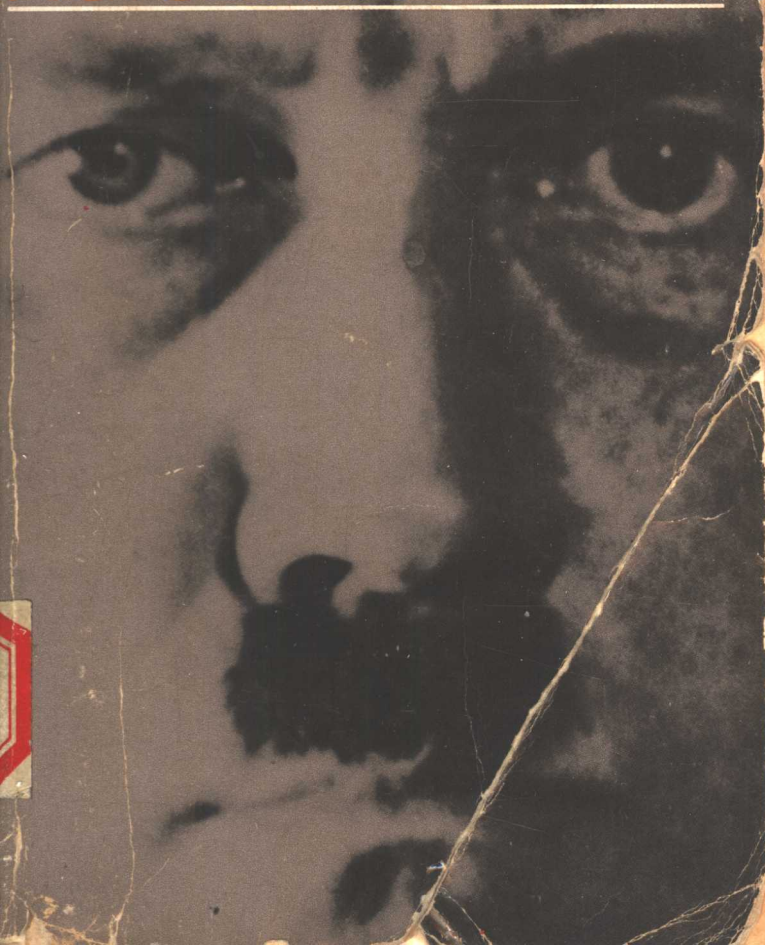


Abridged Edition

ALAN BULLOCK

HITLER

A STUDY IN TYRANNY



Hitler

A Study in Tyranny

by ALAN BULLOCK

Abridged Edition



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To My Mother and Father

HITLER: A STUDY IN TYRANNY

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PREFACE TO THE ABRIDGED EDITION

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Mildred Owen for the skill she has shown in reducing my original text to its present form. She has done this without sacrificing any of the essential parts or the over-all balance of the book, and I am very well satisfied to see it published in this abridged edition.

When I first published my study of Hitler, I said in the preface that I had started with two questions in mind. The first, suggested by much that was said at the Nuremberg Trials, was to discover how great a part Hitler played in the history of the Third Reich and whether Goring and the other defendants were exaggerating when they claimed that under the Nazi régime the will of one man, and of one man alone, was decisive. This led to the second and larger question: if the picture of Hitler given at Nuremberg was substantially accurate, what were the gifts Hitler possessed which enabled him first to secure and then to maintain such power. I determined to reconstruct, so far as I was able, the course of his life from his birth in 1889 to his death in 1945, in the hope that this would enable me to offer an account of one of the most puzzling and remarkable careers in modern history.

The book is cast, therefore, in the form of a historical narrative, interrupted only at one point by a chapter in which I have tried to present a portrait of Hitler on the eve of his greatest triumphs (Chapter 7). I have not attempted to write a history of Germany, nor a study of government and society under the Nazi régime. My theme is not dictatorship, but the dictator, the personal power of one man, although it may be added that for most of the years between 1933 and 1945 this is identical with the most important part of the history of the Third Reich. Up to

1934 the interest lies in the means by which Hitler secured power in Germany. After 1934 the emphasis shifts to foreign policy and ultimately to war, the means by which Hitler sought to extend his power outside Germany. If at times, especially between 1938 and 1945, the figure of the man is submerged beneath the complicated narrative of politics and war, this corresponds to Hitler's own sacrifice of his private life (which was meagre and uninteresting at the best of times) to the demands of the position he had created for himself. In the last year of his life, however, as his empire begins to crumble, the true nature of the man is revealed again in all its harshness.

No man can sit down to write about the history of his own times—or perhaps of any time—without bringing to the task the preconceptions which spring out of his own character and experience. This is the inescapable condition of the historian's work, and the present study is no more exempt from these limitations than any other account of the events of the recent past. Nevertheless, I wrote this book without any particular axe to grind or case to argue. I have no simple formula to offer in explanation of the events I have described; few major historical events appear to me to be susceptible of simple explanations. Nor has it been my purpose either to rehabilitate or to indict Adolf Hitler. If I cannot claim the impartiality of a judge, I have not cast myself for the role of prosecuting counsel, still less for that of counsel for the defence. However disputable some of my interpretations may be, there is a solid substratum of fact—and the facts are eloquent enough.

In 1962 I made a thorough revision of the text in the light of the new material which had been published on the history of the Nazi Party and the Third Reich. After much thought, I found no reason to alter substantially the picture I drew of Hitler when the book was first published, although I have not hesitated to change the emphasis where it no longer seemed

right. It was in the account of the events leading up to the Second World War that I made the most complete revision, partly because of the large number of new diplomatic documents that have been published, partly because it is here that my own views have been most affected by the longer perspective in which we are now able to see these events. I am indebted to Mr. A. J. P. Taylor's *Origins of the Second World War* for stimulating me to re-read the whole of the documentary evidence for Hitler's foreign policy in the years 1933-9. The fact that I disagree with Mr. Taylor in his view of Hitler and his foreign policy—more than ever, now that I have re-read the documents—does not reduce my debt to him for stirring me up to take a critical look at my own account.

When the revised edition of my book was published, I took the opportunity to revise the bibliography as well. Any reader who wishes to consult this can find it in the unabridged edition, together with the original list of acknowledgments and documentation in the form of footnotes for all the quotations I have made from original sources. In view of the number of publications which would now have to be included in the bibliography, I have decided to omit it from the present abridged version.

I have already expressed my thanks to Mrs. Owen. My debt to my wife remains the greatest of all, not only for the support she gave me in first undertaking this study twenty years ago, but for her encouragement and help in facing the task of its revision and present abridgment.

ALAN BULLOCK

*St. Catherine's College
Oxford
January 1971*

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BOOK I

PARTY LEADER **1889-1933**

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS **1889-1918**

Adolf Hitler was born at half past six on the evening of 20 April 1889, in the Gasthof zum Pommer, an inn in the small town of Braunau on the River Inn which forms the frontier between Austria and Bavaria.

In the summer of this same year, 1889, Lenin, a student of nineteen in trouble with the authorities, moved with his mother from Kazan to Samara. Stalin was a poor cobbler's son in Tiflis, Mussolini the six-year-old child of a blacksmith in the bleak Romagna. The three republics Hitler was to destroy, the Austria of the Treaty of St Germain, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, were not yet in existence. Four great empires—the Hapsburg, the Hohenzollern, the Romanov, and the Ottoman—ruled over Central and Eastern Europe. The Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet Union were not yet imagined: Russia was still the Holy Russia of the Tsars.

Hitler's family, on both sides, came from the Waldviertel, a poor, remote country district, lying on the north side of the Danube, some fifty miles north-west of Vienna. In this countryside of hills and woods, with few towns or railways, lived a peasant population cut off from the main arteries of Austrian life.

It was from this country stock, with its frequent intermarriages, that Hitler sprang. The family name, possibly Czech in origin and spelled in a variety of ways, first appears in the Waldviertel in the first half of the fifteenth century.

Johann Georg Hiedler, the presumed grandfather of the future chancellor, seems to have been a wanderer who never settled down, but followed the trade of a miller in several places in Lower Austria. In the course of these wanderings he picked up with a peasant girl from the village of Strones, Maria Anna Schicklgruber, whom he married at Döllersheim in May 1842.

Five years earlier, in 1837, Maria had given birth to an illegitimate child, who was known by the name of Alois. According to the accepted tradition the father of this child was Johann Georg Hiedler, but when he married Maria, he did not bother to legitimize Alois, who continued to be known by his mother's maiden name of Schicklgruber until he was nearly forty. Alois was brought up at Spital in the house of his father's brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler.

In 1876 Johann Nepomuk took steps to legitimize the young man who had grown up in his house. He called on the parish priest at Döllersheim and persuaded him to cross out the word 'illegitimate' in the register and to append a statement signed by three witnesses that his brother Johann Georg Hiedler had accepted the paternity of the child Alois. In all probability, we shall never know for certain who Adolf Hitler's grandfather, the father of Alois, really was, or whether he was Jewish, as had been suggested. From the beginning of 1877, twelve years before Adolf was born, his father called himself Hitler, and his son was never known by any other name until his opponents dug up this long-forgotten village scandal and tried, without justification, to label him with his grandmother's name of Schicklgruber.

Alois left his uncle's home at the age of thirteen to serve as a cobbler's apprentice in Vienna, but he did not take to a trade, and by the time he was eighteen he had joined the Imperial Customs Service. From 1855 to 1895 Alois served as a customs officer in the towns of Upper Austria. He earned the normal promotion and as a minor state official he had certainly moved up in the social scale from his peasant origins. In the resplendent imperial uniform of the Hapsburg service Alois Hitler appeared the image of respectability. But his private life belied appearances.

In 1864 he married Anna Glass, the adopted daughter of another customs collector. There were no children and, after a separation, Alois's wife, who was considerably older and had long been ailing, died in 1883. A month later Alois married a young hotel servant, Franziska Matzelberger, who had already borne him a son out of wedlock and who gave birth to a daughter, Angela, three months after their marriage. Within a year of her daughter's birth, Franziska was dead of tuberculosis.

This time he waited half a year before marrying again. His third wife, Klara Pölzl, twenty-three years younger than himself, came from the village of Spital, where the Hitlers had originated. The two families were already related by marriage, and Klara herself was the granddaughter of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, in whose house Alois had been brought up as a child. She had even lived with Alois and his first wife for a time at Braunau, but at the age of twenty had gone off to Vienna to earn her living as a domestic servant. An episcopal dispensation had to be secured for such a marriage between second cousins, but finally, on 7 January 1885, Alois Hitler married his third wife, and on 17 May of the same year their first child, Gustav, was born at Braunau.

Adolf was the third child of Alois Hitler's third marriage. Gustav and Ida, both born before him, died

in infancy; his younger brother, Edward, died when he was six; only his younger sister, Paula, born in 1896, lived to grow up. There were also, however, the two children of the second marriage with Franziska, Adolf Hitler's half-brother Alois, and his half-sister Angela. Angela was the only one of his relations with whom Hitler maintained any sort of friendship. She kept house for him at Berchtesgaden for a time, and it was her daughter, Geli Raubal, with whom Hitler fell in love.

When Adolf was born his father was over fifty and his mother was under thirty. Alois Hitler was a hard, unsympathetic, and short-tempered man, and his domestic life suggests a difficult and passionate temperament. Towards the end of his life he seems to have become bitter over some disappointment, perhaps connected with an inheritance. When he retired in 1895 at the age of fifty-eight, he stayed in Upper Austria. The family finally settled at Leonding, a village just outside Linz, where they lived in a small house with a garden.

Hitler attempted to represent himself in *Mein Kampf* as the child of poverty and privation. In fact, his father had a perfectly adequate pension and gave the boy the chance of a good education. After five years in primary schools, in September 1900 the eleven-year-old Adolf entered the Linz Realschule, a secondary school designed to train boys for a technical or commercial career. At the beginning of 1903 Alois Hitler died, but his widow continued to draw a pension and was not left in need. Adolf left the Linz Realschule in 1904 not because his mother was too poor to pay the fees, but because his record at school was so indifferent that he had to accept a transfer to another school at Steyr, where he finished his education at sixteen.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler makes much of a dramatic conflict between himself and his father over his am-

bition to become an artist. There is no doubt that he did not get on well with his father, but it is unlikely that his ambition to become an artist (he was not fourteen when his father died) had much to do with it. A more probable explanation is that his father was dissatisfied with his school reports and made his dissatisfaction plain. Hitler glossed over his poor performance at school, which he left in 1905 without securing the customary Leaving Certificate. He found every possible excuse for himself, from illness and his father's tyranny to artistic ambition and political prejudice. It was a failure which rankled and found frequent expression in sneers at the 'educated gentlemen' with their diplomas and doctorates.

There is no doubt that Hitler was fond of his mother, but she had little control over her self-willed son who refused to earn his living and spent the next two years indulging in dreams of becoming an artist or architect, living at home, filling his sketch book with entirely unoriginal drawings and elaborating grandiose plans for the rebuilding of Linz. His one friend was August Kubizek, the son of a Linz upholsterer. Together they visited the theatre, where Hitler acquired a life-long passion for Wagner's opera. Wagnerian romanticism and vast dreams of his own success as an artist and Kubizek's as a musician filled his mind. He lived in a world of his own, content to let his mother provide for his needs, scornfully refusing to concern himself with such petty mundane affairs as money or a job.

A visit to Vienna in May and June 1906 fired him with enthusiasm for the splendour of its buildings, its art galleries and Opera. His ambition now was to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. His mother was anxious and uneasy but finally capitulated.

His first attempt to enter the Academy in October 1907 was unsuccessful. The Academy's Classification List contains the entry: 'The following took the test

with insufficient results or were not admitted. . . . Adolf Hitler, Braunau a. Inn, 20 April 1889. German. Catholic. Father, civil servant. 4 classes in *Realschule*. Few heads. Test drawings unsatisfactory.'

The result, he says in *Mein Kampf*, came as a bitter shock. The Director advised him to try his talents in the direction of architecture: he was not cut out to be a painter. But Hitler refused to admit defeat. Even though his mother was dying of cancer, he did not return to Linz until after her death (21 December 1907), in time for the funeral, and in February 1908 he went back to Vienna to resume his life as an 'art student.'

He was entitled to draw an orphan's pension and had the small savings left by his mother to fall back on. He was soon joined by his friend Kubizek, whom he had prevailed upon to follow his example and seek a place at the Vienna Conservatoire. The two shared a room in which there was hardly space for Kubizek's piano and Hitler's table.

Apart from Kubizek, Hitler lived a solitary life. Women were attracted to him, but he showed complete indifference to them. Much of the time he spent dreaming or brooding. His moods alternated between abstracted preoccupation and outbursts of excited talk. He wandered for hours through the streets and parks, staring at buildings which he admired, or suddenly disappearing into the public library in pursuit of some new enthusiasm. Again and again, the two young men visited the Opera and the Burgtheater. But while Kubizek pursued his studies at the Conservatoire, Hitler was incapable of any disciplined or systematic work. He drew little, wrote more and even attempted to compose a music drama on the theme of Wieland the Smith.

In July 1908, Kubizek went back to Linz for the summer. A month later Hitler set out to visit two of his aunts in Spital. They had expected to meet again

in Vienna in the autumn, but when Kubizek returned to the capital, he could find no trace of his friend.

In mid-September Hitler had again applied for admission to the Academy of Art. This time, he was not even admitted to the examination. Perhaps it was wounded pride that led him to avoid Kubizek. Whatever the reason, for the next five years he chose to bury himself in obscurity.

Vienna, at the beginning of 1909, was still an imperial city, capital of an Empire of fifty million souls stretching from the Rhine to the Dniester, from Saxony to Montenegro. The massive, monumental buildings erected on the Ringstrasse in the last quarter of the nineteenth century reflected the prosperity and self-confidence of the Viennese middle class; the factories and poorer streets of the outer districts the rise of an industrial working class. Vienna was no place to be without money or a job. Hitler himself says that the years he spent there, from 1909 to 1913, were the unhappiest of his life. They were also in many ways the most important, the formative years in which his character and opinions were given definite shape.

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler speaks of his stay in Vienna as 'five years in which I had to earn my daily bread, first as a casual labourer, then as a painter of little trifles,' but a little further on, he gives another picture of those days: 'In the years 1909-10 I had so far improved my position that I no longer had to earn my daily bread as a manual labourer. I was now working independently as a draughtsman and painter in water-colours.' Hitler explains that he made very little money at this, but that he was master of his own time and felt that he was getting nearer to the profession he wanted to take up, that of an architect.

According to Konrad Heiden, who was the first man to piece together the scraps of independent evi-

dence, in 1909, Hitler was obliged, for lack of funds, to give up the furnished room in which he had been living. In the summer he could sleep out, but with the coming of autumn he found a bed in a doss-house, and at the end of the year he moved to a hostel for men started by a charitable foundation at 27 Meldemannstrasse. Here he lived for the remaining three years of his stay in Vienna.

A few others who knew Hitler at this time have been traced and questioned, amongst them Reinhold Hanisch, a tramp from German Bohemia, who for a time knew Hitler well. Hanisch's testimony is partly confirmed by one of the few pieces of documentary evidence which have been discovered for the early years. For in 1910, after a quarrel, Hitler sued Hanisch for cheating him of a small sum of money, and the records of the Vienna police court have been published.

Hanisch describes his first meeting with Hitler in the doss-house in 1909. 'On the very first day there sat next to the bed that had been allotted to me a man who had nothing on except an old torn pair of trousers—Hitler. His clothes were being cleaned of lice, since for days he had been wandering about without a roof and in a terribly neglected condition.'

Hanisch and Hitler joined forces in looking for work; they beat carpets, carried bags outside the West Station, and did casual labouring jobs, sometimes shovelling snow off the streets. Hitler had no overcoat, and he felt the cold badly. Hanisch asked Hitler one day what trade he had learned. '“I am a painter,”' was the answer. Thinking that he was a house decorator, I said that it would surely be easy to make money at this trade. He was offended and answered that he was not that sort of painter, but an academician and an artist.' When the two moved to the Meldemannstrasse, 'we had to think out better ways of making money. Hitler proposed that we

should fake pictures. He told me that already in Linz he had painted small landscapes in oil, had roasted them in an oven until they had become quite brown and had several times been successful in selling these pictures to traders as valuable old masters.' This sounds highly improbable, but in any case Hanisch, who had registered as Walter Fritz, was afraid of the police. 'So I suggested to Hitler that it would be better to stay in an honest trade and paint postcards. I myself was to sell the painted cards, we decided to work together and share the money we earned.'

Hitler bought a few cards, ink and paints, and produced little copies of views of Vienna, which Hanisch peddled. They made enough to keep them until, in the summer of 1910, Hanisch sold a copy which Hitler had made of a drawing of the Vienna Parliament for ten crowns. Hitler, who was sure it was worth far more—he valued it at fifty in his statement to the police—was convinced he had been cheated. When Hanisch failed to return to the hostel, Hitler brought a lawsuit against him which ended in Hanisch spending a week in prison and the break-up of their partnership.

This was in August 1910. For the remaining four years before the First World War, first in Vienna, later in Munich, Hitler continued to eke out a living in the same way. Some of Hitler's drawings, mostly stiff, lifeless copies of buildings in which his attempts to add human figures are a failure, were still to be found in Vienna in the 1930s, when they had acquired the value of collectors' pieces. More often he drew posters and crude advertisements for small shops—Teddy Perspiration Powder, Santa Claus selling coloured candles, or St Stefan's spire rising over a mountain of soap, with the signature 'A. Hitler' in the corner.

After their quarrel Hanisch lost sight of Hitler, but he gives a description of Hitler as he knew him

in 1910 at the age of twenty-one. He wore an ancient black overcoat, which had been given him by an old-clothes dealer in the hostel, a Hungarian Jew named Neumann, and which reached down over his knees. From under a greasy, black derby hat, his hair hung long over his coat collar. His thin and hungry face was covered with a black beard above which his large staring eyes were the one prominent feature. Altogether, Hanisch adds, 'an apparition such as rarely occurs among Christians.'

From time to time Hitler had received financial help from his aunt in Linz, Johanna Pölzl and, when she died in March 1911, it seems likely that he was left some small legacy. In May of that year his orphan's pension was stopped, but he still avoided any regular work.

Hanisch depicts him as lazy and moody, two characteristics which were often to reappear. He disliked regular work. If he earned a few crowns, he refused to draw for days and went off to a café to eat cream cakes and read newspapers. He neither smoked nor drank and, according to Hanisch, was too shy and awkward to have any success with women. His passions were reading newspapers and talking politics. 'Over and over again,' Hanisch recalls, 'there were days on which he simply refused to work. Then he would hang around night shelters, living on the bread and soup that he got there, and discussing politics, often getting involved in heated controversies.'

When he became excited in argument he would shout and wave his arms until the others in the room cursed him for disturbing them, or the porter came in to stop the noise. These outbursts of violent argument and denunciation alternated with moods of despondency.

Everyone who knew him was struck by the combination of ambition, energy, and indolence in Hitler. He was not only desperately anxious to impress people but was full of clever ideas for making his for-