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**THE EVOLUTION OF  
ADOLF HITLER'S  
*WELTANSCHAUUNG*:  
A CRITICAL STUDY OF  
HIS RHETORIC,  
1920 - 1926**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts at Massey University

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1997**

*For Max*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This year has been a learning experience, especially in respect of self motivation, but I made it! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who helped me bring this thesis to completion.

The Staff of Massey University History Department, in particular my supervisor Dr. Joel Hayward for first suggesting the topic, for his generosity with time and resources, and for his guidance and support in my frequent moments of uncertainty. Also a special thanks to the History Department Secretaries, Mary Lou Dickson and Lynne Coates.

To Dr. Axel Laurs, my second supervisor, for patiently reading numerous drafts and always having a bottle of red wine on offer. Also to Jürg Brönnimann for all his assistance.

Annette Holm at Massey University Library Interloans for her unbelievable speed in acquiring books, articles, and microfilm from all over New Zealand, Germany, and America.

To my family and friends, for making me hang in there and get it finished. A special thanks to the crew at George St. Deli, especially Jo, for keeping me sane and for the constant supply of caffeine.

And last, but definitely not least, to my class mates: Sue, Nick, Tom, Warren, Daiman, and Donna who shared their ups and downs and for just being there to listen to me complain.

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis tests the "orthodox perception" that Adolf Hitler was driven by a *Weltanschauung* which remained fundamentally constant from the outset of his political career. It argues that his theories and concepts underwent continual change and development. The evolution of the Nazi leader's world view is traced by examining his thoughts and reactions as expressed in his rhetoric during the period from 1920 to 1926, the era of his so-called "political apprenticeship".

In order to demonstrate how Hitler's *Weltanschauung* evolved eight facets of his ideology are examined. These themes: the emphasis the Nazi leader placed on current event topics, the parliamentary system, the use of propaganda, the principle of leadership, the Nazi leader's equation of Jews with Marxism, his theory of *Lebensraum*, his belief in Aryan supremacy, and the role of faith, were selected either because of the prominence given to them in Hitler's own rhetoric, or because historians repeatedly identify them as central facets of his world view.

This thesis establishes that acceptance of the received wisdom is an oversimplified means of explaining the genesis of Hitler's world view. The Nazi leader's ideology developed according to his own personal experiences as well as the political, economic, and social climate of the era. Hitler's *Weltanschauung* was far from complete at the outset of his political career and, in fact, some aspects first developed with the writing of his political autobiography, *Mein Kampf*.

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# INTRODUCTION: THE EVOLUTION OF ADOLF HITLER'S *WELTANSCHAUUNG*, 1920 - 1926: A CRITICAL STUDY OF HIS RHETORIC

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Adolf Hitler stated in his political autobiography *Mein Kampf*: "In this period [referring to the six years he spent in Vienna from 1907 until 1913] there took shape within me a world picture and a philosophy which became the granite foundation of all my acts. In addition to what I then created, I have had to learn little; and have had to alter nothing."<sup>1</sup> This study tests the "orthodox perception", that Hitler was ideologically driven by a *Weltanschauung* which remained fundamentally constant from the outset of his political career. It argues that his theories and concepts underwent continual change and development. The evolution of the Nazi leader's world view is traced by examining his thoughts and reactions as expressed in his rhetoric during the period from 1920 to 1926, the era of his so-called "political apprenticeship".

The notion that Hitler's *Weltanschauung* remained fixed began with his own comments in *Mein Kampf*. However, Alan Bullock's biography, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, first published in 1952, actually created what has become the "orthodox perception". In their study, *Explaining Hitler's Germany: Historians and the Third Reich*, John Hiden and John Farquharson explain that "Bullock's Hitler, particularly as delineated in the chapter called 'The dictator', has exerted a powerful spell on a whole generation of historians in Europe and America."<sup>2</sup> Bullock summarised, concerning the formation of the Nazi leader's ideology, that:

it would be an exaggeration to suppose that Hitler had already formulated clearly the ideas he set out in *Mein Kampf* in the middle of the 1920s. Nonetheless the greater part of the experience on which he drew was already complete when he left Vienna, and to the end Hitler bore the stamp of his Austrian origins.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Pimlico, 1995, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> John Hiden and John Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany: Historians and the Third Reich*, London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1983, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, rev. ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 41.

Bullock's biography, still often called the standard work on Hitler, has served as the starting point for many historians who simply took his views at face value or expanded on them. In fact, Barbara Miller Lane stated: "Alan Bullock's tendency to stress Hitler's demagoguery and deemphasise his ideas has been echoed in most subsequent biographies and in many studies of the Third Reich."<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Horn is one of many historians who has employed Bullock's thesis. He states: "The preserved documents are sufficient to trace the fundamentals of his political concepts since 1919. His book, *Mein Kampf*, .... contains hardly any new thoughts."<sup>5</sup> Werner Maser's biography, *Hitler*, is another apt example, as it merely expands Bullock's argument whilst adding little. He states:

[Hitler's] Weltanschauung had been formed by his early environment, by his parental home and his schooling and studies in Linz, Steyr, Vienna, and Munich. Other determining factors were his study of literature from 1905 onwards, his exposure during the last three years in Vienna to the often very extreme views of his variegated fellow lodgers in the men's hostel, and his experience as a soldier in the field during the First World War, then as a political agent in the service of the Reichswehr and finally as leader of a political party. His reading after 1919, and particularly during his detention which he described as 'higher education at the state's expense', merely served to give him a deeper knowledge on certain subjects upon which he had long since made up his mind.<sup>6</sup>

Bullock's thesis emphasised that Hitler had formed the basis of his *Weltanschauung* by the beginning of his political career, implying thereby that *Mein Kampf* represented the final version. Again, this feature of Bullock's argument is apparent in the works of other historians. For example, Ian Kershaw wrote: "Exactly when, how, and why Hitler's fanatically held ideas took their hold on him is far from clear. But the gradual forging of various strands of his thinking into a composite was complete by the time of the writing of *Mein Kampf* in 1924, and scarcely wavered thereafter."<sup>7</sup> Walter Laqueur also adopted this view, commenting: "in the case of Hitler, the age from 20-35, that is the years 1909-1924, contain the real crucial process

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara Miller Lane and Leila J. Rupp, (eds), *Nazi Ideology Before 1933: A Documentation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978, p. 154. Lane lists Wilfried Daim, Ernst Nolte, Joachim Fest, Joseph P. Stern, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Martin Broszat, Rudolf Binion, Walter C. Langer and Robert G.L. Waite as examples.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Horn, "Ein Unbekannter Aufsatz Hitlers aus dem Frühjahr 1924", *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* [hereafter *VfZ*], vol. 16 (1968), p. 280.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Maser, *Hitler*, trans. Betty and Peter Ross, London: Penguin Books, 1973, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Profiles in Power: Hitler*, London: Longman, 1991, p. 19.



of personal and political formation."<sup>8</sup> *Mein Kampf* came to be regarded by many historians as the first and by far the most important source of Nazi ideology.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the "orthodox perception" is that Hitler had formulated his world view by the time he became involved with the German Workers' Party, and, without adding or changing anything significant, outlined it in detail in the first volume of *Mein Kampf*. Hiden and Farquharson conclude that: "It is indeed a feature of the historiography of Adolf Hitler that he is invariably expected to be consistent in every respect of his ideology". They continue by emphasising that this is "asking too much of any human being and is not expected of any other major historical figures."<sup>10</sup> This study likewise contends that it is neither useful nor accurate to explain the evolution of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* by merely employing received wisdom. Recognising and explaining the origin of ideas and their development into political strength and consequence is too complex for this. The notion that Hitler's world view remained fixed from the beginning of his political career ignores his pragmatic nature. His personal experiences and his reactions to the changing political, economic, and social climate of the era receive insufficient analysis, as if they have not had an effect on the development of his world view. In his study, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, Eberhard Jäckel queries blind acceptance of the orthodox view by asking: "How are we to pose the question of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*? The problem here lies in the fact that Hitler did not define it systematically and step by step, it may also have developed and changed."<sup>11</sup> An awareness of this development and change is necessary because "the formation and translation of Hitler's ideology remains the central problem of any analysis, and the question of the revolutionary role of Hitler and his politics can only be answered in this context."<sup>12</sup>

In order to reveal and illustrate the evolutionary nature of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* this thesis undertakes a critical study of his rhetoric. As Wolfgang Sauer explains, the only way to follow the course of Hitler's thought and his response to political change is to examine his public oratory.<sup>13</sup> The Nazi leader permitted only one small group of speeches, Ernst Boepple's *Adolf Hitlers Reden*, to be published

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Laqueur, (ed.), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 222.

<sup>9</sup> H. Holborn, "Origins and Political Character of Nazi Ideology", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 134 (1964), p. 543.

<sup>10</sup> Hiden, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. Herbert Arnold, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Laqueur, p. 219.

<sup>13</sup> Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism", *American Historical Review*, vol. 73 (1967), p. 419.

before 1933. After 1933 he made no attempt to compile his early speeches. The short collection, *Adolf Hitler in Franken: Reden aus der Kampfzeit*, edited by Heinz Preiss, appeared soon after but without his endorsement. The two best-known English collections of the Nazi leader's speeches are Norman H. Baynes' *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1922 - August 1939* and Gordon W. Prange's *Hitler's Words: Two Decades of National Socialism, 1923 - 1943*. However, neither provide a complete survey of the speeches from Hitler's early political career. These speeches can be studied in the pages of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the official newspaper of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) from December 1920 until April 1945. The speeches Hitler made prior to December 1920 can be found in the Munich police files. Two articles, "Hitler als Parteiredner im Jahre 1920" by Reginald Phelps and "Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr" by Ernst Deuerlein, as well as microfilm from the *NSDAP Hauptarchiv*, provide a near-complete collection of the speeches the Nazi leader made in 1920. A compilation of Hitler's articles, which he began writing in 1921 for the party newspaper, has never been attempted. This means that the *Völkischer Beobachter* provides the only collection of this information. These sources as well as *Mein Kampf*, published in two volumes, the first on 19 July 1925 and the second on 11 December 1926, have all been employed below as primary source material, providing a reasonable sample of the Nazi leader's rhetoric during this period.

The time frame, from 1920 to 1926, encompasses the first seven years of the Nazi leader's political career, in which the most concentrated historical debate surrounding the formation of his *Weltanschauung* occurs. Thus, this study analyses Hitler's rhetoric from his first appearance before a mass audience on 24 February 1920 when the National Socialist German Workers' Party announced their political program, referred to as the *25 Point Programme*, to the publication of Volume II of *Mein Kampf* on 11 December 1926. The period also includes a number of important events in the Nazi leader's early political career, such as: the purchase of the party's official newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, on 16 December 1920; his promotion to Chairman of the party on 29 July 1921; the Hitler Putsch which took place on 9 November 1923; the subsequent trial from 26 February 1924 to 1 April 1924; his imprisonment at Landsberg from 1 April 1924 to 20 December 1924; the re-establishment of the party on 26 February 1925; and Hitler's ban on public speaking lasting from 9 March 1925 to 5 March 1927 in Bavaria (and as late as September 1928 in other states).

To determine how Hitler's *Weltanschauung* evolved during the early years of his political career this study examines eight facets of his ideology. The themes have

been selected either because of the prominence given to them in Hitler's own rhetoric or because they are repeatedly identified by historians as central aspects of his world view.

Writings on the Nazi leader typically do not accredited him with the formation of ideas. The studies that do tend to concentrate either on *Mein Kampf*, the so-called *Secret Book*, or his writings and speeches after 1933. It is also common for historians to explain the origin of Hitler's world view outside the party, in Vienna, in the völkisch movement, or even in the broadest patterns of German intellectual development, rather than simply examining his own words. In contrast, this study concentrates specifically on the Nazi leader's rhetoric as it was expressed at the time. Thus, this work hopes to provide new insights into the formation and development of the *Weltanschauung* that Hitler later used as his guiding principles during his time as Germany's *Führer* between 1933 and 1945.

While it is true that a great deal of research has been undertaken on Hitler and the Third Reich, the first years of his political career have not been the focus of so much attention. Obvious exceptions are the works of such historians as Wolfgang Horn, Albrecht Tyrell, Charles Bracelen Flood, Ernst Deuerlein, Reginald Phelps, and Hellmuth Auerbach, who examine aspects of the Nazi leader's life during this period. Yet, apart from Jäckel's study, which ignores the first and most formative years of Hitler's involvement with the Nazi Party by concentrating primarily on his autobiography, the evolution of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* has not been examined in any depth.

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## CHAPTER ONE: FRANCE, THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES, AND "THE NOVEMBER CRIMINALS".

*"[Hitler was the] most effective agitator against the Jews, the Allies, the Treaty of Versailles and all of the Berlin Government".*

*Hellmuth Auerbach, 'Hitlers Politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919 - 1923', 1977.*

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Adolf Hitler spent the last days of World War One at Pasewalk Military Hospital in Pomerania. He was recovering after the British launched a mustard gas attack against his regiment south of Ypres on 13 October 1918. While he was recovering his vision, in hospital, he first heard of the armistice, Kaiser Wilhelm II's abdication and the subsequent collapse of the monarchy, the Berlin revolution, the Kiel sailors' mutiny, and that Allied occupation troops had moved into the Rhineland. This news caused a relapse of his condition, during which he claims to have had a vision summoning him to reverse Germany's defeat. In *Mein Kampf* he associates this vision with his decision to enter political life: "I, for my part, decided to go into politics."<sup>1</sup>

However, the verity of this story is debatable. Hitler's immediate post-war experiences led him to enter politics, not horror at news of Germany's collapse. At the end of the war he had little other prospect than to remain in the army. On returning to Munich his first task, as a member of a Propaganda Unit, was to guard a large demobilisation camp at Lechfeld. The Propaganda Unit was the idea of Captain Karl Mayr, who wanted to stop the Communist and Independent Socialist revolutionaries from influencing returning front-line soldiers. Hitler's success within the Propaganda Unit led Mayr to use him as a political agent and adviser (*Vertrauensmann*) on the various political groupings of the right wing in Munich. In this capacity he attended a meeting of the German Workers' Party, led by Karl Harrer and Anton Drexler, on 12 September 1919. Less than a week later he joined the party as a propagandist (*Werbeobmann*). His first public appearance as a speaker took place a month later. Hitler recalls this event in *Mein Kampf*:

In this first meeting that could be called public I had been granted twenty minutes' speaking time. I spoke for thirty

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<sup>1</sup> Hitler, p. 187.

minutes, and what before I had simply felt within me, without in any way knowing it, was now proved by reality: I could speak!<sup>2</sup>

It is uncertain exactly when Hitler came to his decision to become a politician, yet it is clear that by the beginning of 1920 his political career had begun in earnest.

Hellmuth Auerbach describes Hitler during the early phase of his political life as the "most effective agitator against the Jews, the Allies, the Treaty of Versailles and all of the Berlin Government"<sup>3</sup> but went on to state that: "In what Hitler said and wrote between 1919 and 1923, no original thoughts whatsoever can be found .... Only in *Mein Kampf* did he develop other ongoing concepts."<sup>4</sup> In order to ascertain whether Auerbach's bold claim is correct, this chapter will examine Hitler's speeches and articles on France, the Treaty of Versailles, and the "November Criminals" throughout the period from 1920 to 1926. This chapter will establish whether he emphasised these topics to the detriment of his own world view in the early phase of his political life. It will also determine whether, after the writing of *Mein Kampf*, contemporary issues remained a dominant aspect of his rhetoric.

An investigation of Hitler's articles and speeches during the period from 1920 to 1923 illustrates that hatred towards France, the Treaty of Versailles, and the "November Criminals" was already dominant in his rhetoric. In fact, he made these issues the "scapegoat" for Germany's suffering; that is a focus for the nations' anger. This was possible because these issues were at the forefront of the political, economic, and social climate of the era. Germany was then trying to cope with the disillusionment of defeat in the Great War, attempting to comprehend the Treaty of Versailles, dealing with general impoverishment and rising inflation, occupation troops and loss of territory, as well as the political instability of the new democratic government.

Hitler's verbal attacks on France began with his political career and remained consistent throughout the period from 1920 to 1923. This seems to have had a profound influence on Nazi thinking in general. As Gordon Prange states:

Hatred of France was quite deeply ingrained in the whole of the early National Socialist movement. Even a casual perusal of the Nazi press in the twenties discloses a plethora of propagandist devices designed to stir up

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 322-23.

<sup>3</sup> Hellmuth Auerbach, "Hitlers Politische Lehrjahre und die Münchener Gesellschaft 1919-1923", *VfZ*, vol. 25 (1977), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

anti-French feeling and to demonstrate the necessity of stripping France of her power as a great nation.<sup>5</sup>

The Nazi leader viewed France as the mortal enemy of the German nation. He insisted that: "France remains our enemy".<sup>6</sup> He accused France of formulating the Treaty of Versailles in the spirit of revenge<sup>7</sup>, claiming that France wanted to destroy Germany militarily<sup>8</sup>, economically<sup>9</sup>, and politically.<sup>10</sup> He stated that: "The persistent aim of France is the annihilation of the last possibilities of a reawakening of national pride in Germany"<sup>11</sup>, and that: "Living side by side with the French is possible only if we are constantly ready for action and if our pistols are loaded."<sup>12</sup> Hitler also stated that: "France does not want reparations; she wants Germany's destruction. This means the realisation of an age-old dream, namely, the hegemony of France over Europe."<sup>13</sup>

The Treaty of Versailles also featured prominently in Hitler's articles and speeches, especially prior to the writing of *Mein Kampf*. In fact, Reginald Phelps claims that the Treaty of Versailles was his favourite topic in 1920.<sup>14</sup> The Nazi leader himself confirmed this statement in his autobiography by remarking: "I considered these two lectures on 'The True Causes of the World War' and on 'The Peace Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Versailles', the most important of all, and so I repeated and repeated them dozens of times, always renewing the form".<sup>15</sup> Hitler's speech, "Versailles, Germany's Destruction", given on 24 July 1920, provides a typical example of this oratory:

We do not need nor want at this time a price and wage reduction, first we demand the cancellation of the peace Treaty, because afterwards everything will get better on its own. It is our duty to inform our people totally about this Treaty, until they pluck up courage to undermine this Treaty wherever possible.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon W. Prange, *Hitler's Words: Two Decades of National Socialism, 1923 - 1943*, Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1944, p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Reginald H. Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner im Jahre 1920", *VfZ*, vol. 11 (1963), p. 318. 20 September 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner" p. 304. 6 July 1920.

<sup>8</sup> *Völkischer Beobachter [hereafter VB]*, 12 May 1921.

<sup>9</sup> *VB*, 1 November 1922.

<sup>10</sup> *VB*, 28 February 1923.

<sup>11</sup> *VB*, 22 March 1923.

<sup>12</sup> *VB*, 15/16 April 1923.

<sup>13</sup> *VB*, 6/7 May 1923.

<sup>14</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 275.

<sup>15</sup> Hitler, p. 426.

<sup>16</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 329. 24 July 1920

The Nazi Party felt so strongly about the Treaty of Versailles and its effect on Germany that it included the following point in its *25 Point Programme*. Point Two states: "We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with the other nations, and abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St. Germain."<sup>17</sup> Throughout 1920, Hitler insisted that the Treaty of Versailles was not only unable to be fulfilled, but that it was detrimental to Germany's recovery. For example, on 15 July 1920 he stated: "We cannot fulfil the peace treaty, the people continue to suffer more and more. What is not possible, is simply not possible."<sup>18</sup>

The Nazi leader persisted with this claim throughout 1921, 1922, and 1923. He frequently referred to the Treaty as the "Treaty of Shame" (*Schandvertrag*), and made remarks such as: "We want the reconstruction of the German fatherland, this is however only possible with the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles"<sup>19</sup>, and "The Peace Treaty is unbearable. Its economic implementation means inevitably our political enslavement."<sup>20</sup> As Prange comments, none of Hitler's oratorical offensives surpassed his attacks on the Treaty of Versailles. He never tired of complaining that the Treaty was France's revenge, that it violated ancient historical traditions, increased tensions among nations, and destroyed the whole structure of the German economy.<sup>21</sup>

Hitler's hatred of France and his disregard for the Treaty of Versailles remained constant features of his articles and speeches during the period from 1920 to 1923. However, his attack on the Weimar Government, or the "November Criminals", was based on current developments. He believed that: "It [was] the fault of the revolution that we signed the shameful peace Treaty."<sup>22</sup> This was part of the "stab in the back" claim (*Dolchstoß*) that both General Ludendorff and General Hindenburg openly supported after the first World War. According to this claim the *Reichswehr* was not defeated in the Great War, but forced to surrender because revolutionary elements in Germany had dealt it a fatal blow from behind the lines. Hitler bore a grudge against the Government in Berlin, which he claimed had acted shamefully by signing the Treaty of Versailles. His disregard for the so-called "November Criminals" is illustrated by the following mockery he makes of State Secretary Matthias Erzberger, who was responsible for signing the Treaty: "Erzberger: 'Just give me four

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<sup>17</sup> Norman H. Baynes, (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1922 - August 1939*, London: Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 307. 15 July 1920. For example; 4 March 1920 (Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 275), 6 July 1920 (*ibid.*, pp. 304-05), 27 July 1920 (*ibid.*, p. 308), and 22 September 1920 (*ibid.*, pp. 320-21).

<sup>19</sup> *VB*, 17 February 1921.

<sup>20</sup> *VB*, 22/23 April 1923.

<sup>21</sup> Prange, p. 198.

<sup>22</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 322. 22 September 1920.

hours in Switzerland and you'll get your peace'. Never has the German population been so lied to and deceived."<sup>23</sup> The Nazi leader came to identify the entire Weimar Republic with the "November Crime", often referring to members of the *Reichstag*, especially Social Democrats, whether the individuals were involved with the signing of the armistice or not, as "November Criminals".

In 1921 Hitler focused a great deal of attention on the plight of Upper Silesia.<sup>24</sup> As a condition of the Treaty of Versailles, Upper Silesia went to Poland. Allied troops were to define the frontier in Upper Silesia, taking into account the geographic and economic situation, as well as the wishes of the local population as expressed in a plebiscite. The plebiscite, taken on 20 March 1921, demonstrated that 60% of the population wanted to remain German. However, Polish volunteer troops invaded Upper Silesia on 2 May 1921. Thereafter Upper Silesia remained in Polish hands. The Nazi leader blamed *Reichskanzler* Konstantin Fehrenbach and Foreign Policy Minister Walter Simons for the loss of Upper Silesia. He believed that they had not put up a fight to save Upper Silesia in order to prevent the threatened occupation of the Ruhr region.<sup>25</sup> For, at the London Conference on Reparations, held from 29 April to 5 May 1921, Germany was given an ultimatum: to pay one billion gold marks, which it could not afford, on penalty of occupation of the Ruhr region. In an article printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, "Statesmen or National Criminals", Hitler explained that Simons knew that Upper Silesia was in danger of being taken as compensation but did nothing to protect it.<sup>26</sup> Fehrenbach resigned after the Upper Silesian incident and was replaced by Joseph Wirth. However, Wirth fared no better than Fehrenbach. In Hitler's opinion, Wirth, with the help of Walter Rathenau, the new Minister of Foreign Policy, tried to fulfil the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles to the disadvantage of the German nation. In an article written in early June, Hitler had the following to say about Wirth:

Because of Germany's freedom, Mr. Wirth has said yes. This is probably the freedom Upper Silesia is enjoying in such abundance nowadays. Or do they not belong to Germany? Do the Rhineland, Rhineland Palatinate, the Saarland not belong to Germany? And anyway, do you call the condition the rest of Germany is in, freedom? Is a

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 318. 5 September 1920.

<sup>24</sup> For example; *VB*, 15 March 1921, *VB*, 14 April 1921, *VB*, 5 May 1921, *VB*, 8 May 1921, *VB*, 12 May 1921, *VB*, 15 May 1921, *VB*, 19 May 1921, *VB*, 26 May 1921, *VB*, 29 May 1921, *VB*, 2 June 1921, and *VB*, 28 July 1921,

<sup>25</sup> *VB*, 8 May 1921.

<sup>26</sup> *VB*, 15 March 1921.



people that is every year sucked dry and raided to the last drop of its blood, free?<sup>27</sup>

He claimed that the way the "November Criminals" had handled the Upper Silesian incident marked the beginning of the end for Germany.<sup>28</sup>

The Nazi leader's attack on Wirth continued throughout 1922 with such comments as: "do these people idolise a name that is synonymous with the eternal disgrace of Germany, Joseph Wirth?"<sup>29</sup>, and "That Germany is at the end of its strength nobody could deny, because even the man himself, Mr. Wirth, who is responsible for this state has recognised it".<sup>30</sup> Yet Hitler's main concern in 1922 was Wirth's policy of fulfilment; in other words the payment of reparations. He argued that workers were bearing the brunt of the payments: "Today the labourer works in order to pay off the reparations, and he only earns one third of his peace wages, the rest is slave labour."<sup>31</sup> He also claimed: "Today we fight for the 45 hour week. All right. But the labourer slaves for 30 hours simply for the Allies".<sup>32</sup> Hitler viewed rising inflation as a direct result of reparation payments, because up until 1923 Germany had financed the purchase of foreign currency needed for its reparation payments by simply printing more currency. Inflation was yet another disaster to blame on the Weimar government: "The paper money economy itself originates from the bad conscience and the cowardice of the revolution criminals".<sup>33</sup>

Similar to the loss of Upper Silesia in 1921, the occupation of the Ruhr region was a major theme in Hitler's articles and speeches throughout 1923. Due to a delay in delivering 100,000 telegraph poles, France declared that Germany had formally breached the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Thus, French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr region in order to take the necessary steps to ensure further reparation payments were made on time. In retaliation, *Reichskanzler* Wilhelm Cuno adopted a policy of passive resistance. Hitler viewed this as preposterous. He said that: "Cuno was then of the opinion that the occupation of the Ruhr happened for economic reasons and therefore called for passive resistance."<sup>34</sup> Instead, he proclaimed: "France has no intention of evacuating the Ruhr region or of giving back the Saar region or the Rhineland. The reasons for her occupation policy are political,

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27 VB, 2 June 1921.

28 VB, 15 May 1921.

29 VB, 22 February 1922.

30 VB, 1 November 1922.

31 VB, 19 August 1922.

32 VB, 26 April 1922.

33 VB, 1 November 1922.

34 VB, 6/7 November 1923.

not economic."<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, Hitler's speeches during the period of French occupation, delivered on 1 August 1923, 21 August 1923, 5 September 1923, and 12 September 1923, are full of angry tirades against Cuno.

As has been illustrated, Hitler frequently used the pages of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, as well as his role as a public speaker, to give ideological clarification and interpretation to current political issues throughout the period from 1920 to 1923.<sup>36</sup> While he maintained this tactic during his Putsch trial, focusing in particular on the detrimental effects of the Treaty of Versailles, it was not the case after his release from Landsberg prison. During his incarceration, Hitler wrote the first volume of his political autobiography *Mein Kampf*, completing the second volume during the summer and autumn of 1925. However, while *Mein Kampf* contained Hitler's violent anti-French views, similar to that of his previous rhetoric, it did not centre on the Treaty of Versailles and the "November Criminals" as major themes, instead mentioning them only as events which occurred during the period he was writing. It seems that Hitler was more intent on developing other, and in some cases entirely new, facets of his *Weltanschauung*.

To sum up, then, Auerbach's theory, that Hitler only began developing his political theories and concepts with the writing of *Mein Kampf*, is an exaggeration. It is more accurate, as Wolfgang Horn clarifies, that *Mein Kampf* was not the first representation of the Nazi leader's *Weltanschauung*, but rather the first extensive development of many of the thoughts and ideas which he had been forming since the beginning of his political career.<sup>37</sup> Prior to Hitler's imprisonment he did emphasise contemporary issues in his rhetoric. However, Martin Broszat explains this by saying: "The crisis-ridden years of the Weimar Republic from the Treaty of Versailles to the occupation of the Ruhr and the inflation were the background to the early history of the NSDAP; the years of the party's first political successes."<sup>38</sup> After the Nazi leader's release from Landsberg there is a noticeable lack of interest in contemporary issues, but this change in focus can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, the speech ban which Hitler incurred at his first public appearance after the Putsch trial, on 27 February 1925, which severally curtailed his public political activity. Second, the stabilisation of the political climate with the adoption of the Dawes Plan, meaning that

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<sup>35</sup> VB, 28 February 1923.

<sup>36</sup> Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party, 1919 - 1933*, Devon: David and Charles Publishers Ltd., 1971, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Horn, "Ein unbekannter Aufsatz", p. 280.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State. The Foundations and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*, trans John W. Hiden, London: Longman, 1981, p. 1.

hatred towards France, the Treaty of Versailles, and the actions of the "November Criminals" was no longer at the height of public and political debate. Third, Hitler's decision to enter the *Reichstag* "legally". This gave him increased responsibility within the party, as he had to concentrate on rebuilding the NSDAP and developing a national political platform. Nevertheless, what this change in focus does illustrate, contrary to received wisdom, is that Hitler's world view was far from complete in 1920. Many of the subjects incorporated in his articles and speeches during the first four years of his political career reflect the climate of the era as well as his own interpretation of contemporary issues rather than his own ideology. The shift away from this emphasis on contemporary issues occurs only after Hitler's imprisonment. It is likely that the time the Nazi leader spent in Landsberg gave him time to reflect on his previous experiences enabling him to produce his first serious political theorising in the form of his political autobiography, *Mein Kampf*.

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## CHAPTER TWO: THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

*"I beg you not to forget that the parliamentary principle of democratic majority rule has by no means always dominated mankind, but on the contrary is to be found only in brief periods of history, which are always epochs of the decay of peoples and states."*

*Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. II, 1926.*

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Germany's authoritarian monarchist state collapsed with the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II on 9 November 1918. In the midst of the revolutionary unrest which followed, elections were held for a constituent National Assembly which was to be responsible for establishing the new political order. The election result confirmed social democracy as the leading political force and the so-called Weimar Coalition, led by the first *Reichskanzler*, Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, set about drafting the Weimar constitution. Strongly influenced by the liberal and democratic tradition of 1848, the constitution established the *Reichstag* as the central political organ. The *Reichsrat*, the body representing the constituent states, was to have little influence, but the *Reichskanzler* was given considerable powers, enabling him to act as a counterweight to parliament. Accepted on 11 August 1919, the constitution ended the transitional period of almost one year following the abdication of the Kaiser and laid the foundations of the Weimar Republic. Thus, parliamentary democracy became the system of government, guaranteeing direct popular influence on the political decision-making process.

Kurt Sontheimer explains that "anti-democratic" thought is an overall term used to describe the manifold intellectual currents which developed during the course of the fourteen years of the Weimar Republic. All opposition to the Weimar Republic was considered opposition to democracy, and so deemed anti-democratic in nature.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party opposed the Weimar Republic their actions were viewed as anti-democratic. It is popular for historians to perceive the Nazi leader's rejection of democracy and parliamentarianism as a central facet of his *Weltanschauung*. In order to ascertain the verity of this perception, this chapter

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Sontheimer, "Anti-Democratic Thought in the Weimar Republic", in *The Path to Dictatorship 1918 - 1933: Ten Essays by German Scholars*, John Conway (ed.), New York: Anchor Books, 1936, pp. 36-37.

examines the formation and development of Hitler's views on democracy during the period from 1920 to 1926.

*Mein Kampf* is the most concentrated source of information on Hitler's views concerning democracy and the parliamentary system. Volume I, Chapter 3, "General Political Considerations Based on My Vienna Period", written in 1924 while he was in Landsberg prison, explains, in hindsight, how he developed his anti-democratic theories. He stated: "I had always hated parliament, but not as an institution in itself. On the contrary, as a freedom loving man I could not even conceive of any other sort of possibility of government".<sup>2</sup> He insisted that he attended sessions of parliament in Vienna regularly "and little by little formed [his] own ideas"<sup>3</sup>, admitting that after observing for two years he "could no longer accept the parliament as such."<sup>4</sup>

The most thought-provoking of Hitler's observations was that no single person held responsibility for any policy or decision in the Austrian government. He explained:

The parliament arrives at some decision whose consequences may be ever so ruinous nobody bears any responsibility for this, no one can be taken to account. For can it be called an acceptance of responsibility if, after an unparalleled catastrophe, the guilty government resigns? Or if the coalition changes, or even if parliament is itself dissolved?<sup>5</sup>

Hitler blamed this lack of responsibility on the majority vote, because the majority vote was needed for securing any policy. This meant that no one individual could be held accountable for a decision. He asked: "Can a fluctuating majority of people ever be made responsible in any case? Isn't the very idea of responsibility bound up with the individual?"<sup>6</sup> The Nazi leader continued by explaining that the parliamentary principle of majority led to the demolition of any idea of leadership. The task of a leader was reduced "to making the brilliance of his projects intelligible to a herd of sheep and blockheads, and subsequently begging for their kind approval".<sup>7</sup> He questioned: "Is the incapacity of a leader shown by the fact that he does not succeed in winning for a

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<sup>2</sup> Hitler, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

certain idea the majority of a mob thrown together by more or less savoury means?"<sup>8</sup> The Nazi leader concluded his discussion on the evils of the parliamentary system and democracy by offering his readers an alternative. This would become known as the *Führerprinzip*:

Juxtaposed to this is the truly Germanic democracy characterised by the free election of a leader and his obligation fully to assume all responsibility for his actions and his omissions. In it there is no majority vote on individual questions, but only the decision of an individual who must answer with his fortune and his life for his choice.<sup>9</sup>

While *Mein Kampf* clearly reveals Hitler's anti-democratic views it does not explain how they evolved, especially during the period before his imprisonment when the Weimar Republic experienced terrible instability. One of the earliest documents relating to this period is the *25 Point Programme*, announced on 24 February 1920. This political agenda, which Hitler helped draft, contains two points critical of the parliamentary system as it was then practiced. Point 6 states: "We oppose the corrupt parliamentary custom of state of filling posts merely with a view to Party consideration, and without reference to character or capacity."<sup>10</sup> Point 25 states: "we demand the creation of a strong central power of the Reich. Unconditional authority of the politically central parliament over the entire Reich and its organisation in general."<sup>11</sup> Both points highlight weakness in the parliamentary system and are little more than an unveiled criticism of the Weimar Republic. However, what is interesting to note is that there is no insistence on another form of government at this stage.

The government's lack of authority was a key issue for Hitler in 1920. It is not only included in the *25 Point Programme*, but was the focus of his speech, "Power or Justice" given on 20 September 1920:

Now the government seems to have no authority and only because it has no power, the power to show justice to advantage .... The government is only able to attain authority, when it is able to save national pride internally and externally. Only then will the laws be obeyed again.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Baynes, p. 103.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Deuerlein, "Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr", *VfZ*, vol. 10 (1959), p. 215. 20 September 1920.

Another aspect of Hitler's anti-democratic rhetoric in 1920 was the effect democracy had on the German people. He asserted that the parliamentary system of rule was not helping the people: "No party majority can save the people."<sup>13</sup> The Nazi leader felt the parliamentary system divided rather than united the people: "Everywhere one hears the slogan: 'Here bourgeoisie, here proletariat'. But nowhere was the slogan issued: 'You Germans join together, fight for your own freedom'."<sup>14</sup>

The first, and only detailed opinion of the parliamentary system that Hitler expressed prior to *Mein Kampf* dates from 3 February 1921. In an article printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* the Nazi leader stated that democracy was a failure: "the democratic principle in Germany is an infertile one. A resurrection of the German people cannot be expected from it."<sup>15</sup> He viewed the parliamentary system as un-democratic in nature because of the principle of majority rule, stating:

it is not only worthless today, in fact it is non-existent. Because if in a state a small group only, or let's say one class or party refuses to accept the principle of democratic subordination of the minority under that of the law binding accepted will of the majority, then in practice the democratic principle as such is dead.<sup>16</sup>

Although Hitler's discussion on the democratic system remained limited, 1921 saw Hitler demand more accountability and responsibility from members of parliament. Perhaps, because between 19 January 1919 and 26 October 1921 there had been no fewer than six changes to the office of *Reichskanzler*. This concern is best emphasised by the speech he gave in October 1921, in which he said: "We demand responsibility from parliamentarians and ministers. It should not be allowed that somebody can destroy the people and then retire as if nothing has happened. He who leads the people, has to lead with his head and his head is the pledge."<sup>17</sup> More importantly, it was only in mid 1921 that the Nazi leader made his first public connection between Jews and democracy. He stated on 15 May 1921 in an article written for the *Völkischer Beobachter*: "Germany is only able to live if the pigsty of Jewish corruption, democratic hypocrisy, and socialist betrayal is swept away with an iron broom."<sup>18</sup> While it is hard to be certain what prompted Hitler's sudden equation of Jews with democracy it is likely that the election of the Centre Party on 10 May 1921

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 223. 26 October 1920.

<sup>14</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 303. 27 April 1920.

<sup>15</sup> *VB*, 3 February 1921.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *VB*, 26 October 1921

<sup>18</sup> *VB*, 15 May 1921.

had some influence. For when Joseph Wirth became *Reichskanzler* he appointed Walter Rathenau Minister of Reconstruction, and by 31 January 1922 had made him the new Foreign Policy Minister. Rathenau was a man of exceptional stature and brilliance, but in the eyes of many Germans, especially Hitler, he was first and foremost a Jew. A Jew who now held a prominent position within the democratic system of the Weimar Republic.

The Nazi leader re-emphasised many of his earlier arguments against democracy in the few speeches and articles he presented on the subject in 1922. However, most prominent was the association he drew between Jews and democracy. Hitler saw democracy as a Jewish invention, believing that, like Marxism, democracy was yet another means by which Jews would gain world domination. For example, on 12 April 1922 he said: "Democracy is fundamentally not German. It is Jewish. It has been completely forgotten that this Jewish democracy with its majority decisions has always been, without exception, only a means towards the destruction of any existing Aryan leadership."<sup>19</sup> In September 1922 he said: "who rules in the so-called democracies, in France, England, and America ...? The Jew!"<sup>20</sup> A few months later he remarked: "Democracy is Jewish domination, for the people do not rule; public opinion is manufactured by the press, which is owned by Jews. At the same time democracy is not an end in itself, but the means to an end. The end is the achievement of Jewish domination".<sup>21</sup> Hitler also repeated his concern that the German people were suffering under the democratic system. This is illustrated by a question he posed in his speech, "Can Parliamentarians Save Germany?": "And who is suffering under the conditions brought about by the parliament? Everybody."<sup>22</sup> The democratic principle of majority rule was again attacked with such comments as: "We the National Socialists declare here and forever that we shall no longer tolerate this betrayal of the people. We do not believe in majorities, but in the energy of the minority."<sup>23</sup>

Hitler's attack on the parliamentary system became more prominent in 1923 as the political situation within Germany worsened due to the threatened occupation of the Ruhr region, rising inflation, and crippling reparation payments. His now well established arguments; that the Germans were suffering under the parliamentary system of government because it was not adequately providing for them, that democracy was a Jewish invention designed to acquire world domination, and that in

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<sup>19</sup> *VB*, 22 April 1922.

<sup>20</sup> *VB*, 30 September 1922.

<sup>21</sup> *VB*, 1 November 1922.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *VB*, 6 December 1922.



general democracy was a failure, singling out the government's lack of authority and majority rule in specific continued. Increasingly common were such comments as: "the German parliamentary system is digging its own grave"<sup>24</sup>, and "German parliamentarianism is today the downfall and the end of the German nation."<sup>25</sup> However, by the beginning of 1923 the Nazi leader was also suggesting alternatives to the parliamentary system. This was something he had done only occasionally during the first years of his political career. In a speech given in late February 1923 Hitler stated: "In parliament the call for the strongman won't be welcomed. Today's strongman would first have to destroy parliament. As long as Germany's destiny is in the hands of parliamentary gossipers, our people cannot be saved."<sup>26</sup> A month later the Nazi leader explained:

What our people needs is not leaders in parliament, but those who are determined to carry through what they see to be right before God, before the world, and before their own consciences and to carry that through, if need be, against majorities. And if we succeed in raising such leaders from the people, then once again a nation will crystallise itself.<sup>27</sup>

It can be summarised from Hitler's negative remarks about the parliamentary system throughout the pre-Putsch period that he was ardently against the Weimar Republic. In fact, a police report made in 1923 states:

The party refuses to use the institution of parliament for the implementation of its ideas. An institution based on the popular elected council thinking. It does not want to be a party in the parliamentary sense, for its leaders refuse to accept the mandate principle.<sup>28</sup>

By August 1923, when the French began moving into the Ruhr region without resistance because of *Reichskanzler* Cuno's policy of passive resistance, the Nazi leader's criticism of the Weimar Republic became even stronger. He stated: "We will no longer bow down before an institution which is founded on the delusory majority principle, we want a dictatorship."<sup>29</sup> It seems that Hitler meant what he said, because on 9 November 1923 he proclaimed a national revolution and the deposition of

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<sup>24</sup> Baynes, p. 72. 4 May 1923.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *VB*, 28 February 1923.

<sup>27</sup> *VB*, 29/30 April 1923.

<sup>28</sup> Hoover Institution Microfilms, *NSDAP Hauptarchiv*, John W. Blodgett Collection, Folder 1474.

<sup>29</sup> Baynes, p. 73. 21 August 1923.

governments of Bavaria and the Reich. His Putsch ended in failure. Police opened fire on the Nazi Party, killing sixteen. Many others, including Hitler, were arrested.

Hitler suffered trial for high treason in February of 1924. He openly admitted that he had wanted to overthrow the state, but rejected the charges of high treason. In his concluding speech, he stated: "I cannot declare myself guilty. True, I confess to the deed, but I do not confess to the crime of high treason. There can be no question of high treason in an action which aims to undo the betrayal of this country in 1918."<sup>30</sup> However, as Charles Bracelen Flood explained:

This was treason: an open call for armed insurrection against the Berlin government. In case anyone did not understand that he wanted immediate, violent, bloody change, his concluding words at the Putsch left little doubt: 'We must have a new dictatorship. We need no parliament, no government like the moment. We cannot expect Germany's salvation from the present condition, but only through a dictatorship brought through the sword'.<sup>31</sup>

During his subsequent imprisonment at Landsberg, Hitler continued his condemnation of the parliamentary system by expounding his anti-democratic views in *Mein Kampf*. Yet after his release from prison he seemed to show a complete turn-around. He renounced revolutionary violence and repeatedly insisted upon the "legality" of his new tactics. This so-called "legality" required the party to seek the support of a majority of voters through the use of "democratic" campaign methods: participation in local and national elections was now viewed as a necessary method of gaining political power. It is likely that this change originated in Hitler's terror of deportation to Austria, with which he had already twice been threatened. The "Law for the Protection of the Republic" automatically required that any foreigner convicted of high treason be deported from Germany. The Austrian-born Hitler was still not a German citizen, despite his wartime military service, so this law was of considerable concern to him. However, as Flood notes, although, Hitler was pragmatically committed to gaining power through the ballot box, the German state he envisioned had nothing to do with democracy.<sup>32</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher reiterates this view by commenting: "The defeat of democracy by pseudo-democratic means was the new

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<sup>30</sup> *Der Hitler Prozess vor dem Volksgericht im München, Zweiter Teil*, München: Knarr und Hirth G.m.b.H., 1924, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Bracelen Flood, *Hitler: The Path to Power*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982, p. 408.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 596.

course to which Hitler now devoted himself, even though voting one's opponents down would prove more laborious than shooting them down."<sup>33</sup>

The Nazi leader was banned from public speaking after the speech he gave on 27 February 1925. The fact that the ban originated from seditious remarks is ironic. Yet it is hard to determine whether this speech set the tone for Hitler's views on the parliamentary system over the next two years, because, as a consequence, he rarely appeared in public. However, according to the limited existent information, he did in fact speak at closed party meetings and in the few states which had not imposed a speech ban, a mixed picture is presented. At a closed party meeting in August 1925 Hitler criticised the fickle nature of parliamentary parties. He said:

He, who can no longer belong to a party through inner conviction, has to resign from his mandate. The voters elect representatives of their worldview, not persons. He who transfers his mandate to another party is a thief, and a party who accepts such traitors sacrifice their trust and belief just for an increase in numbers.<sup>34</sup>

In an article printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 14 April 1926 Hitler described the German system of government as "nothing more than an instrument in the hands of foreign power."<sup>35</sup> However, in early June 1926 the Nazi leader finished a speech with the following words:

Give your vote in the upcoming election to whoever you want, but if you are looking for freedom for your people, and believe that the National Socialists will give it to you, then join our ranks as a fighter for our people and work with us to create a new state, a state of justice, a National Socialist free Germany.<sup>36</sup>

The impression these comments give is that while Hitler tried to enter the *Reichstag* legally and abide by the parliamentary system he still did not hold the democratic system in high regard.

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<sup>33</sup> Karl Dietrich Bracher, trans. Jean Steinberg, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure, and Effects of National Socialism*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> *VB*, 12 August 1925.

<sup>35</sup> *VB*, 14 April 1926.

<sup>36</sup> *VB*, 3 June 1926.

It is clear from a survey of Hitler's written and spoken words on the parliamentary system that the subject was not a dominant feature of his rhetoric. In fact, apart from the article he wrote for the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1921 and Volume 1, Chapter 3 of *Mein Kampf*, he has very little to say on the subject. Yet from the articles and speeches which do deal with the parliamentary system, it can be established that the Nazi leader's views did evolve, especially during 1920 and 1921; the first years of the Weimar Republic's existence. Hitler emphasised, in particular, the suffering of the German nation under the parliamentary system and specific aspects of the democratic process such as the majority vote and the lack of responsibility and authority within parliament. He continually re-emphasised these themes throughout the pre-Putsch era. However, new themes also emerged. Denouncing democracy as a Jewish curse became popular by mid 1921, and the idea of replacing the Weimar Republic with a dictatorship became pronounced by 1923. Hitler's attempted Putsch, the comments he made at the subsequent trial, his opinion as expressed in *Mein Kampf*, and the speech ban he incurred because of seditious remarks, illustrate the conviction of his anti-democratic views. His decision to enter the *Reichstag* through legal means, although seemingly contradictory in nature, was in fact, very pragmatic. He did not alter his opinion on the parliamentary system, but wanted merely to prevent being charged with high treason, which might have caused his deportation. Also, in order to become a politically-recognised party he decided not to promote publicly his disregard for the Weimar Republic and everything it stood for.

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## CHAPTER: THREE

# PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUE

*"But the power which has always started the greatest religions and political avalanches in history rolling has from time immemorial been the magic of the spoken word, and that alone."*

*Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. I, 1925.*

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Propaganda is the art of persuasion. It attempts to change attitudes and ideas by reinforcing existing trends and beliefs through manipulation of already existing opinions.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, when thinking of Nazi propaganda the name that comes to mind is Joseph Goebbels. Adolf Hitler appointed him leader of the Reich's propaganda in 1929, and made him Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933. However, Hitler was in fact the Nazi Party's first propagandist. The earliest reference to Hitler in this role appears in a Munich police report made on 13 November 1919.<sup>2</sup>

Historians emphasise propaganda as an important feature of the Nazi Party, especially during the first years of the movement's development. For example, Z.A.B. Zeman stresses that the growth of the NSDAP from "insignificant beginnings" to a truly mass movement was due to the skilful exploitation of propaganda techniques.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, David Welch states: "it would appear that one of the most important factors contributing to the Nazis' rise to power was the cumulative effect of their propaganda."<sup>4</sup> This chapter will, therefore, examine Hitler's position as a propagandist between 1920 and 1926, highlighting the importance of propaganda during the early phase of the Nazi Party's development and to the Nazi leader's overall *Weltanschauung*. It will investigate the evolution of his ideas concerning propaganda, focusing in particular on "the mass meeting" and the "party newspaper", as well as examining his first theoretical discussion on propaganda technique in *Mein Kampf*.

After the war Hitler joined the *Reichswehr* Propaganda Unit, attending a series of training courses (*Aufklärungskurse*) run by Captain Karl Mayr. He quickly gained

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<sup>1</sup> David Welch, *Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, New York: Routledge, 1993, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Deuerlein, "Hitlers Eintritt", p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Z.A.B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 9th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Welch, *Third Reich*, p. 10.

promotion to the role of educator, presenting propaganda lectures to the troops. From this employment he obtained the skills needed to become a political adviser for the *Reichswehr*.<sup>5</sup> It was with this background experience that Hitler joined the German Workers' Party. From the beginning he saw himself as responsible for the party's propaganda. This is reflected by the following comment from *Mein Kampf*: "After my entrance into the German Workers' Party, I at once took over the management of propaganda. I recognised this department as by far the most important."<sup>6</sup>

It was as a propagandist, an agitator, and an unusually talented public speaker that Hitler first won attention. In fact, Martin Broszat sees Hitler's talent as a public speaker as literally forming the foundations of his political career.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Werner Maser describes Hitler as owing his political career in large measure to the power of propaganda.<sup>8</sup> The Nazi leader's skill as a public speaker not only won him attention, but also the Nazi Party. With Hitler in charge of the party's promotion, membership reached 2,000 by late 1920 and 3,000 by August 1921. The party continued to expand, and had 20,000 members by the end of 1922, with an additional 35,000 members by the time of the Putsch in 1923.<sup>9</sup> This was achieved principally because of the emphasis Hitler placed on public meetings.

Hitler gradually increased the Nazi Party's membership by insisting that public meetings be held on a regular basis, at first every month and later fortnightly. The first success the Nazi Party had occurred on 16 October 1919 at what the Nazi leader described as the "first meeting which could be called public".<sup>10</sup> He recalled in *Mein Kampf* that:

After thirty minutes the people in the small room were electrified and the enthusiasm was first expressed by the fact that my appeal to the self-sacrifice of those present led to the donation of three hundred marks. This relieved us of a great worry. For at the this time the financial stringency was so great that we were not even in a position to have slogans printed for the movement or even distribute leaflets.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Deuerlein, "Hitler's Eintritt", p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> Hitler, p. 527.

<sup>7</sup> Broszat, *The Hitler State*, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Maser, *Hitler*, p. 259.

<sup>9</sup> Kershaw, *Profiles in Power*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> Hitler, pp. 322-23.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 323.

The 300 marks donated to the Nazi Party made it possible for Hitler to organise another public meeting. At this public meeting Hitler introduced an idea that was entirely new on the Bavarian political scene: They would charge admission.<sup>12</sup> The Nazi Party's second public meeting held at the *Eberlbräukeller* on 13 November 1919 was a success. It was attended by more than 130 people all paying an admission fee of fifty pfennigs.<sup>13</sup> The high attendance level and the amount of money being made provided the catalyst for more daring ventures to larger halls. The first large scale meeting at the *Deutsches Reich* was not well attended, but the next meeting showed more promise. In fact, Hitler commented in *Mein Kampf* that: "The attendance had risen to over two hundred; the public as well as financial success was brilliant."<sup>14</sup>

The success rate of the Nazi Party's first public meetings was largely due to advertising. Hitler noted in *Mein Kampf*: "I still remember how I myself in this first period once distributed about eighty ... slips of paper, and how in the evening we sat and waited for the masses who were expected to appear."<sup>15</sup> The next attempt, when "invitation slips written on a machine and mimeographed in a Munich stationery store"<sup>16</sup> produced a slightly better result. However, the first noticeable success occurred when, as Hitler explained in his autobiography, "by little collections among us poor devils the funds were raised with which at last to advertise the meetings by notices in then independent *Münchener Beobachter*."<sup>17</sup>

The first truly mass meeting, attended by more than 2,000 people<sup>18</sup>, was organised by Hitler on 24 February 1920 at the *Höfbräuhaus* in Munich in order to announce the party's *25 Point Programme*. In preparation for the party's first mass meeting placards and leaflets were used to advertise the event. Hitler determinedly used the colour red, stating: "On principle the colour red was chosen; it is the most exciting; we knew it would infuriate and provoke our adversaries the most and thus bring us to their attention and memory whether they liked it or not."<sup>19</sup> Although the report in the *Völkischer Beobachter* concerning the meeting noted that Hitler was not even a main speaker<sup>20</sup> his description of events four years later in *Mein Kampf* over

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<sup>12</sup> Flood, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> John Toland, *Adolf Hitler*, New York: Doubleday, 1976, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> Hitler, p. 325.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *VB*, 28 February 1920.

<sup>19</sup> Hitler, p. 322.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

looked this, presenting the meeting as an important historical date in the Nazi Party's and his own development.<sup>21</sup>

The success of 24 February 1920 together with the healthier financial state of the Nazi Party meant that mass meetings became a common event for the movement. A typical meeting in 1920 lasted between two and four hours and was attended by between 800 and 2,500 people. Police reports on the meetings held in 1920 noted that most speakers received a quiet reception, but that when Hitler took the podium the audience became "lively" and often quite "unruly".<sup>22</sup> Reginald Phelps claims: "One thing is for sure: Hitler was the igniting spark, he alone could attract the people week in and week out".<sup>23</sup> Broszat argues that Hitler was not a novice to the art of speech making. He changed the speed and volume of his voice, constructed simple and repetitious speeches, and studied the technique of creating the appropriate atmosphere. Flags, popular music, intentionally late arrival, crowded halls, planted supporters to cheer at appropriate points, and even organised squads to prevent meetings being broken up by rival political parties were all features of Hitler's mass meetings.<sup>24</sup> The following description gives an impression of his speech style:

Hitler moves quickly to the front of the stage. He speaks freely, first with a slow intonation, later his words come out all in a rush, his voice is suppressed and hardly understandable when he gets to passages recited with exaggerated emotiveness. He gesticulates with arms and hands. He jumps about in great excitement and tries constantly to fascinate his numerous public.<sup>25</sup>

Mass gatherings of particular note in the pre-Putsch period were: the Nazi leader's mass meeting on 3 February 1921 in the *Zirkus Krone* (at that time Munich's biggest conference centre); the 14-15 October 1922 German Day in Coburg (perceived as the greatest event in the movement's history at that date<sup>26</sup>); and the first Nazi Party Day held in Munich on 28 January 1923. Throughout 1920 Hitler spoke more than 30 times at public gatherings.<sup>27</sup> In 1921 he began to hold several mass meetings on the same evening making short appearances at all.<sup>28</sup> During the last two

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<sup>21</sup> Hitler, p. 336.

<sup>22</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", pp. 275-330.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>24</sup> Broszat, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Deuerlein, *Aufstieg der NSDAP 1919-1933 in Augenzeugenberichten*, Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1968. pp. 271-72.

<sup>26</sup> Flood, p. 310.

<sup>27</sup> Kershaw, *Profiles in Power*, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Detlef Grieswelle, *Propaganda der Friedlosigkeit: Eine Studie zu Hitlers Rhetorik 1920-1933*,



months of 1922 he held 10 mass meetings, and in the summer of 1923 he appeared on average twice weekly before large audiences.<sup>29</sup> These accomplishments demonstrate that the "mass meeting" became a central feature of the Nazi Party's propaganda technique.

The failure of Hitler's Putsch in 1923 temporarily put a stop to his mass meetings. However, his best orchestrated public appearance, in terms of propaganda value, took place during this period: his concluding speech at his 1924 Putsch trial, which brought him to the attention of the entire German nation. Hitler's first major speech after his release from Landsberg prison on 27 February 1925, which re-asserted his position as leader, was another masterpiece. This speech immediately catapulted him to new prominence on the Munich political scene. However, this success also caused concern. A speech ban (*Redeverbot*) was imposed on 9 March 1925, first by Bavarian authorities and later by other states. This did not mean that the party entirely lost its most effective means of agitation. Meetings were arranged in the three states that had not placed a ban on Hitler, Thuringia, Braunschweig and Mecklenburg. If they took place elsewhere they were advertised as closed meetings for party members only. Hitler was well aware of the necessity of propaganda in the first years of the party's reformation. In fact, he announced a new statute at the refoundation of the NSDAP which outlined the importance of propaganda.<sup>30</sup> This statute prompted Grieswelle to make the following comment: "For the first time in the history of the NSDAP propaganda was represented in an organised fashion in the party hierarchy."<sup>31</sup> Also, by 1925, in contrast to the earlier period when Hitler presented more than half of the Nazi Party's mass meetings, there was a large number of trained public speakers, such as Rudolf Esser, Wilhelm Frick, Gregor Strasser, Gottfried Feder, and Joseph Goebbels, who were not restricted by the speech ban. This enabled 2,370 mass meetings to take place during 1925, and approximately 20,000 in 1928.<sup>32</sup> Another example of the Nazi leader at his propagandist best during this period was the speech he gave at the Bamberg Conference on 14 February 1926. This was the speech which finally reunited the warring factions of the Nazi Party, convincing the Northern fraction led by Gregor Strasser to remain loyal to the movement, and more importantly, to accept Hitler as its leader.

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Stuttgart: Ferninand Emke Verlag, 1972, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> *VB*, 26 February 1925.

<sup>31</sup> Grieswelle, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> *VB*, 26 May 1926.

The move by the Nazi Party to mass media occurred in December 1920 when Hitler discovered that the *Völkischer Beobachter*, a nationalist-racist journal which recorded the operations of approximately twenty right-wing organisations in Bavaria, was for sale. He wanted the Nazi Party to acquire the paper as sole owner because he realised that ownership of the newspaper would greatly strengthen any group that could afford to buy it. However, the party treasury did not have sufficient funds. Nevertheless, on 16 December 1920, spurred by the threat of a proposed sale to Gottfried Feder, Hitler was forced into action. He enlisted the help of Dietrich Eckart who convinced Augsburg industrialist Dr. Gottfried Grandel to put up 56,000 marks. A further 60,000 marks came from Colonel Franz Ritter von Epp, the most right wing of Barvaria's *Reichswehr* officers. This money enabled the purchase of the newspaper. Under the joint editorship of Dietrich Eckart and Alfred Rosenberg, the newspaper appeared twice weekly until 8 December 1923, thereafter it became a daily newspaper. The *Völkischer Beobachter's* circulation in January 1921 was 11,000, and while the monthly circulation figures varied during the year they never dropped to less than 7,500 and even reached 17,000 in early 1922. By 1923 the paper had a readership large enough to place it in the league of major Munich newspapers. The *Völkischer Beobachter* was shut down between 9 November 1923 and 26 February 1925, but on 4 April 1925 it appeared again as a daily newspaper with an ever expanding readership.<sup>33</sup>

The *Völkischer Beobachter* became the main propaganda organ of the Nazi Party, with members of the party being encouraged to subscribe to it. In fact, Hitler commented at a party meeting held in January 1922: "The Press, our only weapon, our light artillery, must soon be able to act as heavy artillery. Every member is obliged to subscribe to the 'Beobachter' and help spread it, not only in Munich, but all over the German Reich."<sup>34</sup> The newspaper was an indispensable ideological and organisational link between the party's central leadership and its local and provincial membership. The column *Aus der Bewegung* (Notes about the Movement) was a valuable means of keeping party members informed of up and coming membership meetings, reporting on the outcome of these meeting, and especially for announcing public meetings. However, it was not just for advertising and reporting that the newspaper was valuable. Hitler soon realised that he could communicate with his followers through open letters, articles, and reprints of speeches, thereby reaching a large audience on a regular basis. In a speech given on 23 May 1926 Hitler said: "If you consider that one

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<sup>33</sup> Charles F. Sidman, "Die Auflagenkurve des Völkischer Beobachter und die Entwicklung des Nationalsozialismus", *VfZ*, vol 13 (1965), pp. 112-18.

<sup>34</sup> Hoover Institution Microfilm, *NSDAP Hauptarchiv*, John W. Blodgett Collection, Folder 1480.

single special edition can reach a circulation of 200,000 copies ... then you must admit that our propaganda activity is rather extensive."<sup>35</sup> Welch asserts that, unlike the long, detailed, and academic discussion of other political newspapers, the *Völkischer Beobachter* encouraged short pieces on typical National Socialist themes with the repetition of commonly recognised slogans, thus attracting a wider reading audience.<sup>36</sup>

The broad outlines along which Hitler felt Nazi propaganda should operate were first developed in *Mein Kampf* between 1924 and 1926. Perhaps because of his incredible gift of oratory, the Nazi leader believed strongly in the power of the spoken word. The emphasis he placed on the spoken word is apparent from the preface of *Mein Kampf*, where he presents an apology for using the written word: "I know that men are won over less by the written than by the spoken word, that every great movement on this earth owes its growth to great orators and not to great writers."<sup>37</sup> Hitler viewed the spoken word as more valuable than the written word for educating the masses, because, unlike the writer, the speaker "gets a continuous correction of the speech from the crowd he is addressing".<sup>38</sup> This enables the speaker to gauge the extent to which his listeners are following his argument, whether they understand what is being said, and if the desired goal of the speech has been achieved.<sup>39</sup> He quickly realised that it was impossible to reach the "broad masses" through the written word. He stated in *Mein Kampf*: "there is the fact that the mass of people as such is lazy; that is they remain inertly in the spirit of their old habits and, left to themselves, will take up a piece of written matter only reluctantly".<sup>40</sup> In fact, he acknowledged the Catholic Church and the Marxists as achieving success with the masses primarily because of their emphasis on oral propaganda.

The Nazi leader saw the primary function of propaganda as attracting supporters. Supporters were then made amenable to the movement through propaganda, because the object of propaganda was to enforce a doctrine. Effective use of propaganda made certain that this doctrine disrupted the existing state of affairs and at the same times continued to attract additional supporters to the movement.<sup>41</sup> Hitler argued that propaganda had to be repetitious and consistent because of the slow intellect of the masses. He emphasised repeatedly the importance of simple slogans,

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<sup>35</sup> *VB*, 26 May 1926.

<sup>36</sup> Welch, *Third Reich*, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Hitler, preface.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 428.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 529-31.

how unwise it was to diverge from the main theme or a few precise points, and the overall stupidity of the audience. The following is a typical example of what Hitler had to say about propaganda technique in *Mein Kampf*:

The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts all effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan.<sup>42</sup>

Hitler considered propaganda a means to an end.<sup>43</sup> The object of propaganda was not the scientific education of the individual, but rather the indoctrination of the masses. Therefore, the Nazi leader saw the task of propaganda as appealing primarily to the emotions rather than reason. He said: "The art of propaganda lies in understanding the emotional ideas of the great masses and finding, through a psychologically correct form, the way to the attention and thence to the heart of the broad masses."<sup>44</sup> He also explained that propaganda should not always be objective or seek to establish the truth. Rather, it should present the masses with a position that does not favour the enemy, but the party's stance.<sup>45</sup>

An interesting feature of the Nazi leader's discussion on propaganda in *Mein Kampf* is that unlike, many other facets of his *Weltanschauung*, he attributes his knowledge on the subject to certain influences. In Volume I, Chapter 6, "War Propaganda" he admitted:

Ever since I have been scrutinising political events, I have taken a tremendous interest in propagandist activity. I saw that the Socialist-Marxist organisations mastered and applied this instrument with astounding skill. And soon realised that the correct use of propaganda is a true art which has remained practically unknown to the bourgeois parties. Only the Christian Social movement, especially in Lueger's time, achieved a certain virtuosity on this instrument, to which it owed many of its successes.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

As well as the Marxists, the Christian Social Party, and the Catholic Church Hitler asserted that he learnt much from the war propaganda of Germany's enemies.<sup>47</sup> He categorically stated that anything of value to be learnt about propaganda could only be done by studying the other side, mainly because he regretted that Germany did not have anything that could be called propaganda. He even went so far as to say that Germany had mainly lost the war in 1918 because its propaganda had been a total failure.<sup>48</sup> The only example of a great orator that Hitler gave was Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Britain between 1918 and 1922. He stated that: "the speeches of this Englishman were the most wonderful performances, for they testified to a positively amazing knowledge of the soul of the broad masses of the people. And their effect was truly powerful."<sup>49</sup> Although the Nazi leader makes no reference to Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* and William McDougall's *The Group Mind: A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology*, they are commonly cited as two early sources from which he derived many of his propaganda techniques. In fact, Robert Waite believes that Hitler's indebtedness to Le Bon borders on plagiarism, because of the number of key ideas he took directly from his work.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, it can be seen that the emphasis Hitler placed on propaganda during the period from 1920 to 1926 was substantial, illustrating that it played a significant role within his overall *Weltanschauung*. In fact, he even designated two chapters to the subject in *Mein Kampf*, in which he outlined in great detail his views concerning propaganda technique, in particular the importance of the spoken word. However, by examining the development of two of the most prominent features of the Nazi leader's propaganda, the "mass meeting" and the "party newspaper", it is difficult to establish with certainty whether the theory behind his use of propaganda actually evolved. It seems that the greatest influence on the growth of Nazi propaganda was finance. For, as has been described above, Hitler's mass meetings were not always a feature of Nazi propaganda. It was only when the party had enough money to advertise and hire large halls that first, public meetings, and then mass meetings took place. Likewise, the Nazi Party's move to mass media was not a well planned undertaking. Rather, it was a more pragmatic decision, as it was the proposed sale of the *Völkischer Beobachter* which first gave Hitler the idea that a party newspaper would be valuable. Money was again the most important issue, for, due to insufficient

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 433.

<sup>50</sup> See Robert G.L. Waite, *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*, New York: Basic Books, 1977, pp. 122-23.

funds it was nearly not possible to purchase the newspaper. In fact, the sum total of the *Völkischer Beobachter* had to be borrowed.

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## CHAPTER FOUR: THE *FÜHRERPRINZIP*

*"We need a dictator, who is a genius, if we ever want to rise up again."*

*Adolf Hitler, Speech, 1920.*

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Prior to the advent of Adolf Hitler the word "*Führer*" simply meant leader. Connotations now attached to the word "*Führer*", however, are but another legacy of the Nazi regime. The *Führerprinzip*, or the principle of leadership, is a complex concept derived from many sources, including the messianic principle of Christianity, the thaumaturgic kings of the Middle Ages, the Prussian military tradition, and the Nietzschean "superman" of völkisch mythology.<sup>1</sup> Ernst Huber, a Nazi political theorist explains the *Führerprinzip*:

The Führer is the bearer of the people's will: he is independent of all groups, but he is bound by laws inherent in the nature of his people. In this twofold condition, independence of all factional interest but unconditional dependence on the people, is reflected the true nature of the *Führerprinzip* .... He shapes the collective will of the people within himself and he embodies the political unity and entirety of the people in opposition to individual interest.<sup>2</sup>

The leadership principle is the term used to describe the governing structure and inner functioning of the Nazi Party. The Nazi theory of the state, like that of Italian fascism, was a product of the party's war against democracy. It is a form of direct rule, with all decisions coming from the top and being made by the leader who commands absolute obedience and remains responsible for all key decisions. Thus, the position of leader commands not only total authority, but also total responsibility.

Preference for an authoritarian form of rule within the German public did not originate with the Nazi Party. In fact, "a Führer cult was emerging within middle-class circles during the First World War ... quite independently of Hitler."<sup>3</sup> Also, the

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<sup>1</sup> David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema 1933-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> D.M. Phillips, *Hitler and the Rise of the Nazis*, London: Penguin Books, 1975, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> William Carr, *Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics*, London: Edward Arnold, 1978, p. 11.

deteriorating political, economic, and social, state of Germany after World War One as well as the defeat and humiliation caused by the Treaty of Versailles meant that many Germans quickly lost faith in the new democratic system the Weimar Republic offered, preferring instead to place their faith in an authoritarian system of rule. As William Carr summarises: the *Führerprinzip* merely represented the culmination of all the political aims, economic demands, and ideological views existing since 1871.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will explain Hitler's rise to *Führer* of the Nazi Party and the development of the *Führerprinzip* as an important facet of his *Weltanschauung*. A survey of Hitler's writings and speeches between 1920 and 1926 illustrates that his thoughts on the *Führerprinzip* and his role within the Nazi Party underwent continual adjustment. This is contrary to earlier studies which invariably stressed his determination from the outset of his political career to assume leadership of the Nazi Party (in keeping with his own statements in *Mein Kampf*). Biographers such as Alan Bullock and Hugh Trevor-Roper certainly did not change this perception and most subsequent writers have preserved the impression more or less intact. However, in a study of major importance, Albrecht Tyrell argues that Hitler made his reputation within the Nazi Party as a propagandist or "drummer", not as a "leader of men". This theory is not only plausible, but demonstrates that Hitler's conception of the *Führerprinzip* evolved as his self-awareness grew and his circumstances changed.

No evidence suggests that before July 1921 Hitler saw himself as a contender for the position of *Führer* of the Nazi Party, although evidence does reveal that he was beginning to form a *Führer* ideology. In fact, historian, Cameron Watt believes that it was more than likely during the period from November 1918 to June 1919, when Germany first experienced political, economic, and social disaster under the Weimar Republic, that the Nazi leader began to develop his ideas on "German democracy"; that is, an authoritarian system of rule as opposed to parliamentarianism.<sup>5</sup> It is in this context that Hitler's earliest mention of the *Führerprinzip* occurs. In a speech given at the *Hofbräuhaus-Festsaal* on 27 April 1920 Hitler stated: "It should not be a question of Monarchy or Republic, but there ought to be for us a type of state that is at any one time best for the people. We need a dictator, who is a genius, if we ever want to rise up again."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> D. Cameron Watt, "Introduction", in *Mein Kampf*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>6</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 299. 27 April 1920.



On 11 July 1921 Hitler resigned from the Nazi Party because of a proposed merger with the Augsburg German Socialist Party; a merger which Anton Drexler in particular had been discussing for several months. In an ultimatum written three days later Hitler said he would only agree to rejoin the party if certain conditions were met. This conduct is seen by some historians, for example Ernst Nolte<sup>7</sup> and Charles Bracelen Flood<sup>8</sup>, as the date when the *Führerprinzip* first came into practice. However, as Ian Kershaw explains: "everything indicates that Hitler's actions in the crisis arose from a heated, spontaneous reaction to circumstances he could not control, rather than from a premeditated strategy to acquire dictatorial power."<sup>9</sup> This motivation is clearly evident in his ultimatum:

I make these demands, not because I am hungry for power, but because recent events have convinced me that without an iron leadership, the party inwardly would stop to be in no time what it ought to be: A National Socialist German Workers' Party and not an occidental alliance.<sup>10</sup>

Hitler's demands for dictatorial powers were accepted because he played a major role within the party. This role is aptly illustrated by Rudolf Hess' article, which states: "Are you really blind to the fact that this man is the Führer, who alone will see the fight through? Do you believe that without him the masses would flow to the Zirkus Krone."<sup>11</sup> Thus, on 29 July 1921 Hitler was elected Chairman in a vote 543 to 1 in his favour.<sup>12</sup> His *Satzung des Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiter-Vereins* (Statutes of the National Socialist German Workers' Association), described as: "a first draft, the birth certificate so to speak, of the new type of leadership party"<sup>13</sup>, was accepted. The statute provided the first outline of the *Führerprinzip*; the new organisational and political structure of the Nazi Party. It stipulated that Hitler was to be Chairman with dictatorial powers, that the Executive Committee had to resign, that the party be purged of all alien elements, that the name or programme of the party could not be changed, that there could be no union with other parties, and that the absolute precedence of the Munich branch of the party had to be preserved.

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<sup>7</sup> Flood, p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Nolte, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche*, München: R. Piper, 1963, p. 446.

<sup>9</sup> Kershaw, *Profiles in Power: Hitler*, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Georg Franz-Willing, *Die Hitlerbewegung I: Der Ursprung 1919-1922*, Hamburg: R.V. Deckers Verlag, 1962, p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> *VB*, 11 August 1921.

<sup>12</sup> Auerbach, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht Tyrell, *Vom 'Trommler' zum 'Führer'*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975, p. 148.

Most debate surrounding Hitler's self-awareness and his role within the Nazi Party occurs during the period from July 1921 to November 1923. An examination of how he was referred to during this era is revealing. Already in 1920/1921 Hitler was occasionally referred to as *Führer* within the party, although usually only as one of the party's leaders together with Anton Drexler and Karl Harrer.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the title was quite explicitly linked to Hitler's leading position within the Nazi Party. The title "*Führer*" or the phrase "our *Führer*" became more popular after Hitler's election to party Chairman<sup>15</sup>, with the first public reference to Hitler's new role: "The *Führer* of the NSDAP" appearing in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 7 November 1921.<sup>16</sup> However, the meaning of the word *Führer*, leader or chairperson, did not change until after Mussolini's March on Rome in October 1922. At this point the term gained its new connotations. A direct comparison between Mussolini and Hitler was made by other members of the Nazi Party: "We also have Italy's Mussolini. He is called Adolf Hitler".<sup>17</sup> This idea was repeated at Hitler's birthday celebrations in April 1923 by Herman Göring: "Many hundreds of thousands are already imbued with the conviction that Adolf Hitler is the only man able to bring Germany back up once more."<sup>18</sup>

Wolfgang Horn makes the observation that: "National Socialist propaganda began the year 1923 by portraying the Führer as the herald and embodiment of German freedom".<sup>19</sup> This observation is pertinent for it explains such remarks as: "shining in everybody's eyes Hitler stood as the idea of the whole movement."<sup>20</sup>, Hitler is "the appointed leader of the new national Germany"<sup>21</sup>, as well as Alfred Rosenberg's April 1923 article, "Germany's Leader", which stated:

Crowds of despaired people have once again found a support in their lives, and men, who have been looking for a leader for the German people, are looking more and more expectantly to the man in Munich .... Today we can say the name Adolf Hitler has ... assumed for us this mystical sound.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *VB*, 9 September 1920.

<sup>15</sup> *VB*, 4 March 1922, *VB*, 13 March 1922, *VB*, 17 May 1922, and *VB*, 23 August 1922.

<sup>16</sup> *VB*, 7 November 1921.

<sup>17</sup> *VB*, 8 November 1922.

<sup>18</sup> *VB*, 22/23 April 1923.

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Horn, *Führerideologie und Parteiorganisation in der NSDAP 1919-1933*, Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> *VB*, 22 March 1923.

<sup>21</sup> *VB*, 8/9 April 1923.

<sup>22</sup> *VB*, 20 April 1923.

It seems this propaganda did have an effect on the Nazi leader. For, in a speech given on 4 May 1923 Hitler emphasised his faith in the *Führerprinzip*, and his role as a propagandist paving the way for the arrival of the *Führer*, but, more importantly, (foreshadowing the remarks he was later to make in *Mein Kampf*) he alluded to himself as a suitable person for role of *Führer*:

What could save Germany is the dictatorship of the national will and the national determination. Then the question arises: is there a suitable personality present? *It is not our task to look for this person.* He is either sent from heaven or he is not sent. Our task is to create the sword, which a person would need, when he arrives. *It is our task to provide the dictator, should he come, with a people that is ready for him.*<sup>23</sup>

Carr concludes that, prior to the November Putsch, Hitler had reached an intermediate position in his political development. He was certainly more than a "drummer" for the Nazi Party but had not yet reached the point where he was absolutely sure of himself as Germany's strongman of the future.<sup>24</sup> Hitler's superiority as an orator, his already dominant position in the Nazi Party, and the role in which the movement seemed to be casting him were all factors in this uncertainty.<sup>25</sup> The failure of the November Putsch, which had been foreshadowed by the failed Pittinger coup of August 1922, made Hitler realise that he could not put his trust in other people, even in General Ludendorff or General Hindenburg, both whom he had viewed as a possible leaders for the NSDAP. In fact, Kurt Ludecke warned after the Pittinger incident: "Gone was Hitler's conception of himself as the advance agent, the drummer-boy. On that day of disappointment he became the Führer .... This failure also altered his entire regard for the 'great' people toward whom he had previously shown a certain deference and humility."<sup>26</sup>

By the beginning of the Putsch trial, on 26 February 1924, Hitler's self-awareness had increased remarkably, revealed by the fact that he used the trial as a political platform. The prosecution, anxious to spare Ludendorff, whose prestige made him an unwelcome defendant in the dock, depicted Hitler as the prime mover in the Putsch. Hitler was only too happy to be identified as the real driving force behind

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<sup>23</sup> VB, 6/7 May 1923. [Hitler's own italics].

<sup>24</sup> Carr, *Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Hiden, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Kurt Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler: The Story of the Nazi Who Escaped the Blood Purge*, London: National Book Association, 1938, p. 61

the uprising, claiming full responsibility. This is illustrated in the following summary of his concluding speech before the Munich Civil Court:

By styling himself as the executor of the people's will, dramatically accepting all the blame of history and blaming the failures simply on the errors of Lossows and the Bavarian commissioner von Kahr, he succeeded in bringing about not only a very mild and honourable judgement, but also creating the platform that right wing radicalism in Germany would still have to see in him one of its most prominent leaders.<sup>27</sup>

With his claim to sole responsibility and the publicity that the trial received Hitler thrust himself past Ludendorff into the vacant position of leader of the entire *Volk* movement.<sup>28</sup>

The Nazi Party disintegrated into chaos soon after Hitler's imprisonment and his subsequent decision to give up the position of Chairman. This confirms his indispensability to the NSDAP. During his absence most of his followers lost interest in party activities, and those who remained active split into two main factions: In Bavaria the Greater German People's Association (GDVG) and in northern Germany the National Socialist Freedom Party (NSFP). The Nazi Party which Hitler confronted on his release from Landsberg was in a state of decline and organisational disaster. He had to decide whether to start rebuilding the party first in the north or in Bavaria. The GDVG had two assets which Hitler could not ignore: it controlled the remains of the Nazi movement in Munich, and it administered what was left of the party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Hitler therefore decided to create order in Bavaria first.

Two months after his release from prison Hitler gave his first public appearance presenting a speech entitled "A New Beginning". At the end of his speech Hitler asked that the Nazi Party to accept him as its unconditional leader for one year with the following words: "I am not willing to accept any conditions. Once again I take the responsibility for everything that happens in this Movement".<sup>29</sup> Hitler made rapid progress winning over the rival Bavarian leadership. By March 1925 the GDVG voluntarily dissolved itself, and within a few months Hitler had complete organisational control of the party in Munich.

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<sup>27</sup> Carr, *Hitler: A Study in Personality and Politics*, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974, p. 193.

<sup>29</sup> *VB*, 27 February 1925.

Hitler's next decisive move was to discredit Ludendorff, whom the NSFP looked upon as their leader. By endorsing Ludendorff in a hopeless campaign, the Presidential election of 1925, Hitler underlined his respect for the General, but at the same time, because of Ludendorff's certain defeat, highlighted his political impotence.<sup>30</sup> Hitler's last act in establishing himself indisputably as *Führer* of the Nazi Party took place at the Bamberg Conference on 14 February 1926. After a debate lasting five hours, in which Hitler was the only speaker, the NSFP, led by Gregor Strasser, was forced to choose between rejection of Hitler's leadership or acceptance of his self-deification. Without a meaningful alternative, the northern leaders had no choice but to accept Hitler's leadership.

The most valuable source of evidence on the *Führerprinzip* of the period from 1924 to 1926 is *Mein Kampf*, the first volume of which Hitler wrote while in Landsberg prison, and the second volume of which he wrote during the summer and autumn of 1925. Apart from his July 1921 statutes, *Mein Kampf* is the most concentrated source of information, although written in hindsight, which exists on the *Führerprinzip*. Most of his remarks on the topic are found in Volume II of his work, either in Chapter 8, "The Strong Man is Mightiest Alone", or Chapter 11, "Propaganda and Organisation". Hitler's thoughts on the principle of leadership can be broken into four main categories. First, he discussed the structure of the Nazi Party prior to July 1921, making the comment that "Strange as it may seem, this committee actually embodied what the party most wanted to combat, namely parliamentarianism".<sup>31</sup> Second, he outlined the way he thought the party should be structured:

The young movement is in its nature and inner organisation anti-parliamentarian; that is, it rejects, in general and in its own structure, a principle of majority rule in which the leader is degraded to the level of a mere executant of other people's will and opinion .... The leader is always elected, but thereby he is vested with unlimited powers of authority .... He makes the decisions and hence bears the responsibility on his shoulders.<sup>32</sup>

Third, he commented on the qualities he felt a leader required, including such stipulations as the need for a "basic philosophy"<sup>33</sup>, the necessity of "ability,

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<sup>30</sup> VB, 21 March 1925.

<sup>31</sup> Hitler, p. 535.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 312-13.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

determination, and perseverance"<sup>34</sup>, and "the combination of theoretician, organiser, and leader in one person".<sup>35</sup> He continued by stating: "it is my conviction that in general a man, aside from cases of unusual talent, should not engage in public political activity before his thirtieth year"<sup>36</sup>, and that "sometimes it will turn out that men inconspicuous in themselves must nevertheless be regarded as born leaders."<sup>37</sup> These were all qualities which Hitler had already displayed in his political career, and as Joel Hayward points out, his comments in *Mein Kampf* were unmistakably an attempt to establish his credentials as Germany's future *Führer*.<sup>38</sup> Fourth, and of most significance to this thesis, are Hitler's remarks about his changing role within the Nazi Party. He acknowledged his role as "drummer" or propagandist by saying: "As director of the party's propaganda I took much pains ... to prepare the soil for the future greatness of the movement".<sup>39</sup> He alluded to his conduct in July 1921 as follows:

The attempt of a group of folkish lunatics to obtain the leadership of the party, with the aid and support of the party chairman of the time, led to the collapse of this little intrigue, and at a general membership meeting, unanimously gave me leadership over the whole movement.<sup>40</sup>

The only other reference Hitler made to his role within the Nazi Party was to comment: "In the course of two years, I enforced my opinion more and more, and today it is taken for granted in the movement, at least in so far as the top leadership is concerned."<sup>41</sup>

Hitler's views, as expressed in *Mein Kampf*, suggest that the *Führerprinzip* was deeply entrenched in his overall *Weltanschauung* by 1926, evidence of this being his comment: "A movement which in a time of majority rule orients itself in all things on the principle of the leader and the responsibility conditioned by it will some day with mathematical certainty overcome the existing state of affairs and emerge victorious."<sup>42</sup> It seems that Hitler's imprisonment provided him with enough time to

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 317.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 528.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 527.

<sup>38</sup> Joel Hayward, "Die Grausame Göttin des Schicksals: An Examination of Fate in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*", Massey University, 1996. p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Hitler, p. 533.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 534.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 543.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 356-57.

reflect and to merge his role as propagandist with that of leader. Helmuth Auerbach explains: "In Landsberg he had the leisure to draw the consequences from his political years of apprenticeship and to put down on paper his creed and his future program."<sup>43</sup> Yet whether Hitler saw himself in the role of the *Führer* by 1926, as he himself described in *Mein Kampf*, is hard to determine with certainty. As Horn states: there is no date which pinpoints exactly when Hitler saw himself as Germany's future leader; a question like this de-emphasises the continual development of Hitler's self-awareness.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Auerbach, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> Horn, *Führerideologie*, p. 38.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: JEWS AND MARXISTS: A COMMON EVIL?

*"Jews and Marxists are Germany's only gravediggers."*

*Adolf Hitler, Völkischer Beobachter, 16 December 1922.*

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Historian Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski explained in his pamphlet, *Antisemitismus: Eine unparteiische Prüfung des Problem*, written in 1920, that he understood the strong anti-Semitic wave sweeping through Germany. He saw it as a reaction to the exaggerated position Jews held within society. The fact that Jews dominated the media, theatre, and economy in peace-time was the starting point. Their profiteering during the war, the large percentage of Jews in government, and most of all the fact that Jews appeared as the leaders of both the German and Russian revolutions further perpetuated this sentiment.<sup>1</sup> By way of introduction, Oppeln-Bronikowski's comments are particularly apt because they reveal the German public's anti-Semitism; the very anti-Semitism which Adolf Hitler believed in and used as a successful political vehicle.

This chapter will examine the development of Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric between 1920 and 1926 with specific focus on how he came to equate Jews with Marxists. The chapter will also determine the significance of anti-Semitism and Marxism to Hitler's overall *Weltanschauung*.

The term "anti-Semitism" was coined in 1873 by Hamburg journalist Wilhelm Maar. However, discrimination against Jews began much earlier. Even in biblical times Jews had a reputation within society as being bad citizens because of their strict observance of religious scriptures. Anti-Semitism developed slowly, but popular violence against Jewish communities began in earnest with the crusades in the twelfth century. During this period certain communities confined Jews to ghettos, forced them to wear special dress, excluded them from certain occupations and accused them of sins against the Christian Church. The origin of anti-Semitism in its modern political form can be traced to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, occurring as a result of the emancipation of Jews after the revolutions of the eighteenth century. Prior to these

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski, *Antisemitismus: Eine unparteiische Prüfung des Problems*, Charlottenburg, Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte G.m.b.H., 1920, p. 6.



revolutions Jews had been treated as second class citizens, incapable of challenging the status of others. However, with the Jews' new-found freedom, and the rapid political, social, and economic changes these revolutions brought about, Jews began to prosper. Those who did not like the new state of affairs blamed Jews, theorising that since they were obvious the beneficiaries of the changes they must have instigated them. This resulted in an attempt to push Jews back into their previous state of inferiority.

As explained above, anti-Semitism was not an invention of Hitler or the NSDAP. The Nazi leader even denies that he was always an anti-Semite. In *Mein Kampf*, he links the development of his anti-Semitism to his Vienna experiences, citing the following incident as the turning point: "Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? was my first thought."<sup>2</sup> He emphasised that it was only after a great deal of thought and wrestling with his conscience that he finally came to accept how evil Jews really were.<sup>3</sup> Michael McGuire claims: "This is the biggest lie in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was raised in an anti-Semitic family, had anti-Semitic teachers, and was raised to hate Jews."<sup>4</sup> However, there is no hard evidence, but merely supposition to prove that Hitler was lying.

It is widely accepted by historians that Hitler's anti-Semitic ideology was not unique to him, but that he was influenced by the numerous anti-Semitic writers who were in vogue in the post war era. The Nazi leader does not deny that he gained knowledge about Jewry by reading anti-Semitic literature. In fact, he said in *Mein Kampf*: "For a few hellers I brought the first anti-Semitic pamphlets of my life."<sup>5</sup> However, much debate has centred on exactly what the Nazi leader read. While this is impossible to establish with any certainty, some educated guesses can be made. For example, in his study of Hitler's 13 August 1920 speech, "Why We Are Against the Jews", Reginald Phelps argues that the influence of such works as Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* and Theodor Fritsch's *Guide to the Jewish Question*, as well as Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels' journal, *Ostara* are apparent in this speech.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Wilfred Daim in his book, *Der Mann, der Hitler Ideen gab*, claims that Liebenfels was the source of many of the Nazi leader's anti-Semitic ideas.

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<sup>2</sup> Hitler, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 52-60.

<sup>4</sup> Michael McGuire, "Mythic Rhetoric in *Mein Kampf*: A Structuralist Critique", *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 63, no. 1 (February 1977), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Hitler, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Reginald H. Phelps, "Hitlers 'Grundlegende' Rede über Antisemitismus", *VfZ*, vol. 16 (1968), pp. 395-99.

He asserts that Hitler met Liebenfels in 1909, and that it is not improbable that the pamphlets from which Hitler alleged he acquired his first ideas on the Jewish question were in fact issues of the *Ostara*. Members of Hitler's inner circle of friends such as Dietrich Eckart, Alfred Rosenberg, Max Erwin von Scheubner Richter, and Gottfried Feder, all known anti-Semites, are also cited by Phelps as having had an influence on the development of Hitler's anti-Semitism.<sup>7</sup> Yet, as Werner Maser explains,<sup>8</sup> perhaps the most important source of the Nazi leader's anti-Semitic ideology was *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a source which Hitler himself makes explicit reference to in *Mein Kampf*.<sup>9</sup> *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are the alleged minutes of a meeting at which the secret Jewish government outlines its plans for world domination. The authenticity of *The Protocols*, which Hitler himself doubted<sup>10</sup>, has never been proven, but the most common explanation is that they were the work of a Tsarist agent working in Paris in the 1890s.

As Ian Kershaw outlines, many historians claim that "hardly a speech or publication [of Hitler's] went by between 1920 and 1922 without the most concentrated vitriol being poured upon the Jews."<sup>11</sup> This is simply *not* the case. Out of a total of 21 speeches that the Nazi leader made in 1920 only four featured anti-Semitism as a main theme. This was actually typical of the period from 1920 to 1926; anti-Semitism was only one of a number of themes which the Nazi leader wrote and spoke about. It is also interesting to note that while Hitler described Jews as the enemy<sup>12</sup> and saw them as a threat<sup>13</sup> he apparently made only one explicit reference to their murder. This incident occurred, allegedly, in 1922 when Hitler was asked in confidence by one Josef Hell just what he would do to the Jews if he had his way. Hitler is said to have screamed: "If I am ever really in power, the annihilation of the Jews will be my first and foremost task."<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Hell's claim remains entirely unsubstantiated, and that Hitler's claimed comments are inconsistent with all his other statements from the period. The only other comment which mentions the

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Werner Maser, *Hitler's Mein Kampf: An Analysis*, trans. R.H. Barry, London: Faber and Faber, 1970, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup> Hitler, p. 279.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality the Third Reich*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 228.

<sup>12</sup> For example; *VB*, 22 August 1920, *VB*, 24 June 1920, *VB*, 26 April 1923, and *VB*, 16 August 1923.

<sup>13</sup> For example; *VB*, 21 August 1921, *VB*, 20 September 1922, and *VB*, 22 February 1923.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolph Binion, *Hitler Among the Germans*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1976, p.28. Binion references the quote to file IB7 Josef Hell ZS64016.

death of Jews is the following emotion-laden criticism in *Mein Kampf* of "cowards" and "communists":

If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.<sup>15</sup>

One of Hitler's most widely-cited anti-Semitic remarks is: "We therefore understand the iron words once pronounced by Mommsen: The Jew is the ferment of the decomposition of peoples."<sup>16</sup> In his survey of the language the Nazi leader used to describe Jews in *Mein Kampf*, Eberhard Jäckel quoted the following examples: "The Jew is the maggot in a rotting corpse", "he is a plague worse than the Black Death of former times", "a germ carrier of the worse sort" and "the drone which insinuates its way into the rest of mankind".<sup>17</sup> However, Hitler's hatred of the Jewish race, expressed, more often than not in extreme language, did not stop at mere name calling. Jews became the "scape-goat" in his rhetoric, responsible for everything he chose to attack. In other words they became his principal negative image. Hitler's August 1922 speech, "Free State or Slavery", is a particularly good example of how he made the Jew the total enemy. In this speech he blamed Jews for the "lying press", the bastardisation of German blood, labelled them Social Democrats, Communists, and Internationalist, said they were the creators of revolutions, and the leaders of the Workers' Movement. According to Jäckel, the Nazi leader believed that:

The Revolution of 1918 and the entire Weimar Republic were Jewish: Marxism and the Soviet 'dictatorship of blood' and, of course high finance were Jewish; the political parties of the Left were 'mercenaries of Jewry', and finally democracy, parliaments, majority rule, and the League of Nations were all Jewish as well.<sup>18</sup>

Hitler saw Jews as a potential threat to the German nation, but he also saw Jewry as a cunning propaganda ploy. In *Mein Kampf* he explained: "In general the art of all truly great national leaders at all times consists among other things primarily in not dividing the attention of the people, but in concentrating it on a single foe."<sup>19</sup> Thus, by telling

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<sup>15</sup> Hitler p. 620.

<sup>16</sup> *VB*, 22 April 1922.

<sup>17</sup> Jäckel, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Hitler, p. 108.

the German people that Jews were responsible for all the evils that befell them, Jews were singled out as the sole cause of Germany's problems.

The Nazi leader used Jewry as a general "scapegoat". However, Marxism became the central curse of Jews in his rhetoric. He was able to do this partly because of the political situation at the time. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was seen as a Jewish phenomenon, not only because the Russian Jew, Karl Marx, was the father of Marxism, but because the leaders of the revolt, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and specifically Lenin, were all Jewish. In Hungary the Jew Belá Kun was setting up his Soviet Republic with Jews serving as eight of his eleven commissars. Furthermore, the Spartacus uprising of January 1919 in Berlin led by the communist Jews, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht together with the Munich Soviet Republics of April 1919, led by Russian born Jews, Eisner, Toller, Landauer, Levin, and Leviné-Niessen were instrumental in imprinting a lasting fear of Marxism among the German public. Also, under the influence of Alfred Rosenberg and Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter, the connection between anti-Semitism and Marxism underwent a transformation in the Nazi leader's thinking, especially between 1920 and 1924. As Hellmuth Auerbach claims:

Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter and Alfred Rosenberg, who both knew the Russian communist revolution from their own experience, were in those years the most influential advisers of Hitler. They were to blame for the tough anti-communist stance of the NSDAP and the uncompromising equality of Bolshevism and Judaism.<sup>20</sup>

Hitler did not always equate Jews with Marxism, although both strands of thought had long been present in his mind, with anti-Semitism being the most dominant. The Nazi Party's *25 Point Programme*, announced on 24 February 1920, included such anti-Semitic points as Point 4: "None but the members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore may be a member of the nation."<sup>21</sup> As well as Point 8: "All further non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany subsequently to August 2, 1914, shall be required forthwith to depart the Reich."<sup>22</sup> Yet it made no explicit reference to Marxism, and especially not in association with Jews.

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<sup>20</sup> Auerbach, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> Baynes, p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

Before Hitler fused the ideas of anti-Semitism and Marxism, his early public speeches focused on Jews as capitalists and as war financiers. The heavy concentration upon Jewish finance capital in these early speeches was directly linked to Hitler's allegations that Jews were responsible for the war. However, by 1922 a change of emphasis had taken place. The Nazi leader came to view Jews as the main power behind Marxism. The crucial factor in this change of emphasis was the connection in his mind between Bolshevism and Jewry. An examination of Hitler's rhetoric between 1920 and 1922 highlights his preoccupation with Bolshevism in Russia. His comments at a National Socialist Party meeting held in June 1920 illustrate this:

What has the Bolshevik achieved in Russia? To incite the people to a point that it went on a rampage through the entire country. The consequences are that Russia is completely doomed to famine and misery, and responsible for all this are the Jews. What were Eisner, Levin, Toller and Co.? Nothing but Jews! Their only goal is to plunge all of Germany into misery. Hopefully the German people will come to its senses and fight the Jews.<sup>23</sup>

Hitler began warning the German public against the danger of Bolshevism in Germany. In his article, "The Beginning of the Jewish Dictatorship", printed in the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 5 June 1921, the Nazi leader stated: "and this has so far stopped the Jews from pursuing their ultimate goal, the 'inner bolshevisation' of Germany.... and the subsequent enslavement of our race."<sup>24</sup> A further example is a speech which Hitler gave in April 1922 at a National Socialist Party meeting. He explained: "The destruction of both national states Germany and Russia is attained; the Jewish state is already erected; in Russia the Jews rule .... Here the preparations are being made."<sup>25</sup>

By mid-1922, the Nazi leader began, publicly, to equate Jews directly with Marxism, as is illustrated by remarks such as "With two weapons the battle has been fought ... against our movement. They are the traditional tools of the Marxist movement and in a broader sense that of the Jews"<sup>26</sup>, and "Jews and Marxists are Germany's only gravediggers."<sup>27</sup> By the end of 1922 Hitler's public linkage of Jews and Marxism was complete. His rhetoric focused more and more on Marxism, but always with the inference that it was an evil closely associated with the Jew. This is

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<sup>23</sup> Deuerlein, "Hitlers Eintritt", pp. 213-14. 11 June 1920.

<sup>24</sup> VB, 5 June 1921.

<sup>25</sup> VB, 26 April 1922.

<sup>26</sup> VB, 22 November 1922.

<sup>27</sup> VB, 16 December 1922.

aply demonstrated by Hitler's 24 April 1923 speech: "And so the Jewish leader succeeded in hammering into the minds of the masses the Marxist propaganda".<sup>28</sup>

Due to the failed 1923 Putsch, Hitler's subsequent imprisonment, and the speech ban he incurred directly after his release from Landsberg, *Mein Kampf* remains the only other major source of information on this period. It can be established that his imprisonment led to a noticeable intensification of his anti-Semitism. This change is highlighted by an interview which Hitler gave on 29 July 1924. When asked by a visiting reporter at Landsberg prison whether he had changed his position concerning Jews, Hitler replied:

Yes, yes, it is quite right that I have changed my opinion concerning the methods to fight Jewry. I have realised that up to now I have been much too soft! While working on my book I have come to the realisation that in the future the most severe methods of fighting will have to be used to let us come through successfully.<sup>29</sup>

In the opening chapter of *Mein Kampf* Hitler established that he viewed Jewry and Marxism as a common evil. He stated: "In this period [the Vienna period] my eyes were open to two menaces of which I had previously scarcely known the names, and whose terrible importance for the existence of the German people I certainly did not understand: Marxism and Jewry."<sup>30</sup> He then outlined, after having spent much time examining the teachings of Marxism, just how dangerous this Jewish weapon was:

The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and its culture. As a foundation of the universe, this doctrine would bring about the end of any order intellectually conceivable to man. And as, in this greatest of all recognisable organisms, the result of an application of such a law could only be chaos, on earth it could only be destruction for the inhabitants of this planet.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Baynes, p. 60. 24 April 1923.

<sup>29</sup> Jäckel, p. 54. Jäckel references the quote to *Der Nationalsozialist*, no. 29, 17 August 1924.

<sup>30</sup> Hitler, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

Hitler justified his attack against Jews and their Marxist doctrine with the following often-cited statement: "*by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*"<sup>32</sup>

*Mein Kampf* does not provide new material on Jewry or Marxism. Rather, it incorporates the themes of the Nazi leader's speeches and articles prior to 1924. For example, Hitler still associates the Jew with Bolshevik Russia, using Russia as an example for the Germany nation to warn what will happen, first, if the German people do not realise the threat the Jew poses, and second, if they do not do something to prevent this threat. The following example is typical of the rhetoric in his autobiography:

*The danger to which Russia succumbed is always present for Germany. Only a bourgeois simpleton is capable of imagining that Bolshevism has been exorcised. With his superficial thinking he has no idea that this is the striving of the Jewish people for world domination .... He goes his way, the way of sneaking in among the nations and boring from within, and he fights with his weapons, with lies and slander, poison, and corruption, intensifying the struggle to the point of bloodily exterminating his hated foes. In Bolshevik Russia we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination.*<sup>33</sup>

After his release from Landsberg prison on 20 December 1924 Hitler's anti-Semitic outbursts become less frequent. In the closing speech of his Putsch trial he stated: "I want to be the destroyer of Marxism"<sup>34</sup>, yet he did not explicitly mention Jews. This comment foreshadows the dominance of Marxism and the lack of anti-Semitism in his rhetoric during 1925 and 1926. However, the implication that Marxism was closely linked to Jewry remained obvious. For example, in an article written on 26 February 1925 the Nazi leader asserted: "The whole strength of our movement is aimed at the two most dangerous enemies of the German people: Jewry and Marxism."<sup>35</sup> A day later he explained: "The success of our movement should not be measured by the number of federal and diet seats, but by the degree by which Marxism can be destroyed and by the extended enlightenment of its authority, the

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* [Hitler's own italics].

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 604. [Hitler's own italics].

<sup>34</sup> *Der Hitler Prozess vor dem Volksgericht im München*, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> *VB*, 26 February 1925.

Jews."<sup>36</sup> The Nazi leader's emphasis on Marxism as a Jewish phenomenon, but his lack of ardent anti-Semitism, became typical. For example, in a speech he gave in early March 1926 he explained:

The struggle against the evil power that plunged Germany into its misery, Marxism and the spiritual mentor of this world power, that is the aim of the old NSDAP. One can only fight a battle against a thing or a person ... [thus we must fight] against the Jew as a person and against Marxism as a thing.<sup>37</sup>

Hitler's lack of anti-Semitic rhetoric could have been due to one of two reasons, the first being that after the failure of the 1923 Putsch Hitler realised that entry to the *Reichstag* would have to be through legitimate political means, probably stemming more from his fear of deportation rather than from any new-found love of the democratic process. It is likely, however, that he realised his radical anti-Semitism was off putting for some voters, and thus toned down his rhetoric. The other explanation is more pragmatic, simply being that because Hitler was banned from speaking in public between March 1925 and March 1927 in Bavaria and until as late as September 1928 in other states, he did not get the opportunity to make so many anti-Semitic remarks.

The conclusion to be drawn is that anti-Semitism and its close association with Marxism was a central feature of the Nazi leader's world view. As Maser notes, by December 1926 anti-Semitism had clearly become a decisive factor in Hitler's thinking and from that time on was a permanent feature of his *Weltanschauung*.<sup>38</sup> In fact, one paper representing the views of the Jewish university fraternities attributed the growth of the National Socialist Party during the period from 1920 to 1925 predominantly to their anti-Marxist stance which was closely identified with their anti-Semitic views.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> VB, 27 February 1925.

<sup>37</sup> VB, 7 March 1926.

<sup>38</sup> Maser, *Hitler's Mein Kampf: An Analysis*, p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origin of the Third Reich*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 300.



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## CHAPTER SIX: THE THEORY OF *LEBENSRAUM*

*"We demand land and territory (colonies) for the nourishment of our people and for settling our surplus population."*

25 Point Programme, 1920.

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Adolf Hitler did not invent the theory of *Lebensraum*. Notions of living space and expansionism are deeply rooted within German history and thought. Ever since the Middle Ages, the "*Drang nach Osten*" (Push towards the East) had been an important factor in German life, from the trans-Elbean movement and the accomplishments of the Teutonic Knights to the colonisation of Bohemia and Silesia, the partitions of Poland, and the 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the writings of a number of well known German theoreticians, such as Georg Friedrich List, Friedrich Ratzel, and Friedrich Naumann, prove that *Lebensraum* theory was a well established German tradition before the Nazi Party came into existence.

The objective of *Lebensraum* theory is to remove the discrepancy between total population and total territory. This results in a greater resource of raw material and thus a better standard of living, as well as a greater power base and militarily stronger and more prestigious country. To achieve these goals, eastward expansion, especially in Poland, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine, is favoured. This was not only because of the age-old "*Drang nach Osten*" tradition, but because the East had an abundance of raw material, for example oil in the Caucasus and grain and heavy industry in the Ukraine. Furthermore, the East was populated by people of allegedly inferior stock, the Slavic race, which provided a suitable source of slave labour.

This chapter will outline how Hitler's views on *Lebensraum* evolved during the period from 1920 to 1926, and will determine the significance of this theory to his overall *Weltanschauung*. An examination of the Nazi leader's rhetoric illustrates that his ideas concerning *Lebensraum* were far from defined in 1920. In fact, he did not have a clear conception of the theory until as late as 1924. Wolfgang Horn explains:

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<sup>1</sup> Prange, p. 16.

"only in 1924 did Hitler put in to concrete terms his demands for 'land and soil'."<sup>2</sup> Detlef Greiswelle supports this view with the following comment: "After the re-establishment of the Party two central points of Hitler's ideology were added: the subject of *Lebensraum*, of which no mention was ever made before and in close relation to this 'the struggle for existence'".<sup>3</sup> Horn and Greiswelle's comments are especially apt for they emphasise the thesis that Hitler's *Weltanschauung*, in particular certain aspects of it, did not remain constant from 1920 onwards, but in some cases developed at a much later point and continued to evolve.

Although the term "*Lebensraum*" was not used by Hitler until he wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf* in 1924<sup>4</sup>, evidence does exist suggesting that the theory did begin to develop between the years 1920 and 1923. Prior to 1924 the Nazi leader's rhetoric focused on the idea of "*Grund und Boden*" (land and soil). During this period the Nazi leader had two main concerns. First, to keep all German people together within the boundaries of the German nation, and second, to acquire enough land to feed Germany's growing population. These concerns originated because of the injustices caused by the Treaty of Versailles which threatened to confiscate German territory such as Upper Silesia and the Ruhr region and had deprived Germany of her overseas colonies. The *25 Point Programme*, which Hitler helped draft, incorporates both of these concerns. Point One states: "We demand the union of all Germans, on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples, to form a greater Germany."<sup>5</sup> Point Three states: "We demand land and territory (colonies) for the nourishment of our people and for settling our surplus population."<sup>6</sup> These points, first announced on 24 February 1920, were still central to Hitler's *Weltanschauung* in April 1923, as he stated in a speech: "Our Movement put forward at the time of its foundation three demands: 1) cancellation of the peace treaty, 2) joining together of all Germans, 3) land and soil to provide food for our nation."<sup>7</sup> Further thought on this theme between 1920 and 1923 is also evident. For example, in an article written for the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 5 June 1921 Hitler stated: "Due to the peace treaty with Russia, food for Germany as well as the existence of work through the acquisition of land, supply of raw materials, and friendly relations between two countries should have been guaranteed."<sup>8</sup> In December 1922 the Nazi leader remarked in private conversation,

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<sup>2</sup> Horn, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Greiswelle, p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Lange, "Der Terminus *Lebensraum* in Hitlers *Mein Kampf*", *VfZ*, vol. 13 (1965), p. 426.

<sup>5</sup> Baynes, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *VB*, 19 April 1923.

<sup>8</sup> *VB*, 5 June 1921.

which foreshadowed the views he was to express two years later in *Mein Kampf*, that Germany "must go over to a purely continental policy, avoiding any damage to British interests" and aiming at "the dismemberment of Russia", which would provide "enough land for German settlers and a broad field of activity for German industry".<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, in a speech given on 27 April 1923, "The Paradise of the Jew or the State of the German People", Hitler remarked:

What we need if we are to have a real People's State is a land-reform .... We do not believe that the mere dividing up of the land can bring any alleviation by itself. The conditions of a nation's life can in the last resort be bettered only through the political will to expansion. Therein lies the essential characteristic of a sound reform.<sup>10</sup>

It is apparent from Hitler's rhetoric prior to 1924 that he was unsure of what path Germany's foreign policy relations, with regard to England, and in particular Russia, should follow. This uncertainty was undoubtedly a hindrance to the development of his *Lebensraum* theory. His intentions concerning relations with Russia during the period from 1920 to 1923 are hard to determine. The Treaty of Versailles and the Bismarckian foreign policy tradition meant that good relations with Russia were upheld as important, and that France and England were the designated enemy. Yet Hitler's anti-Semitism indubitably affected the way he viewed future relations with Russia. He saw Bolshevism as a Jewish curse, so, Russia, because of its Bolshevik rule, became an undesirable alliance partner. Evidence of this is Hitler's July 1920 speech, "Spa-Moscow-or-Us?", in which he stated: "A treaty between Russia and Germany is only possible if Judaism is removed."<sup>11</sup> Again, in an article, "Germany's Last Hope", written in March 1921, he made it clear that there could not be an alliance with Russia.<sup>12</sup> Further evidence of his indecisiveness towards Russia is that throughout the period 1920 to 1923 it was common to find anti-Bolshevik articles in the *Völkischer Beobachter*<sup>13</sup>, yet it was also common to find articles that maintained that the destruction of Bolshevism would make it possible for an alliance

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<sup>9</sup> Rudolph Binion, "Hitler's Concept of Lebensraum. The Psychological Basis", *History of Childhood Quarterly*, vol. 1 (Fall, 1973), p. 188. Binion references the quote to Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, R431/2681/88, 30 December 1922, E.A. Scharrer to Chancellor Cuno.

<sup>10</sup> *VB*, 28/29 April 1923.

<sup>11</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 308. 27 July 1920.

<sup>12</sup> *VB*, 6 March 1921.

<sup>13</sup> For example; *VB*, 11 August 1921, *VB*, 26 April 1922, *VB*, 16 December 1922, and *VB*, 20 October 1923.

between Russia and Germany to take place.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Hitler's uncertainty towards Russia, his view of England underwent a clear reversal in late 1922 early 1923. In the speeches he made between 1920 and 1921 England was equated with France as the enemy.<sup>15</sup> But, as historian Günter Schubert explains, after the occupation of the Ruhr region the difference between the way France and England treated Germany became suddenly apparent to Hitler, as did the possibility of an alliance between Germany and England.<sup>16</sup>

In his article, "Hitler's Concept of Lebensraum: The Psychological Basis" Rudolph Binion argues that it was only in 1924, beginning at his Putsch trial, continuing in a magazine article written in April 1924, and then in the fourth chapter of *Mein Kampf*, that Hitler really began to develop the theory of *Lebensraum* with specific reference to Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> Hitler's closing speech at the Putsch trial incorporates such aspects of the *Lebensraum* theory as the need for territorial expansion, a greater food supply, as well as the belief that the German nation, because of its superiority, needed to command a position of greater prestige. The Nazi leader stated:

The purpose of the State is to provide the people with its food-supply and with the position of power in the world which it is due. Germany occupies in Europe perhaps the most bitter situation of any people. Militarily, politically, and geographically she is surrounded by none but rivals: she can maintain herself only when she places a power-policy ruthlessly in the foreground.<sup>18</sup>

However, he does not specify that expansion should take place in the East, although he is more specific about his feelings towards England and France. He admits that England is not on principle an enemy of Germany, and that France because of her plan to annihilate Germany cannot be viewed as anything but the enemy.<sup>19</sup> His article, "Why Did an 8 November Have to Come?", printed in the April 1924 issue of the monthly *Deutschlands Erneuerung*, provides further evidence that the Nazi leader's *Lebensraum* theory was evolving. While the article contains information already

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<sup>14</sup> For example; *VB*, 6 March 1921, *VB*, 14 April 1921, *VB*, 10 June 1921, *VB*, 4 August 1921, and *VB*, 14 March 1923, *VB*, 16 March 1923, and *VB*, 28 July 1923.

<sup>15</sup> For example; *VB*, 11 July 1920, *VB*, 6 February 1921, and *VB*, 5 June 1921.

<sup>16</sup> Günter Schurbert, *Anfänge nationalsozialistischer Aussenpolitik*, Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1963, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Binion, "Hitler's Concept of Lebensraum", p. 188.

<sup>18</sup> Baynes, p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

discussed in previous articles and speeches such as the failure of the Bismarckian foreign policy tradition and Germany's political, economic and moral state since the Revolution of 1918, it also provides new foreign policy insights. He explains that Germany's land mass is no longer big enough to sustain the rapid increase of her population, meaning that if expansion into new territory is not possible increased industrialisation will be mandatory.<sup>20</sup> He continued by saying:

In foreign policy Germany had two choices: either the decision was made to forfeit maritime trade and colonies, and also over-industrialisation etc., but gain agricultural land; then Germany had to realise this was only possible together with England against Russia, or the aim was for maritime power and world trade, but that could only be considered if a treaty with Russia against England was concluded.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, by April 1924 it is clear that Hitler viewed England as a potential alliance partner, but at the same time realised that he must choose between England and Russia.

Both Hitler's Putsch trial speech and his article emphasised the need for territorial expansion and the continued evolution of his foreign policy plans, yet, despite Binion's remarks, they did not specify eastward expansion. This idea was first clearly expressed in Volume I of *Mein Kampf* published on 18 July 1925. Chapter 4, "Munich", contains the most detailed information on Hitler's theory of *Lebensraum*, connecting the idea of eastward expansion with the theory for the first time. It focuses predominantly on the ways in which Germany can provide for an ever increasing population. Hitler outlined four alternative methods. The first method was, following the French example, the artificial restriction of births<sup>22</sup>, with the second proposal being internal colonisation; that is, increased soil productivity.<sup>23</sup> However, Hitler found both of these alternatives equally unsatisfactory, stating:

The limitation to a definite small area of soil, inherent in internal colonisation, like the same final effect obtained by restriction of procreation, leads to an exceedingly

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<sup>20</sup> Horn, "Ein Unbekannter Aufsatz", p. 282. Horn references the quote to Adolf Hitler, "Warum musste ein 8. November kommen?", *Deutschland Erneuerung*, Erich Kühn (ed.), April 1924.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Hitler, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

unfavourable politico-military situation in the nation in question.<sup>24</sup>

This left two further possibilities for creating a balance between the rising population and the available land mass; "either a territorial policy, or a colonial and commercial policy".<sup>25</sup> Hitler then stated that he preferred the territorial solution: "The acquisition of new soil for the settlement of the excess population possesses an infinite number of advantages".<sup>26</sup> Having made it apparent that the acquisition of new soil was the most viable method he summarised that "the only possibility for carrying out a healthy territorial policy lay in the acquisition of new land in Europe itself"<sup>27</sup>, rather than the possession of colonies. He continued by explaining that "If land was desired in Europe, it could be obtained by and large only at the expense of Russia"<sup>28</sup>, and that "For such a policy there was but one ally in Europe: England".<sup>29</sup>

Horn writes: "The origin of *Mein Kampf* gave researchers cause for seeking the key to understanding Hitler's eastern policy and the *Lebensraum* ideology behind the walls of the castle of Landsberg."<sup>30</sup> The fact that Hitler's imprisonment, between April and December 1924, seemed to be the catalyst for the development of his *Lebensraum* theory caused great speculation among historians. They often over-looked evidence, however, that his *Lebensraum* theory actually began to develop prior to Landsberg, if only to a limited degree. The most common explanation offered by historians is that the geopolitician, Karl Haushofer, participated in Hitler's so-called brain trust during the writing of *Mein Kampf*. While it is probable that Hitler knew of Haushofer's studies and may have been influenced by the formal aspects of his theory, either directly from him or via his student, Rudolf Hess, it is a mistake to believe that Hitler's *Lebensraum* theory is identical to Haushofer's concept of geopolitics. It seems more likely, as Horn explains in his article, "Ein Unbekannter Aufsatz Hitlers aus dem Frühjahr", that while Hitler was in prison he had time to think, and thus, the opportunity to combine different theories from a number of origins with his experience of daily politics into a foreign policy programme.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> Horn, "Ein Unbekannter Aufsatz", p. 280.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 294.

Binion notes that Hitler's *Lebensraum* theory became the monotonous refrain of his writings and speeches from 1924 until he ceased publicising his theory when the elections of 1930 brought the Nazis to the forefront of German politics.<sup>32</sup> However, because he was banned from speaking after his 27 February 1925 public appearance, Volume II of *Mein Kampf*, written during 1925 and published on 11 December 1926, is the most useful source for tracing the further evolution of Hitler's *Lebensraum* theory.

Hitler's comments concerning the theory of *Lebensraum* are confined to Volume II, Chapter 14, "Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy". In this chapter a further development of the *Lebensraum* theory is apparent. While Hitler does not define the geographic boundaries his *Lebensraum* policy would require in order to be successful, he does suggest how much territory would be needed with the following comments.<sup>33</sup> First, Germany's *Lebensraum* had to be big enough to ensure self-sufficiency or autarky. He commented: "As a healthy relation we may regard only the condition which assures the sustenance of a people on its own soil" as a "viable natural relation between the nation's population and growth on the one hand and quality of its soil on the other hand".<sup>34</sup> Second, *Lebensraum* had to be big enough to afford military protection. He explained:

If a nation's sustenance as such is assured by the amount of its soil, the safeguarding of the existing soil itself must also be borne in mind. This lies in the general power-political strength of the state, which in turn to no small extent is determined by geo-political considerations.<sup>35</sup>

Third, *Lebensraum* had to be big enough to command prestige in the eyes of the world. The Nazi leader declared: "To be a world power .... it requires the size which nowadays gives its necessary importance to such a power".<sup>36</sup>

However, of greater importance in Chapter 14 is the fact that Hitler made *Lebensraum* theory the focus of his foreign policy. He states: "the highest aim of all foreign policy ... [is] to bring soil into harmony with the population".<sup>37</sup> He

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<sup>32</sup> Binion, "Hitler's Concept of Lebensraum", p. 188.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Staudinger, *The Inner Nazi: A Critical Analysis of Mein Kampf*, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1981, pp. 48-50.

<sup>34</sup> Hitler, p. 587.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 588.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 602.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 593.

re-emphasises this stance by declaring: "we National Socialists must hold unflinchingly to our aim in foreign policy, namely to secure for the German people the land and soil to which they are entitled on this earth."<sup>38</sup> He continues by explaining that: "Much as all of us today recognise the necessity of reckoning with France, it would remain ineffectual in the long run if it represented the whole of our foreign policy aim."<sup>39</sup> The Nazi leader makes it clear that he does not consider Russia a suitable alliance partner, but rather it is Russian soil that will be used to increase Germany's *Lebensraum*.<sup>40</sup> Finally he admits: "I have already designated England and Italy as the only two states in Europe with which a closer relationship would be desirable and promising for us."<sup>41</sup>

The theory of *Lebensraum*, therefore, was not always a central aspect of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. In fact, it was not expressed in any precise form until the writing of *Mein Kampf* in 1924. Rather, it began as "*Grund und Boden*" rhetoric in retaliation for the demands imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. However, as the theory evolved it came to be viewed as the second of Hitler's two main political objectives, the first being anti-Semitism. Sebastian Haffner neatly encapsulates Hitler's emphasis on *Lebensraum* and its significance to his overall *Weltanschauung* with the following statement:

Politics is the art of implementing a nation's vital struggle for its earthly existence. Foreign policy is the art of ensuring for a nation the amount and quality of living space it needs at a given time. Domestic policy is the art of procuring for a nation the power necessary for this, in the form of its racial quality and its numbers. In short, politics is war and the preparation for war, and war is mainly about living space.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 596.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 597.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 607.

<sup>42</sup> Sebastian Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler*, London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1979, pp. 78-79.



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## CHAPTER SEVEN: ARYAN SUPREMACY

*"If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be considered as the representative of the first group."*

*Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. I, 1925.*

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Promotion of the Aryan race began when racial philosophers, not satisfied with proclaiming the superiority of the white race over coloured races, erected a hierarchy within the white race itself. This instigated the myth of Aryan supremacy. Racial philosophers insisted that the term "Aryan" meant nobility of blood, incomparable beauty of form and mind, and superior breed. All civilisation, in their view, was the result of a struggle between the creative Aryan and the uncreative non-Aryan. Hitler's definition of the word "Aryan" in *Mein Kampf* encompasses these ideas:

All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan. This very fact admits of the not unfounded inference that he alone was the founder of all higher humanity, therefore representing the prototype of all that we understand by the word 'man'. He is the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times, forever kindling anew the fire of knowledge which illumined the night of silent mysteries and thus caused man to climb the path to mastery over the other beings of this earth. Exclude him - and perhaps after a few thousand years darkness will again descend on the earth, human culture will pass, and the world turn into a desert.<sup>1</sup>

An investigation of Hitler's articles and speeches prior to the writing of *Mein Kampf* highlights a lack of discussion on the topic of the Aryan race or its importance within National Socialist ideology. However, as historian Louis Synder claims, the idea of racialism was thought to be at the core of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*.<sup>2</sup> In order to establish when this facet of the Nazi leader's world view first began to develop this chapter will trace his belief in the Aryan as the "superman" of civilisation by examining

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<sup>1</sup> Hitler, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Louis L. Synder, *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, New York: Paragon House, 1989, p. 277.

his rhetoric on this subject between 1920 and 1926. It will also establish the importance of his belief in the Aryan race in relation to his overall *Weltanschauung* during this period.

The party's founding document, the *25 Point Programme* did not mention race; instead it touched on anti-Semitism. In fact, Nazi Party member Gottfried Feder stated, when explaining the *25 Point Programme*: "Anti-Semitism is in a sense the emotional foundation of our movement."<sup>3</sup> This anti-Semitic undercurrent is typical of any mention of the term "Aryan" in Hitler's rhetoric during the period prior to his imprisonment at Landsberg. If the term does appear it is always in association with Jewry; either to compare the Aryan work ethic with that of the Jewish work ethic, to blame Jews for attempting to destroy the German race, or to warn Germans to protect themselves against the cunning ploys of Jews. In, "Why We are Against the Jew", described as Hitler's first speech to develop a racial focus, he compared the Aryan worker with the Jewish worker in order to illustrate the strong German work ethic in contrast to the laziness of the Jew. He explained on 13 August 1920: "With the Jew it is different. He considers work a punishment. We, however, [consider it] a moral duty".<sup>4</sup> This emphasis was a popular feature of Hitler's rhetoric during the period prior to his autobiography. The following remarks from a speech he gave on 12 April 1922 provide a typical example of his opinions on the Aryan work ethic:

The Aryan regards work as the foundation for the maintenance of the community of the people amongst its members, the Jew regards work as the means of the exploitation of other peoples. The Jew never works as a productive creator without the great aim of becoming the master. He works unproductively, using and enjoying other people's work.<sup>5</sup>

During this period Hitler frequently blames the Jew for trying to destroy the German race. For example, in an article he wrote for the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 5 June 1921, "The Beginning of the Jewish Dictatorship", he accused Jews of using Bolshevism to attack the Aryan race. In the same speech he cursed Jews for the presence of Negroes in the Rhineland: "He [the Jew] wants to desecrate, to completely ruin our German race, that is why he offers the German women to the nigger in the Rhineland".<sup>6</sup> The French used Senegalese troops as part of their

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<sup>3</sup> Gottfried Feder, *Hitler's Official Programme*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1934, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 309. 13 August 1920.

<sup>5</sup> Baynes, p. 17. 12 April 1922.

<sup>6</sup> *VB*, 5 June 1921.

occupation forces in the Rhineland and Hitler blamed this occupation on the Social Democrats whom he viewed as Jews. In his 1921 May Day speech the Nazi leader warned: "He [the Jew] is the demon of the peoples, the symbol of the continuous destruction of peoples".<sup>7</sup> Hitler emphasised the need for Germans to stand up to Jews, commenting: "The greatest deed of our people is still imminent. To be the leader in the coming fight of the Aryan against the universal danger of the Jewish people."<sup>8</sup> It was also common for Hitler to associate the Aryan race with anti-Semitism: "Aryan and anti-Semites of all peoples unite to fight the Jewish race, the exploiter and oppressor of all the peoples."<sup>9</sup>

Although Hitler's remarks concerning Aryan supremacy were generally only an extension of his anti-Semitism up until 1924, occasional comments were made which foreshadowed the more specific theorising which appeared in *Mein Kampf*. In a speech, "Free State or Slavery", given on 28 July 1922, he said: "German blood on this earth is on the way to gradual exhaustion unless we pull ourselves together and make ourselves free!".<sup>10</sup> At his birthday celebrations in April 1923 he remarked:

Indeed no Jew can ever become a German. Would he want to become German, he would have to give up the Jew. And this he is not able to. He cannot achieve the inner Germanness and this is due to several reasons: 1) because of his blood, 2) because of his nature, 3) because of his will, and 4) because of his work. His work remains Jewish and continues to belong to the greater idea of the Jewish people.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from a few references Hitler made prior to 1924, it was not until he began writing *Mein Kampf* that he outlined his views on Aryan supremacy in any detail. In fact, the Nazi leader's views on race theory are confined to his autobiography, because there is no mention of his racial theorising in the articles and speeches which he was able to make after his release from prison. Historian Raymond McNinn argues that "race" is the basic theme of *Mein Kampf*.<sup>12</sup> In his book Hitler promotes the issue of race to a position of key importance, and in fact uses it as a means of explaining history. He stated: "it is the task of the folkish state to see to it

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<sup>7</sup> VB, 3 May 1921.

<sup>8</sup> VB, 26 April 1922.

<sup>9</sup> VB, 13 September 1922.

<sup>10</sup> VB, 2 August 1922.

<sup>11</sup> VB, 22/23 April 1923.

<sup>12</sup> Raymond G. McNinn, "Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: Origin Impact, Criticism and Sources", *Reference Service Review*, Spring (1985), p. 15.

that a world history is finally written in which the racial question is raised to a dominant position."<sup>13</sup> He continued by explaining that:

All great questions of the day are questions of the moment and represent only consequences of definite causes. Only one among all of them, however, possesses causal importance, and that is the question of the racial preservation of the nation. In the blood alone resides the strength as well as the weakness of man.<sup>14</sup>

At the base of the Nazi leader's theorising on race is the concept of racial purity. He attributed the decay of nations to a decline in racial purity. Therefore, in his opinion the fate of a nation depended upon its ability to prevent mixing between races.

Hitler maintained that the purer a nation became in its racial make-up the stronger it would be, because a purebred nation possessed as a natural endowment what he called the "herd instinct".<sup>15</sup> This herd instinct described a psychological attitude which guaranteed national unity and self-preservation. However, this instinct was only possible in the case of complete racial uniformity. As writer Hans Staudinger summarises: "according to Hitler, homogeneity of racial elements in the same nation made for national strength, heterogeneity of racial elements made for national weakness".<sup>16</sup> The Nazi leader continued by explaining that Germany's national unity was "no longer based on a unified racial nucleus"<sup>17</sup> because different races had lived side by side on German soil tearing it apart, causing it to lose the unity of national will together with the herd instinct. However, while Hitler believed this had prevented the old Imperial German Reich from establishing world domination<sup>18</sup>, he admitted that the racial strains which had remained unblended held great promise for the future. He explained: "This is the blessing of the absence of a complete blending: that today in our German national body we still possess great unmixed stocks of Nordic-Germanic people whom we may consider the most precious treasure for our future."<sup>19</sup> The Nazi leader does not seem to have realised that no such entity as a pure German race existed.

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 383.

<sup>14</sup> Hitler, p. 307.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>16</sup> Staudinger, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Hitler, p. 360.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 361.

There is little doubt that the racial theories expressed by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* were influenced by the works of Count Joseph Arthur Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Gobineau's thesis, as explained in his four-volume work *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, published in two parts in 1853 and 1855, established race as the driving force behind history. His theory was that civilisations rose and perished because of race. The degeneration of noble races, such as the Aryan race, from which all civilisations are derived, was brought about by intermixture with inferior races. Because Gobineau viewed human races as unequal in physiological and mental capacity, he believed that the whole course of history could be explained from a racial point of view. Chamberlain, whom Hitler met in September 1923, and actually mentioned by name in *Mein Kampf*<sup>20</sup>, reformulated many of Gobineau's views adding a *völkisch* slant. In his 1899 book, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, Chamberlain explained that world history was little more than the struggle between races. The two basic themes of his book were first, that those belonging to the Aryan race were the creators and bearers of civilisation, and second, that those belonging to the Jewish race were a negative racial and a disrupting, degenerative influence in history.

It was not only racial theory, but also social Darwinism which influenced the development of Hitler's views on the superiority of the Aryan race. Darwinian theory originated from the work of English naturalist Charles Darwin. In his 1859 study, *On The Origin of Species*, he explained the concept of evolution as a part of a long, gradual development from a lower to a higher form of life. This occurred as a result of the struggle for existence where only the fittest survived. The term social Darwinism was applied to the use of Darwin's teachings for social and political purposes. William Shirer asserts that the Nazi leader's views, as expressed in *Mein Kampf*, show a simplified grasp of social Darwinian ideology. In his book Hitler explained that nature had divided the peoples by blood and promoted only the breeding of superior stock, for Nature's will was to breed life to the highest level.<sup>21</sup> The struggle for existence, or the survival of the fittest, was seen by the Nazi leader as the agency of all progress, in nature and in human history. For this reason mating between higher and lower species was viewed as a blatant violation of the law of Nature.<sup>22</sup> He believed the result of racial crossing was the "lowering of the level of the higher races" and "physical and intellectual regression".<sup>23</sup> This prompted him to emphasise: "The man who misjudges and disregards the racial laws actually forfeits the

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 260.

happiness that seems destined to be his. He threatens the triumphal march of the best race".<sup>24</sup>

Like Gobineau and Chamberlain Hitler believed that the Aryan, by virtue of natural endowment, was superior to all other races. This superiority resided in the Aryan race's capacity for work, their fulfilment of public duty, their self-sacrifice, and their idealism. These qualities were not created by society, but rather they were genetically determined. Hitler saw the true German, the German with unpolluted blood, as being the Aryan, for the Aryan was the only race capable of creating culture.<sup>25</sup> However, he did realise that if the Aryan lost the urge for self-preservation, which had happened in the past, the race would be endangered. For this reason he maintained that race had to be the centre of national attention, that the Aryan race must be kept clean, that it was the state's duty to force the practice of modern birth control so that no diseased or weak people could reproduce, and that it must promote the teaching of racial knowledge in schools. He made the following stipulations in *Mein Kampf*:

What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children and the purity of our blood, the freedom and independence of our fatherland, so that our people may mature for the mission allotted [them] by the creator of the universe.<sup>26</sup>

Such comments made it apparent that Hitler was familiar with, and had borrowed from, the theory of eugenics, the study of human improvement by genetic means. In fact, Paul Weindling, a eugenics researcher, described *Mein Kampf* as having obvious eugenic undertones: "*Mein Kampf* stressed the need for Germans to restrict mating to only those of Aryan stock. It prophesied that inter-marriage would bring about degeneration with physical and intellectual regression".<sup>27</sup> But, Weindling went on to say that while racial hygienic schemes did influence Hitler's views, his concepts of race, science, and society remained distinctive.<sup>28</sup>

Similar to his earlier remarks in the *Völkischer Beobachter* Hitler made a point in *Mein Kampf* of emphasising the danger of Jews to the Aryan race. In his study of

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 263.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism 1870 - 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 397.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 491.

the book, Michael McGuire came to the conclusion that the Nazi leader pitted the Jew against the Aryan in particular because there was already a tradition of anti-Semitism throughout Europe, and because Jews were the only discernible concentrated ethnic minority in Germany at the time.<sup>29</sup> However, this does not seem an adequate explanation for the Nazi leader's ardent anti-Semitism, especially as he saw Jews as posing a real threat to the existence of the Aryan race. Furthermore, in *Mein Kampf* he openly stated: "The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew".<sup>30</sup> He went on to explain, as Werner Maser concluded "obviously not without envy and a sort of respect"<sup>31</sup>, that in "hardly any people in the world is the instinct of self-preservation developed more strongly than in the so-called 'chosen'".<sup>32</sup> He saw proof of this in the fact that the Jewish race had managed to survive over the centuries with little discernible change to character or intellect. Also, while it was common for Hitler to refer to people of Slavic, Mongoloid, or Negro origin as *Untermenschen* (inferior people) he never directly included Jews in this category. This suggests that the Nazi leader believed Jews were capable of competing with the Aryan, for the position of supreme race.<sup>33</sup>

The Nazi leader maintained that a racial struggle would have to take place in order for the Aryan to become the dominant race. However, this racial struggle was not between the white and black and yellow skinned people, but rather a struggle within the white races, namely between the Aryan and the Jew. Hitler was not concerned with "inferior races" such as those of Slavic, Mongoloid, or Negro origin because he did not consider them strong races; Jews in contrast he viewed as a strong race. Staudinger explains that Hitler saw "the Jew as the main danger to the Aryan world - to the purity of the Aryan races. The Jew became the prime antagonist of Aryanism. The Aryan was the creator; the Jew was the destroyer."<sup>34</sup> The Jew came to represent total "evil" in contrast to the Aryan who represented total "good". The ultimate aim of Jews was seen by Hitler as the lowering of the Aryan racial level. He warned:

Bear in mind the devastation which Jewish bastardisation visits on our nation each day, and consider that this blood poisoning can be removed from our national body only after centuries, if at all; consider further how racial disintegration drags down and often destroys the last

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<sup>29</sup> McGuire, *Mythic Rhetoric*, p. 157.

<sup>30</sup> Hitler, p. 272.

<sup>31</sup> Maser, *Hitler's Mein Kampf: An Analysis*, p. 158.

<sup>32</sup> Hitler, p. 272.

<sup>33</sup> Joel Hayward, Lecture, 24 May 1997, Massey University.

<sup>34</sup> Staudinger, p. 69.

Aryan values of our German people, so that our strength as a culture-bearing nation is visibly more and more involved in a regression .... This contamination of our blood blindly ignored by hundreds and thousands of our people, is carried out systematically by the Jew today.<sup>35</sup>

In order for the Aryan race to maintain its dominant position, fulfilling the ambitions Hitler intended for the race, Jews had to be driven out.

The Nazi leader's belief in the Aryan race became one of the guiding principles of National Socialist ideology. Yet, as a survey of his rhetoric illustrates, his belief in the supremacy of the Aryan race was not always a dominant part of his world view. In Hitler's earlier rhetoric there is little mention of the subject, and what mention there is simply an extension of his anti-Semitic views. In fact, he did not properly develop his racial theory until 1924 when the first volume of *Mein Kampf* was written, and it was not elaborated on in the two years after his release from prison. However, it can be summarised that Hitler viewed the development and promotion of the Aryan race, by which he understood the Germanic and Northern European civilisations, those capable of creating cultures, as central to his *Weltanschauung*. The following passage from *Mein Kampf* illustrates the importance he bestowed on the Aryan race:

*Anyone who speaks of a mission of the German people on earth must know that it can exist only in the formation of a state which sees its highest task in the preservation of the most noble elements of our nationality, indeed of all mankind, which still remain intact. Thus, for the first time the state achieves a lofty inner goal ... the task of advancing the highest humanity, given to the earth by the benevolence of the Almighty, seems a truly high mission.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hitler, p. 512.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 361-62. [Hitler's own italics].



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## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ROLE OF FAITH

*"Faith is harder to shake than knowledge, love succumbs less to change than respect, hate is more enduring than aversion, and the impetus to the mightiest upheavals on this earth has at all times consisted less in scientific knowledge dominating the masses than in fanaticism which inspires them and sometimes in a hysteria [drives] them forward."*

*Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, vol. I, 1925.*

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In his study, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler April 1922 - August 1939*, Norman Baynes makes the comment that:

Hitler's faith centres in the will of Providence as expressed in the experience of the German people; in the duty of self help man is to secure the help of God; in the supreme power of an undaunted faith, which can believe that disaster may be sent to nations as chastisements with the purpose of bringing them to self realisation and a change of heart.<sup>1</sup>

This comment brings to the fore the importance of faith as an aspect of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. In attempt to establish how the Nazi leader's concept of faith developed and what part it played in his overall world view this chapter will examine his rhetoric between 1920 and 1926 on organised religion, the concept of "will", as well as the use of such terminology as "Destiny", "Fate", "Heaven", "God", "Providence", and "the gods".

After an examination of Hitler's written and spoken words on organised religion, Baynes notes: "There is little in Hitler's speeches and articles on the subject of Christianity or the treatment by National Socialism of Christian Churches."<sup>2</sup> This is especially true of the period from 1920 to 1926. In fact, the *25 Point Programme*, announced on 24 February 1920, is very much an exception. Point 24 of the programme states:

We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the State, so far as they are not in danger to it and do not

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<sup>1</sup> Baynes, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 365.

militate against the moral sense of the German race. The Party as such stands for positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish materialist spirit within and without us, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on principle: the common interest before self interest.<sup>3</sup>

The programme clearly outlines how the NSDAP viewed organised religion. It did not discriminate against any religion in particular (except, of course, Judaism) and was in fact quite tolerant, even emphasising that organised religion had positive attributes to offer. Yet, while it is undisputed that Hitler was involved in the writing of the party's programme, the programme also drew on the ideas of Dietrich Eckart, Alfred Rosenberg, and Gottfried Feder. Thus, it is impossible to establish with certainty to what degree Hitler supported the Nazi Party's views on organised religion at the time the programme was announced.

Hitler very rarely made reference to organised religion in his speeches or articles during the pre-Putsch period. However, a memorable exception was his speech, "On Behalf of Christ", given on 12 April 1922, in which he indirectly compared himself to Jesus Christ. He stated:

For as a Christian I have also a duty to my own people. And when I look on my people I see it work and work and toil and labour, and at the end of the week it has only for its wage wretchedness and misery. When I go out in the morning and see these men standing in their queues and look into their pinched faces, then I believe I would be no Christian, but a very devil if I felt no pity for them, if I did not, as did our Lord two thousand years ago, turn against those by whom today this poor people is plundered and exploited.<sup>4</sup>

While much has been made of this oft-quoted speech by historians, it was in fact an isolated incident. Hitler never again publicly compared himself to Jesus Christ.

The only real source of information concerning the Nazi leader's opinion on organised religion during this period is *Mein Kampf*, in which he had surprisingly little to say. The following comment best expresses his stance towards the Church:

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> *VB*, 22 April 1922.

Its [the Nazi Party's] task is not a religious reformation, but a political reorganisation of our people. In both religious denominations it sees equally valuable pillars for the existence of our people and therefore combats those parties which want to degrade this foundation of an ethical, moral, and religious consolidation of our national body to the level of an instrument of their party interests.<sup>5</sup>

This passage is very similar to the party's *25 Point Programme* in that it respects organised religion and that it emphasises its value, in particular its unifying effect. However, instead of providing "liberty for all denominations" as outlined in the *25 Point Programme*, Hitler specifies just two denominations: Protestants and Catholics. He focuses predominantly on these denominations in his autobiography with such comments as: "In the ranks of the movement the *most devout Protestant* could sit beside *the most devout Catholic* without coming into the slightest conflict with his religious convictions."<sup>6</sup> However, from his remarks it is clear that he approves of the Catholic Church to a greater degree than the Protestant Church. For example, the Nazi leader noted that he admired the celibacy of the Catholic priests as well as the propagandist features of Catholicism, and that he respected the Catholic Church for "rigidly holding to dogmas once established"<sup>7</sup>, because this was what he felt led people to develop faith. In contrast, while he saw "Protestantism as such a far better defender of the interests of Germannism", he felt it failed when it had to take a stance on an issue which was "absent from the general line of its ideological world and traditional development".<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of *Mein Kampf* there is not a great deal of information available in the period that followed Hitler's release from Landsberg prison. However, despite the speech ban that he incurred during this period, the Nazi leader was able to make a number of public appearances at either closed party meetings or in the few states which had not imposed a ban on his public speaking. Like the pre-Putsch era the Nazi leader did not have a much to say about organised religion. However, not dissimilar to the startling speech he gave on 12 April 1922, was the following statement he made at a party meeting on 12 December 1925:

We National Socialists see in the work of Christ the possibility to reach something tremendous through a fanatical belief. Christ was born into this rotten world,

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<sup>5</sup> Hitler, pp. 313-14.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 514. [Hitler's own italics].

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 432.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

preached his beliefs, was laughed at first and despite this, out of his belief was born a great world movement. We aim to do the same on a political stage. The one belief that every National Socialist carries in his heart is that no worldly power will be able to destroy our work, if we pursue our goal with an iron energy, perseverance and total faith.<sup>9</sup>

At this meeting Hitler illustrated the power which faith could command by demonstrating the strength of people's faith in religion. He explained that the NSDAP needed people to have the same degree of faith in them as they had in Jesus Christ, and that if this could be achieved it would make them invincible.

Apart from the *25 Point Programme*, *Mein Kampf*, and a few isolated speeches Hitler did not emphasise organised religion in his rhetoric during his early political career. However, this does not mean that he viewed the concept of faith as insignificant. In fact, a speech he gave in April 1922 illustrates the importance he bestowed on faith:

What then have you got to give your people as a faith which it might cling? Nothing at all, for you yourselves have no faith in your own prescriptions. That is the mightiest thing which our Movement must create: for these widespread seeking, and straying masses, a new faith.<sup>10</sup>

The Nazi leader realised the power faith could command and included the concept in his rhetoric on a regular basis. The following examples provide a mere selection of the way he incorporated the idea in his articles and speeches. In a speech he gave on 28 July 1922 he explained: "We are convinced, and that in the last resort is our great faith, that out of the bitterest distress and this utter misery the German Reich will rise again".<sup>11</sup> In early May 1923 he declared:

we must make our own the faith that gradually victory must be granted us if only we are fanatical enough. And from this love and faith there emerges for us the idea of hope .... We have both the hope and the faith that Germany will and must once more become great and mighty.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *VB*, 17 December 1925.

<sup>10</sup> *VB*, 22 April 1922.

<sup>11</sup> *VB*, 2 August 1922.

<sup>12</sup> *VB*, 3 May 1923.

Three months later he explained: "We have too little faith and love! Rather we should have too much faith and love: we need an excess of national fanaticism."<sup>13</sup> On 27 February 1925 he stated: "This brings us to the basic question, the answer to which holds the fate of the German nation. And the question is, will it still be possible in Germany to reintegrate the masses who have lost faith in their own nation ...?"<sup>14</sup>

Hitler explained in *Mein Kampf* that: "Without clearly delimited faith, religiosity with its unclarity and multiplicity of form would not only be worthless for human life, but would probably contribute to general disintegration."<sup>15</sup> Thus, it was in all likelihood from his observations of organised religion that he realised the power faith could command. Yet the Nazi leader's concept of faith did not have a religious base. Instead he believed in the power of "will" and of the guidance of divine intervention.

From outset of his political career Hitler used the term "will". In fact, Alan Bullock said: "No word was more frequently on Hitler's lips than 'will'."<sup>16</sup> Joseph Stern reiterated this view by stating: "The language of 'Will' informs Hitler's speeches and writings throughout his entire public career."<sup>17</sup> While the origin of this concept is common place in the history of ideas, it is probably from the writings of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche that Hitler first came across this vocabulary. As Stern explains:

It seems that 'the Will' is for Hitler what, in German popular mythology, it was for Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: the agent of a law of nature and of history, an all encompassing metaphysical principle; in short, creator of the world and all that is in it. This certainly is the mythology whose language he uses and to which he unreservedly appeals. And numerous historians, English as well as German, have accepted Hitler's claim (the sincerity of which we have no reason to doubt) that his possession of a superior 'Will' is the key to his successes.<sup>18</sup>

In the Nazi leader's speeches and writings he continually promoted the idea that will was a powerful concept. This belief is aptly illustrated by the following

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<sup>13</sup> *VB*, 1 August 1923.

<sup>14</sup> *VB*, 27 February 1925.

<sup>15</sup> Hitler, p. 345.

<sup>16</sup> Bullock, p. 350.

<sup>17</sup> J.P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 70.

remark from *Mein Kampf*: "if they had seriously believed in what they were doing, they would have had to recognise that the strength of a nation lies primarily, not in its weapons, but in its will."<sup>19</sup> The Nazi leader wanted the German people to have faith not only in his will, but in the power of their own will. He believed that this conviction would help Germany better its circumstances. This emphasis is apparent in Hitler's speeches from as early as 1920. For example, in a speech he gave on 22 September 1920 he said: "Although our misfortune is big, so to is the iron will that will break through this misfortune and misery."<sup>20</sup> In May 1921 he said: "There is something which exists that is bigger than the destruction caused by of this nations leaders. The will of the people to live."<sup>21</sup> Two years later he claimed:

Time will have to produce one thing: a holy will in the entire population, a will wanting to eliminate what caused the misery of our people. It must become their will that things will change. And if it is their will, then things will change for Germany.<sup>22</sup>

Hitler also promoted faith in the will of the Nazi Party. This emphasis first became obvious in 1923 and became ongoing. For example, he declared in early July 1923 that: "Our Movement knows that what we are doing is important. This will and this belief will make Germany free again."<sup>23</sup> At a closed membership meeting in May 1926 he asserted: "The only movement which has the strength of will to make Germany free again ... is the NSDAP."<sup>24</sup> These comments were typical of the remarks Hitler made to convince the German public of the Nazi Party's convictions.

It is also common, from the beginning of Hitler's political career, to find reference to such terminology as "Fate", "Destiny", "God", "Providence", "Heaven", and, "the gods" in his rhetoric. These terms were used interchangeably or as synonyms, disregarding philosophical meaning and without biblical connotation. Werner Maser believes that the Nazi leader used these terms in the "same sense as the Stoics; to whom ... [this terminology] denoted the power that holds sway over men's lives, a power that foresees everything and preserves and guides the world it has created."<sup>25</sup> An examination of the way in which Hitler deploys divine terminology in *Mein Kampf* seems to verify this notion. The Nazi leader explains major events or

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<sup>19</sup> Hitler, p. 622.

<sup>20</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 322. 22 September 1920.

<sup>21</sup> *V/B*, 15 May 1921.

<sup>22</sup> *V/B*, 26 April 1923.

<sup>23</sup> *V/B*, 4 July 1923.

<sup>24</sup> *V/B*, 13/14 May 1926.

<sup>25</sup> Maser, *Hitler*, p. 175.

decisions in his life by attributing them to divine intervention. For example, he believed that Fate determined his place of birth: "Today it seems to be providential that Fate should have chosen Braunau on the Inn as my birthplace."<sup>26</sup> The Nazi leader claims to have learnt many of the basic principles of his *Weltanschauung* in Vienna after losing his mother and failing to gain entrance to the Vienna Academy of Art because of Providence:

what then seemed to be the harshness of Fate, I praise today as wisdom and Providence. While the Goddess of Suffering took me in her arms, often threatening to crush me, my will to resistance grew, and in the end this will was victorious.<sup>27</sup>

Divine intervention is accredited with granting Hitler the right to fight for Germany in World War One: "I think back with proud sadness on those first weeks of our people's heroic struggle, in which Fate graciously allowed me to take part."<sup>28</sup> He felt that it was Fate that convinced him to become involved in politics: "in the days that followed, my own Fate became known to me ... I, for my part, decided to go into politics."<sup>29</sup> Finally, Hitler believed that it was Fate that persuaded him to join the German Workers' Party.<sup>30</sup> Throughout *Mein Kampf* the Nazi leader praises Fate, Providence, God, Heaven, Destiny or the gods for having put him in the right place at the right time. In fact, Joel Hayward in his study of the role of Fate in *Mein Kampf* comments that: "Fate repeatedly intervened to open [Hitler's] eyes to truths hidden from most men."<sup>31</sup>

So far this section has concentrated solely on how Hitler used divine terminology in his autobiography, but, as has already been stated, this terminology was always a feature of the Nazi leader's written and spoken language. The following examples provide a sample of the way divine terminology was used in his rhetoric. For example, in August 1920 the Nazi leader said: "the greatest Goddess on earth who oppresses man is the Goddess called Misery."<sup>32</sup> In an article written for the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 8 February 1921 he claimed: "We have no right to sell the destiny of our children and our children's children."<sup>33</sup> In the Nazi leader's 1923 May

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<sup>26</sup> Hitler, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> Hayward, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Phelps, "Hitler als Parteiredner", p. 308. 13 August 1920.

<sup>33</sup> *VB*, 8 February 1921.

Day speech he said: "We believe that some day Heaven will unite all Germans in one Reich, not under the Soviet star or the Jewish star of David, but under the Swastika".<sup>34</sup> At the concluding speech at his Putsch trial he stated:

You may declare us guilty a thousand times, but the Goddess who presides over the Eternal Court of History will with a smile tear in pieces the charge of the Public Prosecutor and the judgement of the Court: for she declares us guiltless.<sup>35</sup>

Faith played a significant role in Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. The Nazi leader placed little emphasis on organised religion, perhaps because he viewed it as a ideology which competed with his own. Yet from his observations of the Church he did realise that faith was important, for it was what kept the people together. However, the Nazi leader's faith was not religious in nature. Rather, his faith centred in the power of "will" and the guidance of divine intervention. Hitler's belief in will-power is hard to establish with certainty, beyond stating that the concept featured dominantly in his rhetoric. However, some historians feel, as Bullock explains, that: "His strength of personality, far from being natural to him was the product of an exertion of will ... and [that] his whole career from 1919 to 1945 [was] a remarkable achievement of will-power."<sup>36</sup> From the outset of his political career the Nazi leader tried to convince the German people to have faith in their own will, and by 1923 began emphasising in earnest the need for them to have faith in the will of the Nazi Party. His use of divine terminology always had a prominent role in his written and spoken language. However, like the concept of will, it is difficult to explain. It seems, especially from the views Hitler expressed in *Mein Kampf*, that he had strong faith in divine intervention, and that divine intervention was what guided him, giving him the will to succeed. As Hayward explains:

The future Führer ... considered this theme central to the *Weltanschauung* expounded in *Mein Kampf*. He introduced it in his very first sentence and developed it steadily and emphatically throughout the following 780 pages, leaving readers with no doubts about his belief in verity.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, it can be established that faith, although not of a religious kind, was a central facet of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. However, unlike other aspects of the

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<sup>34</sup> VB, 3 May 1923.

<sup>35</sup> *Der Hitler Prozess vor dem Volksgericht im München*, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Bullock, p. 350.

<sup>37</sup> Hayward, p. 14.



Nazi leader's ideology it does not seem to have evolved. Rather, it remained constant suggesting that Hitler's faith in himself; that is the power of his will, and his belief in having been selected by divine intervention, was what drove him forward.

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## CONCLUSIONS

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This thesis establishes that acceptance of the received wisdom is an oversimplified means of explaining the genesis of Adolf Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. His world view was not a fixed ideological entity. Rather, it underwent continual change and development throughout his entire early political career. An examination of the Nazi leader's thoughts and opinions as revealed by his rhetoric between 1920 and 1926 illustrates that his theories and concepts evolved according to his personal experiences as well as the political, economic, and social milieu of the era.

Hitler's rise to *Führer* of the Nazi Party and the development of the *Führerprinzip* as an important facet of his *Weltanschauung* occurred as his self-awareness grew and his circumstances within the Nazi Party changed. He did not join the German Workers' Party with the intention of becoming its *Führer*. Rather, his advancement to the position of leader took place gradually as his importance within the party as a propagandist grew; due to the increased responsibility he gained after the leadership dispute of 1921; as a result of the role in which the movement cast him; the prominence to which he rose during the Putsch trial; and his efforts in rebuilding the party after his release from Landsberg. Thus, it is apparent that this aspect of Hitler's ideology was shaped not so much by external, but internal influences, as well as by the growth of his own confidence.

This is not to suggest, however, that Hitler never found himself influenced by the events of the era. His attitude towards democracy and the parliamentary system as well as his equation of Jews with Marxism were directly influenced by the changing political, economic, and social situation within Germany. The instability of the Weimar Republic caused Hitler to hate the principles of democracy. Throughout the period he repeatedly asserted that a majority system of government could not command authority and was not able to provide for the German people. After Walter Rathenau's appointment to the *Reichstag* in May 1921 he even began claiming that democracy was a Jewish curse, and by 1923, prompted by the occupation of the Ruhr region, rising inflation and crippling reparation payments, he called for an alternative to the parliamentary system. However, after his release from Landsberg, where he was sent because of his failed attempt to overthrow the government, he decided to gain power through legal means. Although this shift in opinion seemed to contradict his attempted Putsch, the comments he made at the subsequent trial, and the opinions he expressed

in *Mein Kampf*, he did not actually alter his stance towards the parliamentary system. Instead, he was attempting to prevent his deportation and establish a political platform for the Nazi Party within an environment which had stabilised due to the adoption of the Dawes Plan.

The changing climate of the era had a similar effect on Hitler's views concerning Jews and Marxists. The connection he made between Bolshevism and Jewry was largely due to the events of the period, particularly the political situation in Russia, which he closely observed throughout his early political career. The political situation — that is the Russian revolution led predominantly by Jews such as Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev; the Soviet Republic in Hungary headed by the Jew Belá Kun; the Spartacus uprising in Berlin organised by the communist Jews, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; and the Munich Soviet Republics under the leadership of such Russian born Jews as Eisner, Toller, and Levin — meant that it was easy for Hitler to make the connection between Jews and Marxists, and to convince the German public that Marxism was a Jewish phenomenon. The Nazi leader was also greatly influenced by Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter and Alfred Rosenberg, members of the Nazi Party who had experienced the revolution in Russia at first hand, and who no doubt emphasised the connection between Bolshevism and Judaism to the Nazi leader. By 1922 Hitler had come to view Jews as the main power behind Marxism and publicly asserted this claim.

Having said this, it is clear that Hitler did not remain preoccupied with contemporary issues. This is illustrated by his change in focus, after his Putsch trial in early 1924, on such topics as hatred towards France, the injustices caused by the Treaty of Versailles, and the irresponsibility of the "November Criminals". Prior to the Putsch many of the subjects he incorporated in his rhetoric reflected the climate of the era together with his interpretation of these issues rather than his own ideology. During his incarceration he began writing *Mein Kampf*, in which he outlined his *Weltanschauung* in detail instead of concentrating principally on contemporary issues. This emphasis continued after his release from prison. His decision to enter the *Reichstag* legally saw him take on more responsibility within the movement, meant he had to focus his attention on rebuilding the Nazi Party, assert his role as leader, and develop a national political platform.

The time that Hitler spent in prison was perhaps the most important phase in his development. It gave him time to reflect on previous experiences and gather his thoughts, producing his first serious political theorising in the form of *Mein Kampf*. In

fact two key elements of his world view originated during this period: the theory of *Lebensraum* and the notion of Aryan supremacy. The theory of *Lebensraum* did not always play a dominant role in Hitler's writings and speeches. It began as "*Grund und Boden*" rhetoric in retaliation for the demands imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, with the main emphasis being that all members of the German nation were to be kept together and that Germany should retained enough land to provide for its population. It was not until the first volume of *Mein Kampf* appeared in 1924 that the theory of *Lebensraum* was outlined in any detail. After rejecting a number of possible alternatives, Hitler stated that eastward expansion into Russia was the only viable solution to Germany's lack of living space. In the second volume of his book a further evolution of the theory is apparent. The Nazi leader explained that Germany's living space had to be big enough for self-sufficiency, to afford military protection, and to command world prestige. *Lebensraum* theory was also made the central focus of his foreign policy strategy.

Like the theory of *Lebensraum* Hitler's views on Aryan supremacy first developed with the writing of his autobiography. Prior to 1924 his comments regarding Aryan supremacy were merely an extension of his anti-Semitism. However, race became a key issue for Hitler with the writing of *Mein Kampf*. Influenced by the works of Gobineau and Chamberlain, as well as social Darwinism and eugenic theory Hitler believed the Aryan to be the "superman" of civilisation, the so-called founders of culture. However, in order to preserve this position of supremacy racial purity had to be maintained. For this reason Hitler believed that race was an issue which had to be raised to the centre of national attention. He explained that modern birth control had to be practiced so to prevent reproduction in diseased or weak people, and that teaching of racial knowledge had to be promoted in schools. He also believed that Jews posed a very real threat to Aryan supremacy. Unlike other inferior races, or *Untermenschen*, Hitler saw Jews as a strong race, able to compete with the Aryan race for supremacy. It was this belief which advanced his anti-Semitism more than any other.

While the facets of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* mentioned above show clear evolve between the period from 1920 to 1926, a paucity of evidence prevents the same solid conclusion being drawn with regard to the development of his propaganda technique. Hitler was the Nazi Party's first propagandist and the party's growth during the period was largely due to his publicity exploits. On the surface such features of the Nazi leader's propaganda as the "mass meeting" and the "party newspaper" certainly underwent change, but it is difficult to establish whether this was because an evolution

in Hitler's propaganda theory took place, or whether an increase in party funds allowed for better advertising, covered the costs of hiring larger halls, and enabled the purchase of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

Lastly, one aspect of Hitler's world view certainly did not evolve, perhaps the most personal and ideological facet, his belief in faith. Although the Nazi leader placed little emphasis on organised religion, faith was of great significance to him. His faith centred in the power of "will" and the guidance of divine intervention. While it is impossible to establish with certainty to what degree Hitler was influenced by his belief system, it seems, especially from the views expressed in his book, that his faith undeniably guided him, giving him the will to succeed.

To sum up, then, this thesis clearly shows that Hitler's *Weltanschauung* was not set in stone from the moment he entered the political arena. The Nazi leader did not have an unalterable world view. Instead, he was quite pragmatic in his outlook. His theories and concepts changed and developed in accordance with his personal experiences and the ever changing political, economic, and social events of the era. The received view does not allow for this development. Rather, it presents Hitler as a "cardboard caricature"; a man without substance or depth. To ignore Hitler's thoughts and reactions to the environment around him is to analyse him out of context. This thesis shows that Hitler was indeed a product of his times, shaped and moulded by the events of the era. For this reason, the Nazi leader cannot be examined in an historical vacuum. Thus, the question is raised: can, or should Hitler be judged without also judging the period in which he lived?

Perhaps what this study emphasises more than anything is that there is still much to be learnt about Hitler and the Third Reich. Despite the substantial amount of literature published in this field many unanswered questions remain. As journalist Marlis Steinert recently commented: "Hitler was, and remains a problem with which historians are by no means finished."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18/19 October 1997, p. 139.

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