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Gregory Paul Wegner. *Anti-Semitism and Schooling under the Third Reich.* New York and London: Routledge Falmer, 2002. xiv + 262 pp. $170.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8153-3942-7; $39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8153-3943-4.

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Among the most important questions asked by historians of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust are those that concern popular anti-Semitism–its origins, its prevalence, and its importance as a cause of the genocide. Were the Germans, as Daniel Goldhagen alleges, so possessed by the spirit of "exterminationist anti-Semitism" that they required little urging to turn upon their Jewish fellow-citizens with murderous and sadistic violence? Or was the genocide produced chiefly by structural factors and political rivalries to which popular attitudes had little relevance? And what was the attitude of non-Jewish Germans–and other Europeans–toward the persecution of Jews? Did the majority respond to the horrors of the Holocaust with enthusiastic assent? With indifference? With concern?

These are the underlying questions addressed by Gregory Wegner in this study of school curricula during the era of the Third Reich. As Wegner shows, the teaching of anti-Semitism was a very high priority among some German educators. Among them were leaders of the National Socialist Teachers' Union (NSLB, or Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund), officials of state and national educational and cultural ministries, and teachers and scholars in the many fields covered by German school curricula. With the help of Party propagandists and prestigious academic figures, these educators created curricular materials designed to familiarize school children at all levels with Nazi stereotypes of Jewish appearance, history, genetic characteristics, and religion. As a picture book entitled *The Poisonous Mushroom* put it, children must be taught "how to tell a Jew" as well as "how Jewish traders cheat ... how two women were tricked by Jewish lawyers," and "how Jews torture animals" (p. 159).

Wegner introduces us to a large body of educational literature, much of which he found in an uncatalogued collection in the Henry Kroul Collection of Nazi Writings at Hofstra University. Ranging from advanced texts for secondary-school students to picture books for kindergartners, these materials were designed to fit into an anti-Semitic curriculum that encompassed all grade levels and almost all school subjects. Even physical education was linked to racial identity. Jews, stated one text, had never excelled in diving or high jumping because they were innately cowardly, and Jewish soccer players argued with umpires and injured other players (p. 178). Curricula in almost all subjects were modified to include anti-Semitic content, and teachers were required to teach it. Charts, illustrations, maps, tables and other visual materials reinforced a message that was often driven home by graphic and terrifying stories that showed innocent children as the victims of Jewish malice and cruelty. Though they did not call for the actual imprisonment or extermination of

Jews, these texts urged their expulsion from Germany–an outcome that was pictured in visual materials and board games.

But the significance of this pedagogical literature remains unclear. What exactly do we learn about the history of popular anti-Semitism and its role in the origins of the Holocaust from such material? Certainly we learn that education did not counter-act prejudice. Obviously, the educated elite who produced this material subscribed to an ideology that made a travesty of all reputable academic knowledge, whether history, science, or anthropology. Moreover, these intellectuals did not simply parrot a party line. On the contrary, they offered diverse views that expressed strong personal convictions. But the appeal of National Socialism to intellectual elites is already well known. The abundance of materials certainly suggests that the regime gave the teaching of anti-Semitism a high priority. Among the authors and sponsors of educational materials were "big names" such as the journalist Julius Streicher, the physician Phillipp Bouhler (the leader of the eugenic sterilization program), the party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, and many others. But that the Nazis were obsessed with anti-Semitism is hardly a fact that must be restated.

Much of the book is devoted to content analyses of individual texts. Such analyses cannot tell us how–or even if–a given text was used in the classroom, and how the pupils responded to it. In fact, the Nazis considered teachers politically unreliable, and did not assign them the most important role in the political indoctrination of the young. This responsibility was given chiefly to organizations such as the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls. And, as Wegner points out, the regime was in power for too short a time to reorganize school systems or to saturate their curricula in Nazi ideology. Did anti-Semitism actually figure prominently in classroom teaching? Or did much of this teaching follow traditional patterns? Of course, this is a question that is difficult to research. Schools that did not emphasize anti-Semitism would hardly advertise the fact. But are there no sources–perhaps articles in teachers' periodicals, memoirs, disciplinary hearings of teachers who violated official policy, or police reports–that might shed light, even anecdotally, on the daily life of the classroom?

And what are we to make of the educators' insistence on teaching anti-Semitism always and everywhere? If they had been sure that–as Goldhagen claims–the population was already permeated by "exterminationist anti-Semitism," they would hardly have made such a great effort to promote it. In order to assess the effect of these curricula, Wegner cites surveys carried out by the U.S. occupation forces that found anti-Semitic convictions to be stronger among Germans aged fifteen to nineteen than among any other age group. But many factors, including the exposure of this age group to Party youth organizations and military service, could account for this finding.

In the end, therefore, this book raises more questions than it answers. But by introducing us to these anti-Semitic curricula, Wegner has made an important contribution to our knowledge of the cultural life of Nazi Germany. Well-chosen illustrations add to the book's disturbing impact.