

Klaus P. Fischer. *Hitler and America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. vi + 356 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4338-3.

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## America and Amerika: A Different Take on Hitler's Attitude Toward the United States

As Klaus P. Fischer notes in his introduction, many books that deal with the relationship between the United States and Germany have been published. Most of these books focus on foreign policy between the two nations from the year Adolf Hitler took power in Germany (1933) until the United States declared war on Nazi Germany (1941). So what makes Fischer's work, *Hitler and America*, necessary? Fischer's book "explores the origins and developments of Hitler's views" on America, and discusses their diplomatic policies. The author argues that many American ideas influenced decisions Hitler made and that America had a profound impact on Hitler. For example, as he made certain decisions, Hitler was concerned with "American isolationism, the activities of Nazi sympathizers in America, American public opinion, American Jewish reactions to anti-Semitic events in Germany, and American-German business connections" (p. 1). Fischer also contends that Hitler held a split view of America. One image, America, was of a strong industrial nation that was a true world power, while the second was Amerika, the feeble, mongrel nation, controlled by the capitalist elite with ties to Jews and Bolshevism. Fischer seeks to understand these two views.

In his first chapter, Fischer introduces Hitler's split image of the United States. Hitler admired America for its immigration ratio laws and the government's support for eugenics research. He wanted Germany to be as great as America in both the business world and the industrial world. The United States was a world leader in steel and coal production. According to Fischer, Hitler "believed

that America's strength rested on two pillars: its powerful industrial capacity and its creative Nordic stock" (p. 10). However, Hitler also harbored prejudices toward America. He felt that given its lapsed policies on marriage laws, much of America's Nordic stock was contaminated. This second image of the United States was one of distrust. Amerika was a land that had become corrupted and greedy. Interestingly, it seems as though Hitler saw Germany as going down the same path. If he had not come along and steered the ship back in the right direction, Germany would have ended up like Amerika. This idea is somewhat similar to the concept of "reactionary modernism," which Fischer references from Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (1984). He notes that while Hitler saw the United States as a modern nation with great modern industrial manufacturing, he also saw what he viewed as negative effects of the modern world.

The chapters that follow—2 through 5—deal with German and American foreign policy in the years before World War Two. At times, the connection between the book's thesis and the information presented in these chapters becomes lost. While it is clear that German and American foreign policy is important to the main themes of this book and that these policies influenced Hitler and his views of America, at times Fischer's ideas get lost in the details. The reader often has to stop and remember what the argument is and how this certain bit of detail helps move the argument along.

By any definition Fischer's book is a revisionist history of this important topic. Unfortunately, Fischer makes little to no mention of the previous historical studies against which he is arguing. He simply refers to "other historians," but does not name the historians, does not reference their work, and does not present their arguments in depth. Not knowing which historians' work he is revising or what the other arguments are diminishes this book's effectiveness. While still a worthy book to

read to aid in our understanding of this subject, readers would have benefited from a more in-depth historiography. This book also fits nicely and easily into the newest trends in historical scholarship, globalizing history. *Hitler and America* is a thoroughly researched, well-written book, which brings the reader one step closer to understanding Hitler's feelings and conceptions about America.

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