

Chapter Six

Toxic Reading – *The Poisonous Mushroom/Der Giftpilz* (1938)

The year 1938 could have been called “a date that will live in infamy” just as well as the event to which President Roosevelt applied that phrase: the bombing of Pearl Harbor. For 1938 marked a series of radical developments within the Third Reich. On March 12, with the Anschluss, Germany annexed Austria, just as Hitler had foretold on the first page of *Mein Kampf*, “German-Austria must return to the great German mother country,” and “One blood demands one Reich.”¹ On September 30, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain ironically proclaimed in London “Peace for our time,” alluding to the Munich Agreement with Hitler which led to the subsequent Anglo-German Declaration to work mutually for peace between the two countries. November 9–10, known as Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass, resonates as the first widely-visible use of extreme violence against the Jewish community in Germany and Austria. Besides the destruction of synagogues, schools, cemeteries and businesses, Jews were savagely beaten, and some killed, as well as large numbers sent to Dachau. Amidst these significant historical events that indicated a sweeping change in the Third Reich toward state-sponsored violence in 1938, Streicher’s publishing firm sponsored Ernst Hiemer’s *Der Giftpilz* (“The Poisonous Mushroom”), its second children’s reader. Philipp Rupprecht (“Fips”) illustrated the book with extreme anti-Semitic caricatures. Streicher hoped to flood children’s fertile minds in order to lead them to despise Jews locally, nationally and internationally. This publication was, like Elvira Bauer’s children’s reader, designed to help plant the seed of hatred early in a young person’s life. *Der Giftpilz*’s popularity resulted from the extensive promotion of “Fips” as the artistic creator of the work’s anti-Semitic imagery:

To promote it, Nazi publishing houses arranged for Rupprecht to paint a set of large murals based on the book and present them at exhibitions at banks, community halls, and other small venues throughout the country. Those events were popular, drawing in crowds of German attendees, particularly women and children. Such exhibitions increased the popularity of *Der Giftpilz* and further expanded its reach to children and adults alike.²

1 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1943/1971), 3.

2 “Pages from the Antisemitic Children’s Book The Poisonous Mushroom,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed July 9, 2024, <https://perspectives.ushmm.org/item/pages-from-the-antisemitic-childrens-book-the-poisonous-mushroom>.

The collaboration of Hiemer and Streicher began in the early 1920s, when Streicher relied on Hiemer as a journalist for his newly established paper, *Der Stürmer*.

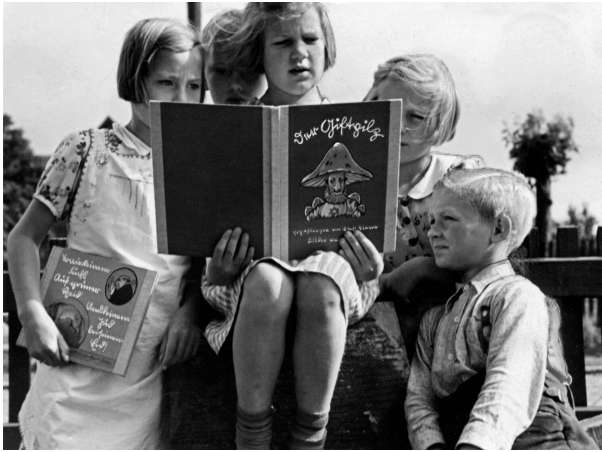


Fig. 116: Children reading *Der Giftpilz/The Poisonous Mushroom* and *Trau keinem Fuchs* (Stadtarchiv Nürnberg).

In *Der Giftpilz*, Hiemer composed 17 short stories to emphasize for the young reader how to differentiate a Jewish person from a Gentile. The simple anecdotal narratives primarily focus on Jewish religion (the Talmud), morals (lying and cheating) and physical appearance (extended noses, beady eyes and so on). In his book, Hiemer stresses a necessary nationalist outlook by showing that if the Jewish plague remained in Germany, it would be a serious threat to the national health of the country. The polarizing stories in the volume contrast a love of the *Vaterland* by the Gentile to the Jews' hatred of the country and its Gentile citizens. This is racism in its strongest and most visible form, aimed at adulterating the mind of the young reader. The illustrations with racial imagery designed by "Fips"/Rupprecht further reinforce this message. (Figs. 116, 117 and 118) Step by step, the short stories build to a climax, developing in the mind of the young child a detestation of anything and everything Jewish. The collaboration of Streicher, Hiemer and "Fips" resulted in four editions of *Der Giftpilz*, with a total distribution of 40,000 copies for this popular anti-Semitic reader.

The cover design for *Der Giftpilz* dehumanizes Jewish people, indicating that they are both literally and metaphorically a "fungus" in German society. The central Jewish mushroom appears most despondent, with an extended nose, woeful eyes, furrowed brow and a clashing red beard. To emphasize his Jewishness,



Fig. 117: Advertisement for *Der Giftpilz/The Poisonous Mushroom*, the new *Stürmer* book (Stadtarchiv Nürnberg).

“Fips” includes a Star of David on his torso. He is further surrounded by four comical-looking Jewish “mushrooms.”

The introductory chapter sets the anti-Semitic tone of the reader. “The Poisonous Mushroom” develops the metaphor of mushrooms, likened to Jews and Germans. There are “good” ones and “bad” ones, just as there are poisonous and nourishing mushrooms. In the lead narrative, an exchange takes place between the young Franz and his mother, who instructs him in distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles, something Franz has already learned from his teachers. Using a popular theme viewed often in *The Eternal Jew*, in film and exhibitions, and setting the stage for the other narratives, the mother reinforces that there is a need to enlighten others about the toxic presence represented by all Jews; they could be peddlers, butchers, doctors, cattle-dealers or even baptized ‘converts’ to the Catholic faith. They often disguise

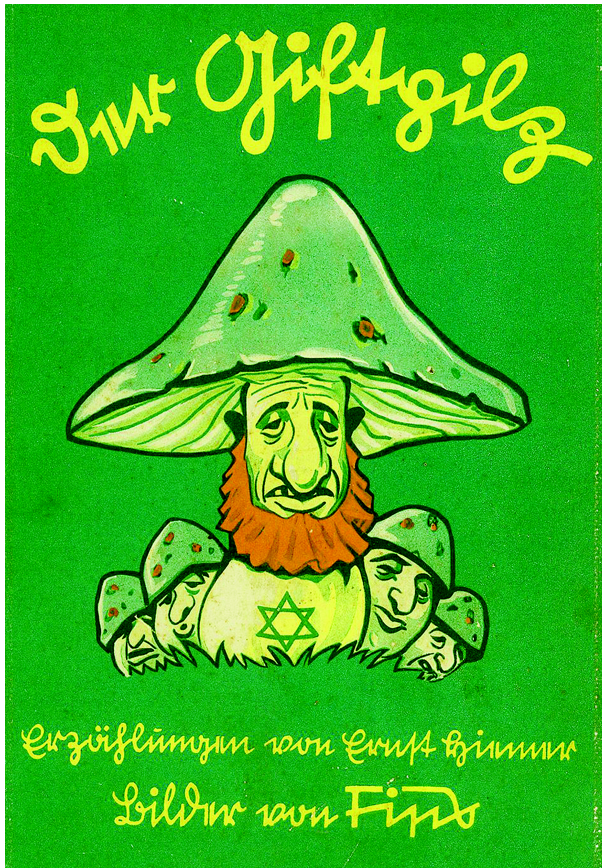
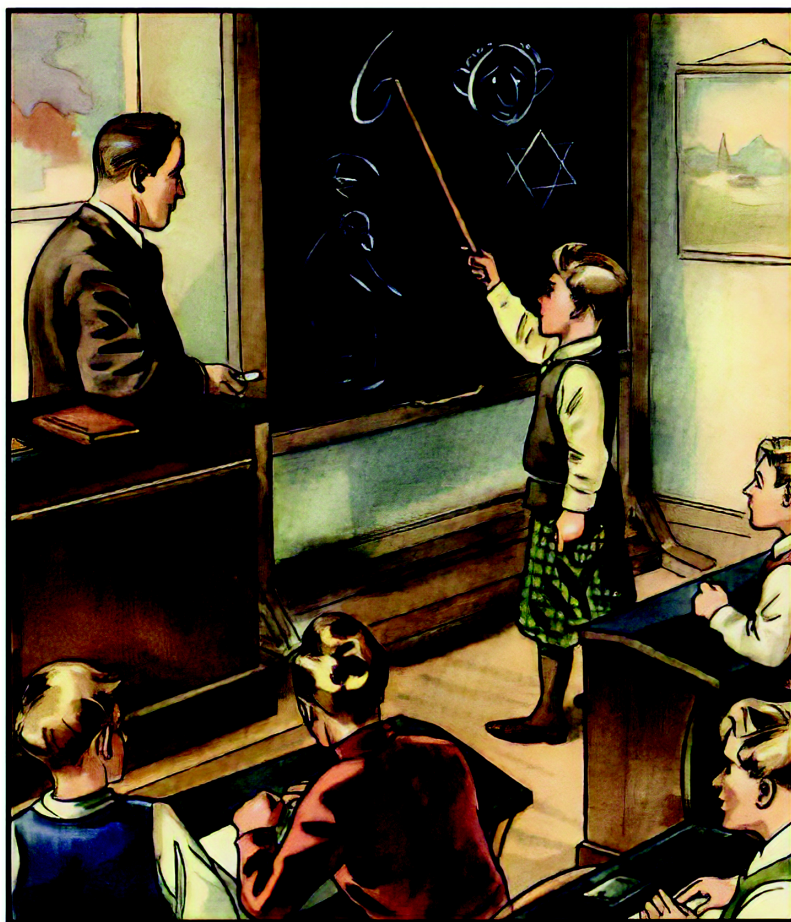


Fig. 118: Cover: Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz/The Poisonous Mushroom* (Stadtarchiv Nürnberg).

themselves and infiltrate German society, so we must be vigilant, for the Jew is the most poisonous mushroom in existence. The mother concludes her moral lesson: A Jew is “Der Teufel in Menschengestalt!” (“The devil in human form!”).

Hiemer’s next short story makes the identification of a Jew more precise. The classroom setting includes a group of Aryan boys and a two-sided blackboard for instruction. The title above the image reads: “Wie man einen Juden erkennt” (“How one recognizes a Jew”). Below the illustration, the caption states: “The Jew’s nose is curved at its tip. It looks like a 6.” In the text, as the Aryan teacher Herr Birkmann looks on approvingly, the young 7th form boy Karl Scholz points to the number 6, acknowledging that the number can be likened to a Jewish nose, a hook or eagle nose. The boys in class note that they can readily detect a Jew by his facial features, with the image of a Jewish man and the Star of David making

Wie man einen Juden erkennt



„Die Judennase ist an ihrer Spitze gebogen. Sie sieht aus wie ein Sechser...“

Fig. 119: “Wie man einen Juden erkennt” (“How One Recognizes a Jew”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

the connection more obvious. The class further offers their observations on the physical characteristics of a Jew: enlarged lips, thick eyebrows, bowlegs, criminal-looking forehead, and curly hair like Black people. Some students remark that a Jew speaks with a nasal tone and smells, suggesting that they can already detect

Jewish people with their other senses as well. Turning the blackboard to conclude his lesson, Herr Birkmann has his class recite a poem which repeats a lesson about how the Devil is in every country, a malevolent plague!

In this Illustration the teacher looks on while the students attentively imbibe their instruction in anti-Semitism. (Fig. 119) On the wall to the left hangs a map, alluding to Jewish omnipresence, and on the right, one sees a traditional pastoral painting with a church steeple visible, situating the narrative in proximity to the local Christian community. On the blackboard, a Star of David supplements the caricature of the stereotypical Jewish facial features.

In this short story “How the Jews Came to Us,” depicting a conversation between Fritz and Karl, we see the whole gamut of Jewish stereotypes. First, the Jews are described physically: enlarged noses, filthy beards, distended ears, and flat feet. They wear ill-fitting clothes and are always bartering over something. Their criminal nature leads them to sell inferior goods, as we saw in earlier narratives. Alluding to the motif of the Wandering Jew, these “creatures” represent themselves in camouflage as Gentiles by trimming their beards, delousing themselves, and infiltrating European countries as well as America. Fritz continues the conversation with Karl by insisting that he can detect a Jew, reciting a poem to provide evidence of his knowledge: The Eastern European Jews arrive in an unfortunate state, but soon develop great wealth. He concludes by cautioning Karl that since they hide their identity, one must always be vigilant, for “Once a Jew, always a Jew.”

Young Gentile boys look on beside three Eastern European Jews pictured in fairly poor straits. In the small-town square with a traditional Bavarian church, they are discussing something intently. (Fig. 120) Their appearance shows them to be foreign. They do not fit in. Their bearded faces and heavy, dark clothes and hats give them away as ‘others.’ Instead of a valise, one has brought a bag full of belongings. The boys even at a distance recognize that these bizarre Jewish men do not correspond to anything they consider “normal.” Hiemer includes the caption below the caricature: “Just look at these guys! Those runny beards! Those dirty ears sticking out.”

The “What is the Talmud” narrative can be viewed with modern eyes in the controversy over Salman Rushdie’s 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*, a work about the apocryphal verses from *The Quran* that dealt with killings and violence. The following year, the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa or death sentence on Rushdie that was irrevocable. The controversial issue was said to have divided Muslims about the limits of free speech, a core value of modern society. In the fatwa sentence, writes Timothy Garton Ash in *The Guardian*, “The issue is whether people should be killed, or face a serious threat of being killed,

Wie die Juden zu uns gekommen sind



„Schau nur diese Kerle an! Diese verkauften Bärte! Diese schmutzigen,
wegstrebenden Ohren...“

Fig. 120: “Wie die Juden zu uns gekommen sind” (“How the Jews Came to Us”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

for what they say or write.”³ This can certainly be applied to the judgment of Streicher at the International Military Tribunal, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter Eight.

In France, more recently, the satirical journal *Charlie Hebdo* faced a terrorist attack in 2015 for its comical image of the Prophet Mohammed. Twelve staff members, including noted caricaturists, were killed and a trial ensued. *Charlie Hebdo* boldly republished its Mohammed cartoons at the time of the trial in December 2020, acknowledging the importance of free speech.

“What is the Talmud?” is Hiemer’s attempt at denigrating the Talmud and characterizing the collection of ancient Jewish teachings and laws, the Mishnah and rabbinic commentaries, all considered sacred, to a negative series of immoral principles. Hiemer’s writings here reflect Streicher’s distortions of the Talmud. In his prison cell, awaiting trial at the IMT in Nuremberg, the publisher and speaker told the prison psychologist G. M. Gilbert that his understanding of the Jewish menace emerged from the Talmud itself. The prisoner went on to say that the Jews are governed by God’s law, which obliges them to abide by racial purity through circumcision. The Germans, a Nordic race, must also maintain racial purity.⁴ As Randall L. Bytwerk points out in his work on Julius Streicher, neither the publisher nor his collaborators could read Hebrew, hence they had to rely on the compendium of anti-Semitic concepts to show how and why Judaism was a “perverted faith.”⁵ Popular in Germany as a resource for anti-Semitic speeches and writings was the figure of Wilhelm Marr, whose 1880 work *Der Weg zum Siege des Germanenthums über das Judenthum* (“The Way to Victory of Germanicism over Judaism”) provided excellent racial talking-points for anti-Semites like Streicher.⁶ Streicher also sourced texts relating to Judaism by Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (*Entdecktes Judenthum*/“Judaism Uncovered”), August Rohlfing (*Talmud-Jude*/“Talmud Jew”) and Theodor Fritsch (*Handbuch der Judenfrage*/“Manual of the Jewish Question”).

In Hiemer’s text, the 13-year-old Jew, Solly, attends a German school and goes to visit a rabbi in the city to discuss religious issues. The rabbi ceremoniously tests Solly on his knowledge of his religion. Solly understands the book of laws and recounts to his elder all that he has already mastered from the Talmud about

3 Timothy Garton Ash, “No ifs, and no buts,” *The Guardian*, June 23, 2007, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/jun/23/comment.religion>.

4 G.M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1947), 10.

5 Randall L. Bytwerk, *Julius Streicher* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), 210. See especially Chapter IV, “The German Anti-Semitic Tradition.”

6 Marr reportedly coined the expression “antisemitism.” In 1871, the year of German unification, he called for a revolution against the Jewish race, as distinguished from the Jewish religion.

what Jews should believe and cultivate, summarizing the lessons from the text itself:

Avoidance of work
 Opposition to farming
 Pursuit of commerce
 Gentile service to Jews
 Permission to lie and cheat
 Incentive to steal from Gentiles
 Elimination of your enemy, the Gentile animal

The final poem concludes Solly's visit to the rabbi, reinforcing the notion that the unethical behavior of Jews is all approved by and codified within the Talmud.

The illustration of "Fips" for the Talmud anecdote, "What is the Talmud?," depicts a weary Jewish student at the lectern, adorned with a Star of David, probing the book for meaning. (Fig. 121) A smoking menorah lights the large volume. An aged, bearded rabbi with large nose and thick glasses supervises the student. The caption reads: "It is written in the Talmud: 'Only the Jew alone is man. The non-Jewish are not called people, they are called cattle.' And because we Jews consider the non-Jewish people to be cattle, we only call him Goy."

In the narrative, "Why Jews Allow Themselves to be Baptized," Anne recounts to Greta that her girlfriend's leader insisted that one could not turn a Black person into a German "through Baptism," echoing what Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*: "That it is criminal lunacy to keep on drilling a born-half ape until they have made a lawyer out of him . . ." ⁷ Anne further notes that it is impossible to convert a Jew into a non-Jew through Baptism. Greta does not comprehend why Catholic priests allow these "criminals" into the faith. Anne continues by insisting to Greta that the Jew is "ein Teufel," a devil who will only destroy the Church.

The image captures a moment when a Jewish couple leaves a religious service at the local church. (Fig. 122) In the background, two blonde Gentile young women, neatly dressed, chat as the Jewish man ogles them. The rotund, bow-legged and flat-footed Jew, accompanied by his equally robust wife, exit the church as the priest, in surplice, stole and biretta, converses with her. The husband, double-chinned with extended nose, has a Catholic missal in hand, as does the priest. A crucifixion scene is located on the church façade. The caption observes: "Baptism has made him non-Jewish."

In another narrative, "Wie ein deutscher Bauer von Haus und Hof geleitet wird" ("How a German Farmer Is Escorted from House and Farm"), Hiemer ex-

7 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1943/1973), 430.

Was ist der Talmud

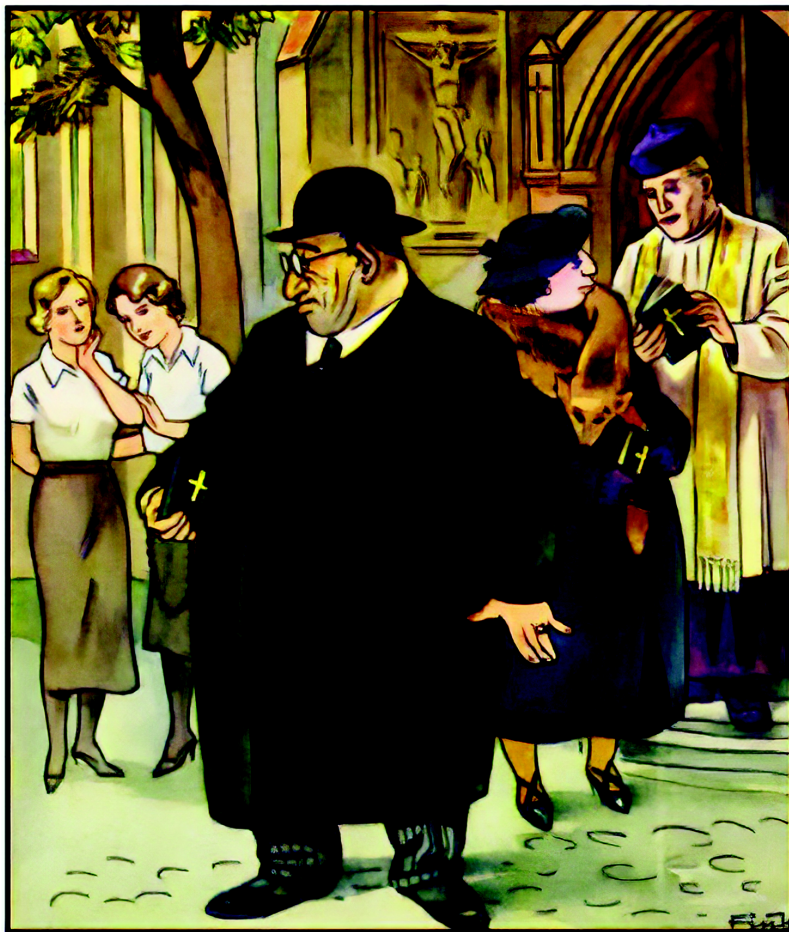


„Im Talmud steht geschrieben: Nur der Jude allein ist Mensch. Die nichtjüdischen Völker werden nicht Menschen genannt, sie werden als Vieh bezeichnet.“ Und weil wir Juden den Nichtjuden als Vieh betrachten, sagen wir zu ihm nur *Bei*.“

Fig. 121: “Was ist der Talmud” (“What is the Talmud”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

plains how an unscrupulous Jew can take advantage of a farmer and strip him of his home and farm. The young Paul, gazing at the Jewish man, loathes him and, with violent intentions, wishes to crush his head with a water jug for what he has done to his neighbor. He tells his father that he will never let a Jewish person

Warum lassen sich Juden Taufen



„Die Taufe hat auf ihm keinen Nichtjuden gemacht...“

Fig. 122: “Warum lassen sich Juden taufen” (“Why Jews Allow Themselves to be Baptized”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

enter his home when he grows up. Paul will place on his door a notice, “No Jews allowed.” The education system described previously indicates that children were taught at a young age to despise Jews. Agreeing with his son, the father here reit-

erates that Jews will always cheat the Gentile. The concluding saying that Paul recites emphasizes the fact that in his eyes and others, the Jews are worse than the plague.

Wie ein deutscher Bauer von Haus und Hof geleitet wird.



„Du, Vater, wenn ich einmal einen Bauernhof habe, dann darf ein Jude überhaupt
nicht in mein Haus herein...“

Fig. 123: “Wie ein deutscher Bauer von Haus und Hof geleitet wird” (“How a German Farmer Is Escorted from House and Farm”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

In this rural scene, a Jewish owner in the background speaks with a Gentile farming couple, one with a sickle and the other with a shovel. (Fig. 123) They appear to be in intense discussion with the Jewish owner. Paul accompanies his father at work in the field. In the Talmud story, one learns that Jews are basically allergic to farming and most interested in robbing the Gentile, as is the case in this illustration. The hard-working Gentile farmer, scythe in hand, cuts the wheat with his son Paul by his side. Paul, holding the water jug alluded to in the story, observes the neatly dressed Jew speaking with his neighbor. The contrast of the Jewish owner with the German farmer provides an obvious commentary on the stereotype of the “swindling Jew” and the industrious Gentile. The caption reiterates the son’s anti-Semitic mindset: “You, father, (Du, Vater) once I have a farm, a Jew will not be allowed into my house at all.”

Hiemer continues to pursue his stereotyping of the “swindling” Jew as a traveling salesman in the narrative “Wie jüdische Händler betrügen” (“How Jewish Traders Deceive”). The traveling merchant attempts to make a sale with a young, blonde Gentile woman in a village. Herr Levy hawks his wares and persists on foisting his cloth upon the woman, claiming that it is the purest wool and would make her look like a princess. She refuses and turns him away. Cursing, he moves on in search of the next gullible woman who might fall for his cloth. The concluding poem reinforces the stereotype that any Jewish trader is a liar, cheat and seducer; the moral: never allow a Jewish salesman to enter your home. Above all, only buy from a German; the poem’s message encourages Gentiles to boycott Jewish businesses, as discussed earlier. (p. 154)

The illustration reinforces the trope of the Jew as a cheater and liar. (Fig. 124) He drives a hard bargain with the rosy-cheeked young woman as she defiantly, arms folded, refuses to purchase the material. In her simple country home, with stockings drying in the background, the blonde, Catholic woman understands that this Jewish trader is trying to deceive her. (“Fips” makes a point to contrast the competing personae by sketching a cross in the background.)

Hiemer includes the caption: “Farmer’s wife, I have something special for you today. Look at this fabric! There’s a dress for you, farmer’s wife, a dress, [and] you’ll look like a baroness in it, like a princess, like a queen.” Flattery gets the Jewish salesman nowhere!

Hiemer’s anecdote of “Die Erfahrung von Hans und Else mit einem fremden Mann” (“The Experience of Hans and Else with a Strange Man”) advances the stereotype of the Jew as seducer. Hans is curious why Else has a handful of candy and inquires about the source. She tells him to keep secret the candy, which was offered by a strange man in the neighborhood. They encounter this bizarre figure, and street-smart Hans intuitively feels that the candy was from a Jew who had tried to lure Else away with him. Hans encounters a policeman, who arrests the would-be

Wie jüdische Händler betrügen

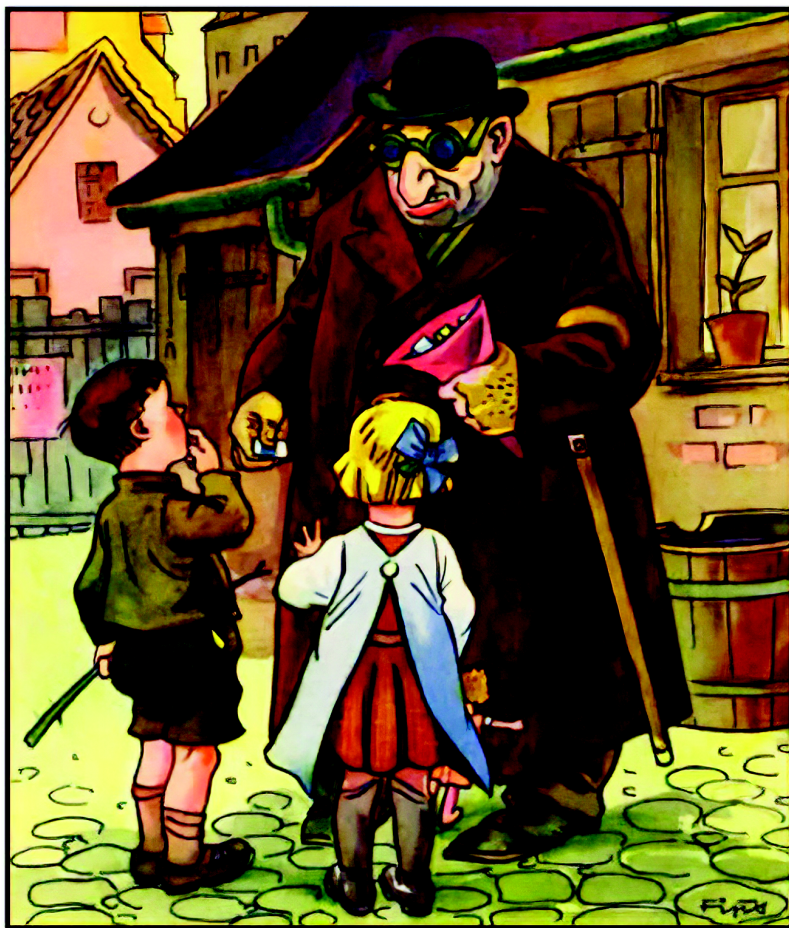


„Jesbäuerin, heut' hab' ich für Dich was Besonderes. Schau diesen Stoff an! Das gibt ein Kleid für dich, Jesbäuerin, ein Kleid, du wirst darin aussehen wie eine Baronin, wie eine Fürstin, wie eine Königin...“

Fig. 124: “Wie jüdische Händler betrügen” (“How Jewish Traders Deceive”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

Jewish seducer and places him in jail. The family and the police both congratulate Hans for astutely recognizing the Jewish threat. The family rewards Hans with chocolate and a ditty that recounts how Jews are murderers, race polluters and potential child molesters. Avoiding them will bring happiness.

Die Erfahrung von Hans und Elsie mit Einem fremden Mann



„Hier, Kleiner, hast du etwas ganz Süßes! Aber dafür müßt ihr beide mit mir gehen...“

Fig. 125: “Die Erfahrung von Hans und Elsie mit einem fremden Mann” (“The Experience of Hans and Elsie With a Strange Man”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

The caricature by “Fips,” a visual variation on “The Good Uncle,” portrays the over-dressed Jewish pedophile offering some candy to an unsuspecting young rosy-cheeked boy and a blonde-haired girl with a blue ribbon in her hair.

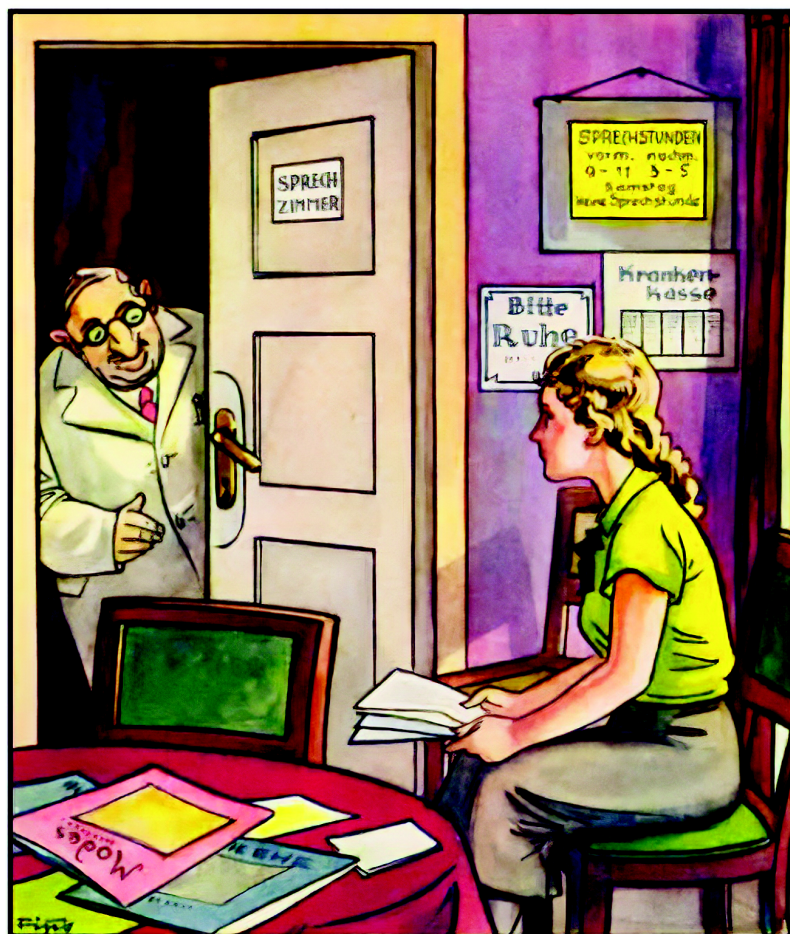
(Fig. 125) His dark glasses, protruding nose and rough beard create an ominous appearance, the traditional image of the menacing stranger. At first, the siblings gaze curiously at this outlandish creature with cane in hand. Soon they will race away to avoid the clutches of the stranger. The caption in English reads: “Here, little one, I have some candy for you. But you have to come with me . . .” Various anti-Semitic myths reinforce the pattern of Jews luring Christian children away for the purpose of using their blood in religious rituals. It was sinister stories like these that often resulted in vicious pogroms against the Jews.

To continue the motif of Jew as seducer, Hiemer describes “Inge’s Besuch bei einem Jüdische Doktor” (“Inge’s Visit to a Jewish Doctor”). The young Inge falls sick with fever, and her mother insists she visit the Jewish Doctor Bernstein. At first, Inge refuses, complaining that he is Jewish, since the leader of her unit of the Bund Deutscher Mädel (“League of German Girls”) taught Inge and the others to avoid Jewish physicians. Finally, complying to her mother’s wishes, Inge visits Dr. Bernstein’s office. While waiting she hears a young female voice asking the doctor to leave her alone. Then there is silence. When the doctor emerges from his consulting room, he attempts to grab Inge. She escapes and, traumatized, recounts the incident to her mother. The latter apologizes and learns a lesson from her daughter, the same one that had been taught by the leader of the League of German Girls: The Jewish doctor is the devil who sullies a German girl’s honor and that of Germany. The country finds healing in doing away with Jewish doctors. (The Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service on April 7, 1933 accomplished just that.) Approximately 11 percent of physicians in Germany were Jewish, and Aryan physicians welcomed their ban due to overcrowding in the profession, despite the fact that often the Jewish doctors were of the highest caliber. The medical practices of Gentile doctors thus grew rapidly. Hiemer implies that Germany could be healed by prohibiting Jews from practicing medicine.

This image depicts the impatient and nervous blonde-haired Inge sitting in Dr. Bernstein’s waiting room. (Fig. 126) With thick-lensed glasses, a crooked nose and a lecherous smile on his face, he appears at the door of the consultation room. The physician beckons the innocent-looking Inge to enter. The caricature leaves the situation open-ended, unlike the narrative. The caption notes: “Two criminal eyes of a perpetrator sparkle behind the glasses, and a grin plays around the bulging lips.”

In the next chapter, “Wie behandelt der Jude seine Angestellten” (“How the Jew Treats His Employees”), Hiemer recounts how Jews mistreat their Gentile workers. The 23-year-old Rosa worked as a maid under harsh conditions in Vienna, a position arranged through a Jewish agency. The business then provided her with a similar position in a Jewish home in London, where once again she was callously mistreated. From dawn to dusk she labored with little to eat and

Inge's Besuch bei einem Jüdischen Doktor



Sinter den Brillengläsern funkeln zwei Verbrecheraugen und um die wulstigen Lippen
spielt ein Grinsen.

Fig. 126: “Inge’s Besuch bei einem jüdischen Doktor” (“Inge’s Visit to a Jewish Doctor”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

was constantly insulted. Finally, a German businessman and his wife assisted her by purchasing a return ticket back to Germany. Hiemer concludes with Rosa’s ob-

servation that the Jew is a devil, reaffirming this with a poem relating how Jews treat the Goyim, or Gentiles, as cattle.

Another lesson put forth in the story: If a girl wishes to remain a virgin, she should have nothing to do with a Jew. The author includes the caption: “A man awaited me at the train station. He greeted me with a tip of the hat. However, I realized immediately that he was a Jew.” To point out the risks of an Aryan girl working as a domestic for a Jewish family, Hiemer alludes to Article 3 of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor from the 1935 Nuremberg Laws. It states that “Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of Germany or related blood who are under 45 years old.”

The situation “Fips” creates for this narrative includes a young blonde German woman with valises in hand, arriving at the station on the Nuremberg-Vienna line. (Fig. 127) A seemingly courteous, balding Jewish man welcomes her, tipping his hat, possibly to hire her, as the story describes. She, however, notices quickly his Jewish features. Hiemer suggests that he may be from a Jewish agency that exploits vulnerable women as they arrive at the train station.

The story “Wie zwei Frauen von einem Rechtsanwalt hereingelegt wurden” (“How Two Women Were Defrauded by a Jewish Lawyer”) recounts the devious wiles of Jewish lawyers. Two Gentile women find themselves embroiled in a legal case against each other. Both have Jewish lawyers representing them. The two lawyers each take advantage of their clients, making the same promises to defendant and plaintiff respectively. At the close of the case, both women are found guilty. Finalizing the case, the Jewish lawyers congratulate each other on having duped the German women and happily pocket their fees. Understanding that they have been deceived by the lawyers, who have no idea of justice, the young women make peace with each other and take to heart the lesson they have learned, saying, “Never go to a Jewish lawyer!”

In the cartoon, outside the courtroom, the two German women look on as the two grinning lawyers with stereotypical Jewish features commend each other for their fine job of cheating the women. (Fig. 128) Dressed in their lawyer’s robes, the long-nosed Jewish attorneys sport goatees and thick, horn-rimmed glasses. The lawyer on the right, wearing a bowtie, cuts a comical figure with his smirk and beady eyes as he unprofessionally dangles a cigarette from his mouth. The lawyers appear quite content; they have had a profitable day in court at the expense of their Gentile charges. Hiemer’s caption reads: “Well, my colleague Morgenthau, we have made a good deal. Great, Herr Silberstein. Now we have taken the money from the two Goy women, and we can place it in our sack (or pockets).”

Hiemer’s graphic story, “Wie die Juden Tiere quälen” (“How the Jews Torment Animals”), caricatures the kosher slaughter of a cow in a way similar to Fritz Hippler’s 1940 pseudo-documentary *Der Ewige Jude* (“The Eternal Jew”), ref-

Wie behandelt der Jude seine Angestellten

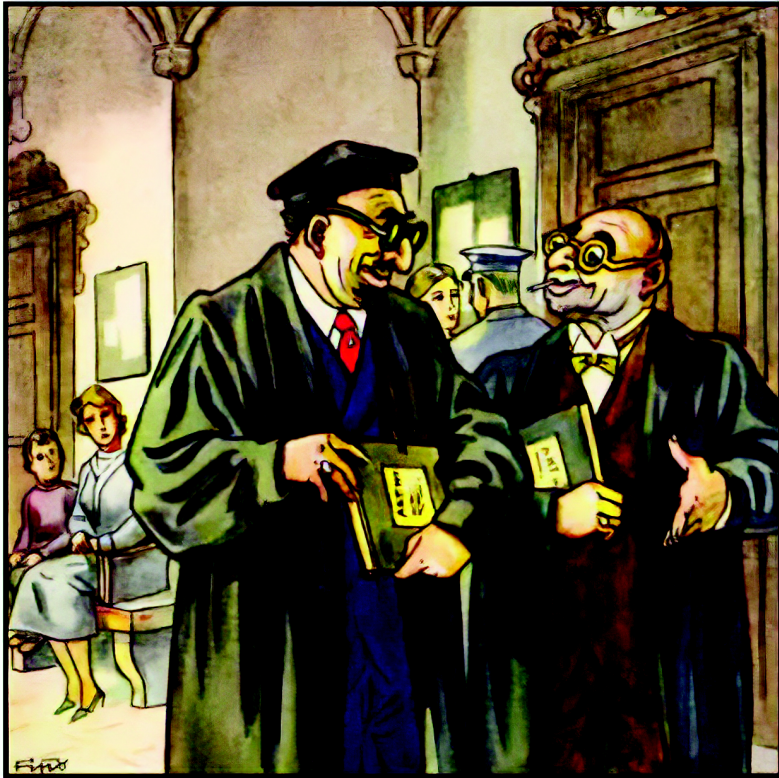


„Am Bahnhof erwartete mich ein Mann. Er zog seinen Hut und war sehr freundlich zu mir. Aber ich merkte gleich, daß er ein Jude war...“

Fig. 127: “Wie behandelt der Jude seine Angestellten” (“How the Jew Treats His Employees”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

erenced earlier, in terms of the myth of the Wandering Jew. The film and the book’s image mock the ritual slaughter of a cow, although the film creates a more explicit scene. The kosher preparation of meat from an animal has very specific

Wie zwei Frauen von einem Jüdischen Rechtsanwalt hereingelegt wurden.



„Na, Herr Kollege Morgenthau, da haben wir beide wieder gemacht
ein gutes Geschäft.“

„Großartig, Herr Silberstein! Nun haben wir die beiden Gojas gebracht
um ihr schönes Geld, und wir können es stecken in unseren Sack.“

Fig. 128: “Wie zwei Frauen von einem Jüdischen Rechtsanwalt hereingelegt wurden” (“How Two Women Were Defrauded by a Jewish Lawyer”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

guidelines, as noted by the National Library of Medicine: “Kosher slaughter is performed by a qualified butcher (known as a shochet) and involves continuous cutting of the esophagus and blood vessels using a special sharp chalef knife, with

the length of the straight blade being at least twice the diameter of the animal's neck."⁸ The incision must be rapid so as to render the cow unconscious, thereby ensuring that the animal will suffer little. The text of the story, however, ridicules the ritual in a scene of two German boys in a Jewish slaughterhouse.

Kurt and Otto hide in the abattoir and witness four Jewish men kill a cow. In detailed language, Hiemer describes the operation, while the men laugh at the slaying of the beast. The youths are appalled by their murderous act, and above all by the laughter on their faces. Given the tragedy of the future Shoah, it is ironic that Kurt observes that the satanic Jews are the most murderous people in the world, and that they kill animals and humans. In the concluding poem, Kurt alludes to the ritual murder of Gentile children discussed previously and believes that the world would be better off if the Jews were eliminated. At this date, 1938, this may not be meant to suggest genocide but merely deportation, whether to Madagascar, Palestine or elsewhere.

The unsettling image created by "Fips" of a cow being butchered by a shochet conducting the ritual alongside the three employees is designed to show the brutality of Jews and their insidious lack of empathy for the unfortunate beasts they slaughter. (Fig. 129) In the backdrop, the two boys gaze through the window at the operation, shocked at the heartless attitude the Jews take toward the death of an innocent, open-eyed cow. The caricatured features and the leers on the employees' faces show them to be cruel and cynical during a respected Jewish ritual. The men's bloody aprons and the knife wielded by the shochet appear repulsive. Hiemer adds the caption: "The animal falls to the ground again. Slowly it dies. But the Jews stand around and laugh."

To set the stage for the next Hiemer anecdote, it might be helpful to look at the use of Christian iconography by Streicher and "Fips" in the 1929 and 1933 issues of *Der Stürmer*. In the 1929 issue, "Fips" utilizes religious imagery to reflect how National Socialism genuflected to Catholicism prior to Hitler's attempt to create a national religion, the Reich National Church under Bishop Ludwig Mueller. (Figs. 130, 131, 132 and 133) Here, in "Auferstehung" ("Resurrection"), a traditionally well-dressed Jew with tophat and cane recoils as the Storm Troopers ironically offer the Hitler salute to Christ on the wayside cross. The swastika banners are pictured in the foreground while the typical country church appears in the background. In "Ostern" ("Easter"), juxtaposed with the above, the Stormtrooper (SA) with his proud, finely dressed wife gazes at the cross with the swastika in the

8 Jagoda Żurek, Mariusz Rudy, Paulina Duma-Kocan, Renata Stanisławczyk, and Marian Gil, "Impact of Kosher Slaughter Methods of Heifers and Young Bulls on Physical and Chemical Properties of Their Meat," *National Library of Medicine*, February 11, 2022, accessed June 29, 2024, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8871367/>.

Wie die Juden Tiere quälen



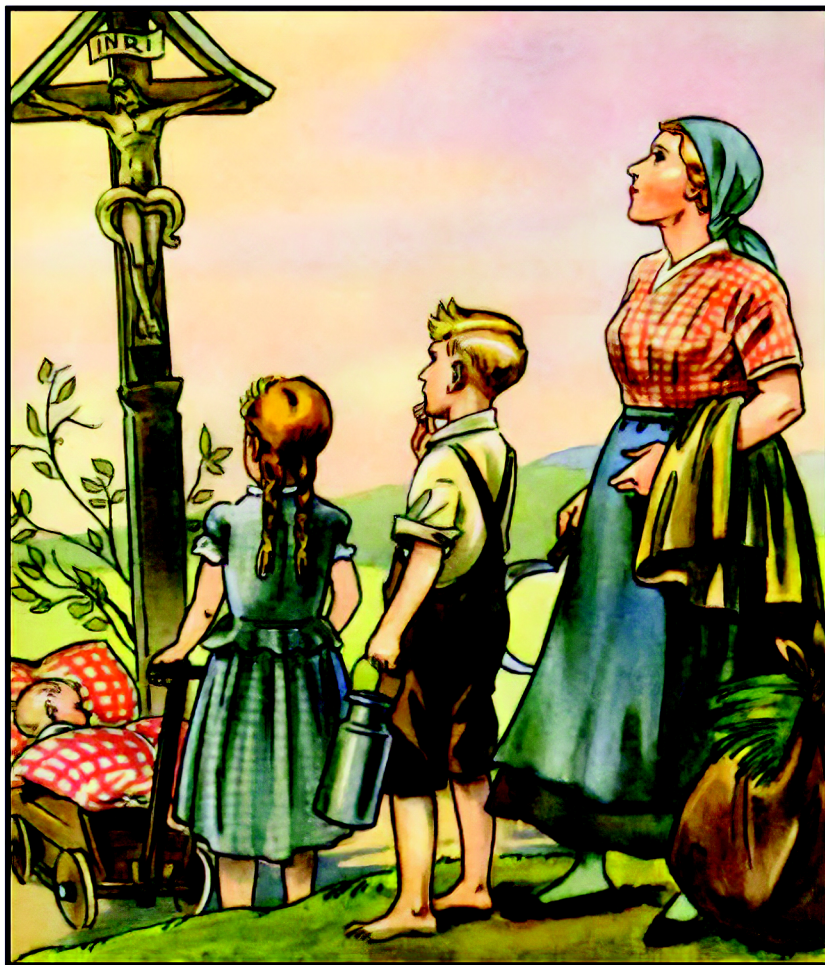
Wieder stürzt das Tier zu Boden. Langsam stirbt es. Die Juden aber stehen herum und lachen dazu.

Fig. 129: “Wie die Juden Tiere quälen” (“How the Jews Torment Animals”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

backdrop and tells her that the Jews killed Jesus as well as Germany, but the nation rose again.

Once again in the top image, “Sie raufen sich und der Jude grinst” (“They scuffle and the Jew grins”), “Fips” juxtaposes anti-Semitic and Catholic imagery. As

Was Christus über die Juden sagte



„Wenn ihr ein Kreuz seht, dann denkt an den grauenhaften Mord der
Juden auf Golgotha...“

Fig. 130: “Was Christus über die Juden sagte” (“What Christ Said About the Jews”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.



Fig. 131: "They scuffle and the Jews grin," *Der Stürmer*, August 1930.

mentioned earlier, the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 obliged Germany to pay enormous reparations that would continue until 1988. The Young Plan of 1929, named for Owen Young, proposed adjusting the payments. The caricature of the smirking, large-nosed Jewish man highlights the political struggle over the payments. Instead of the traditional INRI on the cross, "Young" is inscribed, while the Gentile representing Christ wears a belt indicating that he stands for Germany. In the background, irate politicians squabble over the potential Young Plan going into effect.

The story in "Was Christus über die Juden sagte" harks back to the age-old claim that Jews were responsible for deicide, the crucifying of Jesus. A mother and her children pass by a wayside shrine in the countryside that depicts a crucifixion scene. Shrines, common from Germany to China, normally commemorate a religious moment in that tradition or add some memorial offering such as flowers, often to acknowledge a death by the roadside. In rural Germany these were familiar sites, especially in Bavaria. The mother takes the opportunity at the shrine to instruct her children about the evil of Jews in the murdering of Jesus.



Fig. 132: “Auferstehung” (“Resurrection”), *Der Stürmer*, 1929.

She mentions to them how Jesus drove the Jewish moneychangers out of the temple (Matthew 21:12–13) since they had desecrated the holy site. The mother further informs her children that Jews descend from the devil and hate Jesus because he told the truth about them, an allusion to the Gospel of John.⁹ Concluding her prejudice against the Jews, the mother cites a saying to the effect that ever since the Jews have been on the Earth, there have been enemies of those Jews enslaving the people. This implies that the world must rid ourselves of these murderers. The caption alludes to these “Christ-killers”: “When you see a cross, think of the gruesome murder by the Jews on Golgotha.”

⁹ “‘Jews are the children of Satan’ and the danger of taking biblical passages out of context,” *CBS News*, October 31, 2018, accessed March 28, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jews-are-the-children-of-satan-john-8-44-danger-of-taking-biblical-passages-out-of-context/>. The text of John 8:44 has been taken literally by those who wish to see Jesus as a leading anti-Semite, when He himself was Jewish.



Fig. 133: “Ostern” (“Easter”), *Der Stürmer*, April 1933.

Standing before the crucifixion memorial in this rural setting, the mother takes the opportunity to remind her children of the deicide of Jesus by the Jews, an idea still common in sermons and read in liturgies in 1938. All dressed in rustic clothing, the barefoot, blonde children and their mother gaze up at the crucified Jesus in remembrance of how the Jews called for the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:22–23). These young Catholic children are being indoctrinated by their mother from an early age, following the Church’s teaching at the time that the Jews were enemies of their faith. After the Second Vatican Council in 1965, as noted earlier, the Catholic Church no longer taught this. Historically, the death of Jesus can be attributed to the Romans’ use of crucifixion to execute a Judean rebel claiming to be “King of the Jews.”

In “Reichtum ist der Gott der Juden” (“Wealth Is the God of the Jews”), Hiemer espouses the ancient trope that Jews are only interested in money, a stereotype that might hark back to the Jewish “moneychangers” in the temple recounted in the Gospels (Matthew 21:12–13). The conspiracy theory of Jews control-

ling the media, banks and financial systems was already a part of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and was also alluded to in the United States during the 1930s by the controversial Catholic "Radio Priest," Father Charles Coughlin, who believed that the bankers were manipulating politicians.¹⁰

Hiemer's story could have leapt right out of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, with its claim that Jews are only interested in wealth, control of the media and eventually world domination. As mentioned earlier, *The Protocols* appeared in the early-20th century as the alleged written minutes of the wise men of Zion about Judaism, describing its power and future mission of the subjugation of the masses. Streicher and Hiemer would have certainly known about this book's contents, since Hitler alluded to it in *Mein Kampf*,¹¹ and more than 20 editions of it were available in Germany during the run of Streicher's publication of *Der Stürmer*. Streicher believed in their authenticity. For example, concerning world domination by Jews, *The Protocols* No. 2 states: "Our international rights will then wipe out national rights, in the proper sense of right, and **will rule the nations** precisely as the civil law of States rule the relation of their subjects among themselves."¹² [my emphasis]

In Hiemer's narrative, which includes many anti-Semitic tropes, the altruistic Liselotte would like to become rich so she can help the poor. This sparks a conversation with her mother about the Jews and their amassing of wealth. Liselotte instructs her curious daughter that the Jews are mean, uncaring, unscrupulous, and manipulative. They take advantage of Gentiles who do all the actual hard work, while Jews only trade, often cheating Gentiles. The mother tells Liselotte further that the devilish Jews act criminally and worship gold as their god. Through their riches they will control the world. According to this idea, the Jews through deceit systematically accrue great wealth and make the Gentile correspondingly subservient.

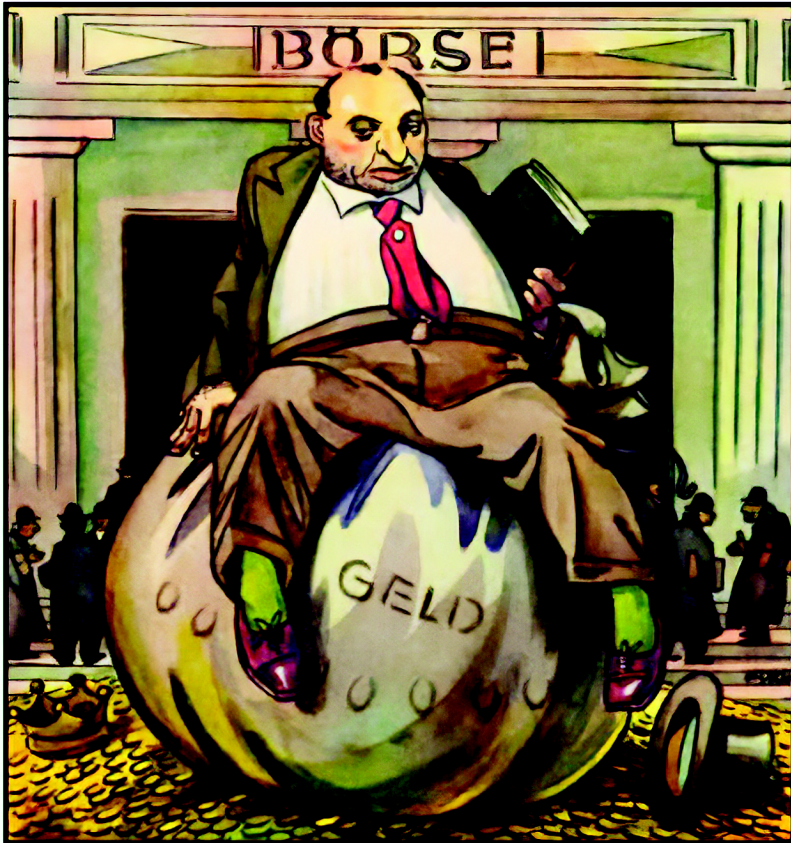
The caricature of the money-hungry Jew by "Fips" can be traditionally and falsely associated with the traditionally described Rothschild image of the corrupt, wealthy banker clutching the globe. (Fig. 134) Here in front of the German

¹⁰ In the 1930s, Fr. Charles Coughlin alluded to Jewish control of the US financial system when he mentioned "driving the moneychangers from the temple," quoting President Roosevelt's inaugural speech as the clerical demagogue became more and more anti-Semitic. Coughlin included a picture of Hitler on his publication of the magazine *Social Justice*, which also serialized *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and promoted the myth of the Jews controlling the world's financial system.

¹¹ *Mein Kampf*, 307–308.

¹² "Protocol No. 2," *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, accessed April 5, 2024, [https://ia803409.us.archive.org/6/items/books_202012/The%20Protocols%20of%20the%20Learned%20Elders%20of%20Zion%20\(%20PDFDrive%20\).pdf](https://ia803409.us.archive.org/6/items/books_202012/The%20Protocols%20of%20the%20Learned%20Elders%20of%20Zion%20(%20PDFDrive%20).pdf).

Reichtum ist der Gott der Juden



„Der Gott der Juden ist das Geld. Und um Geld zu verdienen, begeht er die größten Verbrechen. Er ruht nicht eher, bis er auf einem großen Geldsack sitzen kann, bis er zum König des Geldes geworden ist.“

Fig. 134: “Reichtum ist der Gott der Juden” (“Wealth Is the God of the Jews”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

Stock Exchange (“Börse”), the stereotypical obese Jew sits atop his stash of money (“Geld”), hanging on to his financial ledger. His odd, depressing facial features and mismatched clothes (green socks and red tie) depict a person that a child

would normally avoid. The young reader would not grasp the nuances of the stock market, or the exorbitant amount of cash depicted in the illustration but would certainly shun this shady-looking character. The caption reinforces the message of *The Protocols*: “The god of the Jews is money. And to earn money he commits the greatest crimes. He does not rest until he is sitting on a big pile of money, until he has become the king of money.”

Communists in Germany in the KPD under Nazism were suppressed, starting slowly with the Reichstag Fire Decree, which accused Communists of igniting the blaze that destroyed Parliament, as some historians believe, a “false flag” setup. William L. Shirer in his monumental early work *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* wrote that the arson was probably an act first promoted by leading Nazi officials.¹³ By 1938, at the publication of the Hiemer reader, the German Communist Party was severely reduced to a skeleton political party that operated underground as a resistance force against Nazism since The Law against the Formation of Parties of July 1933 banned all political parties except the National Socialist Party. By 1939, their numbers had diminished due to the execution of its members and the deportation to concentration camps.¹⁴ Despite the almost total elimination of the Communist Party’s presence in Germany amidst instruction teaching children about the evils of Marxism and the positive value of National Socialism, European countries experienced a collective paranoia that the Jewish Bolsheviks would destroy the stability of their respective countries. This was a feeling also widespread in American politics from the 1930s to the 1950s except during WWII when Russia was a US ally.

Hiemer created a tale of ideological conversion in “Wie wurde Arbeiter Hartmann ein Nationalsozialist” (“How Worker Hartmann Became a National Socialist”). (Fig. 135) The Communist Herr Hartmann recounts to the Hitler Youth on their hike that he attended a political meeting and became disillusioned by the Jewish politicians’ messages. They only spoke of the glories of Russia, he remarked, and did not care the slightest bit about the Fatherland. Herr Hartmann insisted that he could not be a traitor to his country, so he and his friends left the meeting, and he became a disciple of Adolf Hitler. He concludes his story to the youth with a song the workers chanted, satirizing in a sense “The Internationale” with its emphasis on class struggle (“Wacht auf, Verdammte dieser Erde”/“Arise,

¹³ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 193. Most current historians believe that the accused Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe could not have acted alone in setting the fire in several areas and that he had assistance, perhaps from Nazi officials.

¹⁴ Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890- 1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 280.

Wie wurde Arbeiter Hartmann ein Nationalsozialist



Der Jude schrie: „Wir pfeifen auf Deutschland... Die Hauptsache ist, daß es
uns recht gut geht...“

Fig. 135: “Wie wurde Arbeiter Hartmann ein Nationalsozialist” (“How Worker Hartmann Became a National Socialist”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

the damned of the earth”). The lyrics of Hartmann’s song end with the message that there will only be peace once the world is liberated from the Jews.

To accompany this story of Herr Hartmann's conversion to Nazism, "Fips" depicts two speakers at a Marxist meeting. The Trotsky-esque one in the foreground speaks in a fiery manner, addressing the comrades, while the other sits by with a cigarette dangling from his lips. Both bear the stereotypical Jewish features, hinting that these are Jewish Bolsheviks.¹⁵ The orator attempts to capture the attention of his audience. However, those in front appear disgruntled listening to his harangue. The disinterested workers plan their exit. An empty beer stein and an open packet of cigarettes remain at the side of the speaker. High up at the left of the illustration a hammer and sickle symbol on the red curtains adds a Communist touch. The image is reinforced with the caption about the Jews, who have no interest in the fate of Germany: "The Jew shouted: 'We don't give a damn about Germany. . . . The main thing is that we're doing quite well.'"

Some Germans in 1938 would admit that there existed a few honest and respected Jews in the country. Hiemer wished to instruct children that this was a fallacy. In his anecdote, "Gibt es anständige Juden?" ("Are There Decent Jews?"), the author attempts to disprove this by means of the Jew Salomon's conversation with some German gentlemen at a local café. (Fig. 136) Salomon claims that the Jews are the most respectable people in society and boasts, for example, that he fought in the Great War. Herr Zimmermann vehemently disputes this fact, insisting that Salomon stayed far from the front lines and profited from it doing business at home. Zimmermann claims that this Jew even sided with the Reds and shouted, "Down with Germany." The verse that Zimmermann shares with his friends stresses that the Jews perceive themselves as angels and provide alms to the poor. This, however, is cast as a fairy tale concocted by the Jews.

A child reading the text might only understand that Jews habitually lie about their war record and do not love their country, but an adult would readily allege that Jews avoided combat in the war whenever possible.¹⁶ To illustrate this conversation in the café visually, "Fips" pictures Salomon attempting to convince his guests with his boasts and gestures that there are decent Jews as the two German servers look on curiously. Salomon's usual characteristics of nose and stubble-beard make him appear unattractive. His tan jacket contrasts him with the German gentlemen at the table. In the end, the guests do not appear convinced. Hiemer reinforces the negative message about Jews and their attitude toward Germany.

15 For a historical understanding of the myth of "Jewish Bolshevism," see Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

16 As noted earlier, in reality, 100,000 German Jews served in the Great War, and 18,000 received the "Eisener Kreuz" (Iron Cross) for their bravery.

Gibt es anständige Juden



„Da sagt mer immer von uns Juden, wir täten beschummeln die andereen Leut'. Wir täten lügen und betrügen. Kein Wort davon ist wahr. Wir Juden sind die anständigsten Menschen, die es gibt.“

Fig. 136: “Gibt es anständige Juden” (“Are There Decent Jews”), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

In the 17th and final narrative of *The Poisonous Mushroom*, “No Salvation Without Resolving the Jewish Question,” Hiemer may be paralleling the common Latin ecclesiastical axiom, “Extra ecclesiam nulla salus” (“No salvation outside the church”), a Catholic tradition since the 3rd century, but also adhered to by Protestants.



Fig. 137: “Wer gegen den Juden kämpft, ringt mit dem Teufel” (“Who fights against the Jews, is wrestling with the devil”) (Julius Streicher), *The Poisonous Mushroom*.

(Fig. 137) The “Jewish Question” had been debated across Europe since the 18th century Enlightenment, but its groundswell came as Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. The Nationalist Socialists first included it in their Party platform of 1920, and subsequently the various early laws against Jews during the Third Reich indicated that it was always at the forefront of Nazi policy, and saw its consummation in the Shoah.

In the “No Salvation” text, a paean to Hiemer’s publisher, members of the Hitler Youth, proudly dressed in uniform, regard a poster of Julius Streicher advertising an upcoming speaking event. One after another they mention how powerful Streicher is and why Jews hate him. The boys hope to hear their idol speak about the Jews as the “misfortune” of Germany at the local townhall. One boy boasts that he viewed Hitler along with Goebbels, Göring and their leader, Baldur von Schirach, at a party parade in Munich on the previous November 9 commemorating the failed Beer Hall Putsch of 1923. The young Hitler Youth remembers seeing the Führer carrying the glorious “Swastika Flag” (“Blutfahne” or “Blood Banner”) from the Putsch. Streicher marched at the head of the parade, he notes.

Another youth, Erich, recounts the lasting impression that Streicher made on him two years earlier at a meeting. There, Gauleiter Streicher spoke eloquently and clearly enough for the youths to understand everything about the peril of the Jews and their horrible crimes. In his two-hour speech Streicher lastly emphasized that there would be no salvation for humanity if the Germans did not solve the Jewish question. Erich concludes his memory of that day with a chorus that maintains that the world has awoken to rid itself of enslavement by the Jews . . . thanks to German ingenuity!

A graphic design to elucidate the message of the text shows Hitler Youth boys and girls from the League of German Girls or Bund Deutscher Mädel posturing themselves before the iconic figure of Julius Streicher on a kiosk poster. An adult male with a bowler hat also peers at the poster. With piercing eyes, the characteristic hairless Streicher looks upon his disciples; the text reads “Julius Streicher speaks at the townhall about the Jews as our misfortune,” his motto on the front page of every *Stürmer* issue, which bolsters his position on the Jewish question. The caption beneath the image of Streicher, “He who fights the Jews, battles the devil,” is a common theme running through Streicher’s repertoire of comparisons of Jews to the devil, as we saw in Elvira Bauer’s *Trau keinem Fuchs* (pp. 135–36). The swastika on the Hitler Youth’s armband, as well as those displayed on the buildings in the background, lend a definite National Socialist tone to the illustration. Both narrative and image in *The Poisonous Mushroom* conclude with a salute by Hiemer and “Fips” for Streicher’s lifelong crusade to dehumanize the Jewish community and characterize them as the pervasive threat to Germany they are perceived to be. The caption underlines the usual association of the Jew with Satan: “We are fighting against the Jews, wrestling with the Devil.” Thus Julius Streicher.

Der Giftpilz, as we have seen, became a very popular reader under the collaboration of Streicher, “Fips” and Hiemer. The anecdotes were simple for the most part, with the exception of the more political stories, such as that of the Communists and the lessons about Jews and the Stock Market. Nonetheless, the text continued with Streicher’s brainwashing message to children and adolescents stating that the Jewish community was a threat to the well-being of the country and eventually had to be removed, at this stage, again, most likely by deportation.