

## Hitler's Jewish Friends

Despite meticulous investigation, historical researchers have been unable to find a personal reason for Hitler's hatred of the Jews. Hitler was not refused admission to art school by a Jewish professor, nor was he infected with syphilis by a Jewish prostitute – these myths have been definitively discounted through meticulous research. Even Hitler himself did not cite a negative personal experience with Jews.

In *Mein Kampf*, only an encounter with a 'figure in a long caftan with black hair' is mentioned, which reputedly led Hitler to address the arguments of anti-Semites for the first time. Analysis of the accounts of contemporary witnesses indicates that Hitler not only had no negative experiences with Jews in Vienna, but in fact had a remarkable number of Jewish friends and business associates. At the time Hitler resided in Vienna, around eight to ten per cent of the city's population were Jews. This was also the approximate ratio of Jewish residents in the men's hostel Hitler lived in. However, the proportion of Jews among Hitler's associates was far higher than this percentage. In fact, it almost seems as if the young Hitler preferred to spend his time with Jews. Historian Brigitte Hamann examined these connections in her book *Hitler's Vienna (Hitlers Wien, 1996)* in more detail; the results of her investigations are summarised below.

Hitler sold his paintings almost exclusively to Jewish dealers: Morgenstern, Landsberger and Altenberg. The master glazier Samuel Morgenstern was his most consistent buyer. The art dealer Peter Jahn, who later searched for Hitler's artwork on behalf of the NSDAP, attested to the extremely good relationship between Hitler and Morgenstern. Morgenstern introduced the young painter to private clients, including the Jewish lawyer Dr Joseph Feingold, who also became a patron. Not only could Altenberg not remember Hitler making any anti-Semitic statements, he in fact asserts that Hitler seems to have preferred Jewish dealers. Hitler's men's hostel friend Hanisch recalled that Hitler had often said that 'you can do business with the

Jews because they're the only ones prepared to take a risk'.<sup>1</sup> Hansich's statement is confirmed by an anonymous resident at the hostel in the spring of 1912: 'Hitler got on extremely well with Jews, and once said they were a clever people who stick together better than the Germans.'<sup>2</sup>

Hitler's best friend during his time at the men's hostel was a Jewish copper polisher named Joseph Neumann, with whom Hitler once disappeared for a week. Another Jewish resident, Siegfried Löffner, took Hitler's side when he felt conned by another (non-Jewish) resident, and reported the incident to the police. Hitler also maintained a friendly relationship with the one-eyed Jewish locksmith Simon Robinson, which led Robinson to support Hitler using money from his disability allowance. Rudolf Redlich from Moravia was another Jewish friend of Hitler. While Hitler was still living with August Kubizek, his roommate took him along to a family music evening held by an affluent Jewish family called the Jahodas. Afterwards, Hitler had only positive comments to make about his hosts and absolutely nothing critical to say. The Jewish general practitioner from Linz, Dr Bloch, who treated Hitler's mother, received hand-painted postcards from Hitler for years on which Hitler expressed his gratitude. As the status of Jews deteriorated dramatically under the Nazi campaign of terror, Dr Bloch managed to get a petition through to Imperial Chancellor Hitler. Hitler responded immediately and prevented the doctor and his wife from being taken to a collection camp. In 1940, Dr Bloch and his wife emigrated to the USA. As his medical degree was not recognised there, Dr Bloch was no longer able to work as a doctor, and he died penniless and far from home in the Bronx in New York in 1945.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There were in fact unsold paintings by the young Hitler in the offices of Morgenstern and Altenberg which the NDSAP found twenty-five years later. B. Hamann, *Hitlers Wien*, Munich 1996, p.500

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, 'My friend Hitler' p.11, in: 'The story of *Mein Kampf*', Vienna Library Bulletin, 6 (1952), No.5/6 pp.31-32, S. Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD*, Stuttgart 1971, quoted from: I. Kershaw, op. cit., p.100

<sup>3</sup> See: B. Hamann, op. cit., p.500

Samuel Morgenstern was less 'fortunate'. The reliable art buyer and patron of the homeless Hitler wrote to the Imperial Chancellery in 1939 to ask for help. 'On 10 November, my business was closed as a result of legal measures and my trading license simultaneously withdrawn, thereby leaving me entirely without means [...] I am sixty-four years old, my wife is sixty, we have been dependent on public generosity for many months and intend to emigrate to find jobs abroad [...] My humblest request to Your Excellency is to have it decreed that the Property Trading Office grant a small remuneration to me in foreign currency for my unencumbered property in District 21, which by official estimate is worth R.M.4,000.00, in return for ceding said property to the State, so that I may produce the required landing funds and live modestly with my wife until we obtain jobs.'<sup>4</sup> The letter did not reach Hitler. Morgenstern and his wife were taken to a collection camp and deported to the ghetto of Litzmannstadt (Lodz) in 1941. Together with 160,000 local Jews, 20,000 Jews from Germany and 5,000 Roma gypsies from Burgenland the Morgensterns were packed in unbearably cramped conditions. In 1943, Samuel Morgenstern died of exhaustion. His wife was deported to Auschwitz extermination camp in 1944. Two years later she was declared dead at the request of her brother.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> B. Hamann, *ibid.*, p.509

<sup>5</sup> See: B. Hamann, *ibid.*, p.512