

## Introduction

No single historical figure dominates the history of the twentieth century in quite the same way as Adolf Hitler. It is very difficult to understand the incredible events which occurred in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 without understanding the personality, the ideology and the career of this remarkable individual. The appearance of Hitler is instantly recognisable – the distinctive haircut, brushed into a side parting, the little moustache, the prominent nose, the square jaw and those intense, staring eyes. What we find difficult to understand is how such an ordinary-looking individual could have had such an extraordinary effect on world history.

This new study of Hitler and Nazi Germany, which is based on a wide range of sources, the most recent research and many previously unpublished documents, does not seek to downplay the importance of Hitler's unique and dynamic personality on the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, but at the same time it attempts to place Hitler's role and his motives within a broad-ranging social, economic and international framework. Each chapter in the book deals with a major aspect of the history of Nazi Germany and seeks to adopt a balance between opposing positions within the debate, where deemed appropriate, and to offer original assessments when deemed necessary. This approach allows for fresh insights on most of the major themes and issues related to the study of Hitler and Nazi Germany.

The book begins with an overview of the early life, ideology and rise to power of Adolf Hitler. In Chapter 2 there is a detailed analysis of the structure and nature of the Nazi state and economy. In Chapter 3, the focus shifts to the domestic aspects of the Nazi regime, including an examination of propaganda and indoctrination, and Nazi policies towards the family, women, education, youth, crime, health and culture. In Chapter 4, opposition and dissent within Nazi Germany are thoroughly investigated. Hitler's foreign policy in the years which led to the Second World War is fully explored in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the military strategy adopted by Hitler as war leader is systematically evaluated. Chapter 7 contains a detailed and thought-provoking reassessment of the origins and the implementation of the Holocaust. In Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, there is a broad-ranging assessment of the key problems in the vast historical debate surrounding the study of Hitler and Nazi Germany.

It is hoped this book will deepen the understanding of all those who wish to examine the key issues surrounding the study of this subject.

## 1

## Adolf Hitler: early life, ideology and rise to power, 1889–1933

### Family background and early life

Adolf Hitler's early life was fairly unremarkable. His family were not even German. They came originally from Waldviertel, a small village 50 miles north-west of Vienna, the Austrian capital. The supposed grandfather of the future Nazi dictator was Johann Georg Hiedler, a mill worker, who married Maria Anna Schicklgruber, a domestic servant, in May 1842. Their marriage came five years after Maria had given birth to a son, named Alois. On the birth register, the space where the name of the father should be is left blank. It is assumed Johann Georg Hiedler was the real father of Alois, but this has not been proven. Alois Hitler bore the name Schicklgruber until he was 40. He lived as a child with Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, his uncle. In 1877, Alois registered Johann Georg Hiedler as his father, but on the birth register Hiedler is spelt Hitler. This decision ensured that the future Nazi dictator was not called Adolf Schicklgruber. Thousands of Germans shouting 'Heil Schicklgruber' somehow does not sound right.

The private life of Alois Hitler was blighted by the death of his first two wives, a roving eye for the ladies, a nomadic nature and heavy drinking. He married Anna Glass in 1864, but she died (childless) in 1883. A month later, he wed Franziska Matzelberger, with whom he was already having an affair; indeed, the liaison had already produced a son: Alois Jnr. Just three months after this marriage, a daughter, Angela, was born. In 1884, his second wife died of tuberculosis. Needless to say, Alois had a third bride lined up. On 7 January 1885, Alois, by now 47, married Klara Poelzl, aged 24, his second cousin, the granddaughter of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler. Klara was pregnant on her wedding day and, given their close family relationship, the couple required a special dispensation from the Vatican to allow the marriage to go ahead.

Klara gave birth to six children during her marriage to Alois Hitler, four sons and two daughters, but apart from Adolf Hitler and his younger sister, Pauline, the remainder died in infancy. Adolf Hitler, the fourth child of the marriage, was born at 6.30 p.m. on 20 April 1889 in the Gasthof zum Pommer, an inn in the town of Braunau am Inn, Austria, close to the German border state of Bavaria. Adolf Hitler was baptised a Roman Catholic. On the birth register he is named Adolfus Hitler, but was always known as Adolf. Angela, his half-sister, was the only near relative he kept in close contact with in later life. Indeed, Angela's daughter, Geli Raubal, became the subject of Hitler's incestuous

infatuation in the late 1920s, which no doubt contributed to her decision to commit suicide by shooting herself through the head in Hitler's Munich apartment in 1931.

Adolf Hitler seems to have genuinely loved his mother, who watched over him as a child, pampering him and letting him do what he liked. He always carried a picture of her in his wallet. In contrast, he was very hostile towards his father, who was strict and domineering. Alois demanded absolute obedience, often punishing bad behaviour by the use of a whip. Hitler described his relationship with his father as 'a battle of competing wills'. Alois wanted his son to become a senior civil servant, but young Adolf wanted to become an artist. Hitler later recalled: 'I never loved my father. I therefore feared him all the more. He had a terrible temper and often whipped me.'<sup>1</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler portrayed his father as a lowly customs official who brought up his family in a state of near poverty. This was completely misleading. Alois Hitler carved out a very successful career as a well-paid official in the Imperial Customs Service. Between 1855 and 1895, he worked as a customs officer in several Austrian towns. He was frequently promoted, wore the grand uniform of a senior local Habsburg official and lived in affluent circumstances, enjoying a salary and a public status much higher than the headmaster of a secondary school. The idea of Adolf Hitler living in poverty as a child is even more misleading. He was a clean, well-dressed, provincial, middle-class boy who lived in affluent circumstances.

In Braunau am Inn, from 1889 to 1892, the family lived in a large, imposing home set in large and pretty grounds. The next home was a palatial apartment in Passau, Bavaria, where the family lived from 1892 to 1895. In 1895, Alois Hitler retired, with a very generous pension, and purchased a large country house, set in nine acres of land, in Hafeld, 30 miles outside Linz. In 1897, the family then went to live in the small rural town of Lambach, in a large third-floor apartment, opposite a Benedictine monastery. They stayed in Lambach for two years before moving on again to a pleasant house with a large garden in Leonding, a village on the outskirts of Linz.

All this moving around meant Hitler had to change schools frequently. At his first primary school, at Fischlam, near Lambach, he was popular with his schoolmates and gained good marks in all subjects. At his next school, in Leonding, he became withdrawn, sullen and moody; his marks slipped to below average, where they were to remain for the rest of his primary school career. In September 1900, aged 11, Hitler began his secondary education at the fee-paying *Realschule* in Linz, which specialised in preparing boys for a commercial, technical or civil service career. Hitler's journey to school involved a three-mile walk. At the *Realschule*, Hitler's marks fluctuated between 'good' and 'average'. He took very little interest in most subjects except history – where his teacher fired his imagination with stories of German nationalism – geography (he loved reading maps) and art, which was his greatest passion. His teachers remembered him as a resentful, moody and generally lazy pupil. It was while he was at the *Realschule* that Hitler claimed he became a fanatical German nationalist. His

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great German heroes were the soldier king Frederick the Great and Otto von Bismarck, the first German Chancellor.

### Hitler at play as a child

Outside school, Hitler enjoyed playing imaginary war games and reading adventure stories. He often led his schoolmates in games of cowboys and Red Indians. Hitler always liked to play a Red Indian in these games; as underdogs, they appealed to him. He also greatly enjoyed reading the adventure stories about cowboys and Indians written by the German writer Karl May. Another passion was war comics. Hitler admitted that as a child he was 'enthusiastic about everything that was in any way connected with war'.<sup>2</sup> One of his favourite war games was to re-enact the Boer struggle against the British Empire. Hitler was once more on the side of the underdogs: the Boers. Indeed, he told friends he would like to enlist in the Boer army.

### The death of his father

On 3 January 1903, Alois Hitler died of a lung haemorrhage. He was buried two days later in the cemetery in Leonding. The death of his father, no doubt inwardly traumatic, seems to have come as something of a relief to the young Adolf Hitler, who was now free of his father's tyrannical discipline and able to pursue his dream of becoming 'a great artist'. In economic terms, the Hitler family were placed in poorer circumstances, but nowhere near poverty. Klara received the property owned by her husband, a widow's pension, equivalent to 50 per cent of the income of the headmaster of a secondary school, and a substantial lump sum. Each child was left a lump sum and was entitled to 240 kronen per year until the age of 24.

### Hitler as a youth

Shortly after his father's death, Hitler persuaded his mother to let him board in Linz, thus avoiding his long walk to school. He neglected his school work and had to pass re-sit examinations in each of his remaining years at secondary school. The headmaster at the *Realschule* at Linz, no doubt tired of Hitler's lack of effort, told him to take his final year at another *Realschule*, at Steyr, some 25 miles away. In effect, he had been expelled. Hitler stayed in lodgings in Steyr for his final year and passed his final re-sit examination. But to achieve the coveted school diploma (*Abitur*) required more schooling, at an *Oberrealschule*. Hitler could not face this, so he persuaded his mother to let him leave school in September 1905, aged 16. Hitler's self-inflicted failure at school left him with a lifelong contempt of book-learned academics and intellectuals.

After the death of her husband, Klara Hitler sold the house in Leonding and moved to Linz, renting a small flat in the town centre. At this stage in his life, Adolf Hitler showed no sign of being a future rabble-rousing dictator. He resembled a young Bohemian, with fairly long hair, a fashionable moustache and smart clothes.<sup>3</sup> He lived the life of a young dilettante: stayed in bed until noon and spent the afternoon going to cafés, art galleries and libraries. In the evening,

he visited the opera (he particularly loved Wagner) with his close friend August Kubizek, a gifted young musician.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of all the superficial psychoanalysis which has been written about Hitler's childhood, it can be seen it was relatively stable and quite ordinary. Hitler showed no signs of mental instability or madness and gave no indication he would go on to become a messianic leader.

### **The death of his mother and the Vienna Academy**

The most traumatic personal events in Hitler's teenage years were the death of his mother and his failure to gain entry to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. In January 1907, his mother became seriously ill with breast cancer. She underwent a mastectomy and seemed on the road to recovery. In the summer of 1907, Hitler persuaded his mother to allow him to withdraw his inheritance of 700 kronen and go to Vienna with the intention of gaining entry to the prestigious Academy of Fine Arts. For a school drop-out, without any qualifications, this was an overambitious plan. He rented a small flat in Vienna, took his examination for the Academy, but failed miserably. Never has history been so dramatically affected by the negative attitude of a small group of art lecturers to a few paintings. Of course, the lecturers in Vienna cannot be blamed for what came later, but their rejection of Hitler does illustrate how history can be altered by the most trivial matters. Hitler was astounded by his rejection, describing the examiners as 'fossilized Bureaucrats devoid of any understanding of young talent'.<sup>5</sup> But the examiners were right: Hitler was not a very good artist. His paintings and drawings from this period show he was technically competent at copying other people's work, but he lacked the ability to create original works of his own. He could paint buildings or landscapes, but not people. Art experts have suggested Hitler's style of painting does not reveal any deep psychological difficulty, certainly no psychopathic tendencies. Even his tendency to paint buildings is viewed as the product of an introverted personality, not deep mental difficulties.

In late October 1907, Hitler was given more depressing news – his mother's cancer was now terminal. He returned home to nurse his dying mother, night and day, very rarely leaving her bedside. But on 21 December 1907, she died; she was buried next to her husband in Leonding. According to Dr Bloch, the family physician: 'In all my career I have never seen anyone as prostrate with grief as Adolf Hitler.'<sup>6</sup> Hitler told Bloch, who was Jewish, 'I will be grateful to you for ever.' He kept his word. Bloch escaped persecution after the Nazis came to power.

### **Hitler's Vienna years, 1908–13**

In February 1908, Hitler returned to Vienna, where he remained for the next five and a half years. In March 1908, he was joined by his close friend Kubizek, who had gained entry to the prestigious Vienna Academy of Music. They shared a flat for the next few months. During this time, Kubizek saw Hitler write poetry and attempt to write a play and an opera (set in Iceland). Hitler also visited the opera

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three nights a week. In the summer of 1908, Kubizek went home for the vacation. While he was away, Hitler tried once more to gain entry to the Academy of Fine Arts, in October 1908. He failed yet again. This second failure had a devastating effect, plunging Hitler into a deep depression. He decided to break all his links with the past. In November 1908, Kubizek returned to Vienna, but found Hitler had gone, leaving no forwarding address. It seems likely that Hitler could not face telling Kubizek, the only friend he had, about his failure.

### Down and out in Vienna?

Hitler later described his time in Vienna as the saddest years of his life. He made no real effort to gain a proper job. He lived in three different flats from the autumn of 1908 to the late summer of 1909. Sometime in 1909, Hitler's financial position deteriorated, but exactly why it did remains difficult to explain. In the summer months of 1909, he did live rough, mostly sleeping on park benches. It is obvious that he was suffering from some sort of deep anxiety in this period, perhaps caused by his rejection by the Academy of Fine Arts. The brief, possibly self-inflicted experience as a 'down and out' in Vienna, which lasted less than three months, was greatly exaggerated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler claimed he earned his daily bread as a labourer and by selling paintings in Vienna. There is no evidence of Hitler ever working as a labourer, but he did sell paintings. The very few people who knew him at this time recorded their views on him much later, thus distorting any understanding of what he was really like. Of course, they describe him as an opinionated, self-contained person, full of bright ideas, prejudices and grand plans, but seemingly too lazy to put in the effort to carry them out.

In October 1909, Hitler moved into the Meidling, a men's hostel, funded by a wealthy Jewish family. It was here that he was befriended by Reinhold Hanisch, an unemployed and street-wise domestic servant, originally from Berlin. Hanisch advised Hitler to write to his well-off relatives for some money to purchase artist's materials and then set himself up as a commercial artist. Hanisch promised to sell Hitler's paintings and postcards in return for a 50 per cent commission. Hitler wrote to his Aunt Johanna, who sent him 50 kronen, a sum Hanisch described as 'a nice piece of money in those days'. Hitler bought an overcoat and some artist's materials with the money.

Hitler moved to the Männerheim, a smart lodging house, mainly occupied by working men on limited incomes, in December 1909. The residents paid nearly three kronen a week for a small room. In return, they enjoyed access to many other facilities, including a large dining room, a reading room, a shower room and a laundry. Residents had to vacate their rooms during working hours, which meant that Hitler had to paint near a window in the lounge.

It is estimated that Hitler produced somewhere between 700 and 800 paintings, drawings and postcards between 1909 and 1913. The partnership between Hitler and Hanisch ended acrimoniously in 1910 when Hitler had Hanisch arrested on a charge of cheating him out of his share of a painting of the parliament building in Vienna. Hanisch spent eight days in jail for this offence. In

1936, Hanisch was arrested by the Gestapo, charged with spreading 'libellous stories about Hitler'. He died in Nazi custody on 4 February 1937, reportedly from a heart attack, but it is highly likely that he was murdered by the Gestapo. It never paid to double-cross Hitler.

At the end of 1910, Hitler's financial position greatly improved. It is estimated that he was earning 70 to 80 kronen a month from the sales of his paintings. This was supplemented by a substantial gift of perhaps 3,800 kronen from his Aunt Johanna. Another sign of his healthy financial state was his decision to transfer his orphan's pension to his half-sister, Angela. Indeed, Hitler was in great danger of exceeding the annual earnings limit of 1,400 kronen per annum imposed on residents at the Männerheim. He continued to stay there, not because he was poor, or needed to, but because it provided cheap accommodation, allowed him room to complete his artwork and prevented him from being in complete isolation.

### Hitler's political ideas in Vienna

During Hitler's Vienna period, he certainly fits the description of a 'coffee house dreamer'. He saw himself as 'an artist' and took no active part in politics. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler claimed that he was a very interested observer of politics and had monitored the appeal of three major parties of pre-1914 Vienna very closely: the Christian Socialists, led by Dr Karl Lüger (Mayor of Vienna); the Social Democratic Party; and the Pan-German Nationalists. Hitler greatly admired Dr Karl Lüger, a brilliant orator, who filled the ears of the lower middle classes with horror stories about the power of the Jews. The only shortcoming of Lüger, claimed Hitler, was his failure to champion German nationalism. Hitler had a 'great hatred' of the Social Democratic Party, because of its devotion to Marxist ideas, but he admired its ability to use propaganda to attract the masses and the willingness of its supporters to go out in the streets to fight for what they believed in. Hitler admits that he was most attracted by the nationalist ideas of the Pan-German Nationalist Party. The only problem with this party was its failure to appeal to the masses. Hitler claims the idea of combining extreme German nationalism, charismatic leadership and mass support in a new political party was already forming in his mind during his Vienna days. We only have Hitler's word that his political ideas were as clear as this before 1914. It is probably more accurate to suggest that these views about his Vienna period were self-serving rhetoric, designed to portray himself as a man of crystal-clear vision, when in all probability he took no more interest in politics than the average person in Vienna at the time.

The same is probably true of Hitler's explanation of his anti-Semitism. There is little evidence in Hitler's early life to suggest that ingrained prejudice against the Jews was a dominant preoccupation. The warm feelings Hitler expressed to Dr Bloch after his mother's death hardly indicate a congenital hatred of Jews. Hitler even admits he was tolerant of Jews when he arrived in Vienna. At this time, Hitler did not view Jews as a 'race' but as a religious group. He claims it was after reading anti-Semitic pamphlets and observing life in Vienna that he came to

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believe the Jews were a united race. 'Gradually,' claims Hitler, 'I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and become an anti-Semite.'<sup>7</sup> In spite of these claims, there is no real evidence that a virulent anti-Semitism dominated Hitler's political thinking during his Vienna period. The anti-Semitic attitudes Hitler expressed at the time were fairly common and cannot be regarded as extreme or exceptional in the context of the times. In fact, he is known to have attended musical evenings at the home of a Jewish family; many of his friends at the Männerheim were Jewish; and he even preferred selling his paintings through Jewish art dealers because he regarded them as more honest. It seems that Hitler's anti-Semitism grew after 1918.

### Hitler moves to Munich, 1913

In May 1913, Hitler suddenly ended his lonely and very unsuccessful period in Vienna. He travelled by train across the Austrian border to the modern city of Munich, Bavaria, southern Germany. Hitler's fateful relationship with Germany and its people had now begun. It was not his love of Germany which was the major reason for Hitler's hasty departure from Vienna. At the time, Hitler, who had already avoided conscription, feared that he was about to be called up for service with the Austrian army. Hitler later claimed he was a 'draft dodger', not out of cowardice, but because he did not want to join the Austrian army. On 20 January 1914, the Austrian authorities finally caught up with him in Munich and asked him to explain why he was avoiding military service. Hitler was forced to go to Salzburg to explain his actions. In February 1914, a military recruitment panel decided Adolf Hitler, future champion of the idea of a 'master race', was 'unfit for service' owing to a minor chest complaint.

Hitler describes his time in Munich before the First World War as the 'happiest and by far the most contented of my life'. He took lodgings with the family of Joseph Popp, a tailor, at a cost of 20 marks a month. The Popp family later described Hitler as leading a solitary existence in Munich. He read books, painted and spent lengthy periods in his room.

### Hitler at war

In August 1914, when the First World War began, Hitler was in Munich. 'I am not ashamed to say,' Hitler later wrote, 'carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, I sank down on my knees and thanked heaven out of the fullness of my heart for granting me the good fortune of being permitted to live in such a time.'<sup>8</sup> Hitler immediately volunteered to serve in the German army. He was accepted by the Bavarian List Regiment and spent most of the war carrying messages, often on a motorbike, between the officer staff and front-line troops.

Hitler's passionate involvement with the fate of the German army during the First World War was the real turning point in his life. His time in the army deeply intensified his extreme feelings of German nationalism. Hitler describes his period in the German army as 'the most memorable period of my life'. He



was a very good soldier, receiving the Iron Cross, second class, in August 1914, and the Iron Cross, first class, in August 1918, a bravery award rarely given to a volunteer. (The latter award was given on the recommendation of a Jewish officer.) The highest rank Hitler achieved was lance-corporal, but there is no evidence that he had any aspirations for promotion to the rank of non-commissioned officer.

Hitler was viewed as somewhat eccentric by the other soldiers. He never requested leave, nor received any letters from home. Some fellow soldiers found his unquestioning, unflinching patriotism towards the German cause somewhat irritating. Hitler was seriously wounded in the leg at the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and briefly blinded in a mustard gas attack in October 1918. He was in hospital recovering from the attack when he heard news of Germany's defeat: 'Everything went black again before my eyes; I tottered and groped my way back to the ward, threw myself on my bunk, and dug my burning head into my blanket and pillow. So it had all been in vain.'<sup>9</sup>

This was a deeply significant moment in Hitler's political awakening. He believed that Germany was not defeated in battle, but 'stabbed in the back by socialists, Jews and democratic politicians'. The Weimar Republic was never accepted as legitimate by Hitler. When the new government signed the controversial Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919, the idea of Germany being betrayed by the new democratic government became widespread among the nationalist right. Among the terms of Versailles were: a reduction of the German army to 100,000, the loss of 13 per cent of German territory and all its colonies and the payment of £6.6 billion in reparations.

## The early growth of the Nazi Party

In November 1918, Hitler returned to Munich, but remained in the army. Munich was in a state of unprecedented political crisis. The king of Bavaria was deposed in a socialist revolution. Kurt Eisner, a Jewish Social Democrat, set up the Bavarian People's Republic, but he was assassinated in February 1919 by a renegade army officer. This incident provoked a workers' revolt, which led to the creation of a workers' republic. This did not last long. In April 1919, troops supported by the free corps (*Freikorps*), consisting of hundreds of patriotic, trigger-happy ex-soldiers, crushed the workers' revolt. A moderate Social Democrat government was put back in power, but this was soon replaced by an extreme right-wing nationalist administration led by Gustav von Kahr.

During the Weimar period, Bavaria was a citadel for right-wing nationalists. The Bavarian right consisted of four elements: the regular army (*Reichswehr*), monarchists, national conservatives and a mob of right-wing ex-soldiers. They all shared a hatred of Bolshevism and a burning desire to overthrow the Weimar Republic. Bavaria – one of the most independent of the German federal states – was thus an ideal place to form an extreme nationalist party with the aim of overthrowing the Weimar Republic.<sup>10</sup> Hitler was now in the right place at the right time. He gave his support in the early post-war years to those elements within

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the German army who wanted to crush the left and overthrow the Republic by force; in turn, these groups aided Hitler's rise to political prominence in Bavarian politics.

Hitler's exact relationship with the German army in Bavaria from 1918 to 1923 is still shrouded in mystery. Hitler was picked out by Captain Karl May – no doubt because of his unquestioning patriotic loyalty – to become a 'political instructor' in the Press and Political Bureau of the army. It was because of his selection as a 'political instructor' by his army superiors that Hitler began to realise that he was a very talented public speaker. In June 1919, he was sent by the army on a short course on 'anti-Bolshevism' at Munich University. This was designed to prepare him for his new role as an army spy and propagandist. Hitler's first major assignment was to investigate the numerous right- and left-wing groups which were agitating for revolution in Munich. One group Hitler was recommended to observe was the German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or DAP), set up by Anton Drexler, a Munich locksmith, in March 1919. Drexler wanted to build a political party that combined an extreme nationalist line with some socialist ideas designed to weaken the appeal of Marxism among workers.

The DAP had less than 40 members and held its meetings in Munich beer halls. On 12 September 1919, Hitler went to observe and speak at a meeting of the DAP, attended by about 20 people. He claims his speech at the meeting left such a favourable impression on Drexler that he was immediately asked to join the DAP committee, as only its seventh member. Already on the committee was Captain Ernst Röhm, a member of the army's district command in Munich and certainly someone Hitler must have already known. Also on the committee was Gottfried Feder, who had lectured Hitler on the course on anti-Bolshevism at Munich University. These links suggest that the army was already thinking of using the DAP's novel combination of nationalism and socialism as a vehicle for its own anti-Marxist propaganda.

Hitler, with a little help from his army friends, quickly replaced Drexler as the leading orator and propagandist in the party. On 24 February 1920, the DAP changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, or NSDAP), commonly known as the Nazi Party. It was actually Hitler who designed the distinctive and now universally familiar swastika symbol, used on party propaganda, party flags and the distinctive Nazi armbands.

On 1 April 1920, Hitler decided to leave the army, with the intention of championing its aims in a different uniform. In December 1920, the unknown NSDAP purchased a weekly newspaper, the *Münchener Beobachter*, for 180,000 marks, and renamed it the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*People's Observer*). The money to buy the paper came from Dietrich Eckart (who provided Hitler and the party with useful and wealthy contacts), from various prominent Munich conservatives and from army secret funds (60,000 marks).

Hitler assembled around him in Munich a group of key figures in the early Nazi movement. Alfred Rosenberg, self-styled party philosopher, provided a