught the young Hitler something far more important: how to build a mass base of popular support through attention to the "social question." Combined with his own deep, personal commitment to solving the "Jewish Question," the lessons learned from Lueger would make Hitler both formidable and dangerous. It must be noted, however, that Lueger did use racial anti-Semitic jargon in speeches but usually only to secure himself politically. "Lueger accused Jews of being 'the destructive element' in every country," furthering his argument by commenting "whenever a state has allowed the Jews to become powerful, [that] state has soon collapsed...."⁶¹ Obviously borrowing such ideas from other more radical Jew-baiters, Lueger often moderated his words after he became mayor in 1885 in an effort not to alienate large portions of his constituency.⁶² Perhaps most telling of his apparent lack of true radical anti-Semitism is the very anti-Semitic slogan he is remembered for: "It is I who determines who is a Jew" (Wer Jude ist, das bestimme ich).⁶³

The use of this pretext as the general construct for his political career remained the hallmark of Lueger's term as mayor of Vienna. To put it simply, Lueger decided who was Jewish from day to day in order to maintain his popularity. John Boyer, who

⁶¹Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 161.

⁶²*Ibid*, 161.

⁶³*Reichspost*, 10 December 1905, 9.

has studied anti-Jewish radicalism in depth in Austria, writes that

on the surface, Lueger's enemies could with some justification accuse him of sheer hypocrisy, for Lueger never disliked Jews personally. Nor did he refrain from participating in high bourgeois and aristocratic social circles before and after 1897, where he frequently encountered and occasionally even befriended influential and wealthy Jews.⁶⁴

In continuing with this trend, Boyer also notes that Lueger

could hate Jews for the tendency to create a culturally pluralistic society and for their often superior educational and intellectual backgrounds. However, [he] could not help but respect them since they were well-educated and talented, especially in light of the fact that many Austrian Jews had risen from petit-bourgeois social disabilities to achieve through their own energies bourgeois prominence, a pattern of social mobility quite similar to Lueger's own.⁶⁵

In this dichotomy lies the true nature of Lueger's anti-Semitism; it existed only to meet his goals and little else. This point is driven home by the fact that Lueger, who often used Jews as scapegoats for crises in Vienna, was forced, by his own pragmatism, to deal with Jews with "sobriety and respect" because of their extensive holdings in private property and capital, both of which he required for his municipal projects throughout Vienna.⁶⁶

⁶⁴John W. Boyer, "Karl Lueger and the Viennese Jews," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 26 (1981): 126.

⁶⁵Ibid, page 126-7.

⁶⁶Ibid, page 127.

In returning to Hitler and Lueger's admiration of Jews, it must be noted the latter admired Jews for what they accomplished socially, while the former's admiration was markedly different and far more perverse. Hitler perceived the Jews as the most formidable force that the German race had ever encountered in all of history, not for their social success as a people, but for their ability to survive their long exile in foreign, hostile lands and keep intact their supposed racial essence. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that

the Jewish state was never spatially limited in itself, but universally unlimited as to space, though restricted in the sense of embracing but one race. Consequently, this people has always formed a state within states. It is one of the most ingenious tricks that was ever devised, to make this state sail under the flag of 'religion,' thus assuring it of the tolerance which the Aryan is always ready to accord a religious creed.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Hitler claimed later in *Mein Kampf* that the Jews, as a race, had no ability to create culture in any form. The hierarchical arrangement of the world's races, in order from culture-creating to culture-destroying, was no novel idea to Hitler; it is highly probable that he discovered such racial theories from Guido von List, the racialist who argued that Aryans had originated at the North Pole, and from Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose prolific work, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, so influenced Hitler that he went and kissed

⁶⁷Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 150.

the man's hands as he lay dying in bed.⁶⁸ Within this racial framework, Hitler wrote

...the Jew possesses no culture-creating force of any sort, since the idealism, without which there is no true higher development of man, is not present in him and never was present. Hence his intellect will never have a constructive effect, but will be destructive, and in the very rare cases perhaps will at most be stimulating, but then as the prototype of the force which always wants evil and nevertheless creates good. Not through him does any progress of mankind occur....⁶⁹

Chamberlain's work became one of the primary texts for the *völkisch* Movement in Germany and inspired a generation of Germans that greatness would be achieved because of the virtue of the German race. It is not without reason that one may conclude that Hitler attempted to realize Chamberlain's vision of German greatness at the expense of European Jewry.

The profound and inherent capability for cultural destruction that Hitler saw in Jews seems to have been formulated, at least partially, during the time he resided in Vienna. As the number of *Ostjuden* migrating to Vienna increased, the Germanness of Vienna slowly gave way to the pressures of Jews who did not assimilate into German culture. Even in Germany, assimilated Jews looked askance at the *Ostjuden* in their cultural dress and regarded them with feelings that could be described as anti-Semitic. This was a disturbing reality for Hitler, but perhaps more shocking was the fact that Jews in the popular

⁶⁸George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: The Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 92.

⁶⁹Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 303.

perception of fin-de-siècle Viennese were white slave traders who would seduce indigent women and girls, trick them into a phony marriage, and then sell them off to brothels elsewhere in Europe, as well as South America.⁷⁰ The Jews thus seemed to be exporting the very women who could have been racially educated, indoctrinated with German nationalism, and laid the foundations for a new German generation in Austria.

Many Jews were also denounced as pimps, with prostitution in Vienna as rampant as anti-Semitism. Prostitutes spread syphilis through their trade resulting, in the perception of the anti-Semites, in the deliberate ruination of Vienna's male German population. Stefan Zweig, a contemporary of Hitler in Vienna, wrote that Vienna's streets were

so sprinkled with women for sale that it was more difficult to avoid them than to find them.... At the time female wares were offered for sale at every hour and at every price, and it cost a man as little time and trouble to purchase a woman for a quarter of an hour, an hour, or a night, as it did to buy a package of cigarettes or a newspaper.⁷¹

Arthur Schnitzler, author of *Rhapsody: A Dream Novel*, also illustrated well the fact that prostitutes were everywhere in Vienna. Though writing after the fin-de-siècle, he indicated in a scene the apparent nature of the city when his protagonist

⁷⁰Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 333-334.

⁷¹Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (London: Cassell Publishers Limited, 1987), 72.

visits with a prostitute, one he had no trouble finding because she approached him, candidly and without reservation.⁷²

Prostitution was so entrenched into fin-de-siècle Viennese culture that it was regulated as a business, not treated as a crime. The Lueger administration did little to stymie prostitution, as it had been legal in the city since 1873. The statute that legalized prostitution required that solicitors register with the police and undergo bi-weekly medical examinations for diseases, mainly syphilis.⁷³ If a prostitute was found infected, then she was technically forced out of business. If this occurred, however, she merely became one of the "clandestine ones," a girl who solicited while infected, one who still roamed the streets.⁷⁴ However, the police of Hitler's Vienna did not seem to concern themselves with the rampant syphilis-infected prostitutes who plagued the Austrian capital. They

checked neither the expensive and notorious VIP call girls, who appeared at the racecourses and in the theaters with their customers, nor the occasional hooker in the flophouses. Girls under eighteen and the numerous prostitutes who were already infected and ill were arrested now and then during a raid, but once they were released after being held briefly in custody, they continued to solicit.⁷⁵

⁷²Arthur Schnitzler, *Rhapsody: A Dream Novel*, trans. by Otto P. Schinnerer (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1927), 38-43.

⁷³J. Sydney Jones, *Hitler in Vienna: 1907-1913* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 62.

⁷⁴Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 366.

⁷⁵*Ibid*, 366.

At some point in Hitler's life it must have troubled him to realize that Karl Lueger, his populist role model, did not do more to stop the spread of syphilis through prostitution, a practice that, in Hitler's mind, was clearly destroying the German race. Hitler noted "prostitution is a disgrace to humanity" and that "the fight against syphilis demands a fight against prostitution."⁷⁶ The preoccupation with prostitution, of course, reflected Hitler's larger fear of the degeneration of the German racial essence, and with it their cultural preeminence. Allegedly at the root of this was the Jewish pimp, who, also in Hitler's mind, was engaged in a dastardly plot to bring about the total ruination of the German race.

For Hitler, who ultimately connected Jewry with prostitution, the fact that he was uncomfortable with women, and perhaps even frightened of them, must have had some bearing on his perceptions. Ian Kershaw notes that "it can be said with near certainty...that by the time he left Vienna at the age of twenty-four Hitler had had no sexual experience" with any woman at all.⁷⁷ This fact is also corroborated by Franz Jetzinger, who writes "there is not one shred of evidence to show that [Hitler] took an active interest in the opposite sex, let alone one particular girl."⁷⁸ In his youth in Linz, he apparently had had an unfortunate encounter with a milkmaid who advanced on him

⁷⁶Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 251.

⁷⁷Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 44.

⁷⁸Franz Jetzinger, *Hitler's Youth*, trans. Lawrence Wilson, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958), 105.

sexually; Hitler, terrified, ran away. The young Hitler operated under the social mores of the fin-de-siècle that demanded a stoic-like outlook on sexuality, i.e. that it should be suppressed, hidden, and obscured.⁷⁹ This stated, it might be understandable that when confronted with Vienna's population of sexually aggressive prostitutes, Hitler was naturally overwhelmed and embarrassed. Stefan Zweig devoted an entire chapter of his memoirs, *The World of Yesterday*, to the issue of prostitution and sexual permissiveness in Vienna. He wrote that

although middle-class usage strove frantically to uphold the fiction that a well-born woman neither possessed sexual instincts nor was permitted to possess any as long as she remained unmarried - anything else would have made her an "immoral person," an outcast from the family - it was obliged to admit the existence of such desires on the part of young men. Since experience had taught that those who had grown to manhood could not be hindered from carrying on their sexual life, the only restriction was the modest wish that they should accomplish their unworthy pleasures outside the walls of sacred morality. Just as cities, under the cleanly swept streets with their handsome *de luxe* shops and elegant promenades, hide a system of subterranean sewers which carry off their filth, so the entire sexual life of youth was supposed to go on under the moral surface of "society."⁸⁰

Hitler, who perceived Viennese society as hypocritical and dionysian, saw the Jews as the people that were bringing ruination on Vienna and Austria as a whole through their spread of prostitution and unclean sexual practices. The Jew was always the problem, the symptom of a disease that threatened to kill the

⁷⁹Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 45.

⁸⁰Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 70.

German race. He writes in *Mein Kampf* about circumstances that surely affected his own youth, as well as the youth of Germany and Austria:

Our whole public life today is like a hothouse for sexual ideas and stimulations. Just look at the bill of fare served up in our movies, vaudeville and theaters, and you will hardly be able to deny that this is not the right kind of food, particularly for the youth.... This sensual, sultry atmosphere leads to ideas and stimulations at a time when the boy should have no understanding of such things. The result of this kind of education can be studied in present-day youth, and it is not exactly gratifying. They mature too early and consequently grow old before their time.... Who will be surprised that even in these age-groups syphilis begins to seek its victims? And it is not deplorable to see a good number of these physically weak, spiritually corrupted young men obtaining their introduction to marriage through big-city whores?⁸¹

He was convinced that the Jewish theater owners who put on sexually provocative shows and pimps who profited from prostitution were some of the destructive elements in German society that had to be eliminated. In Vienna, the young Hitler saw first hand the effect these elements had on society; when he became *Führer* of Germany, he actively sought to stamp out these threats to the German race.

The notion that the Jew represented an alien force in Vienna, as well as Austria, was not one limited to Hitler. Other contemporary writers also stereotyped the *Ostjuden* as a foreign intrusion that was undermining the essence of German culture, and ultimately the German race. Arthur Schnitzler's novel, *Der Weg ins Freie*⁸², attempted to explore the "disintegration of Austrian

⁸¹Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 254.

⁸²*The Road into the Open*.

liberalism under the impact of anti-Semitism."⁸³ A story about the struggles of the older and younger generations battling for supremacy of their era and the personal quest of each character to escape the malaise of an overwhelmingly sick society to better themselves, Schnitzler employs Jews as secondary characters that are transformed into their exact opposite mirror images to illustrate how Jewry is slowly destroying Vienna. When Schnitzler's musician character's Jewish mistress bears him a still-born child, he "feels ambivalent not only towards [her],...but toward Vienna, whose distractions cripple his creativity," Schnitzler is inadvertently indicating that the Jewish influence in Vienna is destroying German culture, as the musician can no longer concentrate on his work, while the still-borne child indicates the alleged Jewish destruction of the German race.⁸⁴

It must be noted finally that while Hitler was confronted with the ideas of anti-Semitism daily, his most obvious influences were what he could see in his everyday routine: *Ostjuden* wearing their special regalia in the central core of Vienna, especially near Leopoldstadt. These were for Hitler the visible Jews, the ones he could see and observe. He apparently had not begun to coalesce his more sinister interpretation of Jews and made the connection between Judaism and Marxism. Other

⁸³Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 12.

⁸⁴William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 242.

racial thinkers had done so, but not Hitler. Still, Vienna was furnishing Hitler with a visceral, gut-level anti-Semitism. The ideology did not come first, but the hatred, and the hatred led him to try to find some sort of comprehensive explanation. For Hitler, the dislike created by personal contact and observation led to an obsessive desire to understand the Jewish phenomenon, especially after the trauma of World War I.

John Lukacs, a noted Hitler biographer and German historian, gives credence to the fact that it was in Munich, not Vienna that Hitler's *Weltanschauung* formed completely. He writes that

the question of *when* the crystallization of Hitler's ideas occurred is not merely a question of chronological curiosity. According to him, not only did his first realization of the Jewish "menace" take place in Vienna, but it was there that he thought the Jewish "problem" through: "I left Vienna as an absolute Anti-Semite, as a mortal enemy of the entire Marxist world view." Yet he had Jewish acquaintances, perhaps even friends, in the youth hostel where he lived.... That he was struggling with the Jewish problem, is probable. But it seems that he felt no need to express these sentiments while they were still inchoate....⁸⁵

Lukacs goes on to argue that the final crystallization of Hitler's worldview took place in Munich as a direct result of the collapse and defeat of Germany in the First World War and because of the communist element that was so pervasive in Munich.⁸⁶ The connection became obvious for Hitler; there was a Jewish

⁸⁵John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 59.

⁸⁶Ibid, 59.

conspiracy out to destroy Germany, and it operated under the guise of Marxism.

Hitler's only childhood friend, August Kubizek, noted that Hitler came to Vienna as an anti-Semite, but Hitler insisted that it was the atmosphere of Vienna that transformed him.⁸⁷ What is certain, however, is that while living in Vienna, Hitler began to form a *Weltanschauung* that would later change the world forever. In Vienna, the young Hitler observed first hand the masterful work of Mayor Karl Lueger, a populist political leader whose use of anti-Semitism to stir up crowds inspired Hitler for many years to follow. However, Lueger was not serious enough in his hatred of Jews to please Hitler, and the *Führer* would later chastise Lueger for this failing. Anti-Semitism was more to Hitler than a tool for political gain; it was a cornerstone to an understanding of history in which the Jews were rationalized as the greatest threat to Western civilization of all time. For Hitler, anti-Semitism had to be more than just an electoral device of a political leader; it had to be a central component in a political program whose aim was the obliteration of the Worldwide Jewish Conspiracy. Lueger's complacency instilled in Hitler one thing, and that was that the Jews had to be destroyed.

⁸⁷J. Sydney Jones, *Hitler in Vienna*, 115-6.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

The Vienna of Hitler's youth was one of conflict and contradictions, of culture clashes and Dionysian artists. It was a city of great architectural creations to conceal a crumbling and decaying empire. The great Austrian satirist Karl Kraus said "I put my pen to the Austrian corpse because I persist in believing there's life in it."⁸⁸ Such was Hitler's impression of Vienna, and from the capital flowed blood to a nearly dead body.

Nonetheless, the city did have a colossal impact on Hitler's perception of Austria, Germany, Europe, and the world. His visits to the opera, where Richard Wagner's works played, not only reinforced in his fertile mind the myths and legends of German greatness from bygone eras, but introduced him to key themes such as purity of the blood and the quest for purification and regeneration. Wagnerian heroes inspired the young artist and slowly steered him towards a destiny that even he could not conceive.

In addition to the opera, Hitler experienced the clash of ethnic nationalism that typified Vienna as the various peoples of the Dual Monarchy clamored for equal representation in both legal and social spheres of life. Prominent here, among other groups, were the Czechs, an outspoken faction whose voice demanded recognition regardless of the consequences. This was the Vienna

⁸⁸Karl Kraus, *Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half Truths: Selected Aphorisms*, trans. and ed. Harry Zohn (Quebec: Engendra Press, 1976), 32.

that helped shape a young artist's mind into something so dreadfully sinister that the world would later tremble under the boots of his armies. This was the Vienna of young Adolf Hitler.

As the capital of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna, by default, opened herself to a myriad of ethnicities and cultures, many of which converged in the city. Vienna has been wistfully described as

not merely the name of a city,...not merely a symbol of European history,...not merely the world's musical centre, [but] all of this and much more. Vienna is the sum of the knowledge of life of generations and peoples, it is the effort of many states to draw together.... Vienna is the expression of life itself...with all its terrors and its great moments.... In its air and its atmosphere one finds the right standard by which to judge the problems of life.... To inherit this earth and yet not fall prey to Mammon, to possess it and yet to remain penniless, to conjure up a vision of Heaven without becoming a Utopian, to blend these things properly together and to fill the hours of one's life with them - in short, to possess the art of living humanely as a human being - all this is essential Vienna.⁸⁹

In the passage above, Vienna was depicted as a city of starry-eyed dreamers and listless romantics, a description that served only to mask the complex reality of the turbulent city. All of life's terrors and great moments were present in fin-de-siècle Vienna. There were ferocious street brawls among members of political parties and between students while Richard Wagner's overpowering operas were performed in the grand *Hofburgtheater*. One certainly had the appropriate air to judge life's problems; there was the "Czech Question" and the "Jewish Question", and the

⁸⁹Ernst Marboe, ed. *The Book of Austria*, trans. by G.E.R. Gedye (Wien: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei, 1948), 358-359.

outcry of the people for total enfranchisement and social reform. Vienna offered much for the impressionable mind, and one in particular was influenced tremendously.

Several facets of fin-de-siècle Viennese culture will be examined in the following pages with the most emphasis placed on how they affected the mind of the young Adolf Hitler. Robert Waissenberger writes that

at the turn of the century, Vienna saw an intellectual ferment which not only stimulated a wealth of new political, scientific, and cultural ideas, but also, as a natural consequence of her position as hub of Austria-Hungary, extended far beyond the city's confines. National awareness which, during the nineteenth century, had been growing among the Monarchy's ethnic groups was now beginning to exacerbate their mutual rivalry.⁹⁰

Keeping the above idea in mind, it may be possible to expose the struggles between Vienna's varied ethnic groups and how the young Hitler would have perceived them. An examination of the *Reichsrat* (Parliament) as an impotent legislative body, incapable of effectively governing even the Austrian portion of the Dual Monarchy, will indicate much concerning nationalist interests among the empire's subjects.

Long before Hitler ever witnessed his first chaotic session of Parliament, he stood spellbound by the architectural design of the *Reichsrathaus* (Parliamentary Building) and its imposing presence on the now-legendary Ringstrasse. The *Reichsrathaus* was designed by the Dane Theophil Hansen, who "fashioned [it] in the classical Greek style," his personal favorite architectural

⁹⁰Robert Waissenberger, "Politics in Vienna Before and After the Turn of the Century," *Vienna: 1890-1920* (Secaucus: Wellfleet Press, 1984), 31.

form.⁹¹ It was “on the Parliament that he lavished his greatest effort” and he “believed that his ‘noble, classical forms would produce with irresistible force an edifying and idealizing effect on the representatives of the people.’”⁹² In an attempt to magnify the height of the *Reichsrathaus*, a large ramp ascending from the street to the front entry way was built; it was guarded by replicas of Rome’s Capitol Hill “tamers of horses” in an effort to tie the parliament to the republican tradition of Rome.



Figure 2. The *Reichsrathaus*. (Photo from <<http://www.earth2marsh.com/images/vienna/>>.)

Perhaps more important than the style of the *Reichsrathaus*' architecture was its position on the Ringstrasse. “Instead of the modest location originally contemplated, the building now assumed prime Ringstrasse frontage, where it could directly face

⁹¹William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 148.

⁹²Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 41.

the Hofburg across a small park."⁹³ By positioning the Parliament just so, an air of confrontation was created between the emperor and the legislature.

Despite any animosity felt between the crown and the Parliament, the true battles that were fought in the *Reichsrathaus* were among the representatives themselves, often going beyond mere verbal beratings to unseemly brawls. Far removed from any notion of Greek democracy and shattering Hansen's idealist dreams for an orderly representative body, the Parliament of Hitler's Vienna remained ineffective, providing more entertainment for the citizenry than legislative order for the empire. The noted Austrian historian Brigitte Hamann underscores the utterly abysmal legislative conditions of the *Reichsrat*:

Parliament's standing orders did not assuage the fight between nationalities; on the contrary, it exacerbated it on account of serious flaws. Because there was no national language, there could be no uniform language in Parliament. Each representative had the privilege of speaking in his native tongue. Ten languages were admitted: German, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Serbian, Croat, Slovenian, Italian, Romanian, and Russian. Yet there were no interpreters.... Because things were so complicated, parliamentary procedures were sometimes argued about for days, which halted all actual work.... Apart from the lack of common languages for debates, there was also no time limit for speeches.... Some non-German representatives took advantage of the lack of interpreters and of a time limit for speeches; because most of their colleagues could not understand them...it was difficult to have any control over whether a speech was really only about the motion under debate or if the only purpose was to gain time by reciting poems or by endless repetitions. This left the

⁹³Ibid, 43.

door wide open to filibusters and made expedited work impossible.⁹⁴

Based on the above-described conditions, there should be little reason to doubt that Hitler, a regular visitor to Parliament's meetings, would hold nothing but contempt for the entire parliamentary system. However, in *Mein Kampf* he writes that

as a freedom-loving man I could not even conceive of any other possibility of government, for the idea of any sort of dictatorship would, in view of my attitude toward the House of Habsburg, have seemed to me a crime against freedom and all reason.⁹⁵

These are perplexing words from the man who would later introduce into Germany extravagant police powers and suspend the civil liberties that he allegedly cherished. Despite his professed belief in parliamentary ideals at this time, Hitler frowned on the Austrian parliament, not as a democratic system specifically, but on the nature of its operation. Renowned Hitler biographer Alan Bullock writes that for Hitler, Austrian "parliamentary democracy reduced government to political jobbery, it put a premium on mediocrity and was inimical to leadership..."⁹⁶

⁹⁴Brigitte Hamann, *A Dictator's Apprenticeship*, trans. Thomas Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 118-119.

⁹⁵Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 76.

⁹⁶Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Konecky and Konecky, 1962), 41.

Moreover, it "encouraged the avoidance of responsibility, and sacrificed decisions to party compromises."⁹⁷

As mentioned above, the Austrian Parliament also served as a venue for entertainment. If it could provide little governance for the people, the least it could do was entertain them. As the *Reichsrathaus* accommodated representatives from all corners of the empire, it should be expected that antipathy would surface among the legislators, in verbal, if not in outright violent demonstrations. Indeed, such was the case. Outbursts from the representatives were common occurrences, and when the

president rang his bell for debate, the other deputies and ministers flocked...into the chamber and began shouting the most terrible abuse at one another. If the members of the Reichsrat disagreed with someone speaking, they would slam the lids of their desks, whistle, or swear in Italian, Czech, and even sometimes in German.⁹⁸

Again, Brigitte Hamann notes the dysfunctional Parliament but indicates that it served as a venue of entertainment for the Viennese. She writes that

an observer from Berlin noticed with astonishment that attending parliament was very popular with the Viennese. As far as he was concerned, the large number of parties represented in the Cisleithanian parliament made any serious work impossible anyway, and the visits to the Reichsrat were "amusing" to the "natives": "there they can...attend an entertainment for free. The representatives personally 'jumping on' each other compensates the Viennese entirely for theater performances, which they would have to pay for after all if they wanted some entertainment. In Parliament they can have a grand time, 'by the grace of the representatives,' and what they

⁹⁷Ibid, 41.

⁹⁸J. Sydney Jones, *Hitler in Vienna: 1907-1913* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983), 82.

get out of it also gives them enough material to amuse their good friends for many an evening in the tavern.⁹⁹

Hitler would later confess in *Mein Kampf* that his first visits to Parliament were enough "to stimulate me to thought for weeks on end," though, unlike Hamann's tavern-goers, Hitler would later speak angrily to the crowded halls of the mens' hostels with tales of the ineffectiveness of democratic forums.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, what he saw in Hansen's magnificent *Reichsrathaus* was a mixture of comical buffoonery and legislative stalemate, resulting in what must have been both the most hilarious as well as disheartening spectacle that he had ever seen. In reference to one such visit, Hitler later wrote scornfully that

present were a few hundred of these popular representatives who had to take a position on a question of most vital economic importance.... [But] the intellectual content of what these men said was on a really depressing level, in so far as you could understand their babbling at all.... A wild gesticulating mass screaming all at once in every different key, presided over by a good-natured old uncle who was striving in the sweat of his brow to revive the dignity of the House by violently ringing his bell and alternating gentle reproofs with grave admonitions. I couldn't help laughing.¹⁰¹

In another visit to the Parliament Hitler observed a hall that was anything but a mindless melee of apparently half-educated representatives. A filibuster was underway, and what few representatives were present lay sleeping in their chairs. The exposure to such polar opposites in a legislative setting

⁹⁹Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 119.

¹⁰⁰Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 77.

¹⁰¹*Ibid*, 77.

triggered in Hitler's mind the notion that parliamentarianism as a governmental system was flawed at some fundamental level. In remembering the filibuster, he claimed that the "first misgivings arose in me" about parliamentary democracy and then asserted that "a year of tranquil observation sufficed totally to change or eliminate my former view of the nature of this institution."¹⁰² Of course, the institution to which he referred was Parliament, and his initial admiration for parliamentary government, if he ever felt it, soon vanished over the course of his visits to the Reichsrat proceedings. Hitler, in *Mein Kampf*, admits that his

innermost position was no longer against the misshapen form which this idea assumed in Austria; no, by now I could no longer accept parliament as such. Up till then I had seen the misfortune of the Austrian parliament in the absence of a German majority; now I saw that its ruination lay in the whole nature and essence of the institution as such.¹⁰³

In addition to contempt for parliamentary democracy, one of the paramount tenets of Hitler's worldview was the idea of nationalism, a notion featured prominently within the framework of the Nazi Party platform. He was exposed early to nationalist tensions within the Austrian Empire. There is little doubt that Hitler's first experiences with ethnic nationalist agitation occurred in Linz, episodes that certainly recurred and intensified in Vienna. As a boy in Linz,

Hitler encountered nationalism and Pan-Germanism. Linz was close to the Czech-settled lands of South Bohemia

¹⁰²Ibid, 77-78.

¹⁰³Ibid, 78.

and the incursion of Czech immigrants, business, and property interests was warily watched by the Austrian-Germans of the town. Hitler's history master, Dr. Leopold Pötsch, was prominent in several nationalist *Vereine* and also introduced his boys to epic periods of German history with magic lantern shows on the Nibelung, Charlemagne, Bismarck, and the establishment of the Second Reich. Hitler was always enthusiastic for these history lessons and his belief in "Germany" as a mother symbol of romantic *Volk* identity and imperial continuity may be traced to his school experiences in Linz.¹⁰⁴

Joachim C. Fest also contends that Hitler's school days in Linz deeply influenced his nationalist tendencies in that the "border dweller's sense of being menaced [and] the hatred for the Danube monarchy's mixture of nations and races" instilled in Hitler the idea that all things ethnically, i.e. racially, German were superior; for Hitler the only true sanctity could be found in those things that were truly "German".¹⁰⁵ Brigitte Hamann notes that

in any case, the "fight against Slavization," and thus against the Czechs, dominated the almost uniformly German-speaking town far more than anti-Semitism against the German-speaking Jews. In the twenty years before 1914 the "Czech question" was the main topic for discussion in the Linz City Council as well as the Linz newspapers - and the schools.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Origins of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 193.

¹⁰⁵Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 39.

¹⁰⁶Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 16. Hamann has an excellent portion of her chapter devoted to the ethnic question in Linz, pages 16-22.

In fin-de-siècle Vienna, the struggle between competing nationalist factions was best observed in the *Reichsrat* that Hitler eventually began to loathe. Of several contentious issues that often deadlocked the parliament, one of the most significant was the question of language, especially as to which language, German or Czech, should have prominence, or if each should stand on equal footing. As mentioned before, the parliament was without an official language. This resulted in incomprehensible debates on vital matters of state and meaningless filibusters that served only to interrupt the legislative process and fulfill the personal ends of the representative who sought to inflict insult on other members of parliament. Clearly, any ethnic group will strive to have its language spoken and used as an official language, and if that ethnic group were the majority, then it would seem only right for that language to be utilized in official proceedings.

Such was not the case in the Dual-Monarchy. "In Austria the percentage of Slavs was 60.9 to the German's 35.7...[and] in all Habsburg-ruled lands...only 23.8 percent of the population was German," figures that suggest a clear Slav, i.e. Czech, majority.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, population figures in 1910 Austria-Hungary indicate a Slav plurality in that they totaled

¹⁰⁷Peter F. Sugar, "The Nature of the Non-Germanic Societies under Habsburg Rule," *Slavic Review* 22 (1963), 8.

16,959,000, while Germans numbered a mere 9,950,000.¹⁰⁸ This majority in the Austrian portion of the empire was not mirrored in the *Reichsrat*, however, in that no one particular Slav party dictated parliamentary processes. In fact, no one particular party held any significant sway over the others despite a Slav majority in Austria, hence the mishmash of languages and tireless filibusters.

Of the Slav groups, the Czechs were the most vocal in seeking recognition of their language and autonomy within the Habsburg Empire. In the Austrian parliament in 1907, they totaled 82 seats, divided among six parties. Ethnic Germans controlled 266, divided among seven parties.¹⁰⁹ Even here, however, there was little clarity about the system used in the Dual-Monarchy to determine a representative's ethnic origins. Brigitte Hamann writes that

according to the criterion that was typically applied in Austro-Hungary - that one's everyday language determined one's nationality - Parliament was composed of the following nationalities: 233 Germans, 107 Czechs, 82 Poles, 33 Rutherinans, 24 Slovenians, 19 Italians, plus 13 Croats and 5 Romanians. Thus 233 German representatives faced a majority of 283 non-German representatives.... It is...remarkable that despite the great number of parties in the Reichstag there was not a single party that called itself "Austrian."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 9. For a full listing of population percentages, see Sugar's article. Holger Herwig, in *Hammer or Anvil? Modern Germany, 1648-Present*, page 181, presents different Austro-Hungarian population figures for 1910 than Peter Sugar. Herwig counts Germans at 12,006,651, 23.36 percent, and Slavs at 23,021,339, 44.34 percent.

¹⁰⁹For a full breakdown of the *Reichsrat* in 1907, see Brigitte Hamann's *Hitler's Vienna*, page 117.

¹¹⁰Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 117-118.

In 1899, the Czechs were defeated when, under intense German pressure, the law that allowed for the equal application of both the Czech and German languages in official internal usage in Moravia and Bohemia was repealed. The Young Czech Party was extremely vocal concerning the language issue, as well as other matters that interested its constituency base. In describing the Young Czech Party, Stanley B. Winters writes

it was perhaps inevitable that the party should have tailored its liberal outlook with its supporters directly in mind - that is, persons with education, property, and above average incomes.... These middle-class elements were amenable to certain social reforms and were politically progressive in the context of existing power relationships. Their values and beliefs were the outgrowth of years of arduous struggle - for job opportunities in the lower ranks of the civil service, for the use of the Czech language in the public schools, and the preservation of the Czech nationality and way of life.... They supported the following postulates: protection for Czech farmers against foreign competition; nationalization of public utilities and transport, regulation of private enterprise when favorable to Czech interests;[and]...equality of the Czech and German languages in official and public life....¹¹¹

As noted before, the protection of the Czech language was of significance to the Czech people who believed that it was the aim of the Germans ultimately to destroy all facets of Czech nationality. The other issues supported by the Young Czechs, such as protecting farmers and businesses from foreigners as well as the nationalization of public utilities and transportation

¹¹¹Stanley B. Winters, "The Young Czech Party (1874-1914): An Appraisal," *Slavic Review* 28 (1969), 434.

were elements of Social Democracy and Christian Socialism, both of which will be examined in more detail in a later chapter.

Nonetheless, Hitler was powerfully affected by the Czech push to preserve their way of life and ethnicity. He was convinced that the Austrian monarchy sought to elevate the Czechs to a status that they did not deserve, ultimately resulting in the de-Germanization of Austria. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler writes with much disgust and exaggeration concerning the matter:

The general line of development was...directed against the Germans. Especially since Archduke Francis Ferdinand became heir apparent and began to enjoy a certain influence, there began to be some plan and order in the policy of Czechization from above. With all possible means, this future ruler of the dual monarchy tried to encourage a policy of de-Germanization, to advance it himself or at least to sanction it. Purely German towns, indirectly through government officialdom, were slowly pushed into mixed-language danger zones. Even in lower Austria this process began to make increasingly rapid progress, and many Czechs considered Vienna their largest city.¹¹²

Hitler's sense of threatened nationalism, his feeling of dread concerning the upsurge of Czech influence in the empire no doubt stemmed from his boyhood experiences in Linz, where many Czechs settled and brought with them their customs and practices, including the apparently dreaded Czech language. Moreover, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, "the Czechs were the most powerful nation after the Germans; they were highly educated and economically very productive, and they represented a fierce competition to the German-Bohemians," especially in the labor

¹¹²Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 92-93.

market, as Czech labor was less expensive than German labor.¹¹³

Hitler thought that the Czechs were slowly destroying the Austrian empire from within; if *Ostjuden* were an alien force from the margins of the empire, then the Czechs were the enemy at its core, and both, even if unconsciously working in tandem, were bringing Austria to ruination.

Hitler's encounter with the clash of nationalist ideals was not limited to his frequent visits to the Dual Monarchy's dysfunctional parliament where the Czech quest for political equality disrupted state business; a powerful influence was found in what was perhaps his favorite of all Ringstrasse buildings, the *Hofburgtheater* (Imperial Theatre), where the great operas of Richard Wagner were performed, operas that hypnotized Hitler and brought him closer to the ideal German state that he envisioned. Hitler's favorite architect was Gottfried Semperer, the designer of the *Hofburgtheater*, and his later plans for a theater in his hometown of Linz included many of Semperer's designs, most notably the elaborate staircase of the *Hofburgtheater*.¹¹⁴

In his book, *Hitler: Mein Jugendfreund*, August Kubizek, Hitler's childhood friend and roommate in Vienna, describes both his and Hitler's numerous outings to the opera. He writes that

for Adolf, nothing could compete with the great mystical world that the Master conjured up for us.... Listening to Wagner meant to him, not a simple visit to the theatre, but the opportunity of being transported into that extraordinary state which Wagner's music produced in him, that trance, that escape into a mystical dream-world which

¹¹³Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 304.

¹¹⁴*Ibid*, 69-70.

he needed in order to sustain the enormous tension of his turbulent nature.¹¹⁵



Figure 3. The *Hofburgtheater*. (Photo from <http://www.washington.edu/ark2/archtm/dw839.html>.)

The mystical dream-world that the "Master" (i.e. Wagner) created was one of German antiquity, and for Hitler, this was a time of German purity, before German soil was tainted by Jewish blood. Much work has been done in an attempt to link Hitler's anti-Semitism to Wagner. Ron Rosenbaum writes, "there are those who believe that a study of Wagner's own 'Jewish problem' demonstrates that Wagner...was a key source of Hitler's mystical blood-and-race rationale for his anti-Semitism," but there is more credence in arguing Hitler's anti-Semitic notions originated

¹¹⁵August Kubizek, *Young Hitler: The Story of Our Friendship*, trans. by E. V. Anderson (Maidstone: George Mann, 1973), 140.

from social and political stimuli, not artistic ones.¹¹⁶ Though anti-Semitism is a perceived element of Wagnerian operas, it was the vision of German greatness that first impressed the young Hitler, especially in his visits to the *Hofburgtheater*.

At an early age in the Linz *Realschule*, the young Hitler was exposed to German history with a heavy sprinkling of nationalism that no doubt laid the early foundation for his nationalistic leanings. As noted above in an excerpt from Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, Hitler's history teacher, Dr. Leopold Pötsch, aimed at enriching his students' minds with legends of German greatness. The concept of the "New Romanticism" was extremely influential with *völkisch* thinkers, and those who subscribed to this idea sought verification and authentication from the historical past. George L. Mosse writes that

the sense of a glorious past played a leading role in both the old and the New Romanticism. After all, the primary condition of a Volk was its rootedness in nature - an attribute not to be attained overnight. Rootedness implied antiquity, an ancient people set in an equally ancient landscape, which by now bore the centuries-old imprint of the people's soul. Antiquity also conveyed the connotation of youth, of the moment of inception, when the pure, unadulterated, heroic, and virtuous qualities of the Volk had been first thrust into history.¹¹⁷

It was the alleged purity of the German race, blood, and soil that hypnotized Hitler, and though he was exposed to German

¹¹⁶Ron Rosenbaum, *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil* (New York: Random House, 1998), 31.

¹¹⁷George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 67.

legends in the classroom, he was most powerfully affected by the myths and symbols of Wagnerian opera. Such is the function of an artist's mind, and Hitler, of course, considered himself an artist. If themes are presented in an artistic manner, then they will have more impact. Of course, only the great Master, Richard Wagner, could transport Hitler to that place of the German purity and untouched soil. Again, August Kubizek:

When he [Hitler] listened to Wagner's music he was a changed man; his violence left him, he became quite, yielding and tractable. His gaze lost its restlessness; his own destiny, however heavily it may have weighed upon him, became unimportant. He no longer felt lonely and outlawed, and misjudged by society. He was intoxicated and bewitched. Willingly he let himself be carried away into that mystical universe which was more real to him than the actual workaday world. From the stale, musty prison of his back room, he was transported into the blissful regions of Germanic antiquity, that ideal world which was the lofty goal for all his endeavours.¹¹⁸

Hitler's own destiny? Did it really weigh as heavy on his mind as Kubizek supposes? The young Hitler was indifferent and lackluster as to any career plans outside of art and it seems a great presumption to believe that while in Vienna concerns over a lofty and heroic destiny distorted his being. Clearly, by the time of his imprisonment in 1923 and the writing of *Mein Kampf*, the vision of a great destiny dominated Hitler's thoughts and actions. The epiphany of the *Trenchgemeinschaft*¹¹⁹, the belief in

¹¹⁸August Kubizek, *Young Hitler: The Story of Our Friendship*, 143.

¹¹⁹Trench community. There was a sense of strong camaraderie between soldiers in World War I, and Hitler was powerfully moved by the connect felt by each man, a connection that transcended all other boundaries.

the "Stab-in-the-Back" myth, and the blaming of the alleged November Criminals for Germany's defeat in World War I crystallized in Hitler's mind the disjointed fragments of his youth into a worldview with him as the next great Germanic leader.

Hitler would follow through with his romantic destiny to fill the role of the archetypal Wagnerian hero. In a study of National Socialism's leadership principles, M. Margaret Ball writes that "it was Wagner...who gave the German nation, through his operas, a real consciousness of the heroic, and it was doubtless largely through him that Hitler was so profoundly (and permanently) impressed with the historic role of the 'hero.'"¹²⁰ Moreover, James Forman notes that "German romanticism turned nationalistic, finding its highest expression in the operas of Richard Wagner" where "Germany's mythological heroes and gods [were] struggling against an array of monsters and deformed enemies."¹²¹ Hitler believed in the idea of Wagnerian heroism, as it was a powerful force for both the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Neo-Romantics, a group that was easily turned *völkisch* and eventually Nazi. Bryan Magee, noted music and Wagner historian, writes that Wagner's

insight is not so much into individuals as into the human condition. For example, it is possible to see the various characters of *The Ring* as multifarious aspects of a singular personality, so that the whole gigantic work becomes a presentation of what it is to be a human being.... In all of Wagner's opera's the ultimate

¹²⁰M. Margaret Ball, "The Leadership Principle in National Socialism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942): 76-77.

¹²¹James Forman, *Nazism* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1978), 5.

significance of the individual characters never lies within themselves, it always goes beyond them to something universal, so that their existence as symbols is of their essence.¹²²

By his ascension to power as *Führer* of the German people, Hitler appeared, at least superficially, to have become one of Wagner's heroes, and his very being as *Führer* indeed served to symbolize the incarnate idealism of the Nazi movement. Perhaps no greater representation of his heroic and divine powers can be demonstrated than the Nuremberg Party Rally of September 1934, when, in a carefully staged and choreographed theatrical entrance, Hitler appeared from the sky, in an airplane of course, and swooped down onto Nuremberg, the Jerusalem of the Nazi movement. The noted German historian Ian Kershaw writes that

the symbolism was replete from the very beginning, as Hitler's aeroplane descended through the clouds over Nuremberg, casting a cruciform shape over the marching storm-troopers and the thousands awaiting him in ecstatic expectation in the streets below. What has been called 'the tone on insistent messianism'...continues to the climatic end of the Rally in which unity of Leader, Party, and People was mystically proclaimed by Rudolf Hess....¹²³

Hitler was playing the role of "hero" with stellar accuracy, having convinced nearly the whole of Germany that the future lay with him. At Nuremberg in 1934, Hitler's popularity and personification of the Wagnerian hero is once again evident. Renowned Hitler biographer John Toland notes that after Hitler opened the rally on September 4,

¹²²Bryan Magee, *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 85.

¹²³Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 69.

at least ten thousand enthusiasts crowded around Hitler's hotel, the Deutscher Hof, repeating the chant "We want our Führer!" until he at last came out on the balcony.... The next morning Hitler appeared at the Luitpold arena, more as an object of reverence than as an orator. He entered dramatically, followed by Göring, Goebbels, Hess, Himmler and several aides, to the strains of the "Badenweiler March."¹²⁴

The intended future of Germany was enunciated clearly by one of Hitler's aides, Gauleiter Adolf Wagner, Bavarian Minister of the Interior, who read from a proclamation written by the Führer himself. "The German form of life is definitely determined for the next thousand years," read out Wagner. "For us, the unsettled nineteenth century has finally ended. There will be no revolution in Germany for the next thousand years."¹²⁵

It is arguable that the young Hitler was impressed with Karl Lueger's parades through Vienna, where he too was held to near god-like status by his constituents. Moreover, it is arguable that Lueger was perceived as a hero by the Viennese just as Hitler was a hero for the Germans. The parades that both enjoyed typify the hero idea that was found in Wagnerian operas. In his memoir *The Nightmare Years*, William L. Shirer chronicles his experiences in Nazi Germany, noting of this 1934 Nuremberg Rally and Hitler:

Like a Roman emperor he rode into the medieval town at sundown, past solid phalanxes of wildly cheering Germans who packed the narrow streets that once had been the gathering place of Hans Sachs and the *Meistersinger*.

¹²⁴John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (New York: Double Day and Company, 1976), 379.

¹²⁵Ibid, 379.

Thousands of swastika flags blotted out the Gothic beauties of the city's architecture, the façades of the old houses, the gabled roofs. The streets, hardly wider than alleys, were a sea of brown and black uniforms.... The frenzy of the crowds fascinated me that evening [4 September 1934] even more than my first glimpse of the dictator. I had seen vast throngs in India moved by the sight of Gandhi and in Rome by Mussolini. But this German horde was different in a way I could not yet comprehend.¹²⁶

Shirer's description could easily be that of any Nazi Party rally, in any German city, and at any time that Hitler was genuinely popular with the German people. By the same token, Karl Lueger's appearances also packed the streets of Vienna, and Lueger, too, was fond of parades. It is unlikely that Lueger drew on heroic Wagnerian ideas, but it is at least plausible that he pulled from nineteenth century *völkisch* notions that a great leader could be found among the people. Dr. Joseph S. Bloch, a contemporary of Lueger's and colleague in the *Reichsrat*, notes in his memoirs that "the average citizen of Vienna worshiped him, as mayor he was cheered wherever he appeared in public, so much so that the court people remonstrated because the ovations presented him were louder than those to the old emperor."¹²⁷

Descriptions of Lueger's appearances do not stop here, nor are they limited to the praise he received. Brigitte Hamann writes that

Lueger loved to appear in public as "handsome Karl" with his golden mayor's chain, surrounded by a throng of

¹²⁶William L. Shirer, *Twentieth Century Journey*, vol. 2, *The Nightmare Years 1930-1940* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 119.

¹²⁷Joseph S. Bloch, *My Reminiscences* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 227.

public-sector workers and municipal civil servants, particularly by priests in their vestments and altar boys, who during all inauguration ceremonies waved holy-water containers, whether it was the opening of a utilities factory or Vienna's Public School 85. Those closest to him wore a special "court uniform," consisting of a green tailcoat with black velvet cuffs and yellow coat-of-arms buttons. Military bands played the *Lueger March*.¹²⁸

One must question if Hitler either copied the manner in which Lueger made his public appearances or borrowed heavily from them. Many parallels are evident in Hitler's parades and public appearances, where intimates in special regalia flanked him and workers in particular were put at the center of attention. Though Lueger may not have been consciously playing the role of Wagnerian hero, he certainly played the part well. It was Hitler who later actively sought out the Wagnerian vision, but he found himself on that path in fin-de-siècle Vienna.

When young Hitler made Vienna his home in 1907, he had the lofty dreams of an artist's career, a significant departure from his father's career in the Imperial Austrian bureaucracy. Hitler himself records in *Mein Kampf* that he "journeyed to Vienna [and] hoped to wrest from Fate what [his] father had accomplished before." He "wanted to become 'something'-but on no account a civil servant."¹²⁹ However, it was in the Austrian capital that he first encountered the workings of political anti-Semitism, the socialist machine of Karl Lueger, and the success that the Viennese mayor enjoyed by effectively coupling the two. It is ironic that when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January

¹²⁸Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 276.

¹²⁹Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 19.

1933, he became the "civil servant" that he detested. It was in the *Reichsrat* that the young and impressionable Hitler saw first hand the feeble and impotent nature of the representative system for the multi-ethnic empire, a pathetic governmental unit that exemplified the sick and dying nature of the Habsburg monarchy. The Slavs, especially the Czechs, represented for Hitler a dangerous threat to the existence of not only the empire, but to the German race as well. And lastly, in the *Hofburgtheater*, Hitler was moved by the works of the great German master composer, Richard Wagner, whose operas transported him to a mystical and ancient past where German purity and greatness reigned supreme. This distant past was what Hitler idealized and wished to create in modern form; a German nation based on purity of blood and strength of community. It was in Vienna that Hitler, in the most suggestible period of his life, was exposed to these social and political elements, elements that he would later mold into a *Weltanschauung* of fantastically horrendous proportions.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL REFORM

The fin-de-siècle in Vienna was a tumultuous time. Much was happening in the city as Europe was on the cusp of entering a new and uncharted modern era. Industrialization was transforming Vienna, though terribly late, and was bringing with it two rambunctious stepchildren: socialism and mass discontent. Waves of radical socialism began to grip the city, ultimately championed by the Jew-baiting Christian Socialist Party headed by Dr. Karl Lueger. Lueger promised social reform in the capital and the bolstering of Austrian businesses by reclaiming from foreigners what, he claimed, rightfully belonged to Austrians. His successful synthesis of anti-Semitic feelings and the mass populace created for Lueger and the Christian Socialists an effective political machine. All the while the young Adolf Hitler was present in Vienna and witnessing the closing days of Lueger's reign in the *Rathaus*. He saw in Lueger a great "German" leader, a role model after whom he could fashion his own political career after, if only partially. The seeds had been sown in Hitler's fertile mind, and Christian Social Vienna was the garden.

Both Karl Lueger and Adolf Hitler were men who rose to greatness from mediocre beginnings entirely by their own persistence, determination, and patience. A little luck may also have contributed, but Lueger and Hitler illustrate that when one sets a goal, it can be attained. As noted in chapter 2, Lueger's father was a janitor and former soldier, a social position that

did not command greatness. Similarly, Hitler's father was an imperial bureaucrat in Upper Austria who did not aspire to greatness or achieve it. Both fathers were content, but had the ambitions that their sons would do better in life than they had. And, perhaps more important than their humble origins, was the fact that each man, Lueger and Hitler, were products of a particular political system: for Lueger, it was liberalism, for Hitler, democracy, a form of liberalism. Both men had in them the idea that liberalism had failed both the state and its citizens, and each sought something better.

Despite his adoption of an anti-liberal stance as he entered the political scene, Karl Lueger was a product of Vienna's liberal educational and social systems. Lueger biographer Richard S. Geehr writes that he

drew heavily on his Liberal university training and years of experience as a Liberal politician. His politics, cultural views, and political style all owed more to these early experiences than he or any of his previous biographers have acknowledged.... As a fledgling politician in the late 1860s, Lueger took considerable pride in the achievements of the ruling Liberal party, and he admired as least one Viennese mayor. Though the Liberals maintained their power by means of the restricted franchise, Lueger was at first successful as a Liberal and would have had nothing to gain by attacking his sponsors.¹³⁰

Such are the facets of Lueger's early career as a politician, a man who rode on the coattails of others in order to arrive at some political recognition. However, as Lueger grew older and the power of the Liberal party began to waiver under

¹³⁰Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger: Mayor of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 38.

the impact of new stressors, the rising Socialist movement in particular, he became attuned to his own ambitions and sought for something greater than what the Liberals would allow. Again, Richard Geehr:

Only after Liberalism became too confining for him [Lueger] and unresponsive to change in the early 1880s did he break away. It took several more years for him to emerge as an anti-Liberal. By that time, Lueger's ambitions to create a mass party had become apparent. For above all, Lueger was transparently ambitious. This and his willingness to use any means to achieve his goals became hallmarks of the mature politician.¹³¹

Fin-de-siècle Liberalism in Vienna was quickly being transformed into a doomed political system and attracted enemies from nearly all sectors of society. The social exclusivity of liberalism as a political program alienated it from the poorer classes of Vienna, while the *petit bourgeoisie* was affronted by the apparent liberal sellout of important Viennese businesses to foreign investors and Jewish financiers. Lueger, who was clearly attuned to the changing nature of Viennese politics, realized that in order to succeed politically, he had adopt a new political philosophy. Noted Viennese cultural historian Carl E. Schorske writes that

the principles and programs which made up the liberal creed were designed to supercede systematically those of "the feudals," as the aristocrats were pejoratively called. Constitutional monarchy would replace aristocratic absolutism; parliamentary centralism, aristocratic federalism. Science would replace religion. Those of German nationality would serve as tutor and teacher to bring up the subject peoples, rather than keep the ignorant bondsmen as the feudals had done. Thus nationality itself would ultimately serve as a principle of popular cohesion

¹³¹Ibid, 38.

in a multinational state.... Finally, laissez faire would break the arbitrary rule of privilege in the economic sphere and make merit, rather than privilege or charity, the basis of economic reward.¹³²

Despite the noble intentions of the Liberal program, such as the education of the non-German peoples in order to make them better subjects in the empire, the true underlying factor in Liberalism's success was its policy of keeping the very non-German subjects it wished to educate disenfranchised and helpless politically. Lueger perceived that the masses were growing tired of Liberal exclusivity and that a general tension was building in Vienna, as well as throughout the Dual Monarchy. Again, Carl E. Schorske notes,

Austrian society failed to respect...liberal coordinates of order and progress. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the program which the liberals had devised against the upper classes occasioned the explosion of the lower. The liberals succeeded in releasing the political energies of the masses, but against themselves rather than against their ancient foes.... A German nationalism articulated against aristocratic cosmopolitans was answered by Slavic patriots clamoring for autonomy. When the liberals soft-pedaled their Germanism in the interest of the multi-national state, they were branded as traitors to nationalism by the anti-liberal German *petite bourgeoisie*. Laissez faire, devised to free the economy from the fetters of the past, called forth the Marxist revolutionaries of the future. Catholicism, routed from the school and the courthouse as the handmaiden of aristocratic oppression, returned as the ideology of peasant and artisan, for whom liberalism meant capitalism and capitalism meant Jew.¹³³

¹³²Carl E. Schorske, "Politics in a New Key: An Austrian Triptych," *The Journal of Modern History* 39 (1967): 343.

¹³³Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980), 117-8.

As a result, the Liberals had nowhere to turn for support; their program offended virtually every sector of the Viennese and Austrian populace at once, a task that would seem difficult to achieve in politics. With few alternatives offered to them, the growing population of industrial workers, as well as the lower middle class embraced various types of socialism as a political program. Under its broad banner was the promise of reform, political enfranchisement, and opportunity and the retaking from foreign investors of businesses that were Austrian, resulting at the same time in a defeat for Jewish financiers who allegedly controlled the free market. Lueger grasped the opportunity when it came his way and consolidated his power based on the widespread disillusionment with liberalism; he was "the political chemist who fused the elements of Catholic social disaffection into an organization of the first magnitude," and while not overly religious in his devotion to the Church, he "knew how to use the new Catholic social theory as a catalyst in his political experiment."¹³⁴ Thus Karl Lueger became the champion of the people and the archenemy of the liberals.

By the same token, Adolf Hitler had become disgusted with the idealism of liberalism, particularly the parliamentary system and democracy as a whole. As mentioned above, Hitler's disillusionment with the parliament began after his initial visits to the *Reichsrathaus* in Vienna where he witnessed incomprehensible parliamentary debates that were in his mind meaningless and without substance concerning important Austrian

¹³⁴Ibid, 141.

issues. In a speech delivered in Munich on 12 September 1923, Hitler expressed clearly his complete and total hatred for the republicans that assumed power in Germany following World War I, the so-called "November Criminals". Hitler despised them and the republic that they created, and based on his experiences in Vienna, it can be easily seen that he perceived the "November Criminals" as puppets of an alleged international Jewish conspiracy that catered only to elite special interests just as the liberals of fin-de-siècle Vienna allegedly did. He said that

the Republic was founded to be a milch-cow [sic] for its founders - for the whole parliamentary gang. It was never intended to be a State for the German people, but a feeding-ground, as pleasant and as rich a feeding-ground as possible. There was never any thought of giving to the German people a free State: the object was to provide a mob of the lowest scoundrels with an obliging object for their exploitation. The fruit of the honest work of other folk has been stolen by those who themselves have never worked....¹³⁵

Hitler continued on by addressing the "November Criminals" themselves in an equally virulent assault.

The essential character of the November-Republic is to be seen in the comings and goings to London, to Spa, to Paris, and to Genoa. Subserviency towards the enemy, surrender of the human dignity of the German, pacifist cowardice, tolerance of every indignity, readiness to agree to everything until nothing more remains. This November-Republic bore the stamp of the men who made it. The name 'November-Criminals' will cling to these folk throughout the centuries.... Shirkers, Deserters, and Pacifists: these are its founders [the Weimar Republic] and their

¹³⁵Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939*, trans. and ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 79.

heroic acts consisted in leaving in the lurch the soldiers at the front, in stopping reinforcements, in withholding from them munitions, while at home against old men and half-starved children they carried through a revolutionary *coup d'état*. They have quite simply got together their November-State by theft.¹³⁶

Hitler made references to the hateful Republic as well as to the November Criminals throughout his political career. The two would remain rooted in his mind even after becoming the *Führer*, and he would repeatedly remind Germany that no such treachery would again befall the Reich under the National Socialist watch.

The Weimar Republic existed for Hitler as an abomination, as a terrible reminder of how the so-called "November Criminals" succeeded in establishing an alleged Jewish-led democracy bent on destroying Germany and eventually Europe and the world. Russia had already been Bolshevized and Hitler warned that a Germany weakened by the internal strife and weakness associated with democracy would be its next victim. Also, Hitler was quick to point out the failures of the Republic, especially the economic situation in Germany following the Great War. It was apparent to him, and it became apparent to many other observant Germans, that the Republic was a dysfunctional entity, self-serving in nature, and held within it the empty promises of an improved life.

Just as the Weimar Republic failed to revive the shattered German economy after World War I, the liberals of fin-de-siècle Austria failed to impress Karl Lueger with their economic programs. The reliance on a purely laissez-faire system had resulted in many Austrian businesses, especially Vienna's

¹³⁶Ibid, 81.

municipal utilities, being contracted out to foreign firms. Lueger, already disgruntled with liberalism as a political philosophy, promised the Viennese that his Christian Social Party would retake businesses that rightfully belonged to Austria away from international capitalists, i.e. Jewish financiers. Richard S. Geehr writes that

Lueger's radical-sounding economic politics had been enthusiastically applauded by those dissatisfied with their material lot, [who] probably found his diatribes against "intermediaries" plausible, especially against shadowy Jewish figures and similarly mysterious or otherwise dimly understood forces. These could easily be blamed for economic woes and many surely believed that Lueger would change all of this.¹³⁷

In the years before Lueger was elected *Bürgermeister*, he served in the *Rathaus* as a city councilman. In the early spring of 1884, an incident over the franchise renewal of the Nordbahn Railroad attracted national attention to Lueger and his archenemy, Georg Ritter von Schönerer, the outspoken leader of the nationalist Pan-German Party. The Vienna Rothschild Bank, already notorious among anti-Semites as a key part of the alleged international Jewish conspiracy, coupled with the parliamentary liberals, pushed for the franchise renewal, which was immediately opposed by Lueger and Schönerer, who argued that the Rothschild franchise was both Jewish and foreign, and thus the polar opposite of Austrian interests. In a petition presented before the Viennese City Council, Lueger argued that

it is Vienna, the imperial and residential capital of Austria, that suffers most painfully from the ruthless exploitation of the Nordbahn concession, whose population was practically forced to pay tribute to a private

¹³⁷Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 148.

business, whose commerce and trade suffers badly from the Nordbahn's tariff policies, in fact, whose arteries, necessary for the growth and prosperity of the city, were drained.... In view of these facts, and considering that state-operated railroads have proved advantageous and useful to the population, and considering further that it would appear necessary, both from the standpoints of strengthening state authority and protecting military and financial interests, to refrain from extending the concession or granting a new one, but instead, to have the state assume control of the rail lines in question.¹³⁸

Lueger's petition was defeated and the Nordbahn was re-chartered, much to the disapproval and disgust of those social activists who saw this as further evidence of a Jewish-manipulated conspiracy to benefit the few at the expense of the many. His petition, however, did put him in the spotlight as an advocate of the municipalization of Vienna's utilities, and thus a proponent of the "common good", a stance Lueger would use to his advantage throughout his political career.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Lueger did not wrest Vienna's gasworks away from foreign hands; he simply had a new gasworks constructed, one that was for Viennese, by Viennese. In 1889, Vienna made a grand leap forward when its first electric plant began operation. New, electrical lighting and public transportation could now be deployed across the city, further pushing the foreign gas monopolies away. Lueger and the Christian Socials sought to gain control of Vienna's electrical systems in particular and to municipalize them. This way, they could provide lighting and better-organized transport for the

¹³⁸Richard S. Geehr, *"I Decide Who is a Jew!": The Papers of Dr. Karl Lueger* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 281-2.

city. Richard S. Geehr notes that "the three private companies that provided the city with electricity were bought out" and thus brought under the control of the *Rathaus*, even though total municipal control was not attained until 1914.¹³⁹ Ironically, as with present-day municipally owned utilities, the electric works were supposed to bring in revenue for the city's coffers and benefit the poor, but the upper-class gained most from the electric works. Again, Richard S. Geehr:

Only secondarily and romantically was the city's illumination meant to bathe the most beautiful and busiest squares and streets, above all the Ringstrasse in the brilliance of numerous arc lamps, an enchanting vista.... Vienna's upper classes profited most from the electrification. In 1913 the most desirable districts possessed the most electric lights per residence. The most poorly illuminated dwellings were in areas whose laborer residents doubtless could not afford the rates.¹⁴⁰

Lueger's administration also oversaw the modernization of Vienna's municipal transportation system, one that still used horse drawn carriages and omnibuses, a dreadfully backward system for a modern city. A perfect fit with the electrification of Vienna was the introduction of electric trams. William A. Jenks has detailed Vienna's tram system in his work, *Vienna and the Young Hitler*:

In the older wards the tramways were nothing more than horse drawn vehicles, inadequate in size and number and most erratic in schedule. The challenge of a slight hill was met by adding teams of honest-to-goodness horsepower. Technically different from the tramways were the omnibuses, also pulled by horses.... The actual difference between tram and omnibus consisted in the near-anarchy of the

¹³⁹Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 149.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid*, 149.

omnibus schedules. Whenever patrons wished to get off, the omnibus obliged. No one could accuse the directors of the General-Omnibus-Gesellschaft of a hypocritical advocacy of the tenets of *laissez [sic] faire*.¹⁴¹

Mayor Lueger's program of taking utilities from the hands of foreign firms and placing under the control of the *Rathaus* earned him much acclaim from the people but plunged the city into debt. The Christian Socialists claimed that the money earned from the utilities was used to finance municipal projects like parks and green areas, but this statement was largely untrue and mere propaganda.¹⁴² For such projects, Lueger contracted long-term loans from both foreign and domestic banks, money that was to be repaid in gold. Since he died in March 1910, Lueger never lived to see the city repay its debts. In 1907, Lueger received these ingratiating comments from Franz Stauracz, a fellow Christian Socialist and his first biographer. He wrote that

his [Lueger's] liberal predecessors also went into debt but didn't accomplish anything; yet the interest on our present loans is paid from the profits on the enterprises and amortized, without costing people a cent. Previously, every year the income from the gasworks, the tramway, etc. went mainly into the pockets of English Jews, but today it is the general population that profits from them.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹William A. Jenks, *Vienna and the Young Hitler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 57.

¹⁴²Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 278.

¹⁴³Cf. Franz Stauracz, *Dr. Karl Lueger: 10 Jahre Bürgermeister* (Vienna, 1907), 77, in Brigitte Hamann's *Hitler's Vienna*, page 278-9.

This was impressive praise but hardly the truth concerning how Lueger and the Christian Socialists financed their municipal reforms. Nonetheless, the seething Viennese populace was shown how Jews and foreigners supposedly profited from squeezing the poor folk of the city.

Both Karl Lueger and Adolf Hitler believed that liberalism and republican idealism were failed political programs that resulted in economic chaos. In the wake of economic crises were people left in need of some social assistance from the government. Vienna under Lueger's mayoralship was no different. The liberal policy of laissez-faire had resulted in the disenfranchisement of many Viennese, as well as transforming some into an increasingly poorer class of citizen with no hope of advancement. Lueger, who always looked for ways to further his own ends, quickly accused the liberals of being in league with the Jews in a bid to keep the common Viennese in a low social status.

By the time of Lueger's election as mayor in 1895, Vienna was falling under the shadow of industrialization and bringing with it the social discontents that follow. The liberals who managed the city as they would any private business with little regard for social matters had let the people that could not help themselves fall into dire straits. Lueger argued that liberalism had failed the people and that only Christian Socialism could save them. Vienna was coming into a new era and had to be prepared to face it. Lueger biographer Richard S. Geehr writes that

long years of experience had imparted to him [Lueger] a sound practical, if not theoretical, grasp of the more material problems that confronted Vienna as a modernizing metropolis. As an avid reader of the popular press and probably also some of the more specialized journals, Lueger was no stranger to prevailing socioeconomic theories, or at least to notions about their practical implementation. With the passing years he seems to have perceived the need to integrate Vienna more carefully as a corporate entity, socially, economically, and culturally, as well as politically. In this way he parted company with his Liberal predecessors, many of whom were successful entrepreneurs, and who had been content to run the city as a business operation, but without much regard for the long-term effects of their politics.¹⁴⁴

Whether he liked it or not, or anticipated it, Lueger inherited the social malaise that was left in liberalism's wake. Vienna was a growing city, the sixth largest in the world at the turn-of-the-century, and was in desperate need of renovation, both practical and aesthetic. The liberals had built the fabulous Ringstrasse, but it served their purposes only; many disenfranchised Viennese did not benefit from the grandiose architectural creations. Lueger made efforts to make Vienna's streets more sanitary by improving the sewer systems. He "has been applauded for making Vienna a more hygienic city," and "although it is true that the private and street sewage systems increased by more than sixty percent between 1896 and 1910," the plans for increasing those utilities had originally been a liberal proposal before the Christian Social regime.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, in typical Lueger fashion, he took credit for the improvement project. Conversely, when confronted about not

¹⁴⁴Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 146.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid*, 156.

making efforts to free the streets of garbage, he flippantly replied, "those who walk in the streets should watch where they step. That's why our Lord gave them eyes...."¹⁴⁶

Lueger, whose model Hitler later followed in Germany, increased the workforce in Vienna while he was *Bürgermeister*. In a bid to make good on social promises, he put people to work for the city government in a variety of occupational sectors; from manual labor for city projects to teachers for the one hundred schools he had constructed. His employment record was impressive, increasing the number of municipal employees from 4,760 to 10,449 between the years 1897 and 1910 while creating 546,459 jobs for men, and 647,369 for women. However, this proved to be a double-edged sword for the Viennese. Richard S. Geehr notes that Lueger's employment program

was highly political in apportioning jobs. Lueger himself stated that its purpose was to "break the 'terrorism' of the Social Democratic leaders.... Before 1897, Lueger had courted enfranchised workers as a source of potential support. Once in office, however, he made it plain that municipal workers who supported rival parties risked losing their jobs. Some were fired for just that reason."¹⁴⁷

Not only did political affiliation with certain parties cost numerous workers their jobs with the city, the wages of many workers did not significantly improve during Lueger's term as mayor, keeping them in a position little better than that during

¹⁴⁶*Amtsblatt*, 1 April 1904, p. 639.

¹⁴⁷Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 157.

the liberal administration. Despite promises from the Christian Socials, little was delivered. Again, Geehr writes that

no significant economic improvement of Vienna's lower and middle classes took place during Lueger's regime. In 1910 nearly eighty-three percent of Vienna's working population earned less than twelve hundred Kronen, and was therefore exempt from paying income taxes. Although the existence of the Viennese laborer had improved over the past two generations, his life was still a struggle for existence. The financial foundations of Vienna's working population, two-thirds of which consisted of worker, day laborers, and domestic servants, remained extremely weak while that of most the tax-paying middle class was a little stronger.¹⁴⁸

Living conditions of many poor workers were quite terrible as well. Slums and inadequate housing could be found everywhere in Vienna, from the back alleyways to the city's inner districts. Sufficient electrical power, water, and basic utilities were severely limited in Vienna's poorer districts while those of middle and upper class status received the lion's share. The young Hitler himself was no stranger to these conditions as the room that he and August Kubizek shared was hardly fit for inhabitation. Kubizek recounts that while he and Hitler searched for a room in Vienna, they both encountered "misery, distress, and filth" in "foul-smelling backyards... through sordid and filthy hallways, past doors behind which adults and children huddled together in a small and sunless room, the human beings as decayed and miserable as their surroundings."¹⁴⁹ This left a scarring impression on both Hitler and Kubizek, neither of whom

¹⁴⁸Ibid, 148.

¹⁴⁹August Kubizek, *Adolf Hitler: Mein Jugendfreund* (Wien: Leopold Stocker Verlag, 1953), 121.

were able to forget the squalor of the great Austrian capital city.

Hitler would spend much time during his Viennese experience theorizing about how to improve the living conditions of the poor masses in Vienna, who he believed were at the mercy of Jewish financiers and greedy landlords. The former is plausible but the latter is certain. Brigitte Hamann, in *Hitler's Vienna*, devotes a portion of her work to the discussion of Vienna's housing problems. She writes that

as capitalists, Vienna's landlords became the poor's enemy per se. Tenants had no legal protection. At any given time, and without apparent reason, the landlord could give notice to a tenant, who then had fourteen days to move out. There were outrageous cases, widely reported by the newspapers, where apartments were vacated by force and the tenants stood in the streets with their belongings, infants, and sick family members, and no idea where to go.¹⁵⁰

Such atrocious actions allowed entire apartment buildings in Vienna's districts near the Ringstrasse to be torn down and replaced by extravagant, upscale apartments for the upper classes. Real estate that was occupied by slums whose tenants barely could pay rent could be developed into cash cows worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. However, taking any actions against the landlords was impossible, not only because the poor tenants had no legal recourse, but also because the landlords themselves were collaborating with Lueger and the Christian Socialists. Hamann points out that "as early supporters of Lueger they constituted a powerful political group who enjoyed

¹⁵⁰Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 138.

the mayor's special protection. What is more, he could rely on their votes in the old election system, which favored the rich and put the poor at a disadvantage."¹⁵¹

Hitler, who was indeed a talented architect, set about a theoretical plan to rebuild the entire Austrian capital. With a huge map sprawled across Kubizek's piano in their tiny room, Hitler designed housing that would be sufficient for families as well as affordable and aesthetically pleasing. According to Kubizek, Hitler wandered about the city for four days in 1908, finally returning exhausted and hungry. When he reappeared, he immediately took to his drawings that consumed the entire night. Kubizek was taken aback by Hitler's plans for workers' flats that had as "minimum requirements: kitchen, living room, separate bedrooms for parents and children, water laid on in the kitchen, lavatory and, at that time an unheard-of innovation, a bath."¹⁵²

These were only the beginning of Hitler's ideas. If a mere music student like Kubizek thought them to be innovative, one can only muse about what other, more renowned and professional designers would have thought. His plans were based on the old-style tenant houses divided up into fractions, the smallest unit being a four family dwelling. Kubizek continues by noting that

this basic unit was the prevailing type. Where conditions required, from four to eight of these units were to be combined to form housing blocks for eight or sixteen families, but these blocks, too, remained "near the ground", that is to say, they still consisted of one storey

¹⁵¹Ibid, 138.

¹⁵²August Kubizek, *Young Hitler: The Story of Our Friendship*, trans. by E. V. Anderson (Maidstone: George Mann, 1973), .123.

only[†], and were surrounded by gardens, playing grounds and groups of trees. The sixteen family house was the limit.¹⁵³

In addition to the design and makeup of the multifamily houses that Hitler designed, he wished to provide what he considered to be the basic, minimum needs for a home. Kubizek notes that during one of Hitler's monologues he argued that a home needed "light - the houses must be detached. There must be gardens, playing grounds for the children - air - the sky must be visible; something green, a modest piece of nature."¹⁵⁴ Hitler and Kubizek's room had no such basic amenities, nor did the building from which they rented. It was bug infested with only one lavatory for the entire floor to use, and often tenants were forced to wait in line to use it.

The housing problem in Christian Socialist Vienna was one that steadily grew worse as years passed, with no apparent hope for reprieve in the near future. Mayor Lueger, the "People's Tribute", did little to ease the suffering due to his political reliance on rich landlords. When Social Democrats confronted Lueger about providing subsidies for the unemployed and homeless, he replied, "these...were people who know how to exploit the population's charitableness all too well, so that they are able

[†]In the European tradition, the floors of buildings, whether public or private, are numbered in such a way as the ground floor is not counted and the second is numbered as floor one. As noted above, Hitler's housing would in fact be two stories high, with the second floor labeled as floor one.

¹⁵³Ibid, 124.

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 122.

to lead a good life without working."¹⁵⁵ In order to trump the Social Democrats, Lueger put the burden off on the average Viennese, who in turn paid dearly for his political stubbornness. In an 1897 study conducted by the Social Branch of the Vienna Ethical Society, interested persons from abroad were asked to investigate the conditions in which Vienna's women worked and lived. The results of the study provided evidence of the grave nature of Vienna's living conditions. A. S. Levetus noted

there is great dearth of suitable dwellings for the poor in Vienna. Where there are such dwellings, the rents are so high that it rarely happens that a family has more than one room and a kitchen. Here and there, where there is a large family, all or many of whom are earning, they can afford better homes. But even one room and a kitchen is a comparative luxury. It often happens that a family consisting of five or six people sleep in the room, while the kitchen is sublet to another family. Some lodgings contain only one small bedroom, where the family sleep, cook, eat, wash, etc.¹⁵⁶

The subletting of rooms was common in Vienna as families could barely pay their rent with the money that they earned on their regular jobs. The subletting of rooms increased the unsanitary conditions for the poor and put even more strain on a housing system that had already far exceeded its capabilities. Brigitte Hamann writes that

the horrible housing situation and the rent increases, exacerbated each year by never-ending floods of immigrants, finally also became a problem for those making more money. Households with many children had to accept subletters, even in the tiny apartments in the huge tenant buildings,

¹⁵⁵Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 137.

¹⁵⁶A. S. Levetus, "Working Women in Vienna," *The Economic Journal* 7 (1897), 106.

in order to come up with their rent.... Beds that were not used during the day were rented to so-called *Bettgeher* or *Schlafgeher* (literally, bed or sleepgoers). They were allowed to use a bed for approximately eight hours at certain times a day or night, but were not allowed to stay in the apartment the rest of the time. In 1910 there were more than eighty thousand *Bettgeher* in Vienna....¹⁵⁷

Such as they were, these were just some of the everyday plights of the poor citizens of Vienna. Constantly under fire from greedy landlords for ever increasing rents, from Social Democrats and Christian Socials that demanded political loyalty, and from foreign immigrants who sought their jobs and housing, the poor Viennese found themselves in dreadful circumstances. Karl Lueger, the apparent champion of the people, only championed those who furthered his aims and supported his party. Credit must be given where it is due, and while Lueger did improve certain aspects of Vienna, many suffered under his neglect. Richard S. Geehr claims that

despite Lueger's boasts about Christian Social achievements in welfare, no significant improvements in the condition of the poor came about. Such improvements could not have been possible without far-reaching changes. New voting laws, decent worker housing, and more equitable wage distribution would prove necessary. The continuing influence of entrenched interest groups in the Christian Social party, Lueger's defense of these groups, or his acquiescence in their politics, as well as his concentration on public works that benefited his constituents, made such changes impossible.¹⁵⁸

Hitler, still impressed by the apparent success of Lueger's municipalization of privately owned utilities as a means of

¹⁵⁷Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, 139.

¹⁵⁸Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 169-70.

funding Viennese public works, immediately set out to lower Germany's unemployment when he became Chancellor in 1933. Under the last chancellors of the Weimar Republic, emphasis during the Great Depression had been placed on maintaining the value of the mark despite the problems of deflation and staggering unemployment. Hitler, however, saw that lowering unemployment levels and providing economic security were keys to political success and popularity so in the Christian Socialist tradition that he experienced in Vienna, sponsored public works programs. The German historian Dietrich Orlow notes that "in contrast to his predecessors, Hitler was determined that the government's first priority was not to safeguard the value of the mark, but to reduce unemployment. The *Führer* insisted on government-sponsored public works programs."¹⁵⁹ This won Hitler and the Nazis an enormous amount of credit with the people who had been suffering under the ineptitude of the Weimar Republic.

The most visible evidence that Hitler sought to reduce unemployment through public works was the construction of the *Autobahn*. Serving Nazi interests as both a public works project and a military rearmament program, the construction of the *Autobahn* helped reduce Germany's unemployment from six million to four million in 1933 alone. Again, Orlow notes that

the emphasis on "getting things done" in turn contributed to the Nazis' undeniable popularity in the early years of the Third Reich. Here were leaders who seemingly did not let the country drift; they acted to lift Germany

¹⁵⁹Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany: 1871 to Present*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999), 159.

from the morass of economic turmoil. And the results were dramatic....¹⁶⁰

The housing of German workers in suitable living conditions was also of great importance to Hitler. He had experienced firsthand in Vienna the dreadful misery of poor living conditions and how such unacceptable dwellings could, and did, destroy the spirit of a people. Indeed, fin-de-siècle Vienna offered little hope of sufficient housing to poor industrial workers. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes that

what I had never suspected before, I quickly and thoroughly learned in those years [1908-1913]:

The question of the 'nationalization' of a people is, among other things, primarily a question of healthy social conditions as a foundation for the possibility of educating the individual (emphasis original).¹⁶¹

The Nazi program for sufficient housing was part of a larger social scheme in which ethnic German workers could have adequate housing; it was also part of the effort to build a genuine *Volksgemeinschaft*, or national community. Affordable Nazi built housing aided in the integration of Germans into the united racial community. In the months following his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler spoke frequently in public and promoted the Nazi public works and social programs as a means to do what the leaders of Weimar did not: inspire confidence. Joachim Fest writes that Hitler's

many comments friendly to business and his consistent efforts to keep the economy out of the revolutionary turmoil of the early phase were primarily aimed at generating a mood of confidence. Most of the measures initiated during the

¹⁶⁰Ibid, 159.

¹⁶¹Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 33-34.

early months were introduced less for their economic rationale than for the sake of making a vigorous gesture.¹⁶²

Hitler realized early on his political career that the revitalization of Germany's society and economy from the malaise of the Weimar Republic could not be accomplished by simply ousting the French occupiers from the Ruhr or ending Allied occupation of the Rhineland. Paramount in Hitler's mind were the leaders in Berlin, republican, disunited, weak, and impotent politically, whom he ultimately held responsible for the horrendous situation that was Germany in the 1920s. The Treaty of Versailles was their crime, and war reparations were daily reminders of their criminal behavior. The treaty put the German economy and its eventual recovery at the mercy of the Western democracies that forced Germany to sign it. In a radio speech on 14 October 1933, Hitler, now Chancellor of Germany, said this concerning the results of the Versailles Treaty:

The armies of the unemployed began to form a new social class: they numbered a third of those normally in employment. Those who were thus disinherited in the economic sphere threatened to become an army of fanatics, politically and socially alienated from the world about them.... [The] National Socialist Revolution pursues a single purpose: restoration of order in our own people, creation of bread and work for our hungry masses, proclamation of the ideas of honour, loyalty, and decency as elements of a moral ethic which can inflict no injury on other peoples, which can but be for the profit of all.¹⁶³

¹⁶²Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 450.

¹⁶³Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939*, trans. and ed. Norman H. Baynes (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 1094-5.

Embedded deep in Hitler's mind were the supposed treacherous machinations and anti-German conspiracy of the "November Criminals" and international Jewry, both of which, he alleged, were responsible for the impotent state into which Germany had been forced. Economic recovery and the rescue of national pride were goals that had to be achieved, and the ousting of the fraudulent "November Republic" would allow Germany to regain her world status. Referring to the impact of the Great Depression, Ian Kershaw points out that

economic crises frequently unseat governments. It is much rarer for them to destroy *systems* of government.... But in Germany, the 'system' itself, the very nature of the state, was at stake from the beginning of the crisis. Hitler and his party were the beneficiaries of this systematic crisis of the Weimar state. They were not its primary cause. Even in its 'golden' years, Weimar democracy had never won the hearts and minds of large numbers of Germans. And even in those years, powerful sectors of society - business, the army, big landowners, leading civil servants in charge of government administration, academics, many intellectuals, and opinion-leaders - had tolerated rather than actively supported the Republic.... Now, as the crisis started to unfold, such groups began to show their true colours at the same time as the masses began to desert the Republic in droves.¹⁶⁴

The mass desertion of republican principles was exactly what Hitler wanted. He already knew what others were beginning to realize: that democratic idealism had failed and Germany needed new leadership. "In Germany, where the roots of democracy were...shallow, they [the Germans] looked to change a system which, they felt, less and less upheld their interests, and move

¹⁶⁴Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 317-8.

to authoritarian rule.”¹⁶⁵ Democracy was a foreign imposition on Germany, and it felt to many Germans like wearing a shoe of the wrong size. It was simply “un-German”. Speaking in September 1936, Hitler captured the spirit of Germany in the closing days of the Weimar Republic by saying that

Germany has no further interest in democracy.... National Socialists are not concerned whether they are hated or loved by the democracies; while they have great sympathy with other authoritarian States, they have no interest in democracy - it represents an alien idea of the State....¹⁶⁶

The stock market crash on 4 October 1929 had worldwide repercussions and was the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back in Germany. As Germany relied on a significant amount of short-term loans from American banks to sustain its economy, the fiscal collapse of U.S. credit proved to be devastating to a nation already plagued by economic crises. “The protest of ordinary people who took the view that democracy had failed them, that the ‘system’ should be swept away, became shriller on both Left and Right.”¹⁶⁷ “Hitler grasped the psychological aspect of the Depression as none of the Weimar politicians had done,” but of far more importance, “was his perception that gloom, apathy, and slump sprang from deep-seated pessimistic doubts regarding the world order and that the masses required stimulus” just as the economy did.¹⁶⁸ For Hitler, a door was opened and sizeable

¹⁶⁵Ibid, 318.

¹⁶⁶Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, 672-3.

¹⁶⁷Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 318.

¹⁶⁸Joachim Fest, *Hitler*, 449-450.

Nazi electoral advancements indicated the mass discontent with the Republic and the acceptance of the National Socialist program. The people were beyond the need for convincing that democracy had failed them. Hitler now had only to drive the point home while adding a sizable dose of anti-Semitism to his rhetoric by accusing Jews of an international conspiracy bent on destroying Germany and the world.

As noted above, Nazi public works programs initiated in the early months of the Third Reich quickly helped alleviate the stresses of unemployment on Germany. Whereas Karl Lueger reduced unemployment significantly in Vienna, Hitler virtually eliminated it altogether in Germany. Lueger's public works programs, namely the gas and electric works and reservoir, employed many Viennese, but at the same time attracted hundreds of thousands of immigrants seeking work, resulting in a housing catastrophe. Hitler's experiences in Vienna had taught him that such a similar catastrophe in Germany would destroy the Nazi movement's credibility with the people. In a speech delivered to the *Reichstag* on 20 February 1938, Hitler gave figures for public works projects indicating the commitment of the Nazi program to the people:

The development of the German road construction is enormous.... The system of *Autobahnen* is the largest building undertaking in the world and already, with a displacement of 240 million cubic metres of earth, by far exceeds the building achievement of the Panama Canal.... Approximately 3,400 bridges were built in connexion with the *Autobahnen*.... The tremendous increase in achievement in these and other fields is paralleled by the increase in our housing activity. In 1937 340,000 dwellings were constructed, this being more than double the figure for 1932. Altogether since the National Socialist assumption of

power over 1,400,000 dwellings have been made available on the housing market.¹⁶⁹

Such construction and public works programs were impressive, and many ethnic Germans who sought work received it. Richard Overy, a renowned economic historian, notes that "between 1933 and 1936 some 21 billion marks was invested by the state" and that by "1937, registered unemployment was down to just under one million."¹⁷⁰ This was a remarkable feat given that in the United States in 1937, unemployment remained at an unacceptable 14.3 percent. Hitler had indeed revitalized Germany while at the same time inducting many members of society into the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Hitler, impressed by Lueger's socialism, would later describe him as the greatest German mayor of all time. Improving on Lueger's model, Hitler played favoritism not just with interest groups that furthered Nazi ambitions, but also to what he claimed were the rightful heirs of Germany, the Germans themselves. While Lueger let his fellow Germans die in poverty, Hitler sought to elevate them to greatness. Adam LeBor and Roger Boyes, both noted journalists and authors write that

the genius of Hitler and his operators was to move a stage further; having made the Germans feel comfortable for the first time in two decades, he devised a way in which the mere act of being German could be translated into a significant event. It was Hitler who made the *spiesser*, the petit bourgeois philistine, feel like a world conqueror. All that was required, initially at least, was an act of belief and a German pedigree. No special talent

¹⁶⁹Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, 960-961.

¹⁷⁰Richard Overy, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 32.

was demanded, only a readiness to revere the Führer unconditionally and an open affirmation of the values and prejudices of the *volksgemeinschaft*.¹⁷¹

Herein lies the improvement of Hitler and the Nazi movement over Lueger and the Christian Socialists. The disturbing reality is that while Karl Lueger was true to his political program as long as it served his purposes, Hitler clenched onto the National Socialist message as a sacred dogma, not simply an ideology to be cast off when no longer needed. Indeed, Hitler did learn from Lueger's socialism and grew from its shortcomings.

¹⁷¹Adam LeBor and Roger Boyes, *Seduced by Hitler: The Choices of a Nation and the Ethics of Survival* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2001), 104.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

Christian Socialism in fin-de-siècle Vienna effectively died with Karl Lueger on 10 March 1910. He was the cohesive force behind the anti-Semitic party, having no capable heirs to succeed him to the mayoralship of Vienna. Social Democrats, the traditional foes of the Christian Socialists, took power and held it until the Nazi takeover and *Anschluss* in the late 1930s. "In 1911 the Christian Socials suffered a major defeat, and the Socialists became the leading party in parliament. Though Lueger's followers retained control of Vienna until 1919," the era of Christian Socialism was over.¹⁷² The *New York Times* carried a brief obituary for Lueger on 11 March 1910, noting twice that he was anti-Semitic and widely known as such.¹⁷³ Scanty biographical details were included, but an American newspaper would have little audience for such distant European matters, despite the growing powder keg in the Balkans and the crumbling nature of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

When Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945 with neither a successor capable of his accomplishments nor an ideologue gifted enough to further the National Socialist program, and with the German nation in ruins, the Nazi Party ceased to function, but the Nazi idea lived on. The commitment to political ideology is one of the key differences between Karl Lueger and Adolf

¹⁷²Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger: Mayor of Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 301.

¹⁷³*The New York Times*, 11 March 1910, 9.

Hitler; the former being artificial, the latter, possessed. Hitler himself knew that he had to finish as much as work as possible before his death because he believed that no one could ever fully take his place. Hitler was the embodiment of Nazism, a political and mythical role that no other German Nazi could fill.

Both Karl Lueger and Adolf Hitler were held high as champions of the common man. Karl Lueger was the "People's Tribute" while Adolf Hitler became the "People's Chancellor", both distinctions that indicate their successful use of mass social politics and reform programs. One of Lueger's enemies in the press as well as politics, Friedrich Austerlitz, the Jewish editor-in-chief of the socialist and anti-Lueger *Arbeiterzeitung*, had articles published in *Die Neue Zeit*, still yet an anti-Lueger paper. In 1911, after Lueger's death, Austerlitz wrote that

in Austrian politics, Lueger was entirely without doubt a great innovator. He was the first politician of the common man; he realized the importance of the masses in politics. Before him, politics of the common man in Austria was a thing for the "educated" (one knows what this means) an inconvenience to the thin strata of the privileged, to cliques and social circles (Tischgesellschaften).¹⁷⁴

Lueger's connection with the common people and small bourgeoisie catapulted him into the *Rathaus* while his liberal opponents, unable to grasp the value of mass politics, began to falter and eventually fell. "Lueger was the product and agent of a developing mass politics, which, however imperfect and

¹⁷⁴Friedrich Austerlitz, "Die Wahlen in Wien," *Die Neue Zeit* 29 (1911), 510.

incomplete, was a major factor in his career and personal fate."¹⁷⁵

In the same token, Hitler's propaganda machine cast him in a new light as the "People's Chancellor" in an attempt to better connect him with the people. "The *Völkischer Beobachter* coined the appellation 'People's Chancellor'-suggesting new pseudo-democratic bonds between the people and the 'man from the people' who was now their leader."¹⁷⁶ As Hitler's career unfolded, the distinction of the 'People's Chancellor' began to fade as the 'Hitler Myth' began to overshadow the Nazi leader. Nonetheless, Hitler profited from mass politics and a natural charisma that he could harness both to connect with and exacerbate the emotions of his audience. In many ways Hitler perfected Lueger's style.

In the final assessment of Adolf Hitler and Karl Lueger, one can easily see the influences of the latter on the former, but no definitive line can be drawn from one to the other. Hitler's future social and political context turned the would-be artist in directions that he could not have predicted. Ian Kershaw writes that

when Hitler came to 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. 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. But what he took from the Viennese mayor was

¹⁷⁵Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, 166.

¹⁷⁶Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 50.

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. That is what endured.¹⁷⁷

In March of 1938, Hitler returned to Vienna, not as the would-be artist, but as the triumphant *Führer* of the German people. Much had happened to Hitler since he had walked the Ringstrasse when Lueger was mayor; now he was the master of the Austrian capital. Crowds swooned over him. Business and schools were closed. The Viennese came out by the thousands to see their new tribute and hear him speak. On 15 March 1938, Hitler "addressed a vast, delirious crowd, estimated at a quarter of a million people, in Vienna's Heldenplatz."¹⁷⁸ There he made ominous references to Austria's new role in the greater German Reich, declaring that Austria would help guard against invaders from the East. Kershaw describes the effect of the *Anschluss* (incorporation of Austria and Germany) and his return to Austria on Hitler's self-perception:

The Anschluss was a watershed for Hitler, and for the Third Reich.... The overwhelming reception he had encountered on his grandiose procession to Vienna, above all his return to Linz, had made a strong impression on the German Dictator. The intoxication of the crowds made him feel like a god. The rapid improvisation of the Anschluss then and there, fulfilling a dream he had entertained as a young Schönerer supporter all those years earlier, proved once more - so it seemed to him - that he could do anything he wanted.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 35.

¹⁷⁸Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2000), 82.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid*, 83.

Hitler returned to Vienna in 1938 with a solidified *Weltanschauung* and a sinister plan for Europe. In 1913 he left Vienna with the fragments from which he would eventually form his worldview: racial anti-Semitism, mass socialism, and ethnic nationalism. It was only after the quagmire of the trenches, the traumatic loss of World War I, the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty, and the economic ruination of Germany in the post war period that Hitler completely solidified his sinister worldview. Such as it was, Karl Lueger and his Vienna only gave Hitler the foundation for something terrible; it was the events of a wider world that shaped Hitler's mind into what it became. No clear path from Lueger can be traced to Hitler, but the "People's Tribute" from Christian Socialist fin-de-siècle Vienna did influence Hitler's development and changed forever the history of mankind.

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