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Dirk Walter. *Antisemitische Kriminalitaet und Gewalt: Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik.* Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz, 1999. Ppp. 349. DM 48.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-8012-5026-3.

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In this well-researched and well-written study, Dirk Walter provides us with the first focused analysis of antisemitic criminality in the Weimar Republic. Walter's narrative traces illegal action over the course of the Republic's history, dividing it into three relatively coherent periods: 1918-23, 1923-28, and 1928-32. Violence marked the initial–or pogrom–phase. Although, as Walter shows, even then debates about proper tactics punctuated the flurry of street attacks and hostage-taking. The second phase saw a shift from real to symbolic violence, when desecrations of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries–there were 200 such attacks between 1923 - 1932–largely replaced physical violence against Jews. The offenders' youth defined this era. It was in this period, according to Walter, that anti-antisemites came to view anti-Jewish activity as being also intrinsically antidemocratic. The third and final phase was marked by a return to violence against Jewish bodies. This violence was much more organized than that of the first phase, being largely under the direction of the SA of the NSDAP. Also of note in this period was an upsurge of interest in Jewish texts, both real and spurious, among antisemites. For example, a belief in the authenticity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was conjoined with a renewed interest in the Talmud as an allegedly anti-Gentile work of lore and law.

Within this chronological framework, Walter's gaze shifts among multiple perspectives. His readers learn about the debates within and among antisemitic organizations and their foes, as well as discussions by legislators and in the press. He also chronicles several violent incidents in frighteningly graphic detail. Here especially his eye for a story well told, presumably still useful in his current career as a Munich newspaper editor, stands him in good stead. Among the work's other strengths are his discussion of the generational shift among antisemitic perpetrators (street thugs in the revolutionary period tended to be older than synagogue and cemetery desecrators of the Golden Twenties) and his exposition and discussion of tactical debates among antisemites. This serves to remind us that right-wing, proto-fascist, and fascist antisemites were not all cut from the same mold, but rather had multiple and often conflicting positions on tactics, strategy, and even goals.

Although Walter narrates the story in brisk fashion, there are a number of issues that could have been dealt with in more depth. For example, he claims a very different atmosphere for Weimar than that which existed during the Kaiserreich, yet some of his evidence (he states that there were no antisemitic newspapers before World War One) is suspect. A broader comparison of the two eras would have been most interesting. On a more interpretive note, he studies antisemitic criminality, yet never fully explains why this would provide a coherent focus. One is left wondering if there might be other, more interpretive, foci which might have proved more appropriate to the subject.

Finally, there are a number of loose threads which would make for interesting studies in themselves. Walter tells of the antisemitic campaign of Talmud denigration. One is led to wonder why there was a resurgence of interest in Jewish writing, especially in classical texts. Could the antisemites have been reading, or misreading, the works of scholarship and translation of the Weimar Jewish Renaissance? Walter also tells us that in the mid 1920s, democrats came to see antisemitism as being intrinsically antidemocratic. Did the antisemites also see it this way? What are the implications of either a yes or no answer? Walter describes and discusses synagogue and cemetery desecration, in harrowing detail. The discussion raises the question of what this defilement meant to the perpetrators. In other words, why this kind of action? To invoke the language of cultural studies, what did the perpetrators mean in the creation of this text? Finally, did these youthful perpetrators mature into the SA thugs of late Weimar, or never again engage in physical violence during the Republic?

It is important to recognize that probably none of these questions would have been asked without Dirk

Walter's fine study, which forces his readers to reconceptualize antisemitic action in the Weimar Republic.

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