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Another Professor's War Diary: A Wonderful, Scholarly Edition of a NotRemarkably Perceptive Observer

The diaries of Victor Klemperer were so rich and fascinating that one always hopes to find equally gripping accounts for other periods of German history. The publication of Professor Karl Hampe's war diary, in an edition over one thousand pages long, held such promise. But is Hampe the Victor Klemperer of the First World War? Unfortunately he is not. For one thing, he was not a victim, but part of the privileged German elite, one of the highest-paid professors at the University of Heidelberg. His criticisms of the government and military leadership were somewhat muted; in fact, he willingly accepted a wartime assignment, justifying and helping to shape German Foreign Office policy toward Belgium.

Hampe, a noted medieval historian, subsequently became the rector of the university in 1924. The volume provides numerous insights into the life of the university and the attitudes of the faculty during the war and the following year, as well as extensive comments on his interactions with government officials in Berlin and Belgium. But one has to dig for them. Whole chunks of text are just plain dull or trivial and there seems little justification for publishing the diary so completely, when a shortened version would have found more willing readers, despite the fact that the current volume has been edited superbly by Folker Reichert and Eike Wolgast. The footnotes are extremely thorough. For example, when Hampe notes with regret in February 1919 that deputies in the National Assembly are getting away with yelling "Murderer!" at each other without receiving a reprimand from the Speaker, our editors have ploughed through the stenographic record to tell us that no such *Zwischenruf* was recorded up to February 19, 1919 (p. 833). A passing reference in November 1918 that Hampe's sister-in-law's brother had fled, following accusations of the mistreatment of prisoners while he was commandant of the Traunstein POW camp, brings a twelve-line footnote, explaining that this was Theodor von der Pfordten, one of the Nazi "martyrs" killed at the Feldherrnhalle during Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch (p. 790).

The volume gives the general impression that Hampe knew less about what was really going on during the First World War than Victor Klemperer, isolated in his "Jew house" and cut off from newspapers and radio news, knew about events in the Second World War. As the editors point out, Hampe, unlike his colleagues Ernst Troeltsch or Max Weber, rarely had access to insider information and relied for the most part on German newspapers and the official army bulletins posted all over town. He chronicled the war in his diary largely from these far from objective sources, even after his suspicions about their veracity had been raised. Hampe believed it was simply unpatriotic to question the official line and rarely indulged in any private reflection, writing on March 21, 1916: "The only thing to do in times like this is to shut up and keep the faith" (p. 370). He did, however, assiduously collect and commit to his diary the perceptions and even gossip of his better connected colleagues and former students, even when he did not agree

with them.

What we glimpse from all this endless and rather self-indulgent scribbling is nonetheless a touching picture of the gradual erosion of the values of the imperial *BildungsbÃ¼rgertum.* Karl Hampe seems to embody both the arrogance and the vulnerability of the German professoriate. The sinking of the *Lusitania* did not bother him unduly, because he believed the official German explanations that the captain had it coming to him. On the other hand, an air raid on Karlsruhe a few weeks later, resulting in only twenty deaths, was "a barbaric way to wage war" and signaled for him the abandonment of international law (p. 242). Viewing the devastation wrought by the German artillery in Louvain that fall, Hampe did not feel overly concerned. It was a pity about the total destruction of the university and especially its library, but it was "architecturally nothing special" (p. 313). He went on to muse about whether the city hall had really deserved its two stars in the Baedeker guide, being "a rather ugly building, hedgehog-like" (p. 313). During his assignment in Belgium to study captured historical documents, he felt much more comfortable among the military personnel than with the civilian members of the occupation force. He found the latter far too skeptical and critical of German propaganda publications like the White Book on Belgian atrocities, or of the collective punishment meted out to entire communities for individual instances of *franc-tireur* activity. The military men, on the other hand, were, he thought, a little too casual in speaking of the shooting of 200 civilians, but such incidents were after all justified by "the necessity of things" (p. 300). Hampe was quite typical in believing, or at least hoping, that war was still a sort of gentlemen's game played according to rules that had changed little since the days of the medieval heroes whom he studied. The Grand Duke of Weimar did not appear to be such a gentleman, however, and is criticized for going after the enemy with all the gusto of a big game hunter, even wanting to gun down a detachment of POWs (p.371). And admittedly Hampe was quite shocked by the use of poison gas by the Germans ("a merciless, scientific slaughter by chemical means"), though he continued in the very next sentence to note regret that the potential effect of the new weapon had not been maximized, due to a lack of reserves (p.335).

As with all good diaries, we learn a lot about the personal side of its author. Hampe was every inch the German professor. His wartime experience was not one of great deprivation; he was concerned that starch was in such short supply by mid-1917 that gentlemen actually had to wear soft shirt collars (p. 579). Yet he believed he was making tremendous sacrifices and crowed triumphantly that he made do with the same bar of soap for nine and a half months, despite the fact that he soaped himself down in the bath every morning–he says the secret is to "bring the brush to the soap" and presumably this surviving bar of good-quality peacetime soap was off limits to the rest of the family (pp. 599, 658)!

His life was managed by his wife, Lotte, so that he could have as much time as possible for undisturbed study and quiet contemplation. He also followed events at the front and in domestic politics very closely. Crises like the popular unrest in Berlin and the toppling of chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in July 1917 upset his equilibrium, and the historian in him started thinking of the start of the revolution in 1848: "With all these impressions I could not work and went off to the woods to pick mushrooms and berries" (p. 566). More frequently he sought refuge in his library amongst the German classics. He boasted of knowing Goethe's *Faust I* (1808) by heart (p. 367). When the revolution broke out, he tried to lift his spirits by reading Fichte's *Speeches to the German Nation* (1807) (p. 773). When news of the armistice conditions arrived on November 10, 1918, he broke down and wept openly with his wife, but then late that evening read aloud to Lotte, so that they might "fortify" each other, the section from Otto von Bismarck's memoirs on the 1848 revolution (p. 776).

Hampe often sounds pompous, but we do sometimes learn contemporary jokes from him, such as the latest proverb in Berlin in the spring of 1917: "Whoever is hoarding belongs in the penitentiary, but whoever is not hoarding belongs in the lunatic asylum" (p. 530). My favorite anecdote concerns the aloof Grand Duchess of Baden, who visited the injured in a field hospital in the early weeks of the war. Her standard question about the particular battle in which the soldier had fought, was: "And where were you injured?" "On the arse, your royal highness," replied one poor soldier. Thinking this must be a mountain or river somewhere, the duchess continued obliviously: "And where is that?" (p. 129).

Sometimes it was from his wife, Lotte, that Hampe received reality checks. She was out among the people far more, and picked up reflections of true popular sentiment. In the spring of 1917 she overheard someone in a tram remarking to a soldier returning home that the men in the trenches were the real traitors, because they were simply dragging out the war (p. 549). The previous spring, Hampe heard negative comments about the campaigns to raise war bonds, to which he himself subscribed

massively. Some people were already viewing the campaigns as devices that simply prolonged the war, stating "when the munitions run out, we'll be sure to have peace" (p. 370). These are the kind of remarks for which we cherish Victor Klemperer's recording hand, but there are too few of them in this diary.

It is clear from the diary that Karl Hampe was a devoted family man, but also a male chauvinist. When food, not to mention coal, and indeed money, ran very short in the autumn of 1918, Lotte embarked on a train journey to friends in nearby Bad Wimpfen, in order to collect potatoes and apples. Hampe accompanied her to help carry the load. But while she was struggling to pack all the apples into several large suitcases, he slipped off to sit in the local cemetery and read (pp. 752-753). More than once he made disparaging remarks about his female students: profound scholarly interests were in his view alien to them (p. 548). When he lost his cook in the summer of 1918, which left the family with the awful prospect of having to cook their own meals, he reflected that "more girls should be training themselves for domestic employment rather than studying" (p. 710). Even his neighbor, Countess Bismarck, the granddaughter of the chancellor, is criticized on the night when a burglar is noisily apprehended three doors down the street at 3 a.m., for appearing on her balcony and immediately lighting up a cigarette "as is her habit"–most unladylike! (p. 574).

More disturbing is Hampe's racism. When he saw French and Russian POWs working closely alongside local women in the countryside, his first thought was to worry about sexual liaisons and the "danger" of mixed-race children (p. 407). His overall rejection of the Russians was fairly mild. He admitted that Russian POWs were "generally appreciated as good-natured and efficient. A hatred between the German and Russian people does not really exist" (p. 596). Hampe's antisemitism, on the other hand, was much more pervasive. He never missed an opportunity to identify someone as a Jew. One of the correspondents of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was "a fat Jew" (p. 452). In the resort town of Oberstdorf he was irritated by the number of Jewish girls dressed in Bavarian costume, which spoiled the "harmonious impression" of the place for him (p. 269). Working in Berlin in the spring of 1917, he was fortunate enough to tag along with his brother, a museum director, for a private tour of the home of James Simon, a wealthy German manufacturer with a stunning collection of paintings by Jan Vermeer, Rembrandt von Rijn, Peter Paul Rubens, and so on. Hampe was quite enchanted by it all, but could not resist noting that "apart from us the little tour group consisted entirely of Jews" (p. 537).

Within the ivory tower, negative value judgments were invariably attached to colleagues or students who happened to be Jewish. He even found it necessary to label some individuals as "half-Jews," dismissing the doctoral candidate Max Fischer's conversion to Catholicism as having occurred, "I suspect, in part for practical considerations" (p. 571). A fellow historian, Professor Veit Valentin, in a sense a rival because the German Foreign Office called him in to work on Belgian papers, was brushed aside as a "half-Jew ... who once again compromise[d] the university professoriate" (p. 449). Hampe was enchanted by the Germanness of Antwerp when he arrived there in the fall of 1915: the Flemish manner of speech, gestures and expressions all reminded him of Oldenburg or Bremen. So when a German colleague working in Brussels warned him about tensions between Flemings and Germans, Hampe saw only the indomitable harmony of racial brothers. His interlocutor, Dr. Gustav Mayer, because he happened to be Jewish, "[could] never have this feeling and will therefore always be inclined to underestimate this characteristic affinity" (p. 294).

At war's end, Hampe's antisemitism flared up even more openly. Professor Edgar JaffÃ© was another colleague summoned to work in the government-general offices in Brussels, with whom Hampe had initially enjoyed quite friendly relations. On hearing that he had become the finance minister in the Bavarian republican government, Hampe spluttered: "What on earth has this scrawny little Jew from Hamburg got to do with Bavaria, and with what right is he now suddenly assuming authority?" (p. 774). The following day, when he learned of the kaiser's abdication and the collapse of the empire, "the most miserable day of my life," he and his wife encountered the medical professor, Albert Fraenkel, who greeted them with the words, "I'm already beginning to console myself." Hampe was appalled at how unbearable Jews like Fraenkel were, "with their readiness to adapt" (pp. 775-776). And at the end of that month he criticized another Jewish colleague for his "typical" lack of national tactfulness for allowing two French officers to attend his lectures (p. 789).

Yet Hampe did not allow himself to go completely off the rails. By the New Year he was already dissociating himself from the views of the far right: "In the evening read with difficulty an antisemitic pamphlet that placed the greatest blame for our collapse on the Jews; in spite of its accurate core one cannot subscribe to this low level of intellect" (p. 818). One year after the German defeat he

noted with distaste the attempt of German-national students to parade through the town with antisemitic placards, which were, however, seized from them by the police (p. 913). Our editors try to place all this in perspective, describing his views as the typical *Honoratiorenantisemitismus* of the educated elite in the mold of Heinrich von Treitschke and Adolf StÃ¶cker. His general remarks about Jews were dismissive, while at the same time he maintained entirely uninhibited relations with some of his Jewish colleagues. His children played with those of a Jewish neighbor. Nonetheless, I myself, though no stranger to the history of the professoriate during this period, found the sheer number of offensive comments rather surprising and shocking.

Hampe certainly did not sympathize with the National Socialist movement. Rather, he was a solid national-liberal, who moved slightly to the left during the Weimar Republic, when he joined the German Democratic Party, which was reviled by some as a "Jew party." He can be counted amongst the *Vernunftrepublikaner*, but before 1919 he was no great friend of parliamentary democracy, writing more than once that a dictatorship would be the most appropriate form of government in wartime (pp. 547 & 571). Yet as Germany was collapsing, Hampe allowed that a democracy could hardly be any worse than the "wretched" government of recent decades (p. 756). The revolution of 1918-19 was offensive to him, and while the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were "regrettable" and "hardly desirable in this fashion," they were "in this case understandable" (p. 820). Similarly, for the murder of Kurt Eisner in Munich he felt "of course no tears and no regrets" (p. 836). His sympathy lay rather more with the murderer, Count Arco, who should, he felt, have sought advice beforehand as to whether this was the right way to get rid of the Socialist prime minister (p. 836). All in all, Hampe showed an old-world professorial disdain for politicians, and was not above delivering cheap shots. At the installation of the Bauer-MÃ¼ller-Mayer-Schmidt cabinet in the summer of 1919, he remarked dismissively: "The vulgarity of the[ir] names is telling. They are for the most part mediocre dilettantes" (p. 881). Could this be a refusal on his part to admit that everything he had stood for in the past was wrong, dreadfully wrong? During the war he had regular conversations with Max Weber, who benefited from a much clearer view of what was going on than did Hampe himself. Yet Hampe refused for a long time to surrender his illusions of German greatness and invincibility and was usually the first person on his street to hang out the flags at news of some battle victory. After a lengthy one-on-one discussion with Weber in the fall of 1915, Hampe wrote: "With his boundless and crippling pessimism, and his absolute anti-annexationist stance, he is definitely not suitable for any collaboration [on the Belgian question]" (p. 284).

Reichert and Wolgast have investigated Hampe's role at Heidelberg in the Weimar Republic beyond the confines of the diary, and find that he was widely regarded as a moderate. Karl Jaspers wrote to Hampe on his sixtieth birthday in 1929: "When you are present at a faculty meeting, one has the reassuring feeling that nothing absolutely terrible can occur.... Your presence is a shield, and I think we have great need of that" (p. 93).

There are very few significant points in this book that are not discussed by the editors in their ninety-page introduction. Determined not to be influenced by their interpretation, I waded through the 900 pages of the actual diary first, making over twenty typed pages of notes, before studying the introduction. It was perhaps not surprising, but rather gratifying, to discover that many of the points that I had found significant had been spotted by the editors, too. I bite my tongue as I say this, but the introduction is so thorough and meticulous that one does not learn a great deal more from the actual diary entries themselves, which again suggests the utility of a much shorter version of this book. Apart from that, I have only a couple of minor criticisms. There are too many unnecessary footnotes about every little variation in orthography, such as when Hampe misspells someone's name, or uses an archaic spelling. For example, when Hampe writes about "KÃ¶ln," we have a footnote revealing that "Hampe writes *CÃ¶ln* here" (p. 286). These minor corrections are neither surprising nor noteworthy and simply add to the length of the book. Finally, although the book does not have a subject index, the excellent introduction is blessed with around thirty helpful section headings. There are indexes both for places and persons. The sixty-seven page personal index gives useful biographical information even if it is arranged in a most irritating fashion. Although entries are indexed alphabetically by the family name, first names are given first, which slows down the search for any particular entry. When the eye runs down the column for the Ts, one sees only Eugen, Mehmed, Charles-Maurice, Michael, David, and so on. As in other books, the surname should come first in the alphabetized list.

Costing around $150, this is a book that even some libraries will hesitate to buy. I am pleased to have it on my bookshelf, and I did find a good deal of useful material on

a variety of topics in it. Parts of it were even enjoyable to read. But this is not a book that I shall return to again and again like Klemperer's diaries. Most readers will be content to absorb the masterly ninety-page introduction by the two editors.