

Although it is thought of as having been "written" by Adolf Hitler, **Mein Kampf** is not a book in the usual sense. Hitler never actually sat down and pecked at a typewriter or wrote longhand, but instead dictated it to Rudolph Hess, the Nazi Party Secretary while pacing around his prison cell in 1923-24. Hitler was imprisoned (house arrest) after his unsuccessful attempt at taking over the German government in what has been referred to by historians as "the Beer Hall Putsch." The original title Hitler chose was "Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice," but his Nazi publisher knew better and shortened it to Mein Kampf (My Struggle or My Battle). The original title does, however, reveal a great deal about Hitler himself.

When the book was first released in 1925 it sold poorly. People had been hoping for a juicy autobiography or a behind the scenes story of the Beer Hall Putsch. What they got were hundreds of pages of long, hard to follow sentences and wandering paragraphs composed by a self-educated man. However, after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, millions of copies were sold. It was considered proper to give one to newlyweds, high school graduates, or to celebrate any similar occasion. But few Germans ever read it cover to cover, a big mistake since it did contain a "blueprint" for the future of Germany during the years of Nazi domination.

The book contains Hitler's own words about his youth, early days in the Nazi party, future plans for Germany, and ideas on politics and race. Hitler outlines his views of a racial, religious, and cultural hierarchy, placing "Aryans" at the top as the superior race, and Jews, Gypsies, and Slavic peoples at the bottom. He believed in a worldwide struggle for power between the Aryans and the Jews, a struggle that, in his view, could only end in complete Aryan domination. Hitler also states his goal or desire for expanding the Aryan race and acquiring more land for Germany.

Go to the next two On-line sections. They should be read carefully. Answer all questions as indicated.