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**Hitler's Austrian Life to 1913**

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Part I: Hitler

This book is praised on the dust cover by *The Baltimore Sun* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* as well written. Gordon Craig, emeritus professor at Stanford University, tells us that journalist J. Sydney Jones captures the atmosphere of Vienna 1907 to 1913. Professional biographer and freelance novelist Robert Payne also endorses the book, and this endorsement more than any of the others suggests Jones' forte. Payne (1911-1982) had written about two dozen popular biographies including a competent, non-scholarly one of Hitler. Yet few professional historians would cite Payne in a footnote. Using the popular Payne as a model, at least in style, Jones synthesizes very well the works of Alan Bullock, Robert Waite, Werner Maser, Bradley F. Smith, John Toland, memoirist August Kubizek and Franz Jetzinger (*Hitlers Jugend: Phantasien, Luegen und die Wahrheit* [Vienna, 1956]) and Hitler's own *Mein Kampf*. As a reprint, originally published in 1983, the author misses Ian Kershaw's *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, Vol. 1 (1999), and John Lukacs's *The Hitler of History* (1998).

A major virtue of the book is that the contents deliver exactly what the title purports; thus Jones has written a third study of Hitler and Vienna. Eleonore Kandl, "Hitler's Oesterreichbild," (Diss. Vienna, 1963) and William Jenks, *Vienna and the Young Hitler* (1976), had earlier written on this theme. This book should appeal to four audiences: One, American journalists who want an introduction to Hitler and the Nazi phenomena; two, beginning teachers of history who can put together a fast lecture on a subject that is not their own specialty; three, BA graduates who failed to take history in college and later in life discover the excitement of historical narrative and reasoning; and four, art and music students or travelers who could enjoy scenes from old Vienna 1907-1917. Reading this book may stimulate further interest in the history of Europe, Nazism, or the origins of the European War that later became World War II.

German experts will find few surprises in this book, although Jones' research goes beyond Payne. The endnotes, bibliography and index are excellent. Although Jones reveals little from archives, he has added new archival research from the NSDAP *Hauptarchiv* citing...
Although J. Sydney Jones raises the question as to how Hitler, a nominal Catholic, gradually became a Wagnerian pagan mystic, the matter is not explored deeply. He adds little to Waite, Lukacs, and Bullock on this point. Hitler spent his inheritance on opera tickets in the years 1907-1908 in Vienna. By 1909 he was poor and homeless to the point of pawing his overcoat (p. 130).

Jones fully denounces Hitler throughout the book as an anti-Semite. On the origins of Hitler's anti-Semitism, Jones admits there is still some question. Kubizek said Hitler picked the attitude up in their hometown of Linz, but Jones quotes Hitler in Mein Kampf maintaining he learned anti-Semitism from the Viennese papers (p. 115). Jones leans towards this hypothesis. Since anti-Semitism was endemic in Austria, the real issue is why Hitler's brand of anti-Semitism later became so intense. Hitler joined a minor German party in 1919 in Munich, a party devoted to promoting the idea that anti-Semitism was key to anti-communism and anti-revolution. Did Hitler's identity crisis come in Vienna 1907-1913 or in Munich in 1919? Jones says that Hitler linked Marxism with Jews (p. 172). True enough, but Jones leaves out a crucial date: when did Hitler draw this conclusion. The key question, as Lukacs suggests, is that at some point anti-Semitism became a tap-root in Hitler's psyche. Anti-Semitism appeared to be the Manichean-single cause, providing a clue to Hitler's future political and military ambitions.

Jones mentions that Hitler picked up some additional political views about Jews from four pamphleteers and politicians: Lanz von Liebenfelds; Guido von List, the mayor of Vienna; Karl Lueger; and, most significantly in Jones's opinion, the Pan German League politician Georg von Schoenerer. Hitler's still mysterious, wider reading list is qualified by Jones with many "perhaps" and "possibilities." Jones quotes Lueger who wrote in 1890 that he wanted all Jews put on a ship, sent out to sea, and drowned with no survivors (p. 155). This "final solution" of the Jewish question was apparently a clue to the future. Paradoxically Jones relates how the penniless and unemployed Hitler lived off Jewish charities in 1909-1910 (pp. 133, 135, 149, 305, n. 54). Later, in 1910-1912, Jewish art dealers bought most of his paintings (pp. 147-148, 177-178, 201, 210). Hitler developed his skill as an orator denouncing "Jesuits" and "Reds" at the Maennerheim, his Viennese lodging for three years (pp. 241-242). Intellectually Hitler had a simplistic hypothesis for Austria's troubles, but the young man in his twenties developed his talent to project passion into his speeches. Hitler the loner, a social misfit, survived in Vienna without social, economic, ideological, or political ties. In fact, had it not been for World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Great Depression, the second-rate artist and unknown veteran of World War I would not have become Chancellor of Germany in 1933. Nor would the memoirs of music student August Kubizek have been translated and published in England in 1955.

Jones made one major error (p. 121 n. 74) on the problem of German-Jewish relations. He says, "It is possible that Hitler never gave a direct order for extermination of the Jews and might even have been unaware, up to 1943, that his orders to the contrary had been ignored,"--a citation to the infamous David Irving! Today Jones must be blaming himself for putting that sentence in his book. Jones's only defense in writing this sentence could be that the full extent of Irving's weaknesses as a researcher was unknown in 1983. At that time, Irving fooled some historians by citing ample archival footnotes. Few historians, until Irving's 2000 London lawsuit for denying the Holocaust, took the trouble to check out his flawed footnotes. But in 1983 there were already some scholarly objections to Irving's notions about Hitler. Jones was also unfortunate in not being able to consult Gerald Fleming's Hitler and the Final Solution, published a year later in 1984, which thoroughly demolished Irving's theories about Hitler. Jones made his gratuitous comment discounting the Jews' extermination, going beyond the limits of his study, which covered 1907-1913. Including this sentence illustrates the journalist turned historian's weakness. He wanted to touch all bases in his bibliography and notes--but his scholarly ambitions, in this case, led a fine researcher and writer astray.

The story of Hitler's sex life is largely retold from Waite, who is far more original on the topic. Jones may have put too much emphasis on Robert Waite, Sigmund Freud, and Werner Maser (Adolf Hitler: Legend, Myth and Reality [1971]). Many scholars criticized Robert Waite's The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler (1977) as overdoing the Freudian interpretation of Hitler's early years, but Jones expands on that hypothesis to sell his own book. Maser's speculations on sex (contrary to Waite) have more of an audience in Germany than in America. One wonders if Jones, the journalist, living in America in the 1980s, did not project liberal-hedonist sexual values back onto the repressed or "Victorian" Vienna of an earlier era (p. 64). This book makes for interesting reading to this generation of students, but it seems unnecessary to mention four times (pp. 7, 64, 244) the sensational story of Crown Prince Rudolf's suicide in 1889 (the year of Hitler's birth, p. 88). Did Rudolf's tale of lost love need to be told in connection with Adolf Hitler, the later Fuehrer of the NSDAP and ultimate suicide? Jones says Hitler in 1910 was painting gilt in the Hofmuseum in "his own frock coat and his derby was stuck jauntily back on his head" (p. 200). Picturesque writing, but it sounds like Charlie Chaplin, and Jones may be rather imaginative here.

Most amateur biographies dismiss Hitler's art as second-rate. His pictures of buildings were competent, but the human face and body were apparently beyond Adolf Hitler's talent. Jones blames Hitler's own laziness for his failure as an artist. Like many creative artists he was somewhat erratic. He would produce wildly for a few weeks and then turn to reading pamphlets or going to the opera, while allowing his art work to slide. This despite that the fact that the art framing shop run by the Jewish dealer S. Morgenstern was willing to buy in 1910 everything Hitler could produce (p. 210).

Hitler had been evading the Austrian military draft ever since 1909, but the law was drawing a net around him by 1913. Hitler was determined by then to escape Austria's art world, national rivalries, and army by going to Munich to study art. Hitler in early 1913 was industriously painting one picture per day to build up capital for his trip (p. 240). When the alienated loner departed Vienna in May, he took down framed quotations by Schoenerer from over his bed and packed them in his suitcase (p. 251). They were, indeed, clues to Hitler's future. "Without Jews, Without Rome / We will build Germany's Cathedral. Heil!" and "We gaze freely and openly, we gaze unflinchingly / We gaze happily over there into the German fatherland. Heil!" were the two quotations (p. 158).
Part II: Vienna

A tourist planning to visit Vienna could experience something of its historical flavor from Jones' account. The author has good insights on art, music and architecture. Jones the journalist does not completely put himself back in the 1913 mood in the United States, England, or Austria. His interest in sex seems more a product of America in the 1970s and the 1980s. The 1913 generation appeared more concerned about racism, and sexuality was considered largely a private matter. To Jones, racism implies articulated sexuality. For amateurs on Vienna's history, the stories that Jones tells about psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, composer Gustav Mahler, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, artist Gustav Klimt, and the Ringstrasse architecture, could help teachers and general readers fill in gaps in their knowledge about the moribund Habsburg monarchy in its last years.

Jones retells the story of an adventurous woman named Alma who married composer and conductor Gustav Mahler. Gustav went to Dr. Freud in 1910, unsettled by Alma's affair with Walter Gropius, later a leading architect. Alma next had an affair with painter Oskar Kokoschka and finally married writer Franz Werfel. Alma was a very interesting woman, another in Jones's tales of famous Viennese of the time Hitler lived in the Habsburg capital. In pursuit of coincidence and as a purveyor of headlines, Jones threw a number of gratuitous headlines into his text. Jones produces a fantastic yet reasonable footnote: both Hitler and Alma sang tunes from Franz Lehr's popular The Merry Widow operetta in 1912 (p.324, n.65).

Vienna had a high rate of suicide by failed artists and intellectuals. Jones quotes Emil Durkheim that suicide is not an expression of individualism, but a reflection of society's moods and temperaments (pp. 244-245). Jones comments that in April 1945 Hitler himself committed suicide "in true Viennese fashion" (p. 267). Well, maybe.

The basic idea that the Habsburgs were in decay is a major theme of A. J. P. Taylor's very politicaThe Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary (1948) and more than amply proven by the Allies's victory in 1918-1919. Jones, the journalist, plays down the steamy nationality question by referring to twelve "ethnic groups" (p. 7), an anachronism. Somewhat prescient in 1908, Hitler thought that the multinational empire was indeed in political decay. Hitler, as in many other cases, made a shrewd guess for the wrong reasons. Nationality and race were confused in Hitler's mind to his dying day. He blamed "inferior races" for Austro-Hungarian decay rather than the growing nationalist propaganda on all sides. The European balance of power system in the 1914 diplomatic crisis, sparked by the assassination of the Habsburg heir by a Serb, led to World War I. Vienna's basic problem was that twelve nationalities desired a different future, and Habsburg sovereignty in the long run was ideologically doomed. The idea of monarchy everywhere was in decay.

On Austria's Balkan road to war 1912, 1913, and 1914, Jones quotes Leon Trotsky, then writing as a journalist in the Balkans (pp. 237-239). Trotsky saw these wars as a tragic destruction of civilization and a return to barbarism throughout Europe, including people within the socialist parties. He, like others, predicted general war in 1914. Vacillating between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Trotsky denounced socialist participation in military intervention in small countries, which meant the abandonment of "proletarian solidarity" in favor of "nationalism."

Nevertheless, a strong point in Jones's account is his psychological insights into Vienna at the fin de siecle. The stories of Alma Mahler, Schoenberg, Klimt, Freud, and Hitler all demonstrated irrational emotional tendencies widespread at that time in Vienna. Advertising and the newspapers made the phenomenon of this Age of Irrationalism popular. Europe on the eve of World War I was a long way from the Age of Reason.

Hitler in Vienna should sell, even in this reprint edition, but a professional historian will observe that a number of Jones' paragraphs seem padded. Freud and Hitler were coincidentally living in Vienna during the years 1907 to 1913. They both learned that sex was a significant problem for them personally, which molded their lives more than the average person of that era. So Jones cannot resist sentences like: "Freud weathered the storms of protest and by 1908, when he and Hitler might have crossed paths, international repute plus a group of disciples had come to roost" in Vienna (p. 73); and "Hitler, like Freud, was a product of Vienna's sexual atmosphere" (p. 75). Vienna's atmosphere compared to what? Does anyone care that the widow of the founder of the Sacher Hotel, Vienna, smoked cigars around 1910 (p. 90)?

Jones summarized the ideas of Wittgenstein in a beautifully written paragraph (p. 122). But how does the historian go from the mind of Wittgenstein to the mind of Hitler? That both were coincidentally living in Vienna is not enough.

Conclusion: A worthy, well-documented yet popular synthesis of historical writing, but not indispensable for a research library. The book is a fine addition for public libraries and undergraduate college libraries.

Notes

[1]. Source: Christopher Jones' letter to Ronald Hilton <chilton@stanford.edu> 28 August 2003.


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J. Sydney Jones. The Hitler who arrived in Vienna in 1907 was a young aspiring artist; the man who left six years later was a hate-filled dictator in the making, destined to plunge the world into war. Jones' look at Hitler's formative years provides a startling and insightful picture into the future Fuhrer, examining his career as an artist, his acquaintances, and his developing political beliefs. Jones also explores the Vienna of those fragile years before World War I, a home to an amazing array of artists, thinkers, and future leaders, including Sigmund Freud, composer Gustav Mahle.