

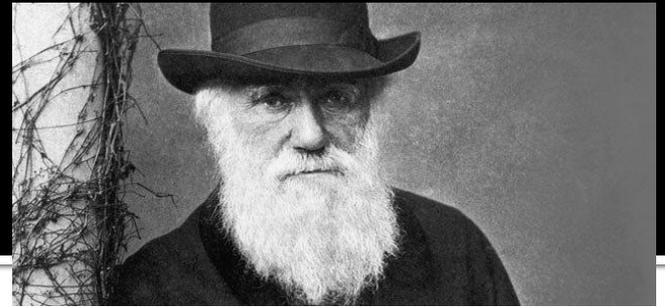


Adolf Hitler's Antisemitism

Why the Jews?



Social Darwinism



- All life is a ruthless struggle for existence
- Hitler (in 1944):
 - “War is the unalterable law of the whole of life – the prerequisite for the natural selection of the strong, and the precedent for the elimination of the weak”
 - “All creation is subject to this law: no one can avoid it.”

Racialism

- Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927)
 - 1911 = *The Foundations of the 19th Century*
 - “bible” of German racialism
 - Redemptive power of “Aryans”
 - Destroyed a Roman Empire dominated by Jews!
 - Germans lead the Aryan peoples



Hitler's Sensory Antisemitism

- From *Mein Kampf* (1925):
 - “There were few Jews in Linz. In the course of centuries their outward appearance had become Europeanized and had taken on a human look; in fact, I even took them for Germans.”
 - Claims to have been shocked by antisemitism as a teenager

Hitler's Sensory Antisemitism

- Sight & smell of stereotypes
- Encounters “an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks . . . Is this a Jew?”
 - “. . . my first question assumed a new form: Is this a German?”
- “The cleanliness of this people, moral and otherwise, I must say, is a point in itself. By their very exterior you could tell that they were no lovers of water, and to your distress, you often knew it with your eyes closed.”

Economic Causes?

- Penniless in Vienna?
 - Pension checks from parents' estates
- Academic failure
 - No admission to the Academy for Fine Arts
- Social failure
 - "dark forces" were behind his rejections



Self-Hatred or Trauma?

- “Jewish Blood”?
 - NO
- Homosexual?
 - NO
- One testicle?
 - Maybe . . .
- Syphilis?
 - Maybe . . .
- *Mein Kampf*: “The pollution of our blood, blindly ignored by hundreds of thousands of our people, is carried on systematically by the Jew today. Systematically these black parasites of the nation defile our inexperienced blond girls and thereby destroy something that can no longer be replaced in this world.”

Corporal Hitler

- Hitler = corporal in WWI
 - Served in the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment
- Antisemitism in the RIR 16?
 - Justin Fleischmann (1898-1993) won military awards, allowed to attend Yom Kippur services, sent to officer training
- Jewish officers in WWI?
 - Hugo Gutmann



1918: Germany's Defeat

- Hitler, like many, was traumatized by defeat
 - “stab in the back”!



Der 2. August 1914 auf dem Odeonsplatz in München (oben mitten in der begeisterten Menge Adolf Hitler)

Hitler Enters Politics

- Political informant for the army
- 12 Sept. 1919 = attended a meeting of the German Workers' Party (DAP)
- 16 Sept. 1919 = "Gemlich letter"
 - Hitler argues Jews are a race, not a religious community
 - Thousands of years of inbreeding
 - Worshipped money
 - "grows in his hands effortlessly and endlessly in the form of interest."

Gemlich Letter (16 Sept. 1919)

- Hitler's solution to the "Jewish Question"?
 - NOT pogroms – only temporary solution
 - "The antisemitism of reason, however, must lead to the methodical, legal contestation and destruction of the privileges of the Jew, which he possesses in contrast to the other aliens living our midst. Its ultimate and unshakeable goal must be the removal of Jews altogether."

Warning or Rhetoric?

- 1922 newspaper interview:
 - “Once I really am in power, my first and foremost task will be the annihilation of the Jews . . .”
- 24 July 1942:
 - “After the war those Jews who, according to the hit song, want to ‘hang out their washing on the Siegfried Line’ will not be so impudent. Perhaps the English soldier . . . Will wipe the smile off their faces. Because . . . Antisemitism is decidedly stronger among the Anglo-Americans than with the Germans . . .”

The Centrality of Antisemitism

- Hitler's obsession with Jews was a constant
- "Table Talk" notes (28/30 Nov. 1944):
 - "Jesus was most certainly not a Jew. The Jews would have never handed one of their own people to the Romans . . ."
- Political Testament (30 April 1945):
 - "Above all I charge the leadership of the nation and their subjects with the meticulous observance of the race-laws and the merciless resistance to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry."

Summary

- Common attitudes of Hitler's youth:
 - Social Darwinism, Nationalism, Racialism, Antisemitism
- Bitter after academic, economic, social failure
- WWI brought life meaning . . .
 - . . . But Germany was defeated
- Antisemitism was central to Hitler's worldview