

Huey Long and the Dictators

By EDWARD F. HAAS*

On February 5, 1935, Henry J. Allen of Wichita, Kansas, sought an assessment of political developments in Louisiana from his friend John M. Parker, the state's former governor. At the core of Allen's request was a need to learn the truth about Sen. Huey P. Long. The Midwesterner admitted that he was "disposed to laugh at" the Kingfish, but Allen quickly added, "I was in Germany when they first began to laugh at Hitler, who is a sort of Teutonic Huey Long without Huey's mercurial disposition and mental quickness."¹

Allen, of course, was not the only person to compare the Louisiana politico with the German Führer. On March 4, 1935, Gen. Hugh Johnson, a stalwart New Dealer, claimed that the Kingfish was "a dictator by force of arms" and "the Hitler of one of our sovereign states." Johnson indeed contended that "Hitler couldn't hold a candle to Huey. . . ."² Lawrence Dennis, America's foremost proponent of home-grown fascism, declared Long to be "the nearest approach to a national fascist leader." Dennis believed that "it takes a man like Long to lead the masses." He, like Allen, contended "Long's smarter than Hitler, but he needs a good brain-trust. . . . He needs a [Joseph] Goebbles." Dennis was

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¹Henry J. Allen to John M. Parker, February 5, 1935, John M. Parker Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

²*New York Times*, March 5, 1935.

seemingly angling for the job.³ Journalist Raymond Gram Swing also viewed Long as a harbinger of American fascism. Although Swing did not believe that the Kingfish was as much a social thinker as were Hitler and Benito Mussolini, he wrote that the parallel with "the European prototypes is obvious." Swing maintained that Long was "ruthless, ambitious, and indeed plausible enough to Hitlerize America."⁴ Socialist Norman Thomas also thought that Long was moving toward fascism and compared him with the Führer and Il Duce. In an open letter to the Louisiana politician and Fr. Charles Coughlin, the radio priest, the veteran Socialist noted that, like the Kingfish, "both Hitler and Mussolini were friends of the little man." Thomas further observed, "Like Mussolini, you Senator Long, have destroyed self-government in local communities. Like all dictators you are afraid to walk in your own state without an armed bodyguard."⁵

American Communists repeatedly connected the Kingfish with Adolf Hitler and fascism. Sender Garlin, a veteran Communist propagandist, in an extremely disparaging pamphlet entitled *The Real Huey Long*, wrote that the Kingfish was the "personification of the fascist menace in the United States."⁶ The Communist writer even perceived a similarity between Long and the German Führer in the Kingfish's mannerisms when he noted that the Louisiana senator's voice was that "of a side-show barker, with the gestures of a Hitler."⁷ On March 12, 1935, the *Daily Worker's* main headline proclaimed: "Huey Long—Louisiana's 'Hitler' Is

³Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Politics of Upheaval* (Boston, 1960), 77.

⁴Raymond Gram Swing, "The Menace of Huey Long, Part III," *The Nation*, 140 (January 23, 1935): 98-100. Swing clearly believed that Long was a dictator, but his position on the Kingfish as a fascist was somewhat equivocal. Swing contended, "He is not a fascist, with a philosophy of the state and its function in expressing the individual. He is a plain dictator. He rules, and opponents had better stay out of his way." Swing, "The Menace of Huey Long, Part I," *The Nation*, 140 (January 9, 1935): 38. Victor C. Ferkiss had no doubts. He labeled the Kingfish "the precursor of fascism" in the United States. See Ferkiss, "The Political and Economic Philosophy of American Fascism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1954), 132-33, 137, 152.

⁵Norman Thomas, "To Huey Long and Father Coughlin: An Open Letter" (June 1935?), copy in the Socialist party of America Papers, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina.

⁶Sender Garlin, *The Real Huey Long* (New York, 1935), 47.

⁷*Ibid.*, 5.

Sole Lawmaker."⁸ All who linked the Kingfish with the Führer, however, were not disciples of Karl Marx. At least one belonged to the Kingfish's own family. According to Sender Garlin, Julius T. Long, Huey's estranged older brother, reputedly remarked, "I don't want my children to be branded . . . [because] their uncle is trying to be a Hitler in this state."⁹ Columnist Westbrook Pegler labeled Long, "Der Kingfish."¹⁰

Similarities between the Kingfish and the European despots certainly existed. Conditions in Germany, Italy, and Louisiana, respectively, were particularly dismal when Hitler, Mussolini, and Huey Long attained power. In Germany, the aftermath of World War I had caused serious economic and social problems that the Weimar Republic could not solve. In Italy, there was a background of disunity, illiteracy, and the absence of democracy.¹¹ One could make the same observations about Louisiana. French Catholics in the south fought with Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the north and everybody in rural Louisiana hated the city of New Orleans. The state was one of the poorest in the Union. Roads were bad, illiteracy rampant, and many citizens lived barren impoverished lives. After the failure of Populism and the advent of disfranchisement preserved the power of the Democratic conservative oligarchy, few Louisianians placed much stock in the democratic process.¹² Although residents of Louisiana did not necessarily feel "stabbed in the back," as did many Germans, participation in elections declined markedly. Gov. John M. Parker brought some reforms to the Pelican State, but the flood of 1927 and the coming of the Great Depression only made matters more dire.¹³ The Depression also had a devastating impact upon

⁸*Daily Worker*, March 12, 1935.

⁹Garlin, *The Real Huey Long*, 27; *Daily Worker*, March 14, 1935.

¹⁰Quoted in Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 51.

¹¹Bruce F. Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini: Totalitarianism in the Twentieth Century* (Wheeling, Ill., 1997), 22-3, 33-8.

¹²Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 42-3.

¹³Bennett H. Wall, Light Townsend Cummins, Judith Kelleher Schafer, Edward F. Haas and Michael L. Kurtz, *Louisiana: A History*, 4th ed. (Wheeling, Ill., 2002), 243-67, 287-306.

Italy and Germany.¹⁴ The people in all three places were open to new leadership.¹⁵

Mussolini, Hitler, and Long began as minor political figures who took advantage of divisions among their foes. In Italy, the middle class was torn between a fear of Communism and the passivism of the liberals. In Germany, too, there existed, notably among conservative interests, a fear of Communism and a dislike of the Weimar Republic. When the conservatives could not unite, Hitler and the Nazi party came to the fore.¹⁶

In Louisiana, the Democratic conservatives had divided before the gubernatorial campaign of 1928. Some backed Gov. Oramel H. Simpson, most supported Rep. Riley J. Wilson. Neither promised much in the way of change. A key factor in the campaign, often overlooked, was the death of New Orleans mayor Martin Behrman in January 1926.¹⁷ Behrman, a veteran Democratic politician with strong connections throughout the state, recognized the significance of the New Orleans Old Regulars as a unifying force in state politics. His absence undoubtedly contributed to the divisions among Louisiana Democrats.¹⁸

Hitler and Long both declared that their programs were the only alternatives to Communism. Hitler maintained that Communism had already achieved a foothold in Germany. He argued that the doctrine would "gradually shatter the whole world . . . and transform it as completely as did Christianity." Noting the severity of the challenge, Hitler, in an address to German industrialists, vowed to resist the Communist onslaught at all costs and to protect private property.¹⁹

¹⁴Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 41-2; Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, rev. ed. (New York, 1964), 151.

¹⁵For Louisiana, see Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 43.

¹⁶Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 27-8, 45.

¹⁷T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long* (New York, 1969), 225n, 244-49; William Ivy Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm: The Life and Times of Huey Long* (Baton Rouge, 1991), 141-42.

¹⁸For the role of Mayor Martin Behrman and the New Orleans Old Regulars in Louisiana politics, see Edward F. Haas, *Political Leadership in a Southern City: New Orleans in the Progressive Era, 1896-1902* (Ruston, La., 1988), 99-100; Allen P. Sindler, *Huey Long's Louisiana: State Politics, 1920-1952* (Baltimore, 1956), 22-6.

¹⁹Bullock, *Hitler*, 197.



**Huey P. Long Flanked by Louisiana National Guardsmen
in the Canal Bank, New Orleans, 1934
(Courtesy of the Library of Louisiana)**



**Huey P. Long with Two Students at a Football Game
(Courtesy of the Special Collections Division, Tulane University)**



Huey P. Long Delivering a Radio Address
(Courtesy of the Special Collections Division, Tulane University)



Above: Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler
Below: Josef Stalin





**Huey P. Long Takes the Oath of Office
in the United States Senate
(Courtesy of the Louisiana State Museum)**



Huey P. Long Campaigning in Arkansas, 1932
(Courtesy of the Special Collections Division, Tulane University)

Long also pledged to fight communism. He contended that "Share Our Wealth," his plan for the redistribution of wealth in the United States, was "the only stop-gap to Communism."²⁰ On March 8, 1935, the Kingfish recommended the implementation of his program "within the next five years or communism will be upon us."²¹

Mussolini, Hitler, and Long all had the added advantage of being activists in the face of essentially passive opposition.²² The three were dramatic speakers who knew how to appeal to the masses. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler indeed wrote, "To lead means to be able to move the masses."²³ Both the German leader and Long understood the political value of spectacle as did Mussolini, who on several occasions joined with the Führer in the limelight. Hitler's mass meetings with thousands of uniformed onlookers, swastika flags, glittering standards, and goose-stepping storm troopers became the stuff of dark legend and newsreels.²⁴ Long geared his approach to a simpler, more rural environment. Folksy bands and sound trucks, a creation of Huey's fertile mind, lured Louisianians to Long's rallies, where they could personally hear the word of the Kingfish. Long also exploited the relatively new medium of the radio to his advantage (as did Hitler after 1933).²⁵

Both the Führer and the Kingfish used democratic means to seize power.²⁶ "Hitler," contended the historian Ian Kershaw, his most recent biographer, "was not a tyrant imposed upon Germany. He was in many respects . . . a highly popular national leader."²⁷ John Lukacs, a specialist in the history of modern

²⁰Rose Lee, "Senator Long at Home," *The New Republic*, 79 (May 30, 1934): 68.

²¹*Times*, March 9, 1935.

²²For the concept of activism, see Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 27-8.

²³Quoted in John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York, 1997), 209. For Hitler's skill as a speaker, see Bullock, *Hitler*, 196-99. For Huey Long's oratorical skills, see, for example, Ken Burns, director, Ken Burns and Richard Kilburg, producers, *Huey Long* (Florentine Films, 1986).

²⁴See, for example, Bullock, *Hitler*, 216; Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York, 1987), 42, 69-70.

²⁵Williams, *Huey Long*, 203, 466-67, 629-30; Burns, *Huey Long*.

²⁶Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 83; Williams, *Huey Long*, ch. 11. Hitler did resort to extralegal tactics in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 with severe consequences, but he later used the electoral process to advance his rise to power.

²⁷Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (New York, 1991), 194.

Europe, held that the Führer "was a populist—a believer in the sovereignty of the people; a modern populist, and not an old-fashioned demagogue."²⁸ Russell Long, Huey's son, also believed that his father was a populist, in his words, the "greatest populist."²⁹

At first, many, like Henry Allen, were inclined to laugh at Hitler and Long. Alan Bullock, another Hitler biographer, argued that prior to the Great Depression, "Those who had ever heard of Adolf Hitler shrugged their shoulders and called him a fool."³⁰ One German exclaimed, "You'll never win, Schicklgruber, not even if you shout your head off. You aspire to rule Germany? You want to be a dictator with that nose? Don't make me laugh."³¹ In October 1933, screen star Charlie Chaplin wrote to Hitler to forgive him for stealing his moustache and for appearing in more movies, but not for getting more laughs.³²

For his part, Huey Long consciously cultivated the image of the buffoon. Taken from a popular radio program, his nickname in itself became a vital component of his public persona. The Kingfish commonly used wit to make his political point in public addresses and frequently engaged in humorous activities.³³ In 1931, for example, the Louisianian entered into a good-natured debate with Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York on the proper way to eat cornpone and potlikker. Huey was a professed dunker; FDR, an adopted son of the South, a crumbler.³⁴

Despite their respective exteriors, the Führer and the Kingfish had keen minds. According to Kershaw, Hitler "showed a quick

²⁸Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 108.

²⁹See Burns, *Huey Long*.

³⁰Bullock, *Hitler*, 151.

³¹Quoted in Lothar Machtan, *The Hidden Hitler*, trans. John Brownjohn (New York, 2001), 262. One of those who differed with this view was Williams Seeds, the British consul general in Munich. In May 1922, Seeds dismissed Hitler as "unimportant," but by November he contended that the German leader has become someone more significant than a "scurrilous and rather comic agitator." *Ibid.*

³²Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 67.

³³Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 49-50.

³⁴Williams, *Huey Long*, 428-39; Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 50.

and sharp appreciation of the realities of government."³⁵ Lukacs noted his "astonishing memory, capable of absorbing and retaining a remarkable array of technical details. . . ." This capacity often amazed his associates, particularly the generals.³⁶

Observers of the Kingfish also noted his intelligence. He, too, had a great memory and a sharp eye for detail. Several claimed that he was the smartest man in the United States Senate.³⁷ Alban Barkley once remarked that Long was "the smartest lunatic I ever saw in my whole life."³⁸

Hitler and Long also shared some personal traits. Both men kept late hours. The Führer, like Joseph Stalin, had social evenings that lasted long into the night. Hitler usually did not retire until two o'clock in the morning.³⁹ Long seemed to be awake always. He usually slept only four hours each day and commonly used his bedroom as an office. He greeted visitors there and frequently scheduled impromptu late night appointments as ideas and schemes popped into his mind.⁴⁰ Cecil Morgan, one of Long's foes, contended that stamina as well as intellect played a major role in the Kingfish's success. The Louisiana attorney-legislator claimed that Long "worked while we slept."⁴¹

Hitler and Long indeed were two men in a race with time. Both expected to die early deaths and rushed to achieve their goals before their time on earth expired. The Führer "was often in a hurry" because he expected his health to fail. Near the end of World War II, Hitler, a raving hypochondriac, was taking twenty-eight separate pills each day and receiving a steady dose of injections and hormone treatments from quack physicians. Some of his illnesses, however, were quite real as was his general physical deterioration. In 1943, Herman Goering contended that Hitler at

³⁵Kershaw, *Hitler*, 112.

³⁶Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 137.

³⁷Williams, *Huey Long*, 681; Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 50; Burns, *Huey Long*.

³⁸Quoted in Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 50. Long replied, "Maybe that is the smartest description I've ever had applied to me!"

³⁹Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 68.

⁴⁰See, for example, Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 48-9; Burns, *Huey Long*.

⁴¹Quoted in Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 253.

the end of his days suffered from arteriosclerosis, jaundice, "stomach cramps, intestinal spasms, and headaches" as well as "the shaking of his left arm, dizziness and disturbance of balance," symptoms that strongly suggested Parkinson's disease. Hitler ultimately became a "physical wreck."⁴²

Long feared assassination. Although he sometimes joked about plots against his life, the Kingfish sincerely believed that his opponents wanted to kill him. Upon one occasion, he asserted, "I'm a cinch to get shot."⁴³ On July 20, 1944, Hitler, of course, narrowly escaped death when rebellious military officers exploded a bomb in his bunker.⁴⁴

Hitler and Long also extolled the value of hatred. Joseph Goebbels once commented that Hitler had bragged about having "learned to hate." The Führer remarked, "God's most beautiful gift bestowed upon us is the hatred of our enemies, whom we in turn hate from the bottom of our hearts."⁴⁵ Long shared this appreciation. The Kingfish upon one occasion lauded to an associate the value of Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Long claimed that he read the classic every year. His reasoning was both direct and pragmatic: "That man in the book knew how to hate and until you learn how to hate you'll never get anywhere in this world."⁴⁶

Hitler and Long also exuded, in their own respective fashions, charisma. Ian Kershaw and M. Rainer Lepsius indeed have argued that charismatic rule constituted the heart of Hitler's authority. Borrowing heavily from sociologist Max Weber, Kershaw and Lepsius contend that Hitler came to power due to the crisis in Germany that resulted from defeat in World War I, the failure of the Weimar Republic and the economic upheaval of the Great Depression. Hitler presented a sense of mission that promised his personal salvation to the German people and then used his achievements to craft the foundation of the Führer cult. Within this "charismatic community" that Hitler created, all powers resided in the Führer and opposition had no place. Loyalty to Hit-

⁴²Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 74; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 164-65.

⁴³Williams, *Huey Long*, 321.

⁴⁴Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945, Nemesis* (New York, 2000), 671-81.

⁴⁵Quoted in Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 71-2.

⁴⁶Quoted in Williams, *Huey Long*, 34.

ler, moreover, outweighed any governmental position and institution. Only devoted followers held office. Bureaucracies existed only to perform his will. For Germans of the Third Reich, every positive good derived directly from Hitler; any ill came from the misguided works of minions who acted without the Führer's knowledge. A common remark among the citizens of Nazi Germany when problems occurred was "If the Führer only knew this."⁴⁷

Huey Long, too, used difficult conditions in Louisiana to vault into power. He, like the Führer, displayed properties of charismatic leadership. He vowed to liberate the masses of Louisiana from their trials and generally delivered on his promises. Many Louisianians responded with unbridled admiration for Long. Governmental administration under the Kingfish consisted largely of agents, to use the words of Rainer Lepsius, "who were personally summoned by the leader on the basis of their loyalty."⁴⁸ The names of Seymour Weiss, Robert Maestri, Oscar K. Allen, and Gerald L. K. Smith readily come to mind.⁴⁹ No one, however, doubted that ultimate authority rested in the hands of the Kingfish. As the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., once declared, "Every man a king, but only one wore the crown."⁵⁰

Long, however, never amassed the overwhelming and unchallenged power that Hitler possessed. The Kingfish, for instance, failed to measure up to commonly accepted criteria for totalitarianism. European historian Bruce F. Pauley has noted six components to the definition of totalitarianism: "extraordinary powers of the leader," "importance of an exclusivist ideology," "existence of a single mass party," "a secret police prepared to use terror to eradicate all domestic opposition," "a monopoly of the communications media as well as over the educational systems," and "a

⁴⁷M. Rainer Lepsius, "Charismatic Leadership: Max Weber's Model and Its Applicability to the Rule of Hitler," in Carl Friedrich Graumann and Serge Moscovici, ed., *Changing Conceptions of Leadership* (New York, 1986), 53-66; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936, Hubris* (New York, 1998), xiii, xviii, xxvi-xxx; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 10-4. For Max Weber's theory of "charismatic leadership," see Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York, 1968), 241-54, 266-71, 1111-157.

⁴⁸Lepsius, "Charismatic Leadership," 63.

⁴⁹See, for example, Williams, *Huey Long*, 253, 274-75, 565-66; Burns, *Huey Long*; Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 64-5.

⁵⁰Burns, *Huey Long*. Political scientist Allan P. Sindler also used this expression. Sindler, *Huey Long's Louisiana*, 98.

determination to change basic social, artistic and literary values."⁵¹ Political theorist Carl Friedrich advanced a similar concept. He asserted that there was a "six-point syndrome of totalitarianism: an official ideology, a single mass party, terroristic police control, monopoly control over the media, a monopoly of arms and central control of the economy."⁵²

Long certainly exercised "extraordinary powers," manipulated the electoral process in Louisiana to his own ends, and used the state police and National Guard in a manner that his enemies considered to be intimidating and "terroristic."⁵³ He also had great control over public education in Louisiana, but he made no effort to "change basic social, artistic, and literary values." Football coaches and student journalists may have experienced both the interference and the wrath of the Kingfish, but the faculty at Louisiana State University faced no challenges to their academic freedom.⁵⁴

Long never advanced "an official ideology." His famous program, "Share Our Wealth," was inclusive, not exclusive. He did not control the economy in Louisiana and surely did not dominate the media. His influence with the press around the state, for example, was so weak that Long had to publish *Louisiana Progress*, his own newspaper, and use the radio, public addresses, and pamphlets to get his message out to the people. The efforts that Long did make to control the media failed.⁵⁵

There were also serious gaps in the Kingfish's power. Although Long's political might was extensive and his remark that he was the constitution in the state bore a measure of truth, there was no "single mass party" in Louisiana. Despite his most fervid efforts, the Kingfish was never able to eradicate his opposition, a group that enjoyed the patronage and support of Pres. Franklin D. Roo-

⁵¹Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 1.

⁵²Quoted in Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, 2000), 24.

⁵³Hodding Carter, "Huey Long: American Dictator" in Isabel Leighton, ed., *The Aspirin Age, 1919-1941* (New York, 1949), 339-63.

⁵⁴Williams, *Huey Long*, 521-25, 763-82.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 454-57.

sevelt, one of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ Long's various foes actually coalesced into a powerful political faction that would not let up and played a major role in Louisiana politics for over a quarter century after the Kingfish's demise.⁵⁷

Long never possessed the absolute power that Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini wielded in Europe. Hitler, for example, essentially suspended the German constitution after the Reichstag fire.⁵⁸ Norman Thomas, though he deemed the Louisiana political boss a fascist, confessed that the Kingfish's loyal subordinates were more akin to "circus dogs jumping through hoops than [an] army . . . marching in goose step."⁵⁹ The Kingfish differed with the Führer on other counts. Hitler sought vast territorial expansion and pursued a course of military conquest.⁶⁰ As the historian William Ivy Hair observed, "Long's foreign policy—such as it was—consisted in letting the rest of the world alone."⁶¹ Burton Wheeler and William E. Borah, two of Long's closest compatriots in the Senate, were leading isolationists.⁶²

The experiences that Hitler and Long had during World War I also differed markedly. Hitler, of course, was the courageous lance corporal who defended Germany and, though deemed unfit for promotion due to his odd personality, earned the Iron Cross for bravery.⁶³ Long did not serve in the war. At the Kingfish's request, the Winn Parish draft board exempted him for service because he was married and had children. Long, not totally satisfied with this classification, sought also to claim that his position as a notary public, an official state post, according to the Kingfish, exempted him from the military. In later years when opponents contended that the Louisiana politico was a draft dodger,

⁵⁶Sindler, *Huey Long's Louisiana*, 86-7; Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 287-89.

⁵⁷Sindler, *Huey Long's Louisiana*, 154-207; Mark T. Carleton, "For Anti-Longites: A Tentative Assessment," *Louisiana History*, 30 (1989): 249-62.

⁵⁸Kershaw, *Hitler*, 67-8, 80, 130, 208-09.

⁵⁹Quoted in Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 296.

⁶⁰See, for example, Kershaw, *Hitler*, 143-54.

⁶¹Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 296.

⁶²Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (Lincoln, Neb., 1983), 124, 191-93.

⁶³Kershaw, *Hitler*, 2.

Long forthrightly noted the role that his family played in his draft status and added, "I did not go because I was not mad at anybody over there. . . ." ⁶⁴

Hitler believed that a man should not engage in politics before his thirtieth birthday. ⁶⁵ Long was impatient to begin his political career. He attained his first governmental position at the age of twenty-five. ⁶⁶ Hitler maintained that Christianity was a weak and obsolete religion. ⁶⁷ Long, though not a churchgoer, conversely quoted the Bible in his political addresses, claimed that it was the greatest book ever written and asserted that God's word formed the foundation for his Share Our Wealth program. ⁶⁸

The Führer was always aware of the political implications of his public appearance. His Nazi uniform became his usual attire. ⁶⁹ Hitler constantly sought to control his weight. He once commented to Albert Speer, "Just imagine if I went around with a belly. That would be a political disaster!" ⁷⁰ The German leader additionally would not appear in public wearing the glasses that he needed to correct his failing eyesight. He instead read from extra large "Führer" print in his prepared addresses. Hitler also avoided participation in sports because "they might make him look undignified or inferior." ⁷¹

The Kingfish gravitated in the other direction. He commonly conducted business from his hotel bedroom while wearing pajamas, slippers, and a dressing gown. When he did wear one of his numerous suits, he added gaudy shirts that virtually screamed with shrill colors and outrageous ties that contemporaries claimed assaulted the human eye. His weight fluctuated with his diet and his drinking habits. Long typically went from pudgy to trim and then back again. Although the Kingfish abhorred physi-

⁶⁴See Williams, *Huey Long*, 115-16.

⁶⁵Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 68.

⁶⁶Williams, *Huey Long*, 119-25; Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 141.

⁶⁷Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 143.

⁶⁸Williams, *Huey Long*, 592, 648; Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 33-4, 271.

⁶⁹Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 66.

⁷⁰Quoted in Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 69.

⁷¹Pauley, *Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini*, 66.

cal labor, one famous newsreel showed him clad in work clothes energetically chopping wood.⁷²

The Führer's hatred for Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and the physically handicapped led directly to the Holocaust and the murder of millions.⁷³ Long, on the other hand, may have generally accepted many of the South's racial mores, but they did not play a major part in his political campaigns. The Kingfish, furthermore, insisted that African Americans would participate in Share Our Wealth.⁷⁴ Burton Wheeler once stated, "Long has far less racial prejudice in him than any other Southerner in the Senate."⁷⁵

The Kingfish also displayed no animosity toward Jews despite the presence of premier anti-Semite Gerald L. K. Smith in his camp. The Louisianian's personal acceptance of Jews indeed constituted one area where the fawning Smith deviated from his worshipful praise of the Kingfish. Smith particularly condemned Long's close friendship with Seymour Weiss and Abe Shushan.⁷⁶

Accusations of dictatorship and fascism and comparisons with Hitler nonetheless plagued Huey Long throughout his political career.⁷⁷ Sometimes the Kingfish reacted in good humor to these contentions. He once declared, "Fine. I'm Mussolini and Hitler rolled into one. Mussolini gave them castor oil; I'll give them tabasco, and then they'll like Louisiana."⁷⁸ At other times, he joked, "What this country needs is a dictator."⁷⁹ Long, however, always insisted that democracy existed in Louisiana. He told one newspaperman, "You and I both know that if the people want to throw me out they're going to do it."⁸⁰

⁷²Williams, *Huey Long*, 436-37, 679; Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm*, 200-01; Burns, *Huey Long*.

⁷³Kershaw, *Hitler*, 148-51.

⁷⁴Williams, *Huey Long*, 703-06.

⁷⁵Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 192.

⁷⁶Glen Jeansonne, *Gerald L. K. Smith: Minister of Hate* (New Haven, 1988), 105.

⁷⁷See, for example, Carter, "Huey Long: American Dictator."

⁷⁸Quoted in Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 67.

⁷⁹See *ibid.*

⁸⁰Quoted in Williams, *Huey Long*, 762.

For the most part, Long rejected outright and with great anger any charges of his similarity with Hitler. The Louisiana leader proclaimed to one offending member of the press, "Don't liken me to that sonofabitch. Anybody that lets his public politics be mixed up with religious prejudice is a plain Goddamned fool." On another occasion, Long remarked, "I don't know much about Hitler. Except this last thing, about the Jews. There has never been a country that put its heel down on the Jews that ever lived afterwards."⁸¹ His bottom line on dictatorship bore no equivocation and also managed to take a shot at his most formidable political enemy. The Kingfish exclaimed, "I don't believe in dictatorships, all these Hitlers and Mussolinis. They don't belong in American life. And Roosevelt is a bigger dictator than any."⁸²

⁸¹See *ibid.*, 761.

⁸²Quoted in Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 66. For a view that on one level agrees with Long's position on FDR, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The War Lords* (New York, 1979).