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The Hitler Emigres

Daniel Snowman

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Snowman was born in London in 1938. He has degrees from Cambridge (Double First in History) and Cornell, and at the age of twenty-four became a Lecturer at the University of Sussex. He has spent much of his professional life at the BBC where, as Chief Producer, Features (Radio), he was responsible for a wide range of projects on cultural and historical subjects.

His previous books include *Fins de Siècle: How Centuries End, 1400-2000* (with Asa Briggs), a history of twentieth-century America, a comparative study of British and US values, and critical portraits of the Amadeus Quartet and Plácido Domingo. His most recent publication is *PastMasters: The Best of History Today*.

THE HITLER EMIGRES

The Cultural Impact on Britain
of Refugees from Nazism

Daniel Snowmna



PIMLICO

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The subject-matter of *The Hitler Émigrés* can arouse considerable passion. Many who read the book will doubtless feel that particular topics or personalities might warrant more (or less) attention than I have given them, or

of a different kind. But I hope that, whatever the reservations about this or that tree, leaf or twig, those who read what follows will relish the immensely rich forest that I have tried to traverse.

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Daniel Snowman, London

Introduction

London in the 1960s: the decade the press dub the 'Swinging Sixties'. Jean Shrimpton and Twiggy model provocatively short skirts, David Bailey photographs the rich and famous, EMI's Abbey Road studios provide a regular home-away-from-home for the Beatles and the latest fashion emporia are opened by Terence Conran and Mary Quant. The BBC launches a satirical decade with *That Was the Week that Was* (making stars of David Frost and Bernard Levin) and gains a second channel, while the big screen promotes the careers of Julie Christie, Terence Stamp and Michael Caine. Irreverent painters such as the playful Yorkshireman David Hockney or the more saturnine Francis Bacon produce canvases that provide new kinds of semi-licit frisson, while George Devine, Peter Brook and Peter Hall mount the latest dramatic fireballs by Edward Bond, Harold Pinter, Shelagh Delaney and Arnold Wesker, and celebrate the abolition of theatre censorship. A National Theatre, awaited for half a century, at last sets up shop, albeit in temporary premises in the Waterloo Road.

The 1960s was the decade of the contraceptive pill, of student protest, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, of a new vocabulary of political assertion, a time when people began to talk of 'Women's Liberation', of 'Sexual Politics' and of being 'Black' or 'Gay'. A popular American president was assassinated and his successor took the US into its most unpopular war. A Labour prime minister talked of the white heat of the technological revolution and financed the development of seven new universities plus a 'University of the Air' to bring education to the widest possible clientele. Throughout the western world, but

especially in Britain (and even more especially in London), the young, the post-war 'baby-boomers', ascended the demographic pole and, as though determined to have a voice commensurate with their numbers, shouted louder, asserted themselves more powerfully and tried to change the world. The phrase 'Cultural Revolution' sat awkwardly on English-speaking lips, evoking images of Mao and his Little Red Book. But a cultural revolution in the broadest sense was effected by the bright new generation who took over the streets and shops, the art houses, universities and boutiques in the Swinging Sixties.

That, in outline, is the popular picture, a mythologised mantra of celebrity. But there was another cultural revolution in Britain during this period, not precisely associated with a single decade and not as noisily celebrated, perhaps, but a revolution arguably more profound.

Walter Cook had been talking of his New York Institute of Art when he said, back in the 1930s: 'Hitler is my best friend; he shakes the tree and I collect the apples.' But the sentiment was one that many in Britain came to share.

I remember thinking about this one evening in June 1965. I was at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where I had managed to obtain a seat, high up and somewhat to the side but with a good view of the orchestra. Everyone had read in the papers how this production (by Peter Hall) was going to be something of a scandal, what with naked virgins and a human sacrifice. Not the sort of thing the Lord Chamberlain would normally permit on the stage, perhaps. But then this was 'high art'. In the stalls I was able to pick out Claus Moser, Berlin-born and a passionate music lover. Moser was on the faculty of the London School of Economics and would soon be appointed Director of the Central Statistical Office. He was also on the Board of the Royal Opera House and would later become its Chairman. George

Weidenfeld was in the audience too. A prominent publisher and bridge between readers and the great authors of continental Europe and beyond, Weidenfeld had adored opera ever since his childhood in Vienna and would not miss an occasion like this. Present, too, was the composer and musicologist Egon Wellesz, once a protégé of tonight's composer. Wellesz had written an introductory note in the programme in which he quoted something he remembered Mahler saying in 1907. Karl Rankl, first Musical Director of this company, was there too, returning to his old house for the first time in many years and sitting hunched in near obscurity. Tonight's composer was once his professor, too.

The lights dimmed and there was a ripple of applause. Into the pit, angular elbows and shoulders pugnaciously forward, darted Georg Solti, this evening's conductor and the Royal Opera's controversial Musical Director. Sometimes too demanding for the phlegmatic English temperament, Solti was one of those Hungarians who (they would joke behind his back) enter a rotating door after you and come out ahead. Some openly disliked Solti, finding his energy excessive. Members of the chorus and orchestra would imitate his strong Hungarian accent ('But just sink how many languages I can speak viss ziss accent!' he would riposte with a justifiable grin). On one notorious occasion the 'Get Rid of Solti' campaign led to his car being vandalised. But everybody acknowledged his formidable musicianship and his kindness to the talented young singers he constantly sought out and encouraged. Solti's ambition when he came to Covent Garden was, quite simply, to make this the finest opera house in the world. Bold words. But with Solti at the helm at Covent Garden, and especially when he was in the pit, everyone sensed that something important was going on. Especially on a night like this. Without him it would have been unthinkable for the Royal Opera to have mounted Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*.

Moses and Aaron was knotty, controversial, difficult to digest, uncompromisingly 'Modern'. But the production came to be recognised as one of the peaks of the Solti regime. Covent Garden in the 1960s was palpably the great international house Solti was determined to make it, able to present to the highest standards one of the most demanding works of the modern European imagination. And of the various seeds that came to flower that memorable night in London, several of the most important had been transplanted to British soil from Hitler's Central Europe.

Britain's artistic and intellectual life was greatly enhanced after the Second World War by the presence of émigrés from Central Europe, mostly refugees who had fled from Nazism and, sooner or later, made a home in Britain. Theirs was the 'other' cultural revolution of the 1960s.

On London's South Bank Otto Klemperer, crippled almost to immobility by age and illness, managed to steer his way through a series of landmark cycles of the Beethoven symphonies and concertos, while the chamber repertoire was regularly enriched by uplifting performances by the Amadeus Quartet. At Glyndebourne the Festival's founding director, Carl Ebert, returned to produce a string of memorable operatic productions, many of them also designed, coached, rehearsed and conducted by émigré talent. Nor was music the only cultural activity to benefit. Ernst Gombrich, author of the classic *The Story of Art*, was director of the Warburg Institute during these years, while fellow art historian Nikolaus Pevsner systematically logged and described what he considered to be all the significant 'Buildings of England'. These were important years, too, for publishers: George Weidenfeld had come from Austria, André Deutsch from Hungary, and the art publishers Phaidon and Thames & Hudson were each the creation of Viennese immigrants. Many of Britain's leading scientists and intellectuals, too, had been émigrés: people such as

Hermann Bondi (who became Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence) and the biochemist Max Perutz, the historians Geoffrey Elton and Eric Hobsbawm, and the philosopher Karl Popper.

These, and many like them, had come to Britain directly or indirectly from Germany and Austria, some from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. A few had roots further east, in Russia and Poland. A number of the émigrés – the architect Walter Gropius, for example – came to Britain only to move on elsewhere, mostly to the United States. Others arrived in Britain not before the war but afterwards. Klemperer, for instance, spent the war years in the USA, coming to London for a glorious Indian summer as principal conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra from 1957; Solti was in Switzerland during the war and afterwards in Germany for some years, before coming to live and work in London in 1961. Popper taught philosophy (and wrote his most important books) in New Zealand before moving to the LSE.

Many émigrés were of Jewish background, though most thought of themselves as highly assimilated, their German culture (until the advent of Hitlerism) seeming more important than their Jewishness. Some went further. Gombrich, into extreme old age, would vehemently deny that his Jewish lineage played any part in his intellectual development. A few came from highly religious backgrounds and became rabbis and teachers while there were also those to whom the politics of Judaism – Zionism – was far more enticing than its religious observance. George Weidenfeld, for example, regarded his Zionism as the Archimedean theme guiding his whole life.

We are not, of course, speaking of a single generation. Popper and Gombrich were weaned in a Vienna still feeding at the cultural table of Mahler, Klimt and Schnitzler. This was the world of Béla Horovitz, creator of Phaidon Press. But to his son, the composer Joseph Horovitz, childhood memories

were of a Vienna racked by political tension while Joe's sister Hannah was a baby when she was whisked out of Vienna in 1938. The Horovitz family, like the Sigmund Freuds, were among the thousands of refugees from Nazism who left *Mitteleuropa* to settle in the UK - ten thousand of them arriving with the 'Children's Transports' in the last, desperate months before the outbreak of war.

Others made the move in less trying circumstances. Eric Hobsbawm (who had a British passport) arrived from Berlin in 1933 as a teenager when his uncle, with whom he lived, had a chance of work; Gombrich and Perutz settled in Britain in 1936, the former with a job offer and the latter to do graduate work at Cambridge. Essentially, they found themselves in Britain at a time when the situation back in *Mitteleuropa* was deteriorating to such a degree that it became preferable, then prudent, then vital, to stay. These did not come to Britain as refugees, but stayed to find refuge.

Many of the émigrés, while expressing fulsome gratitude to Britain for having rescued them from the jaws of death, also spoke of the pain of having to live in a land, language and culture not their own, the standard lament throughout the ages of people forced into exile. Some, such as the film maker Emeric Pressburger and the writer Arthur Koestler, both of whom had lived in a variety of places before putting down roots in England, felt for the rest of their lives that nowhere was really 'home'.

'Do you think we'll ever really belong anywhere?' asks the little girl in Judith Kerr's classic children's novel *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* as the family travel to England.

'I suppose not,' said Papa. 'Not the way people belong who have lived in one place all their lives. But we'll belong a little in lots of places, and I think that may be just as good.'

Many refugees*¹ retained a sense of home while in exile and some returned when it became possible for them to do so. Kurt Jooss, whose influential dance company repaid their

debt to England by strenuous touring throughout the war years and beyond, went back to Germany in 1949 to become a major figure in the resuscitation of dance there after the war, while his colleague the artist Hein Heckroth (best remembered for designing such films as *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffmann*) returned to resume his career in Germany in 1956. A few, prompted by communist convictions, left Britain after the war and went (like Brecht) to live and work in East Germany, for example the photomontage artist John Heartfield and - after a spell in prison for espionage - the atomic physicist Klaus Fuchs. More typical was the economic historian Sidney Pollard. Having become Professor of History at the University of Sheffield and a distinguished expert on the Industrial Revolution, Pollard spent his last years before retirement at the University of Bielefeld. 'Though fully at home in Britain,' he wrote, 'I never lost the feeling that I was not quite like those born here.'

Others might have been 'exiles' in the eye of the beholder, but tried not to think of themselves as such. The artist and writer Fred Uhlman, who escaped from Nazi Stuttgart to Paris, then nearly got caught up in the Spanish Civil War before finally settling in London, wrote a moving autobiography which he entitled, significantly, *The Making of an Englishman*. By the end of the book Uhlman is something of a country squire (married to the daughter of a titled British MP), living in Essex during the war before moving to London. Many refugees fought with pride in the Allied forces and recalled the experience as the melting pot that turned them into true Brits. Claus Moser's RAF commanding officer advised him to change his first name, at least for the duration, to Michael. 'Give us a tune, Mike!' called Moser's raucous messmates as Claus sneaked over to the piano hoping for a few moments of private communion with Schubert or Mozart.

A few émigrés took the adoption of a British persona to extremes, and there is a splendid but probably apocryphal story of the archetypal refugee who, having doubtless been 'more German than the Germans' before catastrophe struck, goes on to become 'more English than the English'. After innumerable obstacles, he finally receives his naturalisation papers some years after the war - and bursts into tears.

'Don't worry, old chap,' say his friends comfortingly. 'There's no longer anything to worry about.'

'I know,' blubbers the new citizen. 'But why did we have to lose India?'

Paul Tabori (who tells this tale) recounted how he could not suppress a smile when he saw a man who showed his acquired Englishness by wearing his handkerchief up his sleeve rather than in his pocket. George Mikes became famous for a series of affectionately satirical books, starting with *How To Be an Alien* (published in 1946 by his fellow Hungarian refugee André Deutsch), that observed in exquisite detail the contrasts between life on the Continent and the peculiarities of the British.

On Sundays on the Continent even the poorest person puts on his best suit, tries to look respectable, and at the same time the life of the country becomes gay and cheerful; in England even the richest peer or motor-manufacturer dresses in some peculiar rags, does not shave, and the country becomes dull and dreary . . .

. . . On the Continent people use a fork as though a fork were a shovel; in England they turn it upside down and push everything - including peas - on top of it . . .

When people say 'England', Mikes pointed out, 'they sometimes mean Great Britain, sometimes the United Kingdom, sometimes the British Isles - but never England.'

Was Mikes an 'exile'? Yes, in a sense. But he was also proud to be an Englishman. Indeed, he rather relished his

double identity. He even got used to people rhyming his name with 'bikes' instead of calling him (correctly) 'Meekesh'. In Hungary, he said cheerily to a BBC interviewer in 1972, 'I'm the chap who became an English writer' - while in England everyone still regarded him as 'a Hungarian'.

Towards the end of his life, Mikes and two other ageing Hungarian émigrés, Arthur Koestler and Emeric Pressburger, used to get together in the heart of the East Anglian countryside where for a time each had a home. Three elderly exiles with thick Mid-European accents acting like English country gents. And what did they talk about? Pressburger's grandson and biographer Kevin Macdonald paints a touching picture of the old boys in 1982: in a re-enactment of rituals that went back to a half-remembered childhood, they set themselves up as a committee to organise a traditional Magyar 'pig-eating' orgy.

The men and women whose lives and achievements fill the pages of this book thus include the old and the young, Jewish and non-Jewish, immigrants and refugees, Rhinelanders and Danubians, patriotic British citizens and exiles homesick for *Mitteleuropa*. No single term adequately embraces them all. Nor does the word 'culture' do full justice to the range of their contributions. Half a century ago, the word 'culture' was widely understood to mean much the same as 'intellectual life' and the 'arts'. A cultured person was someone at home with the traditional canon of literature and philosophy, painting and sculpture, theatre, music and architecture. To those in the know, the word was also used in its more specialised, anthropological sense to denote the behaviour, attitudes and values of a tribe, clan or society. Thus the courtship and burial rituals of a primitive society, its divinities and devils, were deemed to be part of its 'culture'. And so, by extension, were the physical

manifestations of those values and attitudes - its totem poles and bone necklaces, its axes and coffins.

By the 1960s and 1970s, clever social theorists, taking up themes from Marx, Freud and others, began to emphasise the links between these two concepts of culture and see any art or artifice as, in part, a manifestation of the values and attitudes that lay behind their production. Thus the two usages of the word 'culture' tended to converge. Today, any familiar artefact (a postage stamp, toothbrush or deckchair, a computer game, Nike trainers or the latest cooking aid or cellular phone) is liable to be included in media discussion of our 'culture', as are the latest patterns of behaviour (lap dancing, the sort of headlines our newspapers adopt, the latest home furnishings, the rhetoric of political speeches, new dating styles, whatever). All these are commonly embraced by the word 'culture' in a way that would not have been acceptable fifty years ago. The implication, of course, is that the 'art' a society produces is best understood not as a striving for creative and interpretative excellence but as a manifestation, along with all the other things we make and do, of society's wider attitudes and values.

In this book, the word culture is used in both senses. Much of what follows will consider the contribution of the 'Hitler émigrés' to the 'traditional' arts and sciences. But the attitudes and values of British society, so acutely observed by George Mikes and others, will also be brought under the microscope from time to time. Indeed, part of what is chronicled below includes changing 'cultural' attitudes towards 'high culture'.

Finally, a few words about what this book is and what it is not. It is not a catalogue of contributions from famous émigrés to British cultural life nor, I trust, an exaggeration of their influence. I do not wish to argue that Britain had little cultural life until this particular wave of people arrived in its

midst. Far from it. Britain was never a *Land ohne Musik*, much less a Land without Culture, and in the 1920s and 1930s boasted an intellectual, cultural and artistic life of high quality. It would be foolish, too, to underrate the quality and dynamism of home-grown British cultural life in the years following World War Two, which provided important opportunities for Britain's little band of exiles from Hitler, but for the most part was not created by them. Many excellent writers - cultural historians such as Bryan Appleyard and Robert Hewison as well as central players such as Noël Annan or Peter Hall - have documented the personalities and achievements of the post-war decades and the Hitler refugees get very little mention either collectively or individually.

Yet the émigrés did have an effect, as any substantial group of immigrants is bound to do, on their hosts. Earlier waves of immigration to England - the Huguenots from France after 1685, the Irish who arrived after the potato famine or the Jews from Russia and Poland who came at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth - all had a profound impact upon the society in which they settled, just as subsequent waves of migrants from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent in the second half of the twentieth century were to do. Immigration can give rise to social tensions as two different peoples confront one another and compete for the same homes, school places and jobs. But it is also one of the ways in which a society refreshes itself and avoids the dangers of cultural stagnation. British history is undoubtedly the richer for the mix of Celts and Romans, Angles and Saxons, Normans and Huguenots, Irish and Jews, Germans and Hungarians, Indians, Africans, West Indians and Chinese who have been pushed or pulled to its shores. And the particular group featured in this book made a distinctive contribution to British cultural history. With the passage of time, it is becoming possible to see this in its proper historical

perspective. The nature of that contribution, the impact of this particular stone being thrown into the lake of British cultural life, is what this book will attempt to describe, analyse and assess.

We start with the stone and then go on to consider the lake. Who were the 'Hitler émigrés'? Where did they come from? What did they bring with them and how were they received? To answer these questions we have to go back to *Mitteleuropa*.

PART ONE

THE CULTURE THEY CARRIED

CHAPTER ONE

More German than the Germans

Under an edict of the Emperor Joseph II, Mozart's monarch, everyone of consequence in the Viennese imperial administration was required to communicate in German. German was the language of the Enlightenment, of progress, of liberal writers such as Herder, Lessing and Schiller. In the mid-nineteenth century a younger Emperor, Franz Joseph, pulled down the protective walls encircling Vienna, built a ring road round the city and brought in people from all over the Empire to construct a modern imperial capital. For the first time Jews were permitted to dwell within the city, and the Freud and Kraus families, for example, moved from the provinces to the capital during these years. Sigmund Freud, like Gustav Mahler and so many others raised in the 1870s and 1880s in the wake of German unification, were steeped in German cultural ideals, which by now also incorporated metaphysical concepts - the Will, Spirit, Transcendence - beloved of such celebrated figures as Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche. These were seductive, supra-national abstractions easily adaptable to the idea that Germany's political unity might be but the prelude to an even greater unification of all those imbued with the true German spirit. This kind of thinking was intoxicating, alluring and dangerous, like the songs of the Lorelei.

Throughout the old Habsburg Empire, which stretched from its capital Vienna north into Bohemia, eastwards to the borders of Russia and Poland and south into the Balkans and Italy, the German tongue was widely regarded as the

language of culture, influence and sophistication. The Viennese critic and essayist Karl Kraus frequently wrote about the beauties of the German language and poured his satirical scorn on those (especially Jews who moved to Vienna from further east) who spoke or wrote it incorrectly. Arthur Koestler's mother, raised in Vienna but living in Budapest, felt she was living in a form of cultural exile; she never learned Hungarian properly and the only newspaper she read was the German-language *Pester Lloyd*. Martin Esslin (later the BBC's Head of Radio Drama) remembered how his grandfather was a highly respected Budapest journalist; not only that, said Esslin proudly, but he worked on one of the city's two German-language papers. 'He was the epitome of the completely emancipated Jew of that period,' he recalled, going on to describe a learned man with an enormous library who had written a book on eighteenth-century Budapest. You might be a Czech-speaking merchant in Moravia, a schoolteacher from Croatia or Romania, a wealthy Prague industrialist or Martin Esslin's grandfather in Budapest: if you had ambitions to better yourself, you needed to know German and would probably gravitate sooner or later, if you could, towards Vienna. Stephen Hearst (another refugee who later entered the higher reaches of BBC cultural programming) told me that when he applied for British naturalisation after World War Two he had to explain that, while he was born and raised in Vienna, his parents were both from Lemberg (or Lvov). Where is that? Hearst needed to elaborate: it was part of Austria-Hungary until 1918, Polish between the wars, then Russian.*1

To Western sophisticates like Count Metternich, the Austrian Foreign Minister and Chancellor in the decades up to 1848, Vienna was at the easternmost edge of European civilisation ('Asia begins at the Landstrasse,' he is alleged to have said dismissively, pointing out of the window). But to many of the far-flung denizens of the Austrian Empire,

Vienna represented not an end but a beginning, the entry point, the cosmopolitan capital, the epitome of progress and liberalism, a cultural bastion of the German-speaking world. 'The towns of Bohemia and Moravia were German islands in a sea of Czech peasantry,' writes Steven Beller, 'and the further east one went, the more did German appear to be a synonym for western progress.' Indeed, the very name 'Austria' - 'Österreich' or 'Eastern Kingdom' - suggested an outpost or a branch of the historic lands of Germany.*2 One day, this was the dream, the whole German world would again be one.

There was, of course, another view of German unity as observed from Habsburg Austria. It may have excited; but it also excluded. All those enticing ideas about the transcendent 'Germanness' of German art and the spiritual unity of the German-speaking peoples - these were ideals shared by many in Austria. Yet Austrians were *not* citizens of the new nation; Germany had united in 1871 without them. Could they ever be part of a greater German state? It was not impossible. The fact that Germany had united at all, albeit excluding Austria, helped whet pan-German aspirations still further. After all, reasoned the Viennese cognoscenti, for all the polite fiction of the 'dual' Austro-Hungarian monarchy (established in 1867), everybody knew that power, authority, culture resided in Vienna. And Viennese culture meant German culture, *Bildung*, a word suggesting not only book learning but also the wisdom that is acquired by the mature assimilation of all life's higher experiences. As long as the Emperor Franz Joseph was in power, German culture would continue to predominate in the Austrian Empire. And if, one day, the Habsburg monarchy should fall, then the logical step would be for Austria to become, at last, part of a greater Germany. 'As a boy in the 1920s, I grew up *wanting* Austria to become part of Germany,' recalled George Weidenfeld, little imagining

the circumstances in which the dream of his childhood would become the nightmare of his adolescence.

The idea of culture - German culture - thus created a bond between people from all over the German-speaking world and beyond. This was enthusiastically shared by many of the Jewish peoples of Middle Europe. Throughout Jewish history, from biblical times, great emphasis had been placed on learning. The mythologised figures in the Jewish past had been men of God, rabbis, scholars. Jacob and Daniel are praised for their devotion to their studies, Solomon for his wisdom. From the biblical Moses to Moses Maimonides in the twelfth century to Moses Mendelssohn in the eighteenth, it is the prophets and philosophers, the scribes and the scholars quite as much as the kings and generals who are the role models. In the Russian and Polish Pale, in the *Shtetl* and synagogue, the pivotal figure is the rabbi and he is not so much a preacher or prayer leader as a teacher and scholar, the person responsible for the education of the next generation, the only figure in the village capable of solving difficult questions of Jewish law. A man might climb the social scale by acquiring various practical skills. But if you really wanted to endear yourself to the parents of your betrothed, the best way was to demonstrate your devotion to Talmudic and rabbinic studies. Even those Jews who were not particularly conscious of their Jewish ancestry, or believed they had transcended or disavowed it (for instance Heine, Marx, Mahler, Schnitzler and Freud), tended to gravitate towards achievement in the intellectual and cultural worlds. Devotion to learning is a constant theme throughout the history of the Jewish people, one that was much in evidence in pre-Hitlerian Middle Europe. While Jews made up about ten per cent of the population of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna (200,000 in a population of around 2 million), they accounted for something like thirty per cent of the pupils enrolled in one of those elite grammar schools known as a *Gymnasium*.

It would be foolish to read too much into this admiration for learning or to apply it indiscriminately to all Jewish communities in the past. At certain times and places, it was the Jewish merchant or moneylender who became the archetype rather than the scholar or thinker. However, at least until the establishment of the state of Israel in modern times, Jews were not especially distinguished for their agricultural or military skills. But as writers and musicians, thinkers and mathematicians, people of Jewish origin and background had often been disproportionately prominent. Was this because of the age-old emphasis on the value of learning, going back (perhaps) to rabbinic and even biblical times? Maybe in part. But it arises from other influences as well.

If you were a young Jewish man in late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century Vienna or Berlin, you would have known without it being spelled out to you that the upper ranks of certain professions were, in effect, barred. You would have been unlikely to aspire towards a career in the army, politics or (obviously) the church – or, indeed, in any form of public service. ‘A diplomat!’ Fred Uhlman’s father expostulated cruelly when his innocent son suggested the profession he thought he might enter. ‘Why not a pope? Has anybody ever heard of a Jew in the diplomatic service? Who are you? A baron perhaps? Do you think I am Bismarck?’

It was partly a question of anti-Semitism; one only has to read the prose works of Wagner or the political speeches of the mayor of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, Karl Lueger, or to recall the fate of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew who entered the army service in France, to be reminded that anti-Semitism was not invented by Adolf Hitler. Many Jews therefore gravitated towards those fields in which Jews (with all that *Gymnasium* education behind them) tended to be more widely accepted – the law and medicine, economics and philosophy, music, literature, journalism and publishing. Steven Beller suggests that over a half of those teaching in the Medicine Faculty at

the University of Vienna in 1910 and over a third of those teaching Law were of Jewish descent.

Thus the reasons why so many Jews moved into such fields included both the traditional 'pull' towards learning as well as the 'push' of exclusion from the upper reaches of the army or politics. But there is a further point. Many of the leading figures in these liberal, cultural professions may have been Jewish, but would have considered themselves no more than nominally so. Some even converted to Christianity - though Jewish converts were often uncomfortable with their adopted faith and unlikely to tempt providence by trying to 'pass' in a traditionally closed profession. After all, one of the main reasons for conversion was usually to help the proselytising family to keep out of the spotlight. Many more were neither converts nor practising Jews but, rather, thought of themselves as 'assimilated'. And assimilation presupposed almost by definition the rejection of partisan ideology, separatism, exclusivity, dogma - Jewish, or any other - and, in their place, the aspiration to embrace universal truths and the whole of humanity. These were the sentiments of the press and the academy, not of the army, church or politics. 'All Men are Brothers,' Schiller had written, a cry famously hymned by Beethoven and echoed for a century thereafter by liberal intellectuals - including many assimilated Jews who were able neatly to marry their pan-Germanism with a belief in universal values.

Pan-Germanism appealed to the emancipated Jews of *Mitteleuropa* because it seemed to embody those universalist ideals - especially, perhaps, after Germany's spectacular rise to unification and international prominence. For those on the margins of the German-speaking world, in the wider reaches of Austria-Hungary, the idea of forging stronger links with Germany also implied cutting loose from an empire that seemed inextricably tied to its eastern lands and to doctrinaire Catholicism. The liberal Jews of Middle