

Video Librarian

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Ascent of Evil: The Story of Mein Kampf ★★★

Recommended

(2016) 52 min. DVD: \$100: public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities. EPF Media. PPR. ISBN: 978-1-933724-45-4.

The rise of Adolf Hitler to power is the core subject of filmmaker Frederic Monteil's documentary, which retells familiar history through the fortunes of Hitler's famous 1925 manifesto *Mein Kampf*. Many viewers are likely unfamiliar with the full story of the Nazi strongman's ascension to leadership in Germany prior to the country's occupation of much of Europe and the subsequent murder of millions. *Ascent of Evil* fills in the gaps, using archival materials and interviews with historians to recount Hitler's activities as a spy after Germany's debilitating loss in the First World War. The film recounts Hitler's defiance during his trial on conspiracy charges, and talks about how he wrote *Mein Kampf* during a prison sentence. But the most interesting element of the documentary is its chronicle of the book's publishing history, which in some ways foreshadows the contemporary tendency of the media to bring attention to dangerous, populist figures for the sake of profits. The success of *Mein Kampf* echoes the gradual embrace of Hitler—an outsider politician—as the nation's imagined savior. Questions are pondered here: can one see the anti-Semitic violence in Hitler's soul on the pages of *Mein Kampf*? Could anyone have predicted the Holocaust from reading it? Those reflections and more inspire analysis here of the controversial tome, which was published in variously-priced gift editions. Presented in both English and French language versions, this interesting study is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (T. Keogh)