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Guido MÜLLER, Stuttgart

Dirk WALTER, *Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt. Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik*, Bonn (Dietz) 1999, 349 S.

A young man rips down a news vendor's ad for a paper he objects to. A hostile crowd forms. He is attacked, draws a gun, and shoots one of the mob. Not an item on the latest news from the USA, but from Berlin's Kurfürstendamm in August 1919. And the gunman is not a member of some right-wing group, but Artur Zucker, a Jewish businessman outraged by the antisemitic *Deutsche Wochenblatt*.

The status of antisemitism in the Weimar Republic is frequently analyzed and usually bagatellized. Dirk Walter by contrast presents an antisemitism whose increasingly direct, increasingly physical forms challenged and gridlocked Weimar's legal and social systems. It began with the postwar emergence of an »antisemitism of the deed« whose »direct actions« grew out of the wartime radicalization of a pre-1914 *Kathederantisemitismus* that was primarily theoretical. The new activism initially developed into a legal campaign focused on the significant number of aliens remaining in Germany after the war. Relatively few of those, however, were Jews, the majority being former prisoners of war and laborers, or emigrants from south and east Europe fleeing postwar famine and disorder. As a consequence, the systems of registration, internment and deportation developed in the various states of the Republic proved a dead end in antisemitic terms.

Jewish organizations nevertheless reacted. The *Centralverein* in particular sought legal action against an antisemitism that, especially in Munich during 1922 and 1923, involved increasing numbers of physical attacks on people who »looked Jewish,« or who happened to be in the neighborhood of Jewish community activities. During the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, Jews and alleged Jews were also frequently seized as hostages by right-wing groups in small cities and towns.

Most of these offenses were swept under the rug by local courts who described the perpetrators as »outside agitators«, and punished their behavior as assault and battery while drunk, rather than press more serious charges. Yet at the same time, convictions on the lesser charges were easier to obtain and to sustain on appeal. Exactly what was the best way for prosecutors to proceed? Similarly, in the mid-1920s a wave of vandalism against synagogues and Jewish cemeteries was largely perpetrated by juveniles – who were handled gently as a consequence of the Republic's recent overhaul of its juvenile justice system, to emphasize rehabilitation instead of punishment.

The *Centralverein* achieved some results by pursuing charges of »offenses against religion«. Here too, however, the relevant laws were designed to cope with village atheists, not politicized fanatics like Nuremberg's Julius Streicher. Moreover, as Walter demonstrates, Weimar's Social Democrats, Communists, and left-wing liberals had no interest in strength-

ening anti-blasphemy legislation, since they wanted to attack religion themselves without risking prosecution.

The rise of National Socialism after 1930 posed a fresh set of problems. Many of the Jewish victims of Nazi physical attacks were identified with the political left. Was what happened to them politically, religiously or racially motivated? In court, it made a difference. »Antisemitism of the deed«, in short, pushed the boundaries of the Republic's legal system throughout the Republic's existence.

Walter makes a convincing case that persistent, low-level anti-Jewish violence contributed significantly to a growing sense of Germany's Jews as unassimilable – a permanent source of distraction and agitation, more trouble than they were worth. He is too careful a scholar to pick up Daniel Goldhagen's »eliminationist« thesis. His work does, however, demonstrate that popular attitudes were increasingly receptive to the concepts of segregation and exclusion advocated by the extreme Right. That growing synergy culminated in November 1938, when the *Kristallnacht* pogrom was followed by the large-scale incarceration of Jews in concentration camps. It was the first time Jews as Jews had been afforded a »privilege« theretofore largely reserved for »Aryans«. It would not be the last.

Antisemitism was not itself a crime in the Weimar Republic. Walter asserts that making it criminal would have been politically impossible. Contemporary US experiences with the concept of »hate crime« indicates as well that criminalizing thought is extremely difficult to justify and enforce in an open society such as Weimar.

And that brings this review back to Artur Zucker. The weakest suffer most in an uncivil society. Zucker's behavior is, however, part of a large body of evidence that not all German Jews remained personally passive in the face of uncivility. A familiar American folksong goes: »I'm not much good at fighting/But I'll die before I'll run!« Zucker's belligerence, multiplied by hundreds and thousands, might have forced the hand of Weimar's legal system by showing that the antisemitic Right did indeed represent more than a marginal threat to public order. And Germany's Jews might also have delivered a message to an enemy that ultimately understood nothing but force: »Germany is *our* country! And we'll fight before we'll run!«

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Hans MOMMSEN, *Von Weimar nach Auschwitz. Zur Geschichte Deutschlands in der Weltkriegsepoche. Ausgewählte Aufsätze. Mit einer Würdigung von Ian KERSHAW*, Stuttgart (DVA) 1999, 439 S.

Sous ce titre, Hans Mommsen, spécialiste reconnu de l'histoire de la première moitié du XX^e siècle allemand, a réuni seize contributions publiées au cours des deux dernières décennies. Un second volume à paraître traitera de ses contributions sur la résistance allemande au nazisme. Précédé d'une introduction élogieuse de l'historien anglais Ian Kershaw, l'ouvrage analyse dans une première partie (154 p.) la crise du système parlementaire libéral de Weimar en soulignant notamment la responsabilité des élites conservatrices et la désaffection de la jeune génération par rapport au régime républicain, qui ont favorisé le développement d'un »nationalisme irrationnel«. L'analyse structurelle qui sous-tend la première partie est poursuivie dans la seconde (254 p.) sur la montée du nazisme, les motifs de son acceptation par une large majorité de la population et la désintégration progressive des normes et valeurs traditionnelles de l'État et de la société.

Fondée sur une vaste connaissance des travaux historiques sur la période, une maîtrise indéniable de l'analyse et le souci d'éclairer les Allemands d'aujourd'hui sur leur responsabilité quant à la mémoire de ce passé, certaines thèses de Mommsen ont cependant suscité des controverses de portée internationale. Tel fut notamment le cas de sa réfutation de ce