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Rainer Zitelmann. *Adolf Hitler: Eine politische Biographie* (Persönlichkeit und Geschichte, 21/22). Göttingen and Zürich: Muster-Schmidt Verlag, 1989. Pp. 176. Paper DM 16,80.

Rainer Zitelmann's short biography, which replaces an earlier study by Walter Goerlitz in the popular series "Personality and History," appears in the 100th anniversary year of Hitler's birth. Although by no means a commemoration of that event, the book does provide a useful insight on the perspective in which the postwar generation of German scholars currently views their nation's former *Führer*. That perception is being significantly shaped by Dr. Zitelmann, whose most important conclusions from his massive analysis entitled *Hitler: Selbstverständnis eines Revolutionärs* (Stuttgart, 1987) are here presented in more condensed and easily accessible form. These include his basic interpretation of the Nazi dictator as essentially a rational — albeit uncommon — politician, and not some sort of incomprehensible charismatic eruption into the history of Germany. Zitelmann maintains, too, that Hitler was not only much more interested in economic questions than often assumed but also that the social policies he derived from this knowledge were deliberately revolutionary in their intent. Hitler was far from being the creature of reactionary German capitalism depicted by Marxists and others. According to Zitelmann, once additional "Lebensraum" in the east had been conquered, Hitler intended to implement a species of state socialism on the Soviet model buttressed by far-reaching welfare measures (improved pensions, public housing, etc.). He is thus made to appear — although this is not stated explicitly — a legitimate predecessor of both the German Federal and Democratic Republics.

With respect to international relations, Zitelmann emphasizes Hitler's unremitting yet unrequited desire to achieve an alliance with England, even after the outbreak of war, along with his self-depiction as a positive force for European unity. However, it was the lure of Russia as a seemingly inexhaustible source of raw materials and energy (oil, especially), and also as a market for German industrial products, that fundamentally determined his external goals. As for the debate between "intentionalists" and "functionalists" concerning Hitler's role in launching the Holocaust, the author makes the important point that at least in the long run Nazi practice tended to correspond to its leader's ideological predilections. Similarly, wartime conditions enabled him to carry out his radical assault upon the mentally and physically handicapped, the evident losers in the relentless Hitlerian struggle for existence and hence rejects from the "national community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*); this was the so-called "euthanasia" program.

A brief portrait such as Zitelmann's, of course, cannot be expected to depict fully a complex and controversial figure who changed the course of world history. Missing, except for Hitler's youthful years, is any discussion of his personality or possible psychological motivations. The otherwise welcome utilization of the recently published complete diaries of Joseph Goebbels seems, in places, excessive (cf. pp. 57ff.). Nevertheless, this is a worthwhile contribution to the already extensive biographical literature on Hitler. An English translation, preferably including an index and source citations, would be welcome.

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