

NAZISM IN OPERATION

What Hitler Did for Germany
 from *The Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany*
 by T. L. Jarman

Party Membership

Membership of the Party was distinguished from membership of the many organizations and formations attached to it. Actual membership of the Party was under 1 million at the beginning of 1933; four months later it was claimed to be 3 million. Then a stop was put to further applications for membership. But exceptions were made, and in 1937 and again in 1939 the conditions of admission were altered and became easier. Boys and girls who had served in the Hitler Youth for four years were, after a careful process of selection, transferred to the Party. By 1943 it was claimed that there were 6½ million members. With a membership of that size, the Party had evidently become something larger than the political *élite* which, earlier on, it had claimed to be. But the idea was retained in that members could, for certain offences, be expelled from the Party. As membership of the Party was an essential qualification for most higher positions – in Government employment, for example – expulsion was a serious matter, not to mention the danger of arousing the interest of the political police. . . .

Controls

[The] Party also possessed a [frightening] . . . apparatus of control, coercion, and destruction – the S.A., the S.S., the Gestapo, and the concentration camps. Secret police, detention, imprisonment, and execution are typical of police-states, but in Germany they were organized with . . . thoroughness and efficiency. The cruelty was therefore all the worse: it was not the cruelty involved in being in

the hands of uncouth and primitive guards and in lack of proper facilities, food, clothing, and housing, as often is the case with atrocities committed by backward peoples; it was a refined brutality without parallel in modern times. . . .

The S.S., which had originated in the specially picked men of Hitler's personal bodyguard and had been developed by Himmler, was the *élite* of the Nazi fanatics. But these fanatics were not wild men in the ordinary sense; they were selected men of strong physique and intelligence, carefully trained, and devoted to the carrying out of the *Führer's* purposes. The men of the S.S. were trained men, but they were more than that: they made up a racial *élite*, and through them the policy of building a super-race was developed. When an S.S. man married, he and the woman he married had to meet special racial and [physical] standards; their children would be born in a special S.S. mothers' house and under the care of an S.S. doctor; the family might live in a special S.S. settlement; an S.S. boy would have open to him certain educational advantages and would do his military service with an S.S. unit. . . . The S.S. was respected and feared. The S.S. was the most active and merciless agent of coercion: in police duties, the concentration camps, and the expulsion and murder of Jews. . . .

The concentration camps were . . . a carefully planned instrument to crush opposition and deter all forms of criticism or discontent. . . . At the beginning of the war in 1939, according to a report by the S.S. general, Pohl, there were six camps, Dachau with 4,000 prisoners, Sachsenhausen with 6,500, Buchenwald with 5,300, Mauthausen with 1,500, Flossenburg with 1,600 and Ravensbrück with 2,500. . . .

Religion

Hitler himself, though he had been brought up a Catholic and appealed from time to time in his speeches to God and Providence, showed little but contempt for religion. But he was astute in his deal-

ings with the Churches. He did not make a frontal attack on them; rather, he encouraged decay from the inside, and drew away the young by providing them, in the Nazi Party and its organizations, with a more exciting alternative to the Churches. . . . For Christianity, a religion of love and international brotherhood, Hitler had no use. It could be left, he thought, to decay in the new, Nazi Germany, where the sentiment of German nationalism would take its place. Hitler turned with hope to the German peasantry in the matter of a basic faith, as in that of racial expansion eastwards. "It is through the peasantry that we shall really be able to destroy Christianity because there is in them a true religion rooted in nature and blood."

. . . Nothing could be more false, indeed, than to imagine that under the Nazi régime the Germans were a people browbeaten and cowed by fear of the secret police, and driven to work against their will by the methods of terror employed by a ruthless dictator. This was [a] mistake — coupled with the equally false idea that the German workers were suffering unbearable economic hardships. . . . Those who thought in this way were also likely to regard Russia as a people's paradise. In fact, it was more correct to see the roles as reversed: in Russia the use of force was more evident than in Germany and poverty and squalor were prevalent everywhere in Russia, in keeping with an Asiatic rather than a European way of life. Once the Nazis were in power and all open opposition had been overcome, terrorism was kept in the background.

The New Germany

The most striking thing about Nazi Germany was the new spirit which animated the country: a new hope, a new self-confidence and pride, a new energy and determination filled a people who since 1918 had suffered the heavy blows of defeat, the collapse of the currency, and, finally, the economic depression of the world slump. *Deutschland erwache!* (Germany awake!) — that had long been a popular

slogan with the Nazis. Now that they were in power it seemed, indeed, as if Germany had awoken. Germans found a new faith in the greatness of the future of their country. As a German head of state wrote in 1937 in reference to the plebiscites which produced mass votes in favour of Hitler's policies: "In fact 98% have voted for Hitler of their free will. And they would do it at any time. So would I."

. . . Germans, those who were not politically suspect in any way, could travel abroad; the currency they could take out was limited, but exchanges could be arranged with foreigners visiting Germany. The Nazi leaders did not fear that if Germans visited foreign countries they would come back with their own national allegiance weakened. The foreign visitor was welcome in Germany. . . . [and what he saw] was generally overwhelmingly in Germany's favour. He found what was apparently the most orderly and well-directed country in the world; people were at work and appeared to be contented, all the [comforts] of life were there: opera, theatres, the cinema, cafés and restaurants, hotels, books, sports, hiking and sun-bathing in summer, skiing in winter. The young, or those who saw Germany for the first time, were liable to feel that all this . . . had been created by the Nazis. . . .

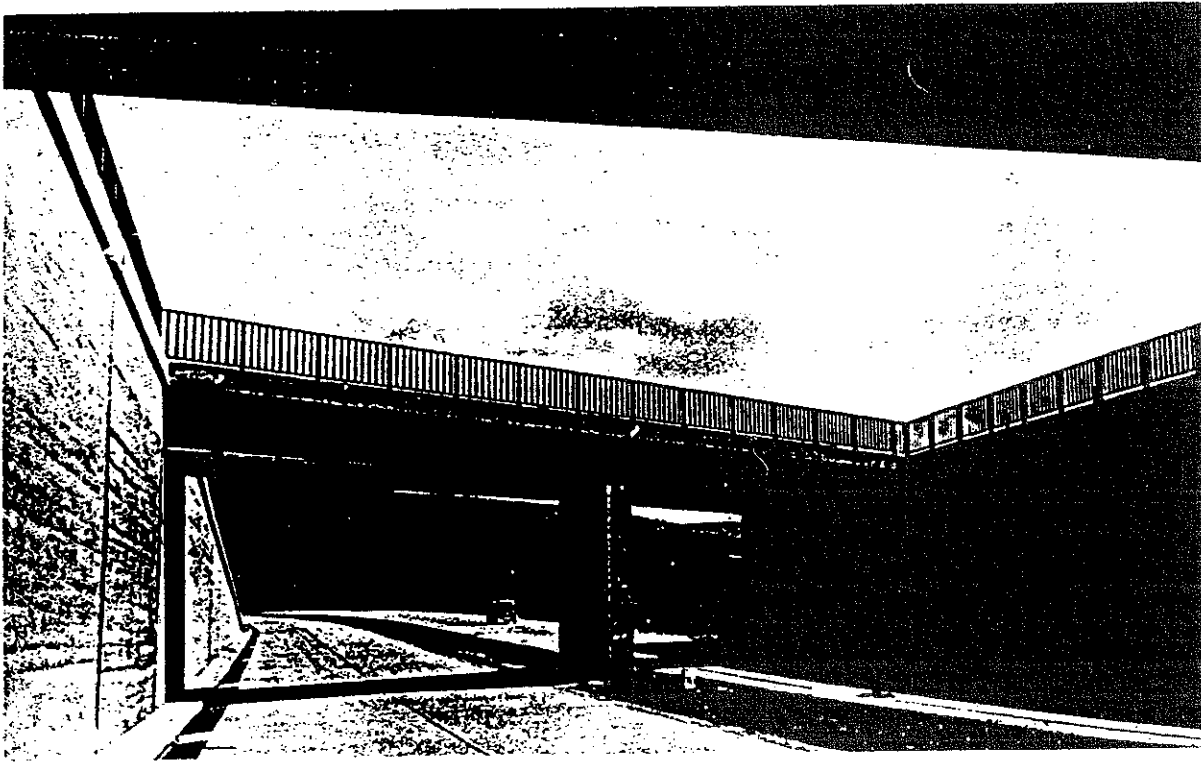
Economic Recovery

At the basis of Nazi success was Germany's economic recovery. . . . That the men could get jobs again, and were back at work — that in itself was a source of pride to the Germans when they were told of the faltering and fumbling methods of foreign countries to deal with the problem. The reduction of the German unemployment figures by 5 million was a remarkable achievement, and of the greatest propaganda value also. When Hitler had come to power, there were 6 million unemployed out of Germany's 20 million workers; by the end of 1936 only 1 million were listed as unemployed. That was what the *Führer* had brought about. He had asked for four years: he had kept his pledge. . . .

Public works were an essential part of the Nazi policy for dealing with unemployment. In itself, this was not new, and it was a policy adopted in other countries also. During the Weimar period loans had been used to finance public building, and in the United States Roosevelt's New Deal made extensive use of organized public undertakings to relieve unemployment. But Hitler had the apparatus of dictatorship in his hands. . . . Hitler could fix wages and use certain measures of compulsion. It was easier in Germany to organize those who were unemployed into work-gangs and move them from place to place wherever they were most wanted. Thus towns could be planned, housing estates created, and new factories built as a nucleus around which the residential quarters were arranged. Hit-

ler, with his youthful interest in art and architecture, took a personal interest in the new building schemes, and attention was also given to layout and landscape gardening. . . .

Perhaps the most striking of all Hitler's public works, and best known, were the *Autobahnen*, or great motor roads. . . . These roads were wide and straight, with parallel tracks, providing one-way traffic in each direction separated by a broad stretch of grass and shrubs. There was no cross-traffic on these roads; bridges or viaducts were used when other roads or railways had to cross. Cars coming onto or leaving the *Autobahn* did not do so at right angles, but moved on or off gradually at special points. The building of these great roads certainly helped to relieve unemployment; it was a large-scale



Miller Services, Toronto

Section of an *Autobahn* built during the Nazi Régime

and long-term programme, which stimulated the motor industry and the iron and steel industry also, for the building of the numerous bridges created a demand for steel. The roads were also of propaganda value: they impressed foreigners, and they impressed the Germans themselves. In addition, they were of strategic value: important roads led to the Austrian, Czech, Polish, and Belgian frontiers, and such roads were well calculated to serve the needs of modern mechanized armies. . . .

At a rather later stage, rearmament became of great importance. . . . Military expansion could only be based on economic expansion, on the fullest development of the heavy industries which offered employment to the workers and provided the basic materials of war. Here, then, was a dilemma for the Nazis: a nationalist policy meant making Germany independent of foreign countries, yet economic expansion must necessarily mean the import from abroad of raw materials not found, or not found in sufficient quantities, in Germany. The policy of . . . economic self-sufficiency . . . was followed in every possible way. *Ersatz*, or substitute, goods produced by the skill of German chemists were used wherever possible in place of goods formerly imported. Such research had been going on long before the Nazis, and was now intensified; much use was made of *Buna* (synthetic rubber) and substitutes for wool and petrol. The materials to be imported from abroad were reduced as far as possible and a drive undertaken for the production of foodstuffs at home; only materials essential to the country's development plans were to be admitted, and elaborate quotas, licence arrangements, and exchange restrictions were worked out. Bilateral agreements were made with a number of individual countries for trading purposes. . . .

Labour

Even a dictator cannot afford to ignore altogether the wishes of the people, and the success of the Nazi régime depended to a large extent on the goodwill

of the workers. The Nazis laid a firm foundation the way they dealt with unemployment, and they strengthened their position by building up the *Arbeitsfront* (Labour Front). . . . Strikes and lock-outs were made impossible — they were condemned as political sabotage — and the *Arbeitsfront*, which included the employers as well as workers, provided machinery for industrial conciliation and arbitration. That industrial disputes could be settled without strikes meant a considerable economy, and aided the Nazi drive for increased production. . . .

The Labour Front had also visibly attractive ways of appealing to the workers. Wages, if low, could be supplemented, with the German genius for careful and elaborate organizations, by providing special facilities — for holidays and travel, for entertainment, for sport. Inside the Labour Front there was the department known as *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy), and this was an excellent means of providing cheap holidays for the lower-paid workers, who might otherwise have had to stay at home. Workers who wished to take advantage of the scheme made weekly contributions. As the number who did so ran into millions, things could be organized in mass and the cost of the holidays to each person could be low. . . .

Arrangements were also made to bring within reach of workers the theatre and classical concerts. . . .

The German Race

Quite apart from the workers, for whom careful consideration was given, the Nazis waged a constant struggle for youth, for woman as the mother, and for the physical well-being of the whole German race. . . .

At every stage of development the Nazis sought to mould and influence the young with the object of creating a race of splendid Germans, a true *Herrenvolk*. Little boys and girls had their own Nazi organizations, and at fourteen the boys joined the *Hitlerjugend*. The Nazi youth movement undoubtedly



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German girls in a government-sponsored camp

captured the imagination of the children; it was a real punishment to remain, for any reason, outside. Children wanted to march and sing and salute, they wanted to go to the Nazi camps, they wanted to enjoy the wonderful, exciting life that was organized for them. And no other youth movement was allowed to compete for their loyalty. Children became, from an early age, the devoted followers of the *Führer*, like those who demonstrated at a great cinema meeting in Cologne and chanted in unison: "*So war es* (So things were). We were slaves; we were outsiders in our own country. So were we before Hitler united us. Now we would fight against Hell for our leader." Then for the young men there came six months of compulsory labour service in a camp before their two years' military service. The labour service had as its object to let manual labour break down the barriers of social class, mould the character still further to the Nazi pattern, and

strengthen the physique of the potential soldier and worker. Outdoor manual labour and military drill (with spades instead of rifles) were the means. The physical training of the young began to make its mark on the whole nation; the Germans carried off many of the prizes at the Olympic Games held in 1936 in Berlin, and the foreign visitors were impressed both by German athletic prowess and by the splendid spectacle offered in the German capital. There was before their eyes a new Germany: of youth, of power, of faith – though its future was in the hands of one man whose megalomania would lead its people to disaster. But for the moment this was hidden: each September at Nuremberg the *Parteitag*, or rally, was held, with the most magnificent pageantry. The marching of thousands of disciplined, uniformed figures, the massed bands, the forest of flags, the simple glories of the vast stadium of the Zeppelin Field lit at night by hundreds of searchlights meeting in a dome overhead – all had their effect, intense and hypnotic, on German and foreigner alike.

Discussion guidelines

1. How was the Nazi Party organized to maintain control over the state, and sustain public morale?
2. "At the basis of Nazi success was Germany's economic recovery."
 - (a) Estimate the validity of this statement.
 - (b) If the statement is true, does it mean that man prizes material security more highly than political liberty? Explain the reasons for your decision.
3. "In actuality, Hitler's program impoverished and brutalized the German nation." Argue this point of view.

Cross references

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Europe's Hard Edge

The rise of Austria's far right may be an omen, as a mood of intolerance sweeps the continent

By Barry Carne in Vienna

By Vienna's elegant standards, Leopoldstadt is a shabby place, boasting few of that old city's faded charms. It is a gritty working-class district, heavily populated by immigrants, which is the principal reason why Integrationhaus—Integration House—is sited there. The facility offers temporary haven to asylum seekers, 110 of them at the moment. For more than a week, ever since Jörg Haider's Freedom Party entered government, the refugees have been flying a large black flag from one of the building's upper windows. "It is an expression of our fears," explains Andrea Erasland-Weninger, Integration House's manager. "We are worried that anti-foreigner feeling in this country has now become socially acceptable. If the politicians can call refugees criminals and complain about too many foreigners, it won't be long before ordinary people are saying the same thing."

They already are, and not only in Austria. For there is a chill wind blowing across Europe, sweeping down from the German-speaking Alps into dark political nooks and crannies right across the continent. *Überfremdung* is how Haider and some of his Austrian lieutenants have chosen to describe the issue. The word summons disquieting memories from an earlier era. "Over-foreignization" is the literal translation and it was widely trumpeted by the Nazi authorities in 1930s Germany and

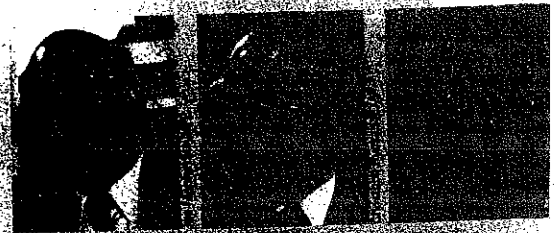
Austria to justify some of Adolf Hitler's noxious racist policies. While Haider is no Hitler, he has rudely exploited a widespread but hitherto rarely voiced Austrian fear of immigration; especially the influx from eastern European countries—the people escaping war in the Balkans or just searching for a better standard of living. "He turned xenophobia into a powerful political weapon," says Wolfgang Bachmeier of Vienna's marketing and research institute OGM. "It is not the only reason for his success, but it is a major one."

It is also the force that is driving the outrage expressed by Austria's 14 fellow member states of the European Union at the inclusion of Haider's Freedom Party in the governing coalition that was sworn into office earlier this month amid near riots on the streets of Vienna. Haider's movement may be the largest



Haider on the slopes for his 50th birthday: using charisma, media savvy and xenophobia as powerful political weapons

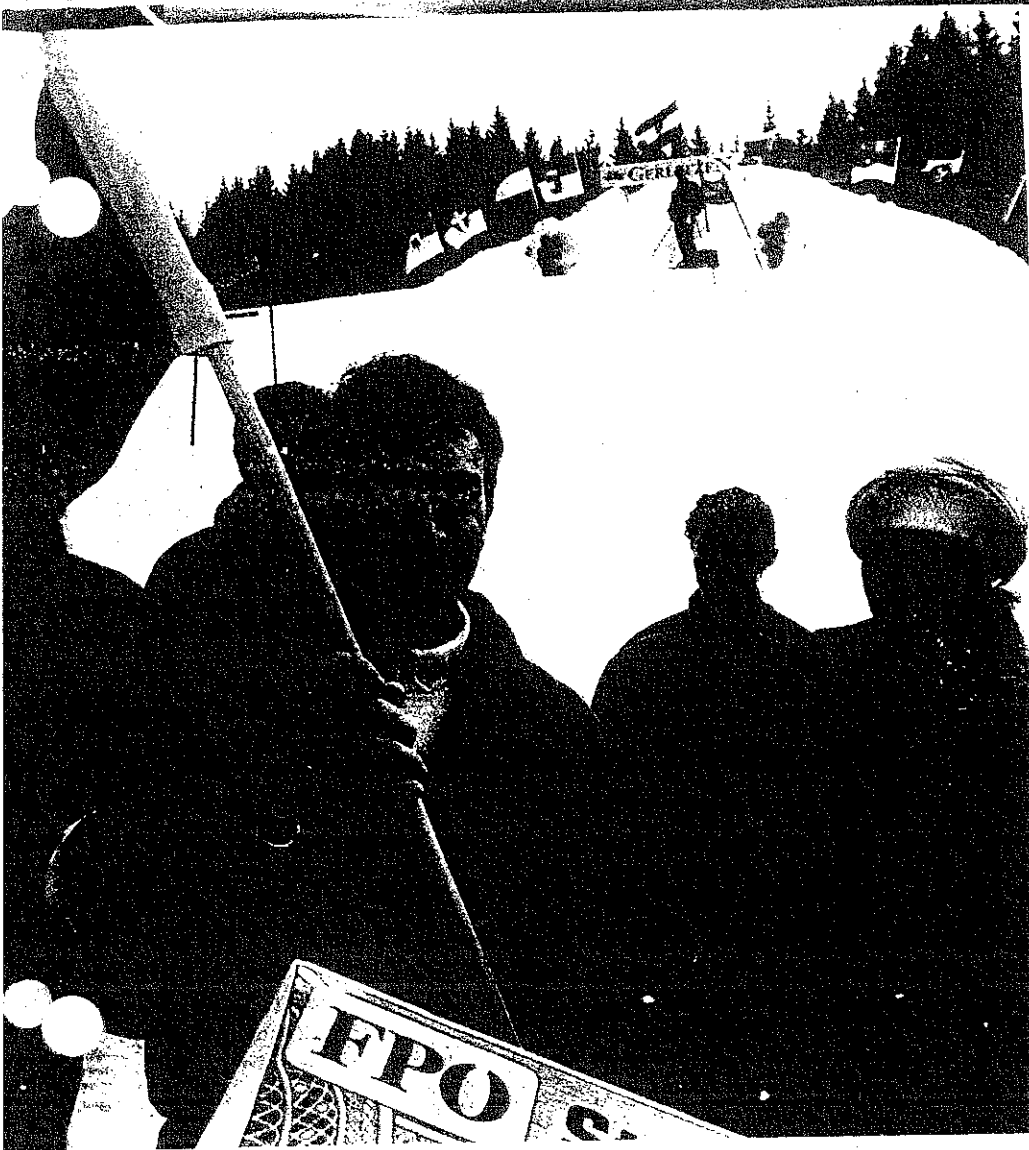
The faces of the far right



Germany's Frey blaming foreigners for crime rates

Switzerland's Bräcker praise for a hard aust. center's tough

Denmark's Harsager family de. for crimes



Europe's centuries-old ethnic balance. The European Union is in the process of expanding to include more eastern nations—and the unneighbourly dread that greater numbers of foreigners will qualify for passports that let them move where they choose on the continent is not often far below the surface.

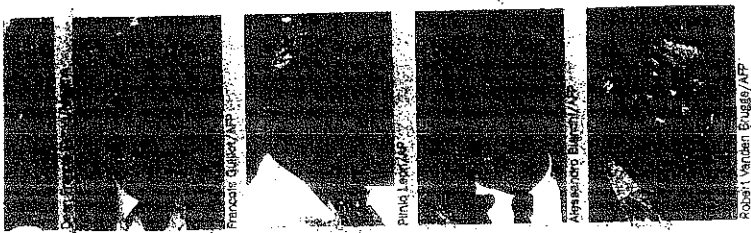
For the political establishment, the fear is that what happened in Austria may prove contagious. "We need to vaccinate Europe from the dangers of a disease which is threatening to spread," warned Italy's left-wing prime minister, Massimo d'Alema, last week as he endorsed the EU's three-point plan to isolate the new Austrian government of Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, whose conservative People's Party is the senior partner in the coalition with the Freedom Party. Under the program, Austria will receive no official ministerial visits from other EU countries and will garner no EU support for Aus-

trian candidates for posts with international organizations. Austrian ambassadors in EU states will have to deal with host country governments at the technical level, that is, below elected government ministers. Canada, too, is supporting the EU sanctions, along with the United States. Israel and several other non-EU countries. The new Austrian government is "on probation," said Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, announcing Ottawa's decision to send "the proper message" to Vienna by "limiting political and diplomatic engagements."

Among the forces of the resurgent far right in Europe, however, the reaction was far different. Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of Italy's dictator Benito, described Haider as a "decent person" and castigated the "leftist" and "racist" EU leadership. "I defend the principle of freedom of thought," she declared, acidly calling on the EU to "just tell us who we should vote for and send those who voted for Haider straight to jail."

Il Duce's offspring is a member of Italy's National Alliance, a direct descendant of the elder Mussolini's black-shirted Fascists. Her party is led by Gianfranco Fini, a smooth operator typical of the new hard-right leaders. He has transformed what he calls the "post-fascist" National Alliance into a legitimate force by shedding much of the old party's totalitarian ideology while continuing to advocate stringent curbs on immigration. His party was the first of Europe's far-right movements to hold power, entering a brief coalition government

Everywhere, except perhaps in France, these parties' fortunes are on the rise. And what unites them all is a simmering resentment about the foreigners who are upsetting



France's LePen: an extremist loses ground
Italy's Mussolini: a fierce defence of 'freedom of thought'
Italy's Fini: a 'post-Fascist,' very smooth operator
Belgium's Dewinter: a 'preference for our own'

Blocher struck terror in the Swiss refugee population with posters of sinister-looking foreigners tearing apart the country's flag

under Italian media magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

In Switzerland, Christoph Blocher enraged his country's Jewish community by praising the author of a book that denied the Holocaust. A millionaire industrialist from Zurich, Blocher led his Schweizerische Volkspartei, or Swiss People's Party, to second place in national parliamentary elections last October with 23 per cent of the vote. During the campaign, he also struck terror in the large refugee population with calls to end "asylum abuse" accompanied by posters of sinister-looking, dark-eyed foreigners tearing apart Swiss flags.

Not far to the north, in Munich, another multimillionaire has been busy providing the inspiration—and funding—for the extreme right Deutsche Volksunion, or German People's Union. Gerhard Frey, whose fortune is based on a publishing empire, founded the DVU in 1987. Since then, the party has blamed foreigners for German crime rates, warned against mass immigration from the east and cast doubts on the numbers who died in the Holocaust. The party is making gains: winning five per cent of the vote in regional elections in the state of Brandenburg last September, and 13 per cent the previous year in Saxony-Anhalt. In all, the DVU and two other hard-right German parties hold seats in four of Germany's 16 state governments.

In Belgium, Filip Dewinter's Vlaams Blok eschews the rougher edges of German extremism. But it has managed to emerge as the third-largest party in Flanders, winning close to 10 per cent of the vote in federal elections last year. The party's prime plank is secession, advocating the separation of Dutch-speaking Flanders from Belgium's French-speaking Walloons. But Dewinter's speeches are rife with anti-immigrant rhetoric. "What we want to do is halt immigration in our country," he said recently. "We want a policy of preference, preference for our own people." Much the same line is being peddled by Denmark's People's Party, which won 7.4 per cent of the vote and 13 seats in parliament in general elections last year by campaigning on a platform to curb immigration and keep Denmark from joining the single European currency. Pia Kjaersgaard, the party's leader, recently suggested that any immigrant convicted of a criminal offence should be deported, along with that person's entire family.

Of all Europe's far-right political groupings, it is only the French version that seems to be in decline. Two years ago, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front was strong enough to win almost 20 per cent of the regional council seats. The party routinely garnered 15 per cent of France's national vote with programs that, among others, advocated the expulsion of all immigrants. Last year, however, the party split when Le Pen's deputy, the aristocratic Bruno Mégret, departed to found his



A protest by Jews in Buenos Aires: Austria's isolation is spreading

own hard-right party, the National Republican Movement. Mégret's party has not flourished—it won just 3.3 per cent of the vote in European parliamentary elections last year. Le Pen, too, managed only 5.7 per cent in the same elections.

Still, the rise of Haider's Freedom Party in Austria is clearly not an isolated phenomenon. Nor is the 27 per cent of the vote the party polled in elections last October based only on Haider's ability to exploit latent xenophobia. There is a liberal wing in the Freedom Party that is pro-business; it is the only political party in Austria to advocate the kind of socially conscious free-market policies that have worked so well for Tony Blair's Labour Party in Britain and, to a lesser extent, Gerhard Schröder's Social Democratic Party in Germany. It helps to explain the otherwise puzzling emergence of some of the six members of the Freedom Party who are part of Austria's new government. One of those is Karl-Heinz Grasser, the new finance minister. For the past 18 months, Grasser, 31, has served as European spokesman for Austro-Canadian Frank Stronach's Magna International Inc. And Grasser has recently admitted that Stronach was influential in persuading him to accept Haider's offer to join the government.

Despite his wealth, the auto-parts magnate is not part of the tight clique that has governed the country for the past 50 years, a so-called Red-Black coalition of left-of-centre Social Democrats and the right-of-centre conservatives of the People's Party. The uninterrupted rule bred a climate of cronyism and corruption, something that Haider cleverly exploited. OGM analyst Bachmeyer argues that "one-third of the Freedom Party's voters in the last election would not vote for Haider as chancellor. What they do want is to keep him as a thorn in the flesh of the old system."

But cronyism and corruption is as much a pan-European phenomenon as the widespread fears of a new flood of foreigners once the planned EU expansion to the east takes place. Corruption brought down the once mighty Christian Democrats in Italy and it is threatening to do the same at the moment to the Christian Democrats in Germany and the conservative forces of the centre-right in France and elsewhere. Add that to the phobia over immigrants, and the result could well prove lethal to much of Europe's old order. No wonder Austria's neighbours in the European Union are worried about Jörg Haider. He may well be a harbinger of the kind of problems that lie ahead. ■

Rickey Rogers/Reuters