

Call for Papers

The French History of *Mein Kampf*, 1925–2016 Translation, Reception, Controversy

International Conference, organized by the Centre de recherches historiques, équipe Histoire et historiographie de la Shoah (EHESS-CNRS), LabEx Tepsis, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Institut historique allemand de Paris

23–24 November 2017 (German Historical Institute Paris)

Adolf Hitler's book, written between 1924 and 1926, has received unprecedented media attention lately. Since it has been placed in the public domain on January 1st, 2016, seventy years after its author's death, there has been a lot of controversy throughout Europe, fuelling reflections on the status to be accorded to a text that has often been mythicized. In Germany, the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* (IfZ) has produced an impressive critical edition: The complete text (all known variants having been established) is now available in two bulky volumes with more than 3,500 footnotes and a thorough critical apparatus. Bringing out the text with such an added mass of historical research was a gamble; it seems to be paying off, even though it is still too soon to tell.

The German critical edition will probably provide the basis for coming editions in other languages. An edition project has just been launched in the Netherlands. In France, the announcement in October 2015 of a new edition of *Mein Kampf* stirred up a brief controversy, which ended in a relative consensus about the need to publish a scholarly edition in French. Above all, the debate has brought to the fore an essential fact: very little, if anything, is known of the book's history in France, from 1934 on, when it was first entirely translated by Fernand Sorlot, with the support of the LICA (International League against Anti-Semitism), to its reception in 1930s France, to its status during the war, to Sorlot's trial after the Liberation of France, to the controversy that arose in 1979 over the issue of a warning foreword, to the use of the text in far-right circles. Our knowledge about the French text is still quite hazy, and yet, for all its limitations, it keeps stoking up debates that rest on shaky intellectual foundations.

Therefore, the main objective of this international and interdisciplinary conference is to reflect on the circulation of *Mein Kampf* in France over a longer period. As the historian Othmar Plöckinger did for Germany, we will try to shed light on major elements of the text's background and genealogy, its reception and the controversies it aroused. Since the existing literature is fairly narrow, our aim will also be to open up the field and to record that unwritten history.

The historians primarily concerned are obviously experts on Nazism, the Holocaust or Vichy France, but the collective reflection should be open also to scholars in the fields of book history, French political and intellectual history, German studies, traductology, literature, sociology and anthropology, and to all of those who came across *Mein Kampf* in their research and may contribute to improve our knowledge about the French side of its history.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of topics the conveners would like to see addressed:

Text genealogy:

- The reception of the German text before its complete translation to French (1925-1934)
- The background of the translation work (aims and objectives of Sorlot publishing house, connections with the LICA, team of translators)
- The role of war veterans in the production and reception of the French version
- The publishing of incomplete or ideologically motivated abridged versions (for example *Ma doctrine*, Fayard, 1938)

Text reception (1925-1945):

- The reception of the book in French far-right circles (1925-1940)
- The reception of the book by French Jews (1925-1940)
- The reception of the book by the French Left (PCF and SFIO, 1925-1940); Maurice Thorez' stance on the book
- The history of the text in the Occupation years (1940-(1944)

What became of the text after the war:

- Sorlot publishing house's strategy after the war; the trial in 1944
- *Mein Kampf* in the Allied denazification policy in occupied Germany
- The debate over the warning foreword; Robert Badinter's role as a public figure
- The uses of *Mein Kampf* by the Far-Right
- The uses of *Mein Kampf* in the French school system

Contemporary debates:

- *Mein Kampf*'s presence on the Internet
- *Mein Kampf* in contemporary anti-Semitic circles

Conveners:

Emmanuel Debono (Ens Lyon) ; David Gallo (CRH/EHESS, CIERA) ; Nicolas Patin (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

Scientific Committee:

Anne-Sophie Anglaret (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) ; Olivier Baisez (Université Paris 8) ; Dorothea Bohnkamp (Université Paris 3 Sorbonne nouvelle) ; Florent Brayard (EHESS/CRH, Paris) ; Christian Ingrao (IHTP/CNRS, Paris) ; Johanna Linsler (EHESS, Paris) ; Stefan Martens (IHA, Paris) ; Marie-Bénédicte Vincent (ENS Ulm, Paris)

Proposals:

Please submit your abstract paper (**1 page max**) and a short biography before **March 1st**, 2016 by **email** to the following address: nicolas.patin@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr. The working language are french and english.

German critical edition:

- HARTMANN, Christian, VORDERMAYER, Thomas, PLÖCKINGER, Othmar, TÖPPEL, Roman (Hrsg.), *Hitler, Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, Im Auftrag des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, München – Berlin, 2016, 1966 p., ISBN [978-3-9814052-3-1](https://www.isbn-international.org/number/978-3-9814052-3-1).

Major editions in French:

- [full translation] HITLER, Adolf, *Mein Kampf. Mon combat*, traduction de André Calmettes et Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Nouvelles éditions latines (Fernand Sorlot), Paris, 1^{ère} édition février 1934. Version facsimilée, accompagnée de l'avertissement de 1979, aux Nouvelles éditions latines, 688 p.

- [partial translation] HITLER, Adolf, *Ma doctrine*, texte traduit et établi par François Dature et Georges Blond, Librairie Arthème Fayard, « Les grandes études politiques et sociales », Paris, 1938, 348 p.