



Mein Kampf

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The Work

Adolf Hitler, the dictator of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”) while imprisoned Bavaria after his failed attempt to seize power in Munich in November, 1923. Published in the summer of 1925, it was followed by the second volume in December, 1926. The book presents Hitler’s Social Darwinist worldview and reveals his hatred of Jews and bolshevists. The German government did not restrict the publication or sale of *Mein Kampf*, but the book did not become a best-seller until 1930.

In 1933 an abridged English translation was published in Great Britain and the United States. This version retained Hitler’s remarks on his main goals, but it omitted many of his crude comments about Jews and nonwhite peoples and his belligerent references to France. This censorship was the work of Nazi government officers who had to approve the translation before permitting it to be published abroad.

Jewish interests in the United States and Britain attempted unsuccessfully to suppress the book’s publication and distribution. An August, 1933, article entitled “Greed Conquers American Decency” in *The Jewish Ledger* of New Orleans denounced *Mein Kampf*’s American publisher, Houghton Mifflin. The publisher of the *Chicago Israelite*, sent a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, asking “Is there not some way that publication of this book can be suppressed?” Wall Street broker Louis Lober even urged New York City’s board of education to boycott textbooks published by Houghton Mifflin.

In 1939 a complete and unabridged English translation of *Mein Kampf* by Ralph Manheim that included scholarly notes was published. It became the book’s standard English translation in the United States both before and after World War II. After 1945—when Hitler’s “Thousand-year Reich” was in ashes—Germany’s Bavarian state, which acted as legal executor of Nazi property, refused permission to publish *Mein Kampf* in Germany. German booksellers who attempted to sell copies of the book were charged with unconstitutional acts. Not until 1979 did Germany’s highest court rule that the book could be publicly sold. Literary critic Fritz J. Raddatz opposed this ruling because he thought the book too dangerous.

Hutchinson Publishing, the British publishing house that held the British copyright to *Mein Kampf*, also faced massive opposition to its decision to reissue the book in 1969. The firm’s chairman, Sir Robert Lusty, was opposed by his board, the West German government, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. However, the Council of Christians and Jews supported the publication of the new edition. This organization, like many scholars, contended that making *Mein Kampf* freely available would help to expose Hitler’s brutal racist philosophy.

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