



THE RETURN OF

The troubling resurgence of his ideas and manifesto, 'Mein Kampf' BY KATIE ENGELHART

On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler took his own life with a simultaneous bite into a cyanide pill and gunshot to the temple. The day before, he dictated his will from the dank confines of the *Führerbunker*, a concrete shelter buried some eight metres below the old Reich Chancellery, as Soviet forces encircled Berlin. What exactly happened next is still fiercely contested, but by most accounts, the bodies of Hitler and his wife, Eva Braun, were carried upstairs to the garden by SS devotees, doused in gasoline, and burned to pieces—then buried, then later unearthed,

and then buried again in an unknown location, or perhaps just scattered to the wind.

Almost 65 years later to the day, the man and the totalitarian regime he established continue to fascinate us. In just the last few years, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), Hitler's poorly written, 700-page magnum opus, "turgid, verbose, shapeless," to borrow from Winston Churchill, has earned bestseller status in some unlikely markets: India, Turkey and the Palestinian territories. His paintings are fetching record-setting prices, and trade in anything the Third Reich leader touched, or might have touched, is thriving. In some

cases, the fascination is trivial, even absurd, such as the "Nazi chic" clothing that has been popular in Asia: T-shirts with Hitler portraits and swastikas. In others, though, it is more pernicious: the 65 years that have passed since Hitler's death have not dulled the allure of the Führer, or his ideology, for the now-burgeoning extreme right.

Take the lead-up to last Sunday's national elections in Hungary, which saw the far-right Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary) rake in 16.7 per cent of the national vote. In just a few years, Jobbik has grown from almost nothing, winning over a disenchanted electorate with its stark anti-Semitic and anti-Roma rhetoric. Party officials have been careful to dismiss any direct links to Nazism; anti-Semitism is

masked in attacks on Israeli investors and hatred of the Roma is justified with talk of "gypsy crime." But members of Jobbik's paramilitary wing, the *Magyar Gárda* (Hungarian Guard), have not been so cautious. Neither have its supporters, who gathered by the Danube River last week to lash out at "Jewish pigs" and to unite in a common cry against foreigners on Hungarian soil: "They should leave!" Jobbik's leaders, now at the helm of the opposition, are ready to take their country forward—away from all that "commotion over the Holocaust."

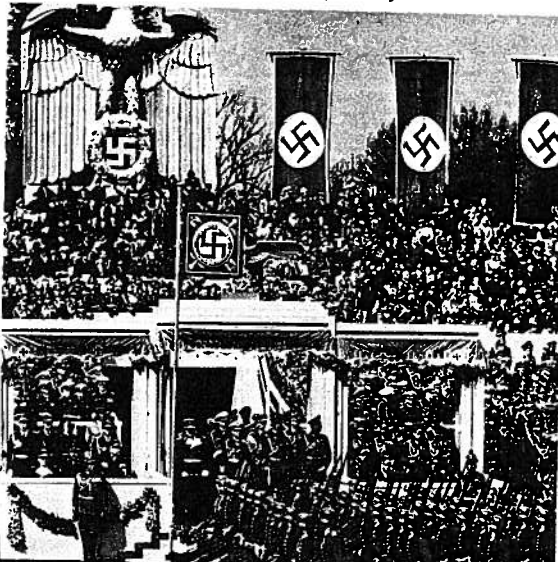
HASNAIN KAZIM, a journalist of Pakistani and Indian origin who is based in Islamabad, shies away from revealing where he was born: Germany. But it's hard to avoid; Kazim says people in Pakistan jump at any opportunity to talk with someone from Germany. "They say: 'Wow! Cool! So you're in favour of Hitler!'" It's even worse, he says, when family comes to visit him in Pakistan's bustling capital. The embarrassment might begin on the busy drive home from the airport. "You'll find cars with the *Deutsches Kreuz*, the German Cross. You'll find people with stickers on their car saying 'I LIKE NAZI' or 'I LIKE HITLER.'" And then there's the banter. "People start talking about Hitler [in a] friendly way," Kazim explains. Even though "the people aren't Nazis," he says that Nazi imagery is ubiquitous in Pakistan's large cities. It took some time away, and then a move back to Islamabad eight months ago, for it to really resonate: "I only

Sharma has boasted.

Perhaps Solomon should not have been taken aback. In 2002, the English-language *Times of India* published a report showing that Indian college students found much to admire in the Führer: namely, his efficiency, military strength and nationalism. The newspaper asked 400 elite college students, "Who's your favourite leader from history?" Hitler came in third, just behind Mahatma Gandhi. "Because he made Germany a superpower," was one student's response.

Of course, it's not just India where *Mein Kampf* is topping the charts. In 2001, it became

CELEBRATING Hitler's 50th birthday in 1939 with a military demonstration in Berlin (below)



HITLER

realized now how many people like Hitler."

Jonathan Solomon, a lawyer in Mumbai, says the same revelation struck him when he was browsing for books. "I was shocked to see that *Mein Kampf* is available in Indian bookstores, even in the prestigious bookstores. It was not 10 years ago." Moreover, pirated copies of the book, in a country where a 22-year ban on Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* has still to be lifted, are available at street stalls. "It sells very well," says P.M. Shenvi, manager of the Strand Book Stall in Mumbai. Today, publishers continue to churn out multiple reprints of *Mein Kampf* a year to meet what R.H. Sharma, an editor at Mumbai's Jaico Publishing House, insists is a surging demand. In 2009, "we sold 10,000 copies over a six-month period in our Delhi shops,"

a hot item after being introduced in Bulgaria. Soon afterwards, an Arabic translation became the sixth best seller in the Palestinian territories, according to Agence France-Presse. ("National Socialism did not die with the death of its herald," read its introduction.) Then, in 2005, the book took a top-seller spot in Turkey, selling over 100,000 copies in January and February alone—mostly, said publishers, to males between 18 and 30. And, it's been flying off Croatian shelves for years.

Not bad, for a badly written book. ("A boring tome that I have never been able to read," Benito Mussolini, the Italian Fascist dictator, once jeered.) Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*—part autobiography, part raving philosophical treatise—in 1923, while in jail for a failed plot to seize control of Munich. It eventually

became the holy book of the German National Socialist Party. Global sales figures are hard to estimate; the official rights to *Mein Kampf* are held by the German state of Bavaria, which bans it from being printed. In the U.S. and U.K., the rights were seized when Hitler was still alive, and are privately held today. Houghton Mifflin, the U.S. publisher, told *Maclean's* that it sold 26,000 paperback copies in 2009. The U.K.'s Random House would not release its sales figures upon request. In many other countries, however, the situation is less controlled, and small publishers are apt to print *Mein Kampf* at will. Increasingly, they are feeding eager markets.

Ilhas Niaz, history professor at Islamabad's Quaid-e-Azam University, says Hitler fares well in Pakistan in part because of a particularly Pakistani admiration for strong leaders. "The cult of personality is strong," says Niaz. When "the current crisis cannot be met by any ordinary leader, people are looking into history for a charismatic figure." Aurangzeb Nazir, a 24-year-old student in Islamabad, told *Maclean's*, "Hitler united his nation and brought it from the brink of collapse to global prominence. That's why we look up to him." It's certainly not a new phenomenon. One of Pakistan's most beloved leaders, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, also saw the 20th century's most famous mass murderer as someone to emulate. "Bhutto had silver-bound copies of *Mein Kampf* in his library," says Niaz. "He incorporated lines from Hitler's speeches directly into his own oratory."

But much of the popularity, Niaz admits, has more to do with the present than the past: "It's an emotional response to what is happening in Palestine." Besides the struggle with India over Kashmir, it is Israeli-Palestinian relations that dominate Pakistan's foreign policy consciousness, and sympathy for the Palestinians and a deep distrust of Israel help fuel the cult of Hitler worship. Maqudas Ghumman, a 21-year-old international relations student at Quaid-e-Azam, told *Maclean's*: "We admire Hitler partly because we want to remind Jews about what happened to them and express our anger over what their leaders, the leaders they admire, are now doing to the Palestinians."

Not surprisingly, the Israeli issue also plays strongly into Palestinian sales of *Mein Kampf*. Issa Ahwach owns Bissan, a Lebanese

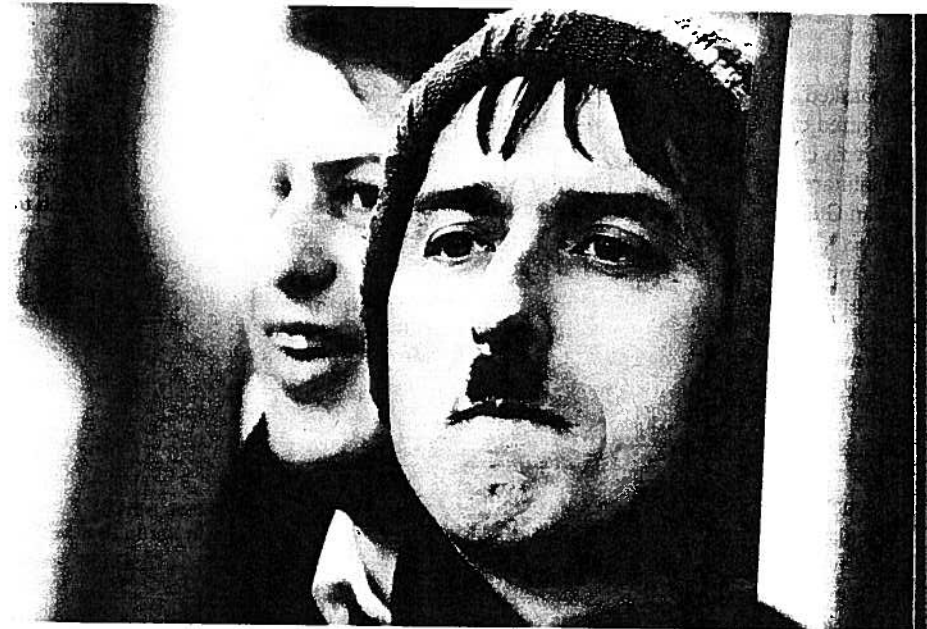
publishing house that prints an Arabic translation for the Palestinian region. Through an interpreter, he told *Maclean's* that sales have held strong "because we are suffering a similar kind of oppression under the Israelis. We can relate to what the Jews suffered."

In India, however, the situation is very different. "This admiration for Hitler that we do see in some circles is very much divorced from his anti-Semitic policies," says Yulia Egorova, a social anthropologist and author of *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image*. Historically, Egorova says, Hitler's popularity dates back to the 1920s and '30s, when the nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose saw the German leader as his country's ticket to independence from colonial British rule and formed an Indian Legion to fight at Hitler's side. "But at the same time he denounced anti-Semitism," Egorova says. Bose eventually became disenchanted with Hitler, but in some places, his dubious image as a defender of Indian sovereignty still stands.

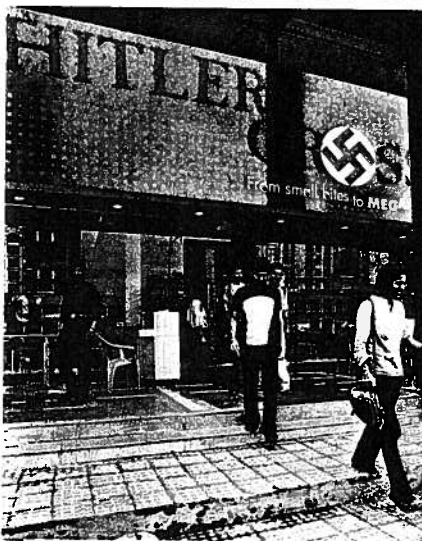
How seriously should Indian interest in Hitler be taken? Rafique Baghdadi, who runs the Business India Book Club, calls *Mein Kampf* a cult book, "rather like Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*. It isn't a book that you see a lot of on local commuter trains." More ominously, though, activist Teesta Setalvad, co-editor of *Communalism Combat*, a monthly journal aimed at promoting secularism, ascribes the revival of interest in Hitler's ideology to the rise of right-wing Hindu fundamentalist politicians like the Bharatiya Janata Party's Narendra Modi, and the "horrendous tendency of India's upper middle class that has always liked authoritarianism." Adds Egorova: "They [draw] parallels between the Jewish question in Germany and the Muslim question in India."

Mumbai lawyer Solomon, who also heads the Indian Jewish Federation, agrees. "There is no anti-Semitism in India," he says. But Muslims, Solomon adds, are not safe: "It is a peculiar situation where we Jews have to raise our worries about these Nazi tactics being used against our Muslim brethren." Tensions have grown because of recent terrorist attacks by Muslim foreigners, but they have deep roots. One famous Hindutva ideologue, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, said in 1949: "If you take *Mein Kampf* and if you remove the word Jew and put in the word Muslim, that is what I believe in."

In Turkey, the flourishing Islamic movement has spurred interest in Hitler and *Mein Kampf*. "It is the Islamists rather than the fascists who have fuelled the sales," says professor Dogu Ergil of Ankara University. "It was a reaction against the war in Iraq and Israel's actions in Palestine." Ergil says Islamist factions consciously boosted *Mein Kampf*



AT A right-wing party rally in Budapest; Hitler's Cross (left), a restaurant near Mumbai



CARS IN PAKISTAN ARE SPORTING 'I LIKE HITLER' BUMPER STICKERS

sales in 2005 by printing the book in large numbers and driving its market price down to \$3: "This was done against Israel and Jews." Arnold Reisman, author of *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision*, also suspects state involvement in the sales, but he thinks the target of the plot was broader. "They are essentially saying: 'Up yours, Europe!'" says Reisman. Turkey was "lying on the floor begging" to gain EU membership for years, but "they'll never get it and they're beginning to see that. And as a result, they're turning away from Europe."

In some instances of Hitler glorification there is a "wilful blindness" at work, says Syed Jamaluddin, a history teacher at the Khaldunia high school in Islamabad. In 2005,

the Indian state of Gujarat came under fire for issuing a textbook to high school students that included a chapter on the "internal achievements of Nazism"; it instructed that "Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time by establishing a strong administrative set-up." (Teesta Setalvad has been leading the battle to amend the texts—"Thankfully, young people in India today are realizing that economic growth is no justification for human rights violations," she says.) But in Pakistan, says Jamaluddin, "The information is out there but our young people are ignoring it. They're only seeing what they want to see. I try to nail Hitler in my class. I try to destroy him." Some are not listening. Sales of *Mein Kampf* were reportedly boosted by business students who saw the book as a how-to guide to becoming a self-made man.

ELSEWHERE, Hitler's continuing legacy is far less innocuous. In Hungary, the far right's foremost self-made man seems to have engaged in a closer reading of the Führer's message. In just four years, Gabor Vona, 31, a history teacher with closely cropped hair and a penchant for T-shirts, has catapulted his Jobbik party from the fanatical fringes to the mainstream, moving from only 2.2 per cent of the national vote in 2006 to almost 17 per cent in last Sunday's elections.

Vona keeps his speech tempered, distancing himself from overtly National Socialist rhetoric. But for many, his party's heated platform, which rests on an intense preoccupation with Hungary's 80,000 Roma, a consistent slew of attacks on "Israeli colonizers," and a solemn vow to ban immigrants from diluting Hungarian purity, draws comparisons that are tough to overlook. There are also the party's more direct connections to

ATTILA KISBENEDEK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; GAUTAM SINGH/AP

neo-Nazi elements in Hungary. For starters, Jobbik's platform is carried on the shoulders of the *Magyar Gárda*, the paramilitary corps founded by Vona in 2007. The uniformed wing is "redolent of the Hungarian Nazis, the Arrow Cross Party, who during the war were really important in carrying out the Holocaust," says professor Jeffrey Kopstein, director of the University of Toronto's Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies. The guard, illegal but still active, wears black and marches in military formation, carrying a red and white flag similar to that of the Arrow Cross. Ervin Nagy, a disillusioned former vice-president of Jobbik and a philosophy lecturer at Karoly Gaspar University, has admitted that the guard was established to attract the extremist vote for a party reluctant to openly display Hitlerian imagery.

modern concerns about globalization. It clearly strikes a chord with today's hard-luck Hungarians—one out of 10 are unemployed in the wake of the global recession. Says Geros: "Apart from the Nazi undertones, party propaganda plays heavily on Bolshevik ideals of anti-capitalism—Hitler and Stalin meet at the extreme ends of the political spectrum."

In Austria, the Nazi-inspired Freedom Party (FPÖ), which became the third-largest national party in 2008, is also preoccupied by the

FUNDAMENTALISTS IN INDIA FIND SOLACE IN HITLER'S PHILOSOPHY OF RACIAL PURITY

women ("female ninjas"); he loathes globalization and the EU; and he was once engaged to a girl whose father founded the Austrian branch of the German neo-Nazi National Democratic Party. Most recently, he campaigned to overturn the *Verbotsgesetz*, the 1947 law banning Hitlerian ideology.

Unlike Jobbik, a relatively new Hungarian product, the FPÖ has a history with real Nazis: the party's founding fathers were two wartime SS officers. And many high-ranking FPÖ officials come from the *Burschenschaften*, a secretive network of right-wing duelling societies that was banned after the Second World War but made a resurgence in the 1950s. Nazi frontmen Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Eichman were *Burschenschaften*; so is Strache.

Because of Austrian law, of course, "the leadership of the party is careful not to play the Nazi card too directly [since] the Nazi party is not legal," explains Anton Pelinka, professor of nationalism studies at CEU. "The Nazi manifesto is used indirectly. For example, with anti-Semitism, the party does not criticize Jews, it criticizes the 'East Coast.' The East Coast is a code word for the New York Jewish conspiracy." And behind it all, Pelinka says, Hitler is there, "in the closet."

In the U.S., "I don't think there's any doubt at all that the radical right as a whole in the U.S. has been Nazified over the last 30 years," says Mark Potok, spokesperson at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a legal advisory group that tracks American hate groups. But it's become a curious mix: in a 2009 SPLC report on the rapid-fire growth of American right-wing militias, Potok and his colleagues wrote: "Militiamen, white supremacists, anti-Semites, nativists, tax protesters

and a range of other activists of the radical right are cross-pollinating and may even be coalescing."

There's also been a shift, says Potok, away from the archetypal enemy: African-Americans. "It's not that the groups like black people," he explains. But they "now believe that behind black people, brown people, gay people, stands the Jew. More of them have come

to a National Socialist view of the world: Jews manipulate everyone else." Of course, the old racism remains: in 2008, two white supremacist skinheads were arrested for plotting to kill Barack Obama and 88 more at a predominantly black school before beheading 14. In neo-Nazi circles, "88" is code for "Heil Hitler," while "14" is a reference to "Fourteen Words" from *Mein Kampf*: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."



MEMBERS OF Jobbik's paramilitary wing at a rally in Budapest; Hitler's *Mein Kampf* has been a bestseller in India, Turkey and the Palestinian territories

There are also extremist elements inside Jobbik that, despite the party's efforts, make their violent tendencies known. Some party members have been linked to the extreme right-wing, anti-Semitic news portal www.kuruc.info. All this could still be dismissed as the stirrings of a Budapest fringe—if Jobbik had not just won a place in parliament. "This is not acceptable in a democracy," insists Andras Gero, history professor at Budapest's Central European University (CEU).

Jobbik's presidential campaign chief Zsolt Várkonyi is quick to defend his party from comparisons to Hitler and the Nazis—"nonsense," he told *Maclean's*. Indeed, Jobbik supporters are not the swastika-emblazoned skinheads of the '90s; they are, largely, disenchanted voters under 40. And Vona has built his career not on a loyal adherence to *Mein Kampf* but on a blending of Hitlerian rhetoric that evokes Hungary's past glory and more

immigrant question. Leader Heinz-Christian Strache has a solution: set up a ministry for the deportation of immigrants. Strache vehemently denies a Nazi link: "I was never a neo-Nazi and never will be." But even Austrian courts are not convinced. When Strache sued a Vienna newsweekly for defamation after it branded him a neo-Nazi, the court ruled that he indeed showed "an affinity to National Socialist thinking." It's not hard to see why. Photos of Strache, allegedly taken at a neo-Nazi training camp, have been leaked. (Strache says he was out for a day of paintball.) He was also photographed giving the three-finger radical-right salute. (Strache insists he was ordering three beers, earning him the nickname "Three Beers Strache.") He attacks Jewish bankers and veiled Muslim



Changing racial demographics have undoubtedly fanned the U.S. flame. In 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau issued a report predicting that whites would fall below 50 per cent of the American population by 2050. "I can tell you that the year 2050 is imprinted on the brain of every white nationalist in this country," says Potok. "That's Armageddon for them." As a result, the SPLC reports, hate groups, many of them with neo-Nazi elements, are thriving—the SPLC located almost 1,000. But Leonard Ziskind, author of *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, points out that today's American National Socialists might be harder to spot than their 1990s forefathers. "You have radical neo-Nazis actually covering up their swastikas, trying to become more mainstream." In a crowd, you couldn't pick them out: "These are people who fly the American flag."

AROUND THE world, efforts to ban Hitler's words, along with other evocations of his Third Reich, continue—an implicit acknowledgment of the Führer's continuing political potency. Just last month, Russian prosecutors officially banned *Mein Kampf* as "extremist," making the sale and distribution of the book punishable by fine. In a public statement, the prosecutor-general's office judged that Hitler's vitriolic rant deserves blacklisting because it "justifies discrimination and destruction of non-Aryan races."

The action follows a spate of far-right violence, in this country that lost 26.6 million people in the war against Nazi Germany. Most were attacks on foreigners and migrant workers; SOVA, a Russian research centre that tracks xenophobia, estimates that last year 71 people were killed and 333 injured in hate attacks. Shortly before the ban was introduced, *Mein Kampf* was reportedly being distributed in Ufa, a region where ultra-right groups are active. Matthew Light, a criminology professor at the University of Toronto and an expert on Russia, is not surprised to see officials panicking. "The Russian government has become more afraid of skinheads and other extreme-right organizations," Light explains. "Whereas in the past they saw them as an outlet for people to vent their frustration, they now think this kind of movement is potentially threatening to the government itself."

It is easy to dismiss *Mein Kampf*; Galina Kozhevnikova, deputy head of SOVA, says "it's been a long time since this book by Hitler was of ideological importance. Hitler's text is archaic and out of date." And yet it remains a charged symbol. In China, *Mein*

Kampf is forbidden except for research purposes and exists only in special libraries—as is also the case in Brazil. In the Netherlands, selling the book is illegal, although owning or lending it is not. In Canada, the book can be sold legally, but a de facto ban has been in place since Indigo CEO Heather Reisman banished it from her shelves in 2001. In France, it's legal to sell the book, but only if it is historically annotated. In Austria and Germany, *Mein Kampf* is banned.

Recent efforts to challenge that injunction in Germany have been blasted by the state of Bavaria, which explained in a statement to *Maclean's* that it maintains the ban out of respect for Holocaust victims. But in 2015, the state's rights to *Mein Kampf* will expire, the book will enter the public domain, and

ONE EXPERT SAYS RADICAL U.S. NEO- NAZIS ARE TRYING TO GO MAINSTREAM



GERMAN riot police at a demonstration by the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party in Hamburg last fall

officials are counting down the time with growing unease. "Once Bavaria's copyright expires," warned state science minister Wolfgang Heubisch in February, "there is the danger of charlatans and neo-Nazis appropriating this infamous book for themselves."

As a result, Bavaria is maintaining its grip on *Mein Kampf* until the clock runs out, continuing to go after publishers that try to reprint it. When a small Czech publisher began printing *Mein Kampf* in 2000, the Bavarian prime minister wrote a letter to then-Czech president Vaclav Havel, begging him to put a stop to it. In 2005, when a Polish man's plan to print a version was revealed by the Associated Press, state officials were urged to get involved directly with Warsaw. And when a Spanish translation appeared on iTunes in 2009, Bavarian officials forced Apple to take it down.

The fear of Hitler and Nazism as a political rallying cry remains. Germany, says Richard

J. Evans, a Cambridge professor and one of the most prolific scholars of the Second World War, has been relatively successful in reining in its extreme-right wing. The grounds for that were laid in the postwar period, when the Allies directed an aggressive "de-nazification" campaign in the former Third Reich—one followed by a period of obsessive German self-scrutiny in the 1960s. But in other countries, like Austria, the process was never completed. "Austria," says Evans, "never came to terms with the past." (Note, he says, the dearth of Holocaust memorials there.) Evans explains that "most Austrians were happy to be incorporated into Germany with the *Anschluss*," even though after the war they would "treat themselves as the first victims of Nazism, and that's how the Allies treated them." That incomplete postwar de-nazification might in part explain why, today, the political opposition is run by a party founded out of the SS.

But the state of the current world economy is also fuelling the trend. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, says Annette Timm, professor of European history at the University of Calgary, those Germans who joined up with neo-Nazis "were the ones who fell through the cracks after reunification and needed something to identify with." Today, Timm says, it is again the down and out "looking for something to feel passionate about." It's not surprising that support for Austria's Freedom Party is high among those without high school degrees, or that in Hungary, one of Europe's most suffering markets, a Nazi-inspired party is faring so well.

Evans stresses that this can happen because Nazism "adapts and changes to present-day circumstances." Rather than featuring thuggish skinheads, the far right now runs "young, good-looking white men" like Hungary's Vona and Austria's Strache. In most cases, it's not exactly time to panic—Evans says that in spite of some gains, neo-Nazism still remains to a great extent "on the fringe of society." But he still finds it all "worrying," given today's mass unemployment and recession. The cautious scholar grants that, as of now, the appropriation of Hitlerian ideology is mostly part of "a protest movement," a way of sending a clear message of frustration to the government. But "that's what Nazism started out as," says Evans. "In the 1930s when people voted for the Nazis, they were voting out of protest: not necessarily because they supported the whole ideological package." And, he adds bleakly, "We all know the results of that voting." M

With Andras Badics, Utku Basar, Tom Henheffer, Naazneen Karmali and Adnan R. Khan