



# ***Aus den Gemeinden von Burgenland: Revisiting the question of Adolf Hitler's paternal grandfather***

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## **Abstract**

Hans Frank was Adolf Hitler's personal attorney. In Frank's memoir, published seven years after his execution in 1946 at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Frank claimed to have uncovered evidence in 1930 that Hitler's paternal grandfather was a Jewish man living in Graz, Austria, in the household where Hitler's grandmother was employed. Contemporary historians have largely dismissed Frank's claim, primarily on the grounds that there were purportedly no Jews living in Graz in 1836, when Hitler's father Alois Schicklgruber was conceived. This consensus can be traced to a single historian, Nikolaus von Preradovich, who claimed that 'not a single Jew' (*kein einziger Jude*) was living in Graz prior to 1856. No independent scholarship has confirmed Preradovich's conjecture. In this paper, evidence is presented that there was in fact *eine kleine, nun angesiedelte Gemeinde* – 'a small, now settled community' – of Jews living in Graz before 1850. The contemporary consensus regarding Hitler's paternal grandfather does not have a strong evidentiary basis. Other evidence, deriving from earlier sources, suggests that the contemporary consensus may be incorrect. Avenues for further research which might help to clarify the question are suggested.

## **Keywords**

Austrian history, Burgenland, Adolf Hitler, Jewish history, Nazi Germany

## **Hans Frank**

Hans Frank was Adolf Hitler's personal attorney beginning in 1928 (Schenk, 2008: 60–1). He was appointed Governor-General of Poland after its occupation by the Germans in 1939, continuing until German defeat in 1945. Under Frank's rule, Poland was subject

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to brutality on a massive scale. Polish clergy, doctors, lawyers, professors and writers were murdered in a deliberate attempt to eradicate the educated classes in Poland (e.g. Lukacs, 2012). At the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946, Frank was condemned to death for war crimes and for crimes against humanity.

While awaiting execution, Frank wrote his memoirs, entitled *Im Angesicht des Galgens* ('Facing the Gallows'). His book was published in 1953, seven years after his execution. Frank reported that Hitler had received a blackmail threat from his nephew William Patrick Hitler in 1930, threatening to expose the truth that Adolf Hitler's grandfather was Jewish. According to Frank, Hitler asked Frank to determine whether there was any evidence to support the nephew's allegations. Frank wrote in his memoir that he conducted an investigation as Hitler had requested, and that he discovered the existence of correspondence between Maria Anna Schickelgruber – Hitler's grandmother – and a Jew named Frankenberger living in Graz. According to Frank, the letters hinted that Frankenberger's 19-year-old son had impregnated Maria Anna while she worked in the Frankenberger household: 'that the illegitimate child of the Schickelgruber [*sic*] had been conceived under conditions which required Frankenberger to pay alimony' (*daß das uneheliche Kind der Schickelgruber [*sic*] unter den Frankenberger alimentenpflichtig machenden Umständen gezeugt worden war*) (Frank, 1953: 330).<sup>1</sup> According to these letters, Frankenberger Sr sent money for the support of the child from infancy until its fourteenth birthday.<sup>2</sup> The motivation for the payment, according to Frank, was not charity, but primarily a concern about the authorities becoming involved: 'The Jew paid without a court order, because he was concerned about the result of a court hearing and the connected publicity' (*und ohne Prozeß zahlte der Jude, weil er wohl einen prozessualen Austrag und die damit zusammenhängende Öffentlichkeit scheute*) (Frank, 1953: 331).

However, the accuracy of Frank's book has been questioned. He is often mistaken on details (note that he misspelled Schickelgruber as Schickelgruber). Some see his entire book as a whitewash: an attempt on Frank's part to portray himself as an unwilling pawn of Hitler. For instance, Frank claimed to have submitted his resignation to Hitler 14 times in protest over the mistreatment of the Poles; but the official German records do not agree, giving only two instances on which Frank submitted his resignation. On both those occasions, the reason given had to do with disputes over his role as Reich Attorney-General, not with any matter pertaining to the Polish situation (Piotrowski, 1961: 155). Hitler refused to accept Frank's resignation on both occasions, and Frank stayed on in his post. Such discrepancies have led many historians to question the veracity of the entire book.

Yet Frank's remorse over the atrocities committed under his authority seems genuine. He accepts his own responsibility, while at the same time pointing to Hitler as the ultimate architect of evil:

It is not my intention to bargain or make a deal with the victors concerning my 'guilt'. Anyhow, I feel guilty as a member of Hitler's whole enterprise. And for this reason, I feel it my duty to my heavily burdened conscience, before God, to humanity and to myself, to accept the guilt for everything that happened in Poland, because as a man entangled in Hitler's whole work I failed in many ways, in word and deed.<sup>3</sup>

Hans Frank was unusual among leading Nazi figures in that he openly criticized Hitler but seemed to have enjoyed immunity from severe punishment. During the Röhm putsch of 30 June 1934, Frank protested vigorously against extrajudicial killings; he insisted that none of those arrested should be executed without first having a trial. Hitler overruled Frank and ordered the executions to proceed, but Frank was not punished for defying Hitler's express orders (Toland, 2002: 342).

On 26 April 1942, Hitler demanded that the Reichstag give him the title *Oberster Gerichtsherr* (Supreme Judge) and the authority to remove any judge from the bench, at any time, for any reason. The Reichstag immediately granted Hitler the authority he had requested. Frank responded by speaking at the University of Berlin on 9 June 1942, denouncing the Nazi state as a 'police state' (*Polizeistaat*) and calling for a return to an independent judiciary in a state governed by laws (*Rechtsstaat*) (Schenk, 2008: 268–9). After this speech, Hitler's adjutant Martin Bormann telephoned Frank to notify him of Hitler's extreme displeasure with the speech (O'Connor, 2013: 167–8). Nevertheless, Frank gave three more such speeches making the same points: in Vienna on 1 July 1942, in Munich on 20 July 1942 and in Heidelberg on 21 July 1942. As a result of these speeches – an extraordinary public challenge to the Nazi regime, and to Hitler personally – Frank was stripped of his position as President of the Academy for German Law, and he lost his post as Head of the Legal Department of the Nazi Party (*Leiter des Rechtsamtes der NSDAP*). After being notified of this punishment on 2 August 1942, Frank wrote in his diary 'Long live the law' (*Es lebe das Recht*) (Schenk, 2008: 269–71).

After the war, Frank accepted responsibility for committing war crimes, and expressed remorse for the evils of Nazi Germany. Visibly shaken after watching, at his trial in Nuremberg, a film depicting the horrors of the concentration camps, Frank said in court that 'a thousand years may pass, and still this guilt of Germany will not be extinguished' (*Tausend Jahre werden vergehen, und diese Schuld Deutschlands wird immer noch nicht ausgelöscht sein*) (Benda, 2001: 346).

Dr Gustave Gilbert was an American psychologist who performed psychological testing on the Nazi leaders while they were awaiting trial for war crimes at Nuremberg. Gilbert was aware of Frank's claim that Hitler's paternal grandfather had been a Jew. Gilbert later recalled:

While [Frank] was prone to exaggerate many things, and of course to glamorize his own role, this is something he thought of no great consequence and he said, 'Well, I guess stranger things have happened than hatred of one's own race.' He was inclined to believe the results of his investigation. [Hitler] wouldn't acknowledge having Jewish blood but the mere fact that [Maria] was in a position to blackmail a Jew, evidently having had relations with [his son], is enough to stir up this violent anti-Jewish sexual hatred in Hitler. (Rosenbaum, 1998: 26)

## The present consensus

Contemporary scholarship has largely discounted Frank's allegations regarding a possible Jewish grandfather for Adolf Hitler. In 2013, Volker Ullrich published the most recent comprehensive biography of Hitler. The English translation, published in 2016, became a *New York Times* bestseller and was declared by the newspaper to be one of the 100

'notable books' of the year (Ullrich, 2016; *New York Times*, 2016). Ullrich noted Frank's claim that Hitler's grandmother was impregnated by a Jew named Frankenberger, living in Graz. Ullrich then wrote: 'subsequent research revealed that no Jewish family by that name lived at the time in either Graz or indeed the entire Steiermark region' (Ullrich, 2016: 15). In support of this statement, Ullrich provided two citations: one was Brigitte Hamann's book *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (1996: 75); the other was Guido Knopp's *Geheimnisse des 'Dritten Reiches'* (2011: 18–20). However, Knopp provided no independent research or citations; he merely cited Hamann. Hamann in turn wrote that during the period in question 'there was no family in Graz by the name of Frankenberger'. In support of this statement she cited an April 1989 article by Nikolaus von Preradovich (1917–2004).

The article by Preradovich (1989a) did not appear in a scholarly journal, but in a right-wing brochure published in commemoration of the centennial of Adolf Hitler's birth in April 1889. There is no mention of the Holocaust or the Final Solution anywhere in the brochure, nor any disclaimer acknowledging the horrors of the Nazi era. Most of the brochure's 42 pages are devoted to previously published articles in praise of Adolf Hitler, including an essay by Albert Speer about Hitler's love of music, and an essay by Joachim von Ribbentrop about Hitler's admirable character. There are photographs of Hitler with Hitler Youth and with German girls; a photograph of Hitler with his favourite dog, Blondi; a photograph of a smiling Hitler greeting guests at the Obersalzberg; and so forth.

The relevant passage from Preradovich's short essay reads as follows:

In 1856, a memorandum was presented to the governor by the Jews living provisionally in Styria, which, however, was unsuccessful. It was only seven years later that a government-recognized Jewish organization was formed. Thus, from the beginning of the sixteenth to the second half of the nineteenth century, there were no Jews living in Styria.

Using the archives of the city of Graz and of the province of Styria, as well as all other relevant aids including the entries of the Jewish religious community in Graz, whose register does not begin until 1856, it can be firmly stated: there was no family by the name of Frankenberger in Graz in the period 1820 to 1860.<sup>4</sup>

This passage lacks many details of interest to the historian. For example: what exactly were the 'other relevant aids' that Preradovich consulted, other than the register of the Jewish community which began in 1856? I am unable to find anyone, other than Brigitte Hamann, who has cited Preradovich's article in the April 1989 brochure. Indeed, the 1989 brochure does not appear in any standard index of scholarly journals – which is not surprising, as it is not a scholarly journal, but rather an encomium to Adolf Hitler.

In the same year that this article appeared, Preradovich published a book titled *Die sieben Todsünde Adolf Hitlers* ('The Seven Deadly Sins of Adolf Hitler') (Preradovich, 1989b). The book is devoted to seven errors which, in the opinion of Preradovich, were responsible for Hitler's failure. One of the seven errors is Dunkirk, 1940. Preradovich believes that if Hitler had ordered his generals to annihilate the British forces encircled at Dunkirk, the outcome of the war might have been different. That view of the Dunkirk

evacuation is shared by others. More than 30 years earlier, in 1955, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein had published a memoir titled *Verlorene Siege* ('Lost Victories'). Manstein had helped to devise the successful plan to invade France through the Ardennes in May 1940. He noted that the halt of the German tanks outside of Dunkirk

was due to the intervention of Hitler, who twice stopped the attacking Panzer units – once in the course of their advance to the coast, the second time in sight of Dunkirk ... the actual effect of which was to build a golden bridge across the Channel for the British Army ... Allowing the British army to escape from Dunkirk was one of Hitler's most decisive mistakes. (Manstein, 2018 [1955]: 122)<sup>5</sup>

But another one of Hitler's seven deadly sins, in Preradovich's opinion, is the 'Holocaust'. ('Holocaust' is in quotes.) Most people, if asked why the Holocaust was a deadly sin, might begin by answering that millions of innocent civilians were killed. But that is not Preradovich's opinion. He never expresses any regret regarding the slaughter of the Jews: on the contrary, he opens his essay with a lengthy, five-page quote from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* including the following statements:

- 'If the Jews were alone in this world, they would suffocate as much in dirt and filth as in hate-filled struggles to outdo and exterminate each other' (*Wären die Juden auf dieser Welt allein, so würden sie ebensosehr in Schmutz und Unrat ersticken wie in haßerfülltem Kampfe sich gegenseitig zu übervorteilen und auszurotten versuchen*) (Preradovich 1989b: 167).
- 'Here, too, the Jew is guided by nothing but the naked egoism of the individual' (*Auch hier leitet den Juden weiter nichts als nackter Egoismus des einzelnen*) (Preradovich 1989b: 167).
- 'he was therefore never a nomad, rather always only a *parasite* in the body of other peoples ... he is always looking for new breeding grounds for his race' (*er war deshalb auch nie Nomade, sondern immer nur Parasit im Körper anderer Völker ... er sucht immer neuen Nährboden für seine Rasse*) (Preradovich, 1989b: 169; emphasis in original).

Preradovich includes these five pages from *Mein Kampf* without disclaimer or apology. In the judgment of Preradovich, the great crime of the Holocaust was not that millions of innocents were murdered, but that it diverted a large number of men, and substantial resources, away from the war effort, 'such a huge amount of men and materiel wasted' (*so ungeheuren Aufwand am Menschen und Materiel zu vernichten*) Preradovich, 1989b: 196).

Subsequently, in 1995, Preradovich wrote the following: 'Day by day, I admire Adolf Hitler more. The man ruled for twelve years. He waged war for more than five years, of which three years were extremely successful!' (*Ich bewundere Adolf Hitler von Tag zu Tag mehr. Der Mann hat zwölf Jahre regiert. Er hat mehr als fünf Jahre Krieg geführt, davon drei Jahre äußerst erfolgreich!*) (DÖW, 2000).

Earlier biographers did not cite the 1989 article by Preradovich, but instead cited his comments in a 1957 interview for the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. These comments

were made decades before Preradovich's right-wing leanings and admiration for Adolf Hitler became known. In the 1957 interview, Preradovich noted that no Jews were officially allowed to reside in Graz before 1856. Maria Anna gave birth to Hitler's father in 1837: therefore, Maria Anna could not have had a liaison with a Jew.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Preradovich is reported in *Der Spiegel* as having proved that 'not a single Jew' (*kein einziger Jude*) lived in all of the Steiermark before 1856:

Preradovic proved that during this time, not only in Graz, but in all of the Steiermark, there was not a single Jew. Jews were driven out of the Steiermark in 1496 and were first allowed to settle (*ansiedeln*) there again beginning in 1856. (*Der Spiegel*, 1957)<sup>7</sup>

(Preradovich published all his own work under the surname Preradovich. Only in the 1957 interview for *Der Spiegel* was his last name given as Preradovic.)

Volker Ullrich is only the most recent of Hitler biographers to rely, indirectly, on Preradovich. Other major Hitler biographers, such as Kershaw (1999: 604, n25) and Toland (2002),<sup>8</sup> also relied on Preradovich's 1957 assertion that there were no Jews in Graz before 1856 in their rejection of Frank's account. The massive, two-volume, 8 lb, 1,150-page *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, in its lengthy entry for Adolf Hitler, notes that 'The identity of Alois Hitler's father (Adolf's grandfather) is not completely certain because of incestuous relationships. However, Werner Maser's investigations have thoroughly dispelled persistent speculations regarding Jewish ancestors' (Zentner and Bedürftig, 1991: 417). The *Encyclopedia*, like many other German-language sources, thus cites Werner Maser, whose 532-page biography was for many decades regarded as the definitive German-language biography of Hitler. Maser had rejected Frank's account, citing written correspondence he exchanged with Preradovich in March 1967 (Maser, 1971: 443, n46). Maser did not provide the actual correspondence. Hitler biographer Joachim Fest (2002: 15) took a more agnostic position, concluding that *every* theory about Hitler's paternal grandfather was 'full of holes'.

The rejection of Frank's claim regarding Hitler's grandfather appears to rest primarily on the consensus that no Jews were living in Graz in 1836. This consensus, in turn, appears to be based in substantial part on assertions made by Nikolaus von Preradovich: first for a magazine interview in 1957, repeated in an unpublished letter to Werner Maser in 1967, and repeated yet again in a short essay written for a right-wing brochure in 1989. Preradovich's writings make clear that he was an admirer of Adolf Hitler who was offended by the suggestion that Adolf Hitler might have been a *Vierteljude* (one-quarter Jew). It is reasonable, therefore, to examine whether Preradovich's assertions are correct. Can we be confident that there was, in fact, 'not a single Jew' living in Graz in 1836?

## **The status of Jews in Burgenland and in Austria, 1496–1867**

Burgenland is the easternmost province of today's Austria. Prior to 1921, however, it was the westernmost province of Hungary. During the two centuries during which Jews were unwelcome throughout most of Austria – from the expulsion of the Jews of Vienna by Emperor Leopold I in 1670 to the general lifting of the bans against Jews in Austria in

the 1860s – Jews were welcome in the Hungarian province of Burgenland. During that time, the *Gemeinden* (communities) of German-speaking Jews in Burgenland thrived (Reiss, 1997). Prince Paul Esterhazy (1635–1713) established official legal guarantees, or *Schutzbriefe* (letters of protection) for the Jews of Burgenland, which led to a flourishing of Jewish communal life and scholarship throughout Burgenland lasting through the mid-1800s (Reiss, 2002). Eisenstadt was home to the largest Jewish community in Burgenland and nourished a lively culture of the arts and music. The composer Joseph Haydn, *Hofkappelmeister* (royal director of music) for the Esterhazy family, lived in Eisenstadt for 12 years, 1766–78 (Geiringer and Geiringer, 1982).

The population of Jews in the *Gemeinden* of Burgenland rose throughout the 1700s and the first half of the 1800s, then declined after the relaxation of the bans against Jews officially residing in the neighbouring Austrian province of Styria. For example, the number of Jews living in the town of Deutschkreuz, in Burgenland, rose from 222 in 1735 to a peak of 1,244 in 1857 (Gold, 1970: 133–4). After 1857, with the loosening of restrictions on Jewish settlement in Styria, the number of Jews in Deutschkreuz dropped to 476 in 1880 (1970: 134).

Meanwhile, what was going on in Austria? In 1496, all Jews were expelled from the Austrian province of Styria (Steiermark) by order of Emperor Maximilian I (Laux, 2004: 33–58). And, as noted above, Emperor Leopold I expelled Jews from Vienna in 1670. After 1670, Jews were prohibited from officially residing in most of Austria. The status of Jews during this period was peculiar. On the one hand, they were officially unwelcome throughout most of Austria. On the other hand, they were becoming an increasingly vital part of the Austrian economy.

Throughout this period – from 1670 to the 1860s – Jews were disproportionately likely to be involved in finance. Indeed, Austrian Jews during this period were generally prohibited from owning land or from engaging in the trades. Finance was one of the few occupations in which Austrian Jews were allowed to engage. In a roster of Viennese Jews from 1763, more than half the Jewish men were engaged in finance, banking, or currency trading. On the large governing committee of the (Austrian) National Bank, the proportion of Jews on the committee in 1823 was 19 per cent, and had risen to 41 per cent in 1836 – in a country where Jews were a small minority, less than 3 per cent of citizens overall (McCagg, 1989: 88).

The experience of Viennese Jews may shed some light on the experience of Jews elsewhere in Austria, including Graz. Let us consider the number of Jews officially residing in Vienna compared with the number of Jews actually living there. In 1752, only 12 Jewish families were allowed to reside in Vienna (Pribram, 1918: liv). By 1790, the number had risen to 70; by 1820, 130 Jewish families were allowed to live in Vienna; by 1848, that number had risen to 200 families. However, the number of Jews actually living in Vienna in 1848 has been estimated by scholars as being at least 4,500 and as high as 10,000 Jews (McCagg, 1989: 86). The discrepancy between 200 families officially residing in Vienna in 1848 and 4,500 to 10,000 Jews actually living in Vienna in 1848 arose because many Jews actually residing in Vienna were legally citizens of other communities. The official rosters did not include many Jews who were non-citizens, even if they were living in Austria for a prolonged period. Throughout the 1700s, the Jews of Vienna were not allowed to have their 'own' rabbi, so they hosted rabbis from the nearby *Gemeinden* of Burgenland; those rabbis

stayed in Austria for months or years although they were not citizens and would not be listed on the rosters of residents (McCagg, 1989: 49).

The historical evidence demonstrates that Jews were over-represented in the financial system, and that some Jews were residing in Austrian communities without being officially registered as citizens of those communities. These facts may be relevant in evaluating the plausibility of Hans Frank's claim regarding Adolf Hitler's grandfather.

### **1850: die kleine, nun angesiedelte jüdische Gemeinde**

As noted above, Jews were driven out of Styria in 1496 by order of Emperor Maximilian I. In 1781, Emperor Josef II allowed Jews to enter Styria to participate in the annual fair (Baumgarten, 1903: 38). Outside of the fair, Jews were officially permitted in Graz generally for no more than 24 hours at a time. Jews in the nearby *Gemeinden* of Burgenland, such as Güssing, nevertheless began to take advantage of these opportunities.<sup>9</sup> For these Jews, according to a history of Jews in Styria published in 1914, 'The pretext of being on the road to the permitted markets offered an opportunity to spend a significant part of each year on business trips.'<sup>10</sup>

Ludwig Kadisch was a Jewish doctor, born in Güssing, in Burgenland, in 1809. In 1850, he requested permission from the Graz city council to establish an inn and Jewish restaurant to serve 'the small, now settled Jewish community' – *die kleine, nun angesiedelte jüdische Gemeinde*. On 27 October 1850, the Graz municipal authorities rejected his application, but he appears to have appealed the decision: on 27 June 1851, the district government again rejected his application.<sup>11</sup> Kadisch was persistent, and on 11 December 1861 he finally received permission to open an inn and restaurant to serve the Jewish population (Rosenberg, 1914: 113–14).

A Jewish restaurant serving Jewish customers would require a supplier of kosher food. Maximilian Schischa was a kosher butcher and food purveyor, born in Mattersdorf (modern-day Mattersburg), in Burgenland, in 1827. The Graz city archives document that on 18 November 1861, Schischa requested official permission to license his services as a kosher butcher and purveyor of kosher food – services which, as Schischa noted in his application, he had already been providing on a part-time basis since the year 1850. The very next day, on 19 November 1861, Schischa received his official permit, legitimizing his business (Stadtarchiv Graz, 18-22171, 1861, cited in Lamprecht, 2004). Schischa's prompt success may have emboldened Kadisch to refile his application, which was approved three weeks later.

Land was purchased for a Jewish burial ground in 1864: the first burial in the Jewish cemetery in Graz took place in July 1864. On 12 September 1865, with full approval of the city authorities, a Rosh Hashanah service was celebrated in the newly dedicated synagogue in Graz, repurposing a previous meeting place (Rosenberg, 1914: 116). In 1867, all official restrictions on Jewish settlement in Graz were lifted.

### **Emanuel Baumgarten**

Emanuel Mendel Baumgarten was born in 1828 into a traditional Jewish family in Krenšier, Moravia (modern-day Kroměříž in the Czech Republic). He studied at



Moravian yeshivot but also attended Vienna University. In 1861, he was elected to the Vienna municipal council, one of the first Jews to hold that honour (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2007). In 1884, he wrote a book titled *Die Juden in Steiermark: eine historische Skizze* ('Jews in Styria: A Historical Sketch'). A second edition was published in 1903. His book is primarily a scholarly monograph describing Jewish settlements in Styria from medieval times until 1870, but also includes personal recollections.

Baumgarten reports that in September 1856 he and several Jewish colleagues met with Michael Graf von Strassoldo, who at that time held the post of *Statthalter* (governor) for the province of Styria. Baumgarten and his colleagues petitioned Strassoldo to lift the restrictions on Jews residing in Styria. Baumgarten cited a letter to local mayors in Styria which noted 'that Jews are staying in local districts for a long time and are taking up residence for a long time' (*daß Israeliten sich in hiesigen Bezirken durch lange Zeit aufhalten und einen Wohnsitz auf längere Zeit nehmen*) (Baumgarten, 1903: 40, n1). Baumgarten reports that Strassoldo's reception of the petition was 'friendly and courteous' (*freundlich und zuvorkommend*). Strassoldo ruled that the general prohibition on long-term official Jewish settlement would remain, for the time being, but that individual Jews would be allowed to reside in Styria on a case-by-case basis (*erklärte sich jedoch bereit, über spezielles Ansuchen Einzelnen gegenüber Konzessionen zu gewähren*) (Baumgarten, 1903: 40–1). The official register of Jews in Graz appears to have been launched following this meeting. Thus, the establishment in 1856 of a community register of Jews in Graz seems not to have been a first step in the foundation of the Jewish community in Graz, as Nikolaus von Preradovich assumed, but rather the recognition of a community already in existence.

## Abraham Wasservogel

Abraham Wasservogel was a Jewish man, the son of Salomon and Paulina Wasservogel, born in 1811 in Moravian Aussee, modern-day Úsov, a small town near Olomouc in what is now the Czech Republic. In October 1841, he requested permission to study medicine and surgery at the University of Graz. On 11 November 1841, 'the Jew Abraham Wasservogel' was granted permission to attend the university and to reside in Graz 'for the duration of his medical-surgical studies' (*für die Dauer seiner medizinisch-chirurgischen Studien*). The exact duration of his studies in Graz is not known. Wasservogel then returned to his native Moravia and appears to have had a lengthy career, lasting until the 1870s, practising medicine near Olomouc (Herzog, 1929). Although the details of his story are sketchy, Wasservogel's successful application to study medicine in Graz provides further evidence that at least some Jews were living in Graz well before the establishment of the Jewish community register in 1856.

## The contemporary consensus

As noted above, the contemporary consensus – which rejects Hans Frank's claim that Hitler's paternal grandfather was a Jew – appears to assume the truthfulness of the assertion by Nikolaus von Preradovich that 'not a single Jew' was living in Graz prior to 1856. But Preradovich's assertion was not correct. As we have seen, there was a 'small, now

settled Jewish community' in Graz from 1850. Although we do not have direct evidence of a Jewish community in Graz in 1836, when Alois Schicklgruber was conceived, the assertion that 'not a single Jew' was living in Graz prior to 1856 cannot be sustained. Neither Preradovich nor anyone else seems to have considered the possibility that the Frankenberger man mentioned in Frank's memoir may have maintained a legal residence in one of the neighbouring *Gemeinden* of Burgenland, actually living in Graz but not legally a resident of Graz and therefore not enrolled on any list of residents of Graz.

As we have seen, there appears to have been a *kleine, nun angesiedelte jüdische Gemeinde* – a 'small, now settled Jewish community' – in Graz in 1850, at the time of Ludwig Kadisch's first application to open an inn and restaurant to serve Jews, and when Maximilian Schischa was already providing kosher food to the local Jewish community according to his own application filed in 1861. And if there was 'a small, now settled Jewish community' in Graz in 1850, it is possible that there might have been a family of Jewish tenants who were renting some living space in Graz in 1836, even if they remained legally residents of the *Gemeinden* in neighbouring Burgenland.

There are many scenarios which might fit the historical record and accommodate Frank's account. For example: if Frankenberger Sr were a financier, lender or currency trader, he might have maintained an official residence in Güssing (home town of Ludwig Kadisch), or another of the *Gemeinden* of Burgenland, while renting a home or a flat in Graz, formally or informally. If the Frankenberger family was officially resident in any of the *Gemeinden* in Burgenland, but renting – perhaps informally – in Graz, their names would not have appeared on any roster of the citizens of Graz.

And with regard to the letters between Maria Anna and the elder Frankenberger: if such letters ever existed, Hitler's agents would have been intent on locating them and destroying them, along with any other records or artefacts which Maria Anna might have kept relating to the father of Alois. In July 1938, four months after the annexation of Austria to the German Reich, Hitler ordered a survey of Döllersheim, Maria Anna's home town in Upper Austria, ostensibly to determine whether the terrain was suitable for army manoeuvres. In 1939, the citizens were forcibly evacuated, 'and the village, along with its heavily wooded countryside, was blasted beyond recognition by mortar shells and thoroughly ploughed over by army tanks' (Fischer, 1996: 74, 584, n1; see also Hamann, 1996: 73). This episode has never been satisfactorily explained. No justification has ever been offered for Hitler's decision to raze to the ground the entire village in which his grandmother had lived. Perhaps Hitler believed that the town might contain some clue to his ancestry which he was anxious to obliterate.

The most direct evidence that Hitler's grandfather was Jewish comes from Hans Frank's account. Is there any other evidence of Hitler's Jewish ancestry, besides Frank's testimony? There are hints. Hitler seems to have been obsessed with the idea of a German woman having an illegitimate child by a Jewish employer – as his grandmother may have conceived a child while employed by the Frankenbergers. Consider the case of Matthias Erzberger, the German official who signed the 1918 armistice ending World War I. Hitler described Erzberger as 'the bastard son of a servant-girl and a Jewish employer' (Toland, 2002: 231). There is no evidence to support Hitler's allegation that Erzberger's father was Jewish. As Hitler biographer John Toland

(2002: 231) observed regarding this passage, ‘he could have been talking of his own father’. The Nuremberg racial laws of 1935 stipulated specifically that no German woman under 45 years of age could work for a Jewish employer in any capacity. Hitler biographer Robert Waite (1978: 128) reports that ‘Hitler himself personally checked the wording of these laws and gave strict orders that not one word should be changed’. Hitler’s own grandmother was 41 when she conceived Hitler’s father. The Nuremberg racial laws would prohibit any 41-year-old Gentile woman working in the household of a Jewish employer.

Hitler was anxious to conceal all traces of his ancestry. His only mention of his paternal grandfather in *Mein Kampf* is a reference to ‘a poor little cottager’ (*eines armen, kleinen Häuslers*) whom he did not even name. The description of ‘a poor little cottager’ fits neither of the two possible candidates allowed by the contemporary consensus: Johann Georg Hiedler was an itinerant miller, not a cottager; and Johann Nepomuk Hiedler was not poor. Outside of *Mein Kampf* he never discussed his family background, as a rule. Hitler’s architect Albert Speer (1969: 112) described how angry Hitler became when Speer told him about a sign which had been erected in Spital, near Döllersheim, which simply said ‘The Führer Lived Here in His Youth.’

In the blink of an eye, he flew into a rage and shouted for Bormann, who rushed in alarmed. Hitler bore down on him, hard. He had said so many times that this village must never be mentioned! Now that donkey of a *Gauleiter* had gone out and put up a plaque there. It must be removed at once. At the time, I could not explain his excitement, because at other times he seemed quite pleased when Bormann reported to him about the renovation of other memorable sites from his youth in Linz and Braunau. Clearly there was some motivation for him to erase this part of his background.<sup>12</sup>

In an interview with the Paris evening newspaper *Paris Soir*, William Patrick Hitler (1939) reported this interaction from 1930:

[Adolf Hitler said:] ‘People must not know who I am. They must not know where I come from and from what family! Even in my book [*Mein Kampf*], I did not allow myself one word on these things, not one word! And suddenly, a nephew is discovered! A nephew!’ ... Suddenly he began to sob, yes, he really began to sob. He dropped into an armchair. Tears were in his eyes ... And he cried, in a voice choked by tears: ‘Idiots! Idiots! You will find still means to destroy everything! Family affairs are private affairs. I could not bear to see all this publicly divulged and debated. That day will be my end. That day, I send a bullet into my head.’<sup>13</sup>

## The other contenders

Ian Kershaw (1999: 9) summarized the contemporary historical consensus when he wrote that ‘the only serious contenders’ for the role of Hitler’s paternal grandfather remain either Johann Georg Hiedler or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler. In 1842, five years after giving birth to her son Alois, Maria Anna Schicklgruber married Johann Georg Hiedler, the brother of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, a farmer and landowner.

Johann Georg Hiedler was, as noted above, an itinerant miller. He did not raise Alois, even after marrying Alois’s mother. Instead, Alois was sent to the farm of Johann Georg’s

brother, Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, in Spital, not far from Döllersheim. Neither Johann Georg nor Johann Nepomuk ever adopted Alois, who continued to be known by his mother's maiden name of Schicklgruber.

In 1876, at the age of 39, and nearly 20 years after the death of Johann Georg Hiedler, Alois went back to the parish church in Döllersheim and had the baptismal record changed. He persuaded the priest, Father Zahnschirm, to write in the name of Johann Georg Hiedler for the father, where there had previously been a blank space. The priest's action may not have been lawful. Parish records were official state records in that era. The priest was not authorized to accept a mere assertion as grounds for changing the official record, to list a dead man as a father. Alois brought with him three witnesses who claimed to have heard Johann Georg acknowledge that he, Johann Georg, was the father of Alois. The three witnesses – Josef Romeder, Johann Breitender and Engelbert Paukh – were illiterate. They signed with an X next to their names to signify their support of the claim that Johann Georg Hiedler was the father of Alois Schicklgruber.<sup>14</sup> Father Zahnschirm may not have been persuaded of the legality of the name change. He did not sign the entry, or date it (Smith, 1967: 29).

What might have been Alois Schicklgruber's motivation for changing his name, and his paternity, at the age of 39? Johann Nepomuk Hiedler had three daughters but no sons. Some have conjectured that Johann Nepomuk Hiedler may have told Alois that he, Johann Nepomuk, would leave Alois a substantial inheritance, if only Alois would change his last name to Hiedler (e.g. Smith, 1967: 30–1). This story would be more persuasive if Alois had in fact changed his last name to Hiedler. But, as all the world knows, the surname Alois chose was Hitler, not Hiedler. If the motive for the name change was the desire to carry on the Hiedler family name, one might expect Alois to have specified that the name on the baptismal registry was in fact Hiedler.

Another possibility is that Alois wanted to quash rumours that he had a Jewish father. If Hans Frank's account is accurate, some people in the community must have known that Alois's mother had received money from a Jew when Alois was a boy. That would have raised questions about why a Jew in Graz was sending money to a Gentile woman in Döllersheim. Alois might have believed that changing the baptismal registry to show that his father was Johann Georg Hiedler would help to suppress those rumours. In that case, it would not have mattered much to Alois whether his surname was Hiedler or Hitler.

There are significant problems with the claim that either Johann Georg Hiedler or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler was the father of Alois. If Johann Georg Hiedler was Alois's father, why did he not adopt the boy after marrying his mother, when Alois was five years old? Why did he never allow his purported son to live with him? If Johann Nepomuk Hiedler was the father, why did he not adopt Alois? Some have suggested that Johann Nepomuk Hiedler was the father but refused to adopt the boy because he did not want to acknowledge that he had had an extramarital affair and was 'trying to head off a family scandal' (Ullrich, 2016: 14). But if Johann Nepomuk Hiedler did not want to acknowledge any connection with Alois, why did he bring the child into his own home and raise him? Hans Frank's claim that Alois was the illegitimate child of a Jewish teenager may actually fit the known facts better than the contemporary consensus.

## Excursus: Franz Jetzinger and William Patrick Hitler

In 1956, Franz Jetzinger published his investigation of Hitler's early years, entitled *Hitlers Jugend* ('Hitler's Youth'). Jetzinger was persuaded of the truth of Hans Frank's account. He even claimed that Adolf Hitler's nephew, the aforementioned William Patrick Hitler – the son of Adolf Hitler's half-brother Alois Jr – had given an interview to the French newspaper *Paris Soir* in August 1939 in which he claimed that the name of Maria Anna's employer in Graz was Leopold Frankenreiter, not Frankenberger (Jetzinger, 1956: 32).

The relevant interview with William Patrick is now available online: anyone with internet access can pull up the microfilm of the full text of the issue of *Paris Soir* in which the August 1939 interview was printed.<sup>15</sup> Nowhere in the interview does William Patrick mention anything about Hitler having a Jewish grandfather. The name Frankenreiter does not appear. Brigitte Hamann, among others, has pointed out that William Patrick, in numerous interviews, never publicly said that Adolf Hitler had Jewish ancestry (Hamann, 1999: 51–2). Hamann regards this omission as evidence against Hans Frank's claim that William Patrick tried to blackmail Adolf Hitler regarding a purported Jewish grandfather.

After moving to the United States in 1939, William Patrick Hitler successfully petitioned for American citizenship. He served in the United States Navy during the war as a pharmacist's mate. After the war, he changed his surname from Hitler to Stuart-Houston. His choice of surname may provide a clue to Hamann's question: if William Patrick believed that Adolf Hitler's paternal grandfather was Jewish, why did he never make a public statement to that effect?

Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) was a British-born German writer who was a leader of the anti-Semitic movement in Germany. His book *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* ('Foundations of the Nineteenth Century'), published in 1899, was a central book in the Nazi corpus. His subsequent essays, especially after the German defeat in 1918, became even more strident in denouncing the Jews as the agents of Germany's humiliation. Chamberlain was married to a daughter of the composer Richard Wagner and was, like Adolf Hitler, an enthusiastic Wagnerian. Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler appear to have admired one another, and met shortly before Chamberlain's death in 1927 (Kershaw, 1999: 629–30n).

William Patrick chose the surname Stuart-Houston. Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic muse was Houston Stewart Chamberlain. It is possible that William Patrick chose the surname Stuart-Houston to signify his own allegiance to the anti-Semitic ideas of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. William Patrick had four sons: his firstborn, born in 1949, he named Alexander Adolf. 'Adolf' is a curious choice of name for a naturalized American, living in the United States, to give to a son born in 1949, four years after the end of the war. William Patrick died in Patchogue, Long Island, in 1987 (Kilgannon, 2006).

Why did William Patrick never publicly share evidence that Hitler's grandfather was Jewish? The first answer might be that William Patrick had no evidence to share. William Patrick's father Alois Jr had left home at the age of 14. It is unlikely that a teenage boy fleeing his father's home would have bothered to steal and carry with him old

letters between his late grandmother and a Jewish man from Graz. At most, William Patrick may have heard his father make some comments about how his own father, Alois Sr, was the illegitimate son of a Jewish teenager. But William Patrick himself would have had no evidence beyond second-hand hearsay: 'My father told me that he heard *his* father say ...'

A second answer might be that William Patrick Stuart-Huston was an anti-Semite. While he might have tried to exploit rumours of Jewish ancestry to blackmail Adolf Hitler in 1930, the gambit may have been a bluff: he might not have wanted the public at large to know that Adolf Hitler, and by extension he himself, was 'tainted' by Jewish blood. This hypothesis is difficult to test: William Patrick has now been dead for more than 30 years and his three surviving sons have shown little interest in discussing their dead father (a fourth son died in a motor vehicle accident).<sup>16</sup>

### Further research

Could any further research clarify the question of Hitler's origins? There are two avenues of research which might be helpful. One line of research would be an investigation of the records of the *Gemeinden* of Burgenland from the 1830s, perhaps beginning with the *Gemeinden* closest to Graz such as Güssing, Schlaining, Rechnitz, Kobersdorf and Lackenbach. If a Frankenberger family were found among the records of the *Gemeinden* of Burgenland, and if the evidence suggested that a Jewish man named Frankenberger might have made excursions to Graz in the 1830s, such evidence would provide substantial support for Hans Frank's claim.

Another avenue of research would be forensic DNA analysis. There has already been at least one amateurish step in this direction. In 2010, Dutch journalists claimed to have obtained DNA from Adolf Hitler's living relatives (Mulders and Vermeeren, 2010). The most dominant haplogroup among the relatives was reportedly E1b1b, which is common among Ashkenazi Jews but rare among Gentile Europeans. These findings were never reported in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, only in the Dutch magazine *Knack* and other popular magazines, so the findings must be treated with caution (Cohen, 2010). The methods were hardly conventional. For example, the authors claimed that they spent seven days trailing Alexander Adolf Stuart-Houston, the eldest son of William Patrick Hitler. When Alexander Adolf dropped a napkin, the napkin was retrieved and used as a source of DNA in the study, according to an article in the *Daily Mail* (Hall, 2010). Such methods – obtaining material without the consent of the donor – would generally disqualify the study from publication in a reputable journal.

However, a more serious investigation might yield useful information. According to the current consensus, Adolf Hitler's paternal grandfather was either Johann Georg Hiedler or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, who were brothers. Johann Georg Hiedler left no children (if he was not the father of Alois Schicklgruber), but Johann Nepomuk Hiedler had three legitimate children, all daughters, who in turn went on to have children of their own (Ryback, 2000). An enterprising researcher might be able to locate the descendants of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler and recruit them to participate in a study. One could then compare the DNA of the descendants of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler with the DNA of the three living sons of William Patrick Hitler – assuming that those men

could be persuaded to participate in such a study. If the DNA of the sons of William Patrick Hitler showed DNA markers characteristic of Ashkenazi Jews, such as the E1b1b haplotype, but the DNA of bona fide descendants of Johann Nepomuk Hiedler did not show those markers, that would provide further evidence in support of Hans Frank's account.

### **Which hypothesis best fits the facts?**

As in any of the sciences, 100 per cent certainty is often not possible. Instead, one makes a hypothesis and checks to see how well the hypothesis fits the facts. The hypothesis that Hitler's grandfather was a Jewish teenager may fit the available facts better than the hypothesis that Johann Georg Hiedler or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler was the grandfather. Consider the following questions:

- Why did Hitler order the destruction of his grandmother's home town, Döllersheim?
- Why was Hitler so anxious to prevent any public investigation into his ancestry?
- Why did Hans Frank enjoy near-immunity from serious punishment, despite calling for an end to the Nazi police state?
- How to explain Hans Frank's claim that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Jewish?

The hypothesis that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Jewish yields answers to these questions. The hypothesis that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Johann Georg Hiedler, or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler, yields less convincing answers.

There is evidence that Hitler was anti-Semitic as a child, although anti-Semitism was not common in his community at that time.<sup>17</sup> Yet in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler claimed that he never had any anti-Semitic feelings until he encountered Polish Orthodox Jews as a 20-year-old in Vienna. He never acknowledged that he had been anti-Semitic as a child, for if he had done so people might ask why. Why would a child who had no personal contact with Jews hate them with such a passion? If Hans Frank's account is correct, then the extramarital liaison between the teenage Frankenberger boy and the 41-year-old Maria Anna Schicklgruber, which may not have been consensual, was the proximate cause of Maria Anna returning home to Döllersheim pregnant, and rejected by her own family. An inquiry into the reasons for Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic feelings at such a young age might have lent further credence to the rumours about his Jewish paternal grandfather.

The most common objection to the hypothesis that Hitler's grandfather was a Jewish teenager rests on the fact that Jews were officially prohibited from residing in Styria from 1496 until 1856. As we have seen, that prohibition on legal residence did not mean that no Jews were *present* in Styria, while having their legal residence elsewhere. The hypothesis that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Jewish, as claimed by Hans Frank, may fit the facts better than the alternative hypothesis that Hitler's paternal grandfather was Johann Georg Hiedler or Johann Nepomuk Hiedler.

## Notes

1. The original German of the source materials has been included throughout this manuscript as a courtesy to the reader, either in the main text or in the endnotes, because the original German texts cited here are in many cases not readily available online.
2. *Und dieser Frankenberger hat für seinen damals – die Sache spielt in den späten Dreißigerjahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts – etwa neunzehnjährigen Sohn, mit der Geburt beginnend, bis in das vierzehnte Lebensjahr dieses Kindes der Schickelgruber [sic] Alimente bezahlt.* ('This thing took place in the late 1830s. This Frankenberger paid maintenance on behalf of his son, who was about 19 years old – to this Schickelgruber [sic], from the child's birth up to its fourteenth year') (Frank, 1953: 330, my translation).
3. The original German reads:

*Aber abgesehen von alledem habe ich über meine 'Schuld' mit einem Gremium von Siegern nicht zu feilschen und zu handeln. Außerdem fühle ich mich insgesamt schuldig als Teilnehmer an dem Gesamtunternehmen Hitlers, und halte es daher vor meinem, deshalb vor Gott, den Menschen und mir selbst schwer belasteten Gewissen für meine Pflicht, jene Schuld auch für alles dort in Polen Geschehene zu übernehmen, weil ich, überhaupt verstrickt in Hitlers Totalwerk, vielfach in Wort und Werk gefehlt habe.* (Frank, 1953, 405)

4. The original German reads:

*1856 wurde von den provisorisch in der Steiermark lebenden Juden dem Statthalter ein Memorandum überreicht, welches jedoch keinen Erfolg zeitigte. Erst sieben Jahre danach konnte sich eine von der Regierung anerkannte jüdische Organisation bilden. Somit existierten vom Beginn des 16. bis in die zweite Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts keine ortsansässigen Juden in der Steiermark.*

*Nach Benutzung der Archive der Stadt Graz und des Landes Steiermark sowie nach der Heranziehung sämtlicher übriger einschlägiger Hilfsmittel unter anderem auch der Eintragungen der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Graz, deren Bestände erst 1856 beginnen – kann festgehalten werden: Eine Familie namens Frankenberger hat es in der Zeit von 1820 bis 1860 in Graz nicht gegeben.* (Preradovich, 1989a: 7–8)

5. The original German reads:

*Dies ist dem Eingreifen Hitlers zuzuschreiben, der zweimal die vorstürmenden Panzerverbände – einmal im Verlauf ihres Vormarschs zur Küste, das zweite Mal angesichts von Düнкirchen – angehalten hat. . . das Entrinnenlassen der britischen Armee aus Düнкirchen ist einer der entscheidenden Fehler Hitlers gewesen. . . durch den tatsächlich der britischen Armee eine goldene Brücke über den Kanal gebaut worden ist.*

6. Even this article in *Der Spiegel* acknowledges: *Fest steht, daß Adolf Hitler den Ariernachweis, den er den meisten Deutschen abverlangte, für seine Person kaum hätte erbringen können. Sein Großvater väterlicherseits ist unbekannt* ('It is certain that the proof of Aryan descent for Adolf Hitler, which he demanded of most Germans, he would hardly have been able to provide for himself. His paternal grandfather is unknown': my translation).



## 7. The original German reads:

*Um diese Zeit aber, so konnte Preradovic nachweisen, lebte nicht nur in Graz, sondern in der gesamten Steiermark kein einziger Jude: Die Juden waren 1496 aus der Steiermark vertrieben worden und durften sich dort erst seit 1856 wieder ansiedeln.*

8. Toland (2002: 247n) cites ‘the research of Nikolaus Preradovic’ as his primary grounds for rejecting the claim that Hitler’s grandfather might have been Jewish. Toland provides no citation. However, Dr Preradovich published all his work under the surname Preradovich. Only in the 1957 interview for *Der Spiegel* was his last name given as Preradovic. For this reason, it is likely that Toland had in mind the 1957 interview for *Der Spiegel*.

## 9. Rosenberg (1914: 223) writes:

*Demzufolge besuchten die Juden der früher erwähnten Gebiete, insbesondere der Grenzflecken Güssing, Schlaining, Rechnitz und Olsnitz regelmäßig auch weiterhin die erlaubten Jahrmärkte, mit Pässen versehen, deren Ausstellung auf keine Schwierigkeiten stieß. (Accordingly, the Jews of the previously mentioned areas, especially the border zones of Güssing, Schlaining, Rechnitz and Olsnitz, were provided with passports and regularly visited the allowed fairs, and encountered no difficulties.)*

## 10. The original German reads:

*Doch bot, wie zur Zeit Josefs II, auch späterhin der Vorwand, auf der Reise nach den erlaubten Jahrmärkten zu sein, Gelegenheit, einen Teil des Jahres auf Handelsreisen in den Alpenländern zu verbringen, wo die Bevölkerung zu einem guten Teil gern in geschäftliche Beziehungen mit ihnen trat. (Rosenberg, 1914: 113–14).*

## 11. The original German reads:

*Und in der Tat wurde dem Ludwig Kadisch die Errichtung einer jüdischen Gastwirtschaft, die einen Mittelpunkt für die kleine, nun angesiedelte jüdische Gemeinde hätte bilden können, durch Gemeinderatsbeschluß vom 27. Oktober 1850 und dann durch Entscheidung der Kreisregierung Graz vom 22. Juni 1851 verweigert. (Rosenberg, 1914: 113–14).*

## 12. The original German reads:

*Er geriet augenblicklich aus der Fassung und schrie nach Bormann, der bestürzt hereinkam. Hitler fuhr ihn heftig an: er habe schon oft gesagt, daß dieser Ort auf keinen Fall erwähnt werden solle. Dieser Esel von Gauleiter habe aber gleichwohl dort ein Schild aufgestellt. Sofort sei das zu entfernen. Ich konnte mir damals seine Erregung nicht erklären, da er sich andererseits darüber freute, wenn Bormann ihm von der Renovierung anderer Erinnerungsstätten seiner Jugend um Linz und Braunau berichtete. Offenkundig gab es ein Motiv, diesen Teil seiner Jugend auszulöschen.*

## 13. The original French reads:

*Les gens ne doivent pas savoir qui je suis. Ils ne doivent pas savoir d'où je viens et de quelle famille je proviens! Même dans mon livre, je ne me suis pas permis un mot sur ces choses-là, pas un mot! Et, subitement, on découvre un neveu! Un neveu!*

*Tout à coup, il se mit à sangloter, oui, il se mit vraiment à sangloter. Il se laissa tomber dans un fauteuil. Des larmes étaient dans ses yeux ... Et il cria, d'une voix étouffée par les larmes: « Idiots! Idiots! Vous trouverez encore moyen de tout détruire! Les affaires de famille sont des affaires privées. Je ne pourrais supporter que tout cela soit étalé et débattu ouvertement en public. Ce jour-là, ce sera ma fin. Ce jour-là, je m'envoie une balle dans la tête. »*

14. Father Josef Zahnschirm's entry may be found in the baptismal registry for Döllersheim parish, tomus VII, p. 7. The relevant page of the baptismal registry is reproduced in Jetzinger (1956: facing p. 17).
15. The original document is available online at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k7642330r/f4.item>.
16. For more about the reluctance of the three surviving sons to be interviewed, see Killgannon (2006). None of the four sons of William Patrick has had any children. David Gardner has claimed that the sons made a pact that they would not have children, so that Adolf Hitler's blood line would die with them: see his book *The Last of the Hitlers* (2001).
17. Jetzinger reports witnesses who observed anti-Semitic behaviour on Adolf's part when he was a 12-year-old boy in Leonding. For instance, there is one account of Adolf harassing a fellow student with the derogatory epithet *Saujud* ('Jewish pig') (Jetzinger, 1956: 109).

### Primary source

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### **Author biography**

Leonard Sax has a PhD in psychology and an MD from the University of Pennsylvania. His paper entitled 'What was the cause of Nietzsche's dementia?' was published by the *Journal of Medical Biography* in 2003. In it he challenged the long-held consensus that Friedrich Nietzsche had syphilis. The paper has now been cited by numerous scholars, and the previous consensus no longer stands. Sax has also written a short biography of Ignatz Bubis for the *B'nai B'rith International Jewish Monthly*. He is the founder and director of the Montgomery Center for Research in Child and Adolescent Development.