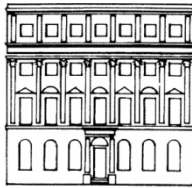


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*On the Advantage and Disadvantage of the 2016 Model of 'Mein Kampf'*

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## *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of the 2016 Model of 'Mein Kampf'*

MOSHE ZIMMERMANN

Helmut von Gerlach is one of that rare species of political personalities who switched from Right to Left in pre-First World War Germany. Gerlach, a close confidant of the court preacher Adolf Stoecker, a leading figure in the antisemitic current of the time, recounted, after his transition to the left side of the aisle, how he had fallen into the trap of antisemitism at the outset of his political career. Somebody on a street corner jammed into his hand a tract from the Association for the Fight Against Antisemitism (Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus), which had been established in 1890. Gerlach read the pamphlet and came away convinced . . . that the antisemites were right. This is an edifying example of the counter-productivity that information campaigns sometimes create. Perusal of the annotated edition of *Mein Kampf*, published in German this year, evokes concern that this work may be fated to influence German readers much as that anti-antisemitic pamphlet did more than 120 years ago.

At face value the intention seems good and worthy. The ban on publishing Hitler's book, imposed by the Allies at the end of the Second World War, and followed by German law, expired at the end of 2015—seventy years after its author's death and upon the expiration of his official heirs' copyright (held, since 1965, by the Bavarian finance ministry). Thus, on 1 January 2016, printing *Mein Kampf* in Germany became permissible under German law. Since this news came as no surprise, the political arena and the historians' guild in Germany had plenty of time to confront the 'evil' or, as the German saying has it, *aus der Not eine Tugend machen*—to find the silver lining in the cloud. Since there is no point in promoting an anti-publication policy by means of new legislation—today even more than in the pre-online era—the solution was found several years ago to task the Institute of Contemporary History (IfZ) with publishing Hitler's two-

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volume book, which originally had appeared in 1925–6, along with scholarly apparatus (hereafter: the critical edition). In order to keep readers from being susceptible to the author's arguments, the new *Mein Kampf* was augmented with an Introduction and some 3,700 detailed footnotes that aim to provide background, to spotlight falsehoods, deceptions, and inaccuracies, and, above all, to provide sources for Hitler's fallacious views.

The idea is basically sound. In Israel there was a similar attempt about twenty years ago. Selected parts of the book—those that seemed relevant in explaining the historical meaning of National Socialism for the Hebrew reader—were translated and embellished with notes that were meant to clarify for readers in the 1990s—history students above all—the circumstances that the text addresses, as well as the risk that anti-democratic forces pose to democratic society.<sup>1</sup> The policy adopted by the German IfZ, however, was different. The institute's mission statement, presented in the introduction (p. 11), is to produce a scientific commentary on a historical source and, at the same time, to tackle a symbol 'the influence of which has not yet reached its concluding phase'.

As warranted by the first part of the mission statement—in the finest German tradition of critical scientific editions—the text is presented in full and festooned with notes relating mainly to the sources on which Hitler relied or may have relied, as well as notes on variant wordings (most of little consequence) in the various editions of the original text. This, however, already paves a path toward the counterproductive outcome alluded to above.

In duelling, the German term *satisfaktionsfähig*—'worthy of response'—is commonly used. There is a code of behaviour that defines who is worthy of being challenged to a duel in view of an insult that he has expressed, and who is not. On the basis of this definition, the challenge to a duel of those who are 'unworthy of response' should be passed up. Following this thinking, *Mein Kampf* should be defined from the outset as 'unworthy of response', for the simple reason that its author is plainly a pathological liar and the text itself is a mishmash of prejudices resting on foundations of racism. Perceiving it as a text worthy of scholarly treatment (similar to the

<sup>1</sup> Moshe Zimmermann and Oded Heilbronner (eds.), *Mein Kampf: Chapters from Adolf Hitler's Ma'avaki* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1994).

treatment of the writings of Goethe or Kafka) is tantamount to falling into a trap. Nevertheless, the editors decided that the axiomatic statement that Hitler's arguments are 'unworthy of response' does not suffice to spare the average reader from harm. Therefore, they set out to deconstruct Hitler's autobiographical opus point by point (as the director of the institute writes in his Foreword).

This approach to *Mein Kampf*, as worthy of response is, after all, reasonable mainly in view of the fear that publishing the original text verbatim would gift the far Right a tool. Today, however, with the massive set of footnotes, the catastrophe having passed, and decades of research having been carried out, such an edition should probably address not only the question of 'where did you come from?' (i.e., where does *Mein Kampf* fit in among similar texts from its time?), but also 'where are you heading?' Where did the Hitlerian worldview lead, and what is it capable of bringing about from 1945, to our times, as the populist Right steadily gathers strength?

This is also said in regard to the second part of the mission statement: 'tackling a symbol', as the editors express it. This act of tackling should shift the emphasis from discussing the origin of the text to coping with its success and the story of its reception since it was published. The editors of the critical edition proudly affirm that they are not neutral and that their interpretation 'takes a stance' (p. 12). However, even if they do not mean it, and precisely in view of all that has been noted above, it turns out that they confine their attention to one question only: the influence of this book up to 1945. Thus, they risk missing the target in both parts of the mission statement.

The editors of this edition, after making Hitler into a 'thinker' 'worthy of response', settle mainly for a painstaking explanation of the circumstances of the writing, refrain most of the time from presenting counterarguments, and risk a counterproductive outcome, as demonstrated below. The editors surely should not be suspected of invoking a tactic that the late Ernst Nolte habitually used – quoting foul opinions and claiming as an alibi that this is done merely to reveal their absurdity – but the outcome appears to be much the same.

For the sake of argument, two things distinguish the craft of interpretation in the Israeli case from that of the German case: the addressees; and the choice of objects to be interpreted and explained. The reading and interpretation of a text differ from case to case

depending on who is being addressed – a German, a Brit, an Arab, or a Jew – and depending on the time. That is, publishing a text fifty years ago is not the same as publishing it today, and doing so in its source language is not the same as doing it in translation. The distinction matters when the policy of the critical edition of such a text is set. The IfZ went far beyond creating a basis for the interpretation of topics in which the average German reader is not well versed. The institute, as stated, sees the book as a text ‘worthy of response’, as if it were a piece of exemplary literature or a scholarly treatise that deserves interpretation and clarification down to the last letter (yet nevertheless retains many portions of toxin that still await attention). If the critical edition would indeed make a positive impression on the average German reader to whom it is addressed – leaving less room for empathy with the Nazi message, all the better. However, the concern is that this publication will have the opposite effect: providing information which, as in this article’s opening anecdote, will strengthen belief in the veracity of Nazi claims precisely among the uninformed and unfamiliar, in the sense of ‘where there’s smoke, there’s fire’. A painstaking reading of the topics discussed below, however, brings to mind a discussion of UFOs that ultimately convinces people to start believing in them.

This book’s target readership is not the professional historian, for whom bibliographic references in appropriate places suffice, but the average reader, one of those tens of thousands who have in fact purchased this heavy work (two volumes weighing more than 5 kilograms). Truth be told, the commercial success of the critical edition confirms the fear that people are indeed combing it for a glimpse into the secrets of the ‘Elders of Zion’, until now locked away in what is known in German as the ‘poison closet’ – not only by studying Hitler’s original text but also by inspecting its accompanying notes and commentary. Below I will attempt to show that at least where Jews and antisemitism are concerned, the information in the critical edition may fail to attain the editors’ express goal.

The critical edition, edited by four historians and four associates (*Mitarbeiter*), includes an expansive Introduction (approximately ninety pages) that presents the editors’ main topics of discussion: the circumstances behind the writing of *Mein Kampf*; the author’s language; Hitler’s self-searching; the invention of his biography; the history of the Nazi party; the party’s positioning among the *völkisch*

movements; and, last and best of all, a forward-looking discussion from the vantage point of 1926—how the book relates to the catastrophe that occurred during the Third Reich. Underlying this taxonomy of topics is the editors' principled position against perceiving the book as a blueprint. For this reason they assign only one role to their two heavy tomes: 'interpreting [the original text] in the context of the era in which it came into being'. The editors do realize, however, that this does not go far enough. As a document qua document, *Mein Kampf* is but one of many coeval works of a similar nature published in that period. Accordingly, they revert to discussing the meaning of the book until 1945.

Examining the impact of *Mein Kampf* from its writing to the defeat of the Third Reich is an undisputed *sine qua non* in coping with this book. The editors' examination starts with a laconic revelation: even though Hitler considers Germany a world power, he evidently forgets to relate to important players such as the United States and Japan (p. 48). Here Hitler already reveals himself as a German-centric rube, thus explaining the potentially enormous menace of his pretensions. Those interested in the relation between the book and its implementation should also give thought to the conclusion of the editors, who point to 'enormous gaps between the National Socialist method of governance and Hitler's locutions in *Mein Kampf*' (p. 65). In another matter of central concern to us, thought should be given to an additional conclusion by the editors: 'To build a path that leads directly from Hitler's hate-filled discourse to Auschwitz is overly simple. Disregarding the relation between the two, however, is more problematic' (p. 53). To reach this conclusion, however, one need not consult these two bulky volumes; it suffices to read Karl Schleunes' *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, published many years ago.<sup>2</sup> Neither is there anything novel in yet another statement in this subchapter: 'The Jews [occupy] the epicentre [*Fixpunkt*] of all of Hitler's fears'; or in the caveat against over-interpreting the paragraph in *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler explains that he would have preferred to gas 12,000 Jews to death back in the First World War.

The Introduction to the critical edition also concerns itself, naturally in view of the editors' attitude, with the more technical aspects

<sup>2</sup> Karl Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy towards German Jews 1933–1939* (Urbana, Ill., 1970).

of the history of *Mein Kampf*. There was a time when some pondered the counterfactual question of how things would have turned out had Hitler been named Schicklgruber? Here, in contrast, the speculation concerns the fate of this book had it retained its original title (as indicated by an advertisement in 1924): *4 ½ Jahre Kampf gegen Lüge, Dummheit und Feigheit* ('4 ½ Years of Struggle against Falsehoods, Vapidity, and Pusillanimity'). The editors, who go to such pains to track down every scrap of knowledge that may have influenced Hitler, should have addressed themselves in this context to a book that appears in their bibliography – that by the pacifist Emil Gumbel, published the same year: *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*<sup>3</sup> – that may definitely have had something to do with the title of Hitler's book.

The Introduction also has much to say about the typography and graphic design of the critical edition. It explains the vacillations that attended the choice of the font for the text – both the original and the notes. The fact that the editors initially selected a Trump-Antiqua font, but wavered in their final decision because, in 1934, Georg Trump was principal of a book-printing school in Munich, which he ran in the spirit of the party, may be regarded as a peculiarity (p. 78). But the decision in principle to use a layout that replicates a page of Talmud or the classic Hebrew Pentateuch and main commentaries (see photo on p. 75 of the edition) is more than a curiosity; it is an act of defiance. What Victor Klemperer called with irony the 'bible of National Socialism' is given bizarre visual expression in the critical edition, a matter at least in bad taste, if not worse, particularly when the two Jewish books are explicitly called 'precedents' for this purpose (*ibid.*). From the practical standpoint, too, the page layout is ponderous; it confuses the reader and creates unnecessary bother in using the index of names and topics, which refers to page numbers in the original edition (and not to those in the critical edition), and in tracking cross-references among footnotes.

Hitler's book, like the critical edition, is comprised of twelve chapters in Volume I, and fifteen in Volume II – from 'In the House of My Parents' and 'War Propaganda' to 'Propaganda and Organization' or 'The Right of Emergency Defence.' In order to demonstrate the method in the critical edition, with its advantages and drawbacks, it is worth focusing on the most important chapter from the standpoint

<sup>3</sup> Emil J. Gumbel, *Vier Jahre politischer Mord* (Berlin, 1922).

of readers of *Yad Vashem Studies*: the one titled 'Volk und Rasse' ('Nation and Race'), Chapter 11 in Volume I of *Mein Kampf*. In the original the chapter was comprised of thirty-three pages; in the critical edition it takes up eighty-three.

In this chapter, as throughout the critical edition, the object of the editors' most intensive concern is 'the historical-ideological roots' and not the transition from the writing of the book to the reality that the Third Reich produced. The search and investigation focus on tracking down the writings from which Hitler harvested ideas or felt ideological proximity. Most of the attention, as the Introduction states, accrues to the German authors Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Theodor Fritsch, and Julius Langbehn, and to the non-Germans Henry Ford and Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau. The extent of their direct connection to *Mein Kampf*, however, remains hypothetical, because neither the text itself nor Hitler's subsequent remarks report the origin of all the information that he presented. Be this as it may, the editors note ten categories of textual criticism on which basis the material used for the many textual glosses was gathered.

The first topic to which a far-ranging footnote is devoted in this chapter is the Jewish claim to 'chosenness' (p. 778). The bibliographic reference attached to this note, which is meant to explain the matter (note 83), confirms a truth that is reflected throughout the chapter: not everyone who is an expert on the history of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's biography, or the history of the Second World War is an expert on Judaism, Jewish history, or the history of antisemitism. Here are several additional examples: notes 151 (p. 811) and 156 (p. 814) suggest clearly that those behind the critical edition are unfamiliar with German Neo-Orthodoxy, which was faithful to the German language and culture, and are equally unacquainted with Mordechai Breuer's relevant book on Orthodox Judaism in imperial Germany.<sup>4</sup> Their unfamiliarity with matters Jewish is not limited to Orthodoxy; they do not understand Liberal Judaism either. Thus, in note 177 (p. 210), they claim that 'religion was a weak basis for self-definition [for Liberal Jews] because most of them rejected the traditional ritual practices' – an allegation that any Jew affiliated with the Liberal stream would of course reject. (It is regrettable that the

<sup>4</sup> Mordechai Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie im Deutschen Reich 1871–1918* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).



editors did not read Michael Meyer's history of the Reform movement.)

Indeed, the editors' reading of Jewish history, even if strewn with bibliographic references, is fundamentally unprofessional; as such, it abets the counterproductive outcome mentioned at the beginning of this review. At the end of Volume II, in three pages of acknowledgments (pp. 1745-7), the editors thank the experts (mainly those known in German as 'student auxiliaries', but also top-notch authorities, and the rabbi of the Munich Jewish community) for helping them with advice on the topics of antisemitism and Judaism. Their list of credits is bewildering; either the advisers' expertise is limited, or they did not read the final version of the texts and thus are used as a mere alibi or fig leaf.

Professional shortcomings are apparent not only in the use of research literature but also in matters of language. Faulty command of Hebrew results in unprofessional locutions and, worse still, in misleading ones – a phenomenon that has no place in a scholarly edition, as the book purports to be, and at an institute that forgoes no stringency in its reference to studies written by others. The editors instruct the public (p. 784, note 93) that the familiar German term *Maloche* comes from Yiddish. Instead, for accuracy's sake, they should have explained that the term *M'lochoh* is the Ashkenazi form of a Hebrew word (which later metamorphosed into Yiddish and then entered the German lexicon). The antisemitic term *Mauscheln*, the editors explain (p. 816, note 162) descends from *Mausche*, which, in their opinion, is 'the Jewish [*sic*] form of the Biblical name Mose'. Now, it is plain that the Biblical name, i.e., the Hebrew one, is משה (Moshe; with its different Ashkenazi and Sephardi pronunciations) and that Mose is but a translation. The lack of professionalism is even more embarrassing when a bibliographic entry relating to this reviewer (p. 1839) renders his name as Mosheh Tsimerman, even though the book referenced appears in German and the editors' names in it are of course spelled correctly. Was this a case of transcription from German to Hebrew and back to mangled German, or did someone think a Hebrew writer would find a German spelling inappropriate? Either way, professionalism and the observance of scholarly rules, of which the institute preens, are absent here.

Let us return to the 'chosen people'. To clarify the matter, a verse about the chosen people from Exodus is quoted in Chapter 11, note

83, followed by remarks by the historian Heinrich Graetz, the German Zionist Emil Bernhard Cohn, and the author Max Brod. Commenting on Brod, the editors add a value judgment: his take on chosenness is 'more modest'. By implication, the editors think that those quoted before Brod do not nurture the Jewish chosen-people idea modestly enough. Would the average German reader not believe, despite a parenthetical remark about the Nazis' attempt to respond by transforming the Germans into the 'chosen people', or a quotation from a venomous statement by Himmler's adjutant about the extermination of several thousands of the 'chosen people', that, when all is said and done, that there is some truth to the argument against the Jews?

In other remarks, too, Hitler's anti-Jewish prejudices are mentioned in succession and are identified as such. Instead of dismissing them axiomatically (or, alternatively, challenging them), the editors add detail and thereby create a counterproductive effect. In note 96 (p. 786), for example, concerning Hitler's argument about the absence of Jews' contribution to art, Wagner is presented, correctly, as a source for this Hitlerian outlook. Added to this, however, is a statement to the effect that Jewish musicians also supported Wagner's antisemitic stance. Two Jewish composers whom the author of an article, in 2009, dredged up from the dead,<sup>5</sup> give the reader the sweeping impression that Zionist musicians agree with the antisemitic Wagner. If this is the case, might there perhaps be room for an after-the-fact understanding of Wagner's and Hitler's fictions? This is stated again in reference to the allegation about Jews' evasion of productive labour (p. 784). The editors' intentions here appear to be pure; they wish to demonstrate that, on the contrary, Jews are willing to work. Having surmounted this dubious hurdle, the editors then tell us about the existence of Jewish labour unions. In so doing, however, they reveal their amateurism once again: how could they overlook the Bund?

Next in line is the canard about the Jews' ostensibly illegitimate practices in economic life. A relatively lengthy quote from Werner Sombart's 1911 book, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (p. 804, note 141), is written in a manner that makes the reader wonder if a

<sup>5</sup> James Loeffler, 'Richard Wagner's "Jewish Music": Antisemitism and Aesthetics in Modern Jewish Culture', *Jewish Social Studies*, NS, 15/2 (2009), 2–36.

respectable academic such as Sombart believed this, does Hitler's working assumption not contain a grain of truth or, at least, extenuating circumstances that justify its adoption? It happens again in the context of Hitler's claim (p. 332 in the original edition) that the Jews contribute to the community's welfare for egoistic reasons only, in contrast to the New Testament imperative of unadvertised charity. Here the editors go out of their way to quote critical remarks from the Gospel According to Matthew in the same spirit, instead of referring to what the Jewish tradition calls 'giving secretly'. Their choice can only reinforce Hitler's claim, not weaken it, in the reader's eyes (note 169).

And what utility would the reader gain from a remark on the charge of deceit that Hitler levels at the Jews — that they profess to be a religious community but are in fact a people (p. 792, note 111)? The editors' commentary on this weighty topic asserts that there are Jews, i.e., Zionists, who agree that the Jews are indeed a people! While this is indisputable, its insinuation in this connection, directed at the reader who is not an expert in Jewish history, first disregards the majority of Jews, who defined themselves as members of a religious community before Zionism emerged in the late nineteenth century, and the fact that only a small minority among the Jews became Zionists after the Zionist movement was established. Second, it creates the impression that 'the Zionists' do agree with Hitler — a sense that gathers strength after one reads note 129 (p. 800). In response to Hitler's indictment of the Jews for deceitfully camouflaging their racial and not religious essence, the editors do not begin their footnote by stating that most Jews are indeed convinced that they belong to a religious community (they relegate this statement to the end of the footnote), but by asserting that there are Jews who reject the claim of Jewishness as being a religion and that certain Jews, primarily doctors, even used the term 'race'. This claim is correct in itself. However, in the place and context where the editors have placed it, it prompts the average reader to conclude that, see, the Jews themselves support their definition as a race — and, if so, where is the difference?

This matter descends into absurdity at the place in the book where Hitler reveals his sexual fantasies about the 'black-haired Jewish youth' who waylays a wholesome German girl. The editors' note here (p. 849, note 229) concerns itself with the question of penetration

(impregnation) and, as an aside, devotes considerable space to Otto Weininger. One who reads this note will probably conclude, again, that, ‘They said it themselves’, i.e., that this belief is not specific to the Nazis and Hitler but is shared by them and ‘the Jews’. Even if the original interpretive intention is fine, the outcome is counterproductive. This is also the place to note, parenthetically, that those who fall into the trap of racism are precisely those behind the critical edition – they indeed do yeoman’s work when they steer the reader toward statistics attesting to the proliferation of Jewish–Christian intermarriage, particularly Jewish males and Christian females, in order to disprove Hitler’s claim (p. 824, note 178). The example that they consider epitomic, however – Victor Klemperer – shows that they have tumbled into a trap that Hitler set for them: Klemperer was Jewish by ‘race’ only and not by religion or self-definition!

Typically and repeatedly, the editors of the critical edition take up the very same problematic topics toward which Hitler drew his readers during his lifetime – and that persist today as well. Is it necessary to contend with the weighty question of whether Jews reek of garlic? The answer would be affirmative only among commentators who find it appropriate to invest effort in debating the question of the stench of beer that wafts from the mouths of Germans or others. Unfortunately, however, the garlic question is indeed discussed (p. 825, note 181), including a learned reference to a recommendation in the Talmud about eating the guilty herb. They even combine it in one breath with a stereotyped depiction of ghetto Jews in their unhygienic milieu – a matter undeserving of space from the outset, even in accordance with the editors’ express definitions. Even if the details are correct in themselves, in the cumulative they leave the reader with the recurrent impression of ‘admitting to some of the facts’, of the existence of some internal truth in Hitler’s book, and of the notion that the film *The Eternal Jew* is ultimately not just vitriolic propaganda.

The next topic is the Jews’ ability to assimilate and acculturate. This theme, central in the historiography of the Jews, is referenced in note 88 (p. 780), in an unprofessional summary, albeit one that is meant to ‘defend’ the Jews as worthy of integration. Worse still, a reader unversed in this issue might get the impression that Felix Theilhaber (whose name surfaces several times in the critical edition) is a dominant figure in the Jewish camp. He is dressed in respectability as a representative of the ‘hygiene of the Jewish race’ (p. 815, note

159); he also serves as proof of the acceptance of the antisemitic argument about Jewish egoism among the Jews themselves on the basis of a quotation from his well-known 1911 book about the demise of German Jewry.<sup>6</sup> Those who are unfamiliar with the history of Zionism (including the editors of this edition) may, of course, come away with the notion that the German racists and Theilhaber, or Hitler and Theilhaber, or perhaps even 'Hitler and the Jews' are in agreement.

Indeed, insofar as Zionism is at issue, the information provided by the editors—in an area that lies outside their expertise—is rough and vague, if not worse. The explanatory note about Hitler's statements concerning the establishment of the Zionist movement (p. 210, note 176), the inception of Zionism, and Vienna as a Zionist centre is puzzling in its content. (It finds no room for Leon Pinsker, Moses Hess, and Rabbi Isaak Rülff.) Given that Hitler was 8 years old when the Zionist movement was established, and 15 when Herzl died, the treatment of Zionism, Vienna, and Hitler requires a footnote of a totally different type. Familiarity with the anti-Zionism that reigns among today's antisemites (some of whom may have purchased the two-volume work at issue) indicates it would be preferable not to quote Alfred Rosenberg's book about Zionism (p. 846, note 226) and the world Jewish conspiracy, but instead to attempt here, too, to challenge the assumption that the state of the Jews is but a platform for such a conspiracy.

The commentators in the critical edition consider nearly everything mentioned in the issues discussed above fit for extensive discussion; indeed, they relate to a lengthy series of anti-Jewish prejudices that are firmly anchored in European society. The notes refer time and again to remarks by Wilhelm Marr on the assumption that he had been one of Hitler's guiding lights. This is puzzling. The contribution of Marr, who introduced the term 'antisemitism' into the political lexicon ten years before Hitler was born, is mentioned in the commentary to this chapter very often, as is the book by Marr's follower Theodor Fritsch, *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (originally titled *Antisemiten Katechismus*). The editors of the critical edition, however, not expert in Jewish history or the history of antisemitism, do not bother to study the only existing biography of Wilhelm Marr in order to

<sup>6</sup> Felix Theilhaber, *Der Untergang der deutschen Juden: Eine volkswirtschaftliche Studie* (Munich, 1911).

frame the man's contribution and explain the chain that leads from him via Fritsch to Hitler.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, they limit themselves to a quick glimpse at only two editions of Fritsch's *Handbuch*, even though this work reappeared almost every year. The changes that it underwent deserve follow-up where the question of influence on Hitler is concerned, no less than the painstaking tracking that is warranted regarding negligible corrections of wording in *Mein Kampf*.

Since these commentators are unacquainted with the evolution of Marr's attitude toward the Jews, they overlook, for example, a relevant work for the discussion of racial mixing outside the Jewish context. It would have been proper to choose a work that Marr designated for this purpose on the basis of his stay in Central America in the middle of the nineteenth century instead of the one that appears in note 231 (p. 850). Those who are firmly oriented in the topic are also aware of the importance of the difference between the meaning of enmity towards Jews in Marr's work *Der Judenspiegel* (1862) and that in his *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* (1879), along with the relevance of this important difference for discussion of antisemitism generally and Nazi antisemitism particularly. Above all, if we compare the account of the history of the Jews' 'domination' in Marr's 1879 opus with Hitler's description, we should subject to thorough examination the similarity, the continuity, and the in-between stages that lead not only from Marr via Fritsch to Hitler but onward, to Auschwitz and to the Holocaust deniers. Furthermore, how can one posit Hitler's offensive against the Jews as targeting a group not defined by religion without relating to the central theme in Marr's 1879 book, subtitled *Vom nichtconfessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet*? The literary stunt that Marr employs at the end of his book—the use of the slogan *Finis germaniae*, replaced by Hitler with the slogan 'a German state for the German nation'—also demands attention, provided that one is aware of the similarity.

The historian Götz Aly,<sup>8</sup> in his pointed and compelling critique of the critical edition, calls attention to the fact that the bibliography on

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism* (New York, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Götz Aly, 'Die neue "Mein Kampf" Edition erstickt im Detail', *Berliner Zeitung*, 11 Jan. 2016. See above for the translation published in this special issue of the *GHIL Bulletin*.

which the edition is based lacks highly important relevant works and makes room for publications of dubious significance and credibility. Insofar as this pertains to the 'Nation and Race' chapter and to the crux of the chapter on the Jews, his criticism is definitely well founded. The editors avail themselves, for example, of nothing written by Jacob Katz, including his work on antisemitism. The historian Walter Zvi Bacharach is totally absent. Other neglected items are mentioned above. Israeli historians are not alone in being omitted. For example, should the note on the Jews' voting patterns in the Weimar era not reference Martin Liepach's classic work<sup>9</sup> (p. 798, note 127)?

Even if we agree that the section that explains the background of Hitler's writings is not 'unworthy of response' and should even be extended, the notes often seem to expand by quoting members of Hitler's supporting cast. Yet they usually refrain from presenting counterclaims that, in this reviewer's opinion (but also in accordance with the editors' statement), should be, didactically, the all-important part of the message for the average and unknowledgeable reader of this thick tome. For example, Hitler thinks that the 'social problem' is typical of urban society only (p. 336 in the original edition). The editors of the critical edition attempt to enlighten us by commenting that there definitely was a social problem in the rural sector (note 189). However, is it not more important for the reader to ask (as is discussed in the professional literature) how the intersection of the 'social problem' and the 'Jewish problem' evolved from the late nineteenth century onward? And as for Hitler's claim that the modern contempt for unskilled labour traces to the Jews, would it be preferable to explain that Henry Ford and Adolf Stoecker viewed this allegation positively (as the editors did in note 190), or rather to advise that this allegation is fundamentally wrong? The same should be asked about Hitler's assessment of the Jews as great capitalist exploiters who concurrently and hypocritically speak for the exploited workers (p. 337 in the original edition). The note on this topic (196) adds an allegation by Hitler's adviser, Rosenberg, but does not confront it.

In all of these cases, reasonable German readers are offered no counterclaim; they may contend with Hitler's arguments only by

<sup>9</sup> Martin Liepach, *Das Wahlverhalten der jüdischen Bevölkerung: Zur politischen Orientierung der Juden in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen, 1996).

invoking the axiomatic proposition that anyone who shares Hitler's views is by definition illegitimate. As stated, however, the editors do not settle for axiomatic propositions. Incidentally, in some other matters the editors prefer to make factual corrections rather than rest their cases on axioms. See, for example note 236 (p. 852), which aims to establish the correct number of people murdered in the Soviet Union, and note 245 (p. 854), which presents an expert opinion from 1936 that challenges Hitler's assumption about the irreversible damage of racial mingling.

Once the editors presume that the text is 'worthy of response', one may complain not only about the content of notes that fail to confront the allegations but also about the absence of notes where such should appear. Do the editors assume that the average uninformed reader should consider footnote-free statements sound? Examples of this are the statement that, 'The Jews were responsible for bringing Negroes into the Rhineland' (p. 345 in the original), and the description of the exploitation of princes by Jews in the era of Absolutism (p. 328 in the original edition, before note 146). Observations pertaining to Zionism are given the same treatment: on p. 324 of the original edition no clarification is offered as to the difference between Zionists and non-Zionists in the context of the broad historical background (apart from scattered information about Zionism in notes at other locations).

If the mission of the critical edition is not only to present the origins of Hitler's ideas but also, as stated, the connection between *Mein Kampf* and the future, then it is the missing information, not the surfeit of information, that becomes broadly apparent. This is said not only with regard to footnotes relating to specific points but also about matters of principle that should receive attention in places where the text is 'worthy of response'. As a case in point, the entire historical account of Hitler's confrontation with the Jews centres on Germany. In a critical edition the question of why all the rules should apply only to Germany and not, for example, to France should be asked (on p. 347 of the critical edition at the very latest). Here we return to this reviewer's original contention: if such matters are 'worthy of response', it would have been better to gather the axiomatic claims against Hitler's prejudices in a brief essay at the beginning of each chapter, without the counterproductive detail and hair-splitting.

Just the same, two alternatives may be noted that suggest how, at the right time and in the right place, a critical approach not pursued



via the footnotes and the critical scholarly edition of *Mein Kampf* may respond to the problem of the uncontrolled use of Hitler's book, which is now permissible for publication. In 1938, the British linguist Emily Lorimer concluded, in view of a partial translation of *Mein Kampf* into English, that in order to warn the British about what they were up against, she should summarize the main points of the ideas that Hitler expressed in his book. She accomplished this in all of 180 pages, allowing the reader of her time (and ours, too) to realize exactly what was at issue without falling into the counterproductive trap. In a chapter only ten pages long, 'Enemy – and Scapegoat', Lorimer apprised her readers not only of the main tenets of Hitler's antisemitic doctrine in *Mein Kampf* but also of counterclaims, without declaring *Mein Kampf* 'worthy of response' *ab initio*. Lorimer's mission statement was explicit: to refute Hitler's approach by demonstrating the illogic of his remarks – not only by mentioning the idealism in the Old Testament or the number of Jews who contributed to the development of modern medicine, but also by analogy. On the question of the nature of Jewish economic activity, for example, Lorimer responds to the Hitlerian threats in *Mein Kampf* that were turning into reality as follows:

The English reader, remembering with gratitude how much the stability of British finance has owed to the co-operation of generations of British Jews with English bankers, would like some indication of just how Hitler would prove Jewish finance was necessarily so fatal to Germany, but Hitler does not attempt to *prove* any of his amazing theses.<sup>10</sup>

This is the right way to subject *Mein Kampf* to critical treatment in pre-Second World War Britain, and its lesson may be learned in a later era as well. In Germany after the war and the Holocaust, the interpreter has the further advantage of knowing the outcome or, at least, the sequence of events after 1938, and this advantage should be pressed in accordance with the needs of contemporary German society. The best-advised way to do this may not be a critical historical edition that trims notes of one kind and adds notes of another kind. A current and effective alternative, similar to Lorimer's vehicle, is

<sup>10</sup> Emily O. Lorimer, *What Hitler Wants* (London, 1939), 49.

Thomas Weber's recent book, *Wie Adolf Hitler zum Nazi wurde: Vom unpolitischen Soldaten zum Autor von 'Mein Kampf'*.<sup>11</sup> This work attains the worthy goal of treating Hitler's farrago of ideas critically from a present-day perspective and providing an optimal frame for discussion of the circumstances under which the Nazi bible came into being in the middle of the 1920s. It may be best, then, to do without the two hefty volumes of the critical edition and suggest to those who have read a full or partial version of *Mein Kampf* (available online, after all) that they follow up with Weber's work, or with Othmar Plöckinger's books *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren* and *Geschichte Eines Buches: Adolf Hitlers Mein Kampf*, thus placing Hitler's opus within an appropriate frame.

As stated, the commercial success of the critical edition may have something to do with the book's way of not only quoting Hitler's prejudices but also helping to revive them. It stands to reason that the massive sales of the book (nearly 100,000 copies at the present writing) originate partly in the footnote information that creates the effect mentioned at the beginning of this review. As we said above, the addressee should be kept in mind. A critical edition of *Mein Kampf* in Germany and such an edition in Israel are two different things. In Israel, there is no fear that the reader will fall for the antisemitic message, either by reading the original text alone or by consulting the explanations in the footnotes. Such is not the case in Germany. It is no hyperbole to state that this book would have been better off had it not been created, although one may argue that the chapter of focal interest in this review is an exception relative to the twenty-six other chapters. However, a work that is more pretentious than professional in certain parts is a problematic enterprise when served up to uninitiated German readers – particularly when its object, the historical source, is Hitler's *magnum opus*, and when the subject is the Jews and Jew-hatred.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Weber, *Wie Adolf Hitler zum Nazi wurde: Vom unpolitischen Soldaten zum Autor von 'Mein Kampf'* (Berlin, 2016).

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