



Mein Kampf Re-issued

“There is nothing more terrible in all the world, than ignorance in action.”
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

“Fascism is a religious concept”. (Benito Mussolini)

“Fascism is like a hydra - you can cut off its head in the Germany of the 30’s and 40’s, but it will turn up on your back doorstep in a slightly altered guise”. (Alan Moore, **V for Vendetta**)

On January 8th 2016, a controversial and critical German-language edition of Adolf Hitler’s **Mein Kampf** (My Struggle), immediately sold out with orders received for four times the print run after becoming available in German bookstores for the first time in 70 years. Long regarded as one of Nazism’s major propaganda tools, this exposition of murderous ideology was written in 1923 while the Austrian-born socialist was imprisoned as a firebrand, following his ignominious Beer Hall Putsch. Hitler was released in 1924 and his first volume was published in 1925 and the second in 1926. Now in 2016, this two-volume, 1,948 page, annotated, academic edition, contains a side-by-side commentary on Hitler’s prose, and over three thousand footnotes. As soon as the copyright expired, **Mein Kampf** was published by the Munich Institute of Contemporary

History over objections that it would be offensive to Jewish groups as well as feed the flames of rising right-wing extremist groups. (telegraph, uk, January 10, 2016), I applaud this courageous decision, given my conviction that censorship has no place within a free and open society.

With all the excitement and various and incendiary controversies surrounding this publishing event, we might now expect a renewed interest in the contents of Adolf Hitler's lesser known, second book. While there had been rumors that such a work existed (at least in manuscript form), emanating from several sources including a former employee of the Nazi party's publishing house. He recalled a manuscript on foreign policy that Hitler had dictated in 1928, just prior to his rise to power, but never published. Hitler himself also mentioned this in 1942. And still, there was no confirmation until German-born Jewish refugee and American historian, Gerhard Weinberg, discovered a mislabeled folder. His workplace was a post-war, remodeled building that had been a torpedo factory, along the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia. There were stored thousands and thousands of linear feet of confiscated documents from the Third Reich, considered to be just as incendiary as their other weapons .

Then, on an average day during the summer of 1958, while looking through his files, Weinberg opened a thick folder erroneously labeled as a partial draft for **Mein Kampf**. As he carefully read the opening lines ... "Politics is history in the making. History itself represents the progression of a people's struggle for survival". Weinberg recognized the twisted logic of the writer but not of this document. As Weinberg recognized that this manuscript was not **Mein Kampf**, he followed along as the author continued on with his argument that foreign policy helps a people's struggle preserve itself; self-preservation requires war. The text continued on with explicit warnings as to exactly what the world could expect from **Der Führer**. While there were the familiar accusations of Jewish conspiracies, there were also new elements, such as early predictions of an eventual war with the USA .

In an interesting synchronicity, Weinberg soon thereafter received a communication from Munich's Institute of Contemporary History wanting to know if he had knowledge of a sequel to **Mein Kampf**. He wrote them back and told them "Yes, and I just found it!". The Institute of Contemporary History then published the "**Zweites Buch**" (Second Book) in 1961, along with Weinberg's commentary. Then while he was showing this manuscript to academic publishers in the USA, an unofficial pirated edition appeared with a dubious translation; and after this he was turned down. At that time, "nobody wanted to be Hitler's publisher". In this respect the history of the "Second Book" parallels that of **Mein Kampf**. Nazi copyrights were seized by the USA in 1945 and then quickly reverted back to the government of Bavaria.

In keeping with the policies of post-war "de-nazification", **Mein Kampf** was kept strictly out of print, as this work was considered too dangerous for the general public.

As Weinberg points out, the problem with this approach, was that millions of copies of this now forbidden book already existed in 1945. What was needed therefore, was a copy that provided both context and commentary that a critical edition could provide. In his introduction to **Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Main Kampf**, which was finally published in 2003, Weinberg wrote, "Germany and the rest of the world have not yet come close to coming to terms with Hitler as a person, as leader of a great nation, and as a symbol." Banning and refusing to publish Hitler's books did little to prevent people from accessing his ideas. It served only to prevent historians from contributing to an understanding of how these books are to be remembered. Despite the claims of Holocaust deniers that any book involving Jewish authors or translators cannot be trusted and is not worth reading, Dr. Weinberg's new edition provides a valuable reference for any serious student of modern European history, the Third Reich, World War II and the Holocaust. (Daniel A. Gross, "A Historian Who Fleed

the Nazis and Still Wants Us To Read Hitler, NewYorker, December 30, 2015).

While Hitler may be long dead, fascist ideology is alive and well throughout our modern world. Only the naive would continue to believe that this was some German aberration. Here in America we have the sad and increasingly grotesque spectacle of our own right wing, racist and war mongering presidential candidates advocating a national registry for Muslims along with internment camps; and who knows what else they have in mind. How many honestly say, here and elsewhere: "It can't happen here"?