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'Das Buch Bayern': The Portrayal of Antisemitism and the 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' in *Erfolg*

By Adrian Feuchtwanger

Between 1920 and 1933 Lion Feuchtwanger published four works - one satirical short story and three novels - in which he tackled the subject of antisemitism in Germany. In the third of these works, *Erfolg* (1930), he exposed antisemitism in Bavarian politics and society, satirized the emerging NSDAP, and drew attention to the increasing politicization of Bavaria's judicial and penal system, as well as providing a compelling fictionalized account of the 1923 Munich Putsch. Although the novel helped garner Lion Feuchtwanger a Nobel Prize for Literature nomination in 1930, it put him and family members in the crosshairs of the Nazi press. After the war the novel endured a mixed reception, but nowadays it is highly regarded, especially in Bavaria. This paper traces the theme of antisemitism in the novel, and points out that a comprehensive German Jewish studies interpretation of the novel would complement the existing secondary literature by foregrounding the antisemitism theme.

The theme of antisemitism in Lion Feuchtwanger's works, 1920-1933

Lion Feuchtwanger tackled the subject of antisemitism in Germany in a series of works published in the period 1920-1933. The short story *Gespräche mit dem ewigen Juden*¹ (1920), in which the Wandering Jew makes a stop in Munich to help found an antisemitic newspaper, is an amusing but serious-minded satirical take on the founding of the *Völkischer Beobachter* and other aspects of antisemitism in Bavaria immediately after World War I. *Jud Süß* (1925) reworked the well-known story of the eighteenth-century court Jew in order to draw parallels between his execution and the assassination of Germany's Jewish foreign minister Walter Rathenau in 1922.² *Erfolg* (1930) used the *roman-à-clef* method to expose antisemitism in politics and society in early 1920s Bavaria, satirized the emerging

1 Feuchtwanger, Lion: *Centum Opuscula*. Greifenverlag: Rudolstadt 1956, 449-472.

2 For a full analysis of the parallels with Walter Rathenau, see Yuill, William: 'Jud Süß: Anatomy of a Best-Seller'. In: Spalek, John (ed.): *Lion Feuchtwanger: The Man, His Ideas, His Work*. Hennessey & Ingalls: Los Angeles 1972, 113-130.

NSDAP, and drew attention to the increasing politicization of Bavaria's judicial and penal system, as well as providing a compelling fictionalized account of the 1923 Munich Putsch. *Die Geschwister Oppermann*, published in 1933 by the Amsterdam-based exile publisher Querido, alerted Lion Feuchtwanger's international readers to the situation facing German Jews at the start of the Third Reich, with characters whose predicament mirrored that of various Feuchtwanger family members.³

Summary of the Martin Krüger storyline in *Erfolg*

The main storyline in *Erfolg* revolves around the trial and imprisonment of Martin Krüger, a *roman-à-clef* figure for whom the author's inspiration was a prominent art historian of the time, August Liebmann Mayer.⁴ Mayer, who was Jewish, held the position of curator at the Alte Pinakothek from 1909 until 1931, but was forced to resign as a result of an antisemitic campaign of defamation and duress. The Martin Krüger storyline in *Erfolg* is a fictionalization of the campaign against Mayer.



Dr. August Liebmann Mayer, Curator, Alte Pinakothek, 1909-31

3 See Feuchtwanger, Adrian: 'Die Geschwister Oppermann: A German Jewish Family in Extremis.' In: Azuélos, Daniel, Chartier-Bunzel, Andrea, Teinturier, Frédéric (eds.): *Feuchtwanger und die Erinnerungskultur in Frankreich*. Peter Lang: Oxford 2020, 3-13.

4 August Liebmann Mayer, who died in the Holocaust, was the subject of extensive international media coverage in 2015 when a notable seventeenth-century painting was restituted to his daughter. See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Liebmann_Mayer (retrieved: 11 March 2020) and <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-holocaust-art/nazi-confiscated-painting-returned-to-heir-of-jewish-art-historian-idUSL1N0XW24820150505> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

In the novel, Martin Krüger is targeted by the Bavarian minister of culture Franz Flaucher, a fictionalization of Gustav Ritter von Kahr.⁵ Flaucher considers various modernist paintings which Krüger has acquired for the state museum to be unacceptably subversive, and for reasons which initially are not explained also has an intense personal hatred of him.

Er [Flaucher] konnte [den Mann Krüger] nicht riechen, nicht seinen geschwungenen, schmeckerischen Mund, nicht seine grauen Augen mit den dicken Brauen [...] Noch [...] frass es ihm an der Seele, wie endlos lang er den Schädling Krüger im Amt hatte dulden müssen.⁶



Gustav Ritter von Kahr, Prime Minister of Bavaria 1920-21

Driven by this hatred—and willingly assisted by the Bavarian minister of justice Otto Klenk—Flaucher sees to it that a spurious charge of offences against public morals (*Sittlichkeitsverstoß*) are brought against Krüger in connection with an alleged sexual relationship with a well-known modernist painter, Anna Elisabeth Haider. The charges are difficult to prove, but Flaucher suborns a key witness, the taxi driver Franz Xaver Ratzenberger, who conveniently for Flaucher is a member of the 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' (a fictionalization of the NSDAP). Krüger is eventually convicted on a perjury charge and receives a three-year sentence.

5 For a comprehensive list of the *roman-à-clef* characters in the novel and the real-life figures on whom they were based, see for example Hoffmeister, Reinhart: *Schatten über München, Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit in Lion Feuchtwangers Roman 'Erfolg'* (Langen Müller: Munich 1981, 17-22. Hoffmeister states: "Feuchtwanger hat für die Figur Krüger mehrere Vorbilder: der Kunsthistoriker und - wie Krüger - Goya-Spezialist, dem in Bayern übel mitgespielt wurde, war der Kurator der staatlichen Sammlungen August Liebmann Mayer, angefeindet von den Rechten im Lande (1931 musste er schließlich den Dienst quittieren.)" Hoffmeister also goes on to list other historical figures used as models for the composite figure Krüger. See also Footnotes 22 and 23.

6 Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Erfolg*. Aufbau Verlag: Berlin 1948, 17-18.

For Flaucher, getting Krüger convicted is one of the 'successes' to which the novel's sardonic title alludes. Flaucher's reputation as a hardliner is significantly enhanced in the eyes of his right-wing allies as a result, and he goes on to achieve another 'success' in the second half of the novel by becoming State Commissioner at the time of the 1923 Munich Putsch.

Alongside these developments, the Krüger case is brought to national attention in the newspapers. Krüger's former girlfriend Johanna Krain and his Jewish defence lawyer Dr. Siegbert Geyer campaign to have the case heard on appeal, but in the meantime Krüger is so badly mistreated in prison that he suffers a fatal heart attack.

Krüger's background

As Flaucher's personal agenda against Krüger unfolds, the reader gradually realizes that Krüger's troubles are exacerbated by the fact that many Bavarians automatically assume he is Jewish and are prejudiced against him as a result. Krüger's predicament is enacted most clearly in the scene in which he undergoes a medical examination conducted by the prison doctor Ferdinand Gsell.

Gsell is an unreliable character, kindly enough but with a dubious track record in medical research: earlier in his career, his studies of putative correlations between blood group and 'race' were conclusively discredited, and he now finds himself practising as a prison physician, which is not a career path he had originally envisaged.⁷

As Gsell conducts his examination of Krüger, the doctor persists with the following assumption: "Dem Aussehen nach keltischer Typ mit leicht semitischem Einschlag, hätte der Mann von Rechts wegen der Blutgruppe A angehören

⁷ There are various correlations between blood group and ethnicity, but ethnicity cannot be used as a definitive indicator of blood group, nor vice versa. <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140715-why-do-we-have-blood-types> (retrieved: 11 March 2020). Moreover, "race" is not a biologically meaningful classification (ethnicity is a social construct). <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/without-prejudice/201612/race-social-construction> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

müssen."⁸ In other words, on the basis of Krüger's appearance alone, despite the fact that his own research and its underlying methodology have been debunked, Gsell decides that Krüger might have Jewish forebears.

This is the only passage containing clear information about Krüger's background. Elsewhere, the reader can do no more than draw inferences from various hints. For example, it is evident from Krüger's interior monologue and reflections as he languishes in prison that he self-identifies as fully assimilated into mainstream German life, is not religiously observant, and prior to finding himself embroiled in court proceedings has never reflected much on his ethnicity: in his personal list of priorities in life (work, relationships, friends etc.), his family does not feature.⁹

What is abundantly clear, however, is that antisemitic prejudice, especially among the all-white Bavarian jury, is going to play an important part in his fate:

Er stammte aus dem Badischen, er konnte sich schwer einfühlen in die dumpfe, breiige Beharrlichkeit, mit der die Bewohner der bayrischen Hochebene den einmal Gehassten zur Strecke bringen. Er konnte sich nicht vorstellen, wie ein eifriger Staatsanwalt aus dem schmierigen Gerede der Kleinbürgerinnen juristisch fassbare Tatbestände konstruieren, wie der biedere Hoflieferant Dirmoser, der wackere Briefträger Cortesi aus so unsauberem Gestammel für ihn Gefängnismauern bauen sollten. Allein heute während der Vernehmung der Hofrätin Beradt, als diese jämmerliche Affäre des Mädchens Anna Elisabeth Haider so widerwärtige Färbung angenommen hatte, war ihm mit einem Ruck ungeheuer real die Bedrohlichkeit seiner Lage unter diesen bayrischen Menschen aufgegangen. Jetzt auf einmal verstand er den ganzen angespannten Ernst des Dr. Geyer.¹⁰

Geyer meanwhile, as an experienced lawyer and parliamentarian, is fully aware of the role that antisemitic prejudice among the jurors will play. When potentially damaging evidence against Krüger is read out in court, Geyer observes, with a sense of weary recognition, the gratified response of the juror von Dellmaier, a 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' member:

Sehr angeregt folgte der Versicherungsagent von Dellmaier der Verlesung. Er hielt ein ironisches, lebemännisch sein wollendes Lächeln fest um die blassen Lippen, er fältete

⁸ Ibid, 641.

⁹ Ibid, 56.

¹⁰ Ibid, 48-49.

überlegen die Lider um die wässerigen Augen, lachte zuweilen hell, meckernd, albern, von dem Anwalt Geyer mit Widerwillen betrachtet.¹¹

The level of antisemitic sentiment faced by Krüger and Geyer becomes even more apparent when the latter is assaulted by thugs with assumed ties to the 'Wahrhaft Deutschen'. The assault on Geyer is reported in the newspapers, but the response among the general public reflects a widespread lack of sympathy: a suited-and-booted gentleman on the Berlin underground, for example, thinks: "Das kommt davon. [...] Diese Juden sind selber Schuld. Warum mischen sie sich in unsere Dinge ein, die sie nichts angehen?"¹² And among the patrons of the Tiroler Weinstuben in Munich - which is frequented by Bavarian politicians on both sides of the political spectrum, as well as by Geyer - the only area of common ground is their shared hostility towards Geyer, whom they treat as an unwelcome outsider:

[...]: über alle politischen Antipathien hin gehörten der reaktionäre Minister, der reaktionäre Schriftsteller und die oppositionellen Abgeordneten zusammen, vier Söhne der bayerischen Hochebene, und der jüdische Anwalt saß fremd, störend, feindlich dazwischen.¹³

The portrayal of Hitler

As well as featuring prominently in the scenes containing Krüger and/or Geyer, the antisemitism theme is developed in many other passages in the novel, for example in the chapter 'Tod und Verklärung des Chauffeurs Ratzenberger'. Here, the Hitler figure Rupert Kutzner spouts conflated ideas and conspiracy theories about alleged Jewish influence, using the disease imagery frequently found in Nazi discourse.¹⁴ In rendering the aura of a Hitler speech, the narrator is careful to employ an authorial tone of voice best described as satirically-edged:

¹¹ Ibid, 86.

¹² Ibid, 144.

¹³ Ibid, 74.

¹⁴ See for example Kirsch, Adam: 'The System – two new histories show how the Nazi concentration camps worked', *New Yorker*, 6 April 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/the-system-books-kirsch> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

Mit heller, manchmal leicht hysterischer Stimme deklamierte er; mühelos von langen, blassen Lippen flossen ihm die Worte mit eindringlichen Gesten, wie er sie predigenden Landpfarrern abgesehen hatte, unterstützte er seine Rede. Man hörte ihm gern zu, er hatte Gesichtspunkte, unter denen sich die Dinge des Staates und des Tages bequem bereden ließen. Schuld an allem Bösen war das Zinskapital, war Juda und Rom. Wie die Lungenbazillen die gesunde Lunge, so zerstörten die international versippten Finanzjuden das deutsche Volk. Und alle Dinge werden gut und renken sich ein, sowie man nur die Parasiten ausschweifelt. Schwieg der Monteur Kutzner, so gaben die dünnen Lippen mit dem winzigen, dunkeln Schnurrbart und das pomadig gescheitelte Haar über dem fast hinterkopflosen Schädel dem Gesicht eine maskenhafte Leere. Tat aber der Mann den Mund auf, dann zappelte sein Antlitz in sonderbarer, hysterischer Beweglichkeit; die höckerige Nase sprang bedeutend auf und ab, und er entzündete Leben und Tatkraft in der Stammtischrunde.¹⁵

The deliberately distanced authorial tone of voice ridicules Kutzner and his use of primitive racist stereotypes. In the immediately subsequent passage, in which Kutzner's ideas stimulate lively discussion at Ratzenberger's *Stammtisch*, the narrator continues in a more blatantly satirical tone:

So war es nicht wunderlich, dass am Stammtisch *Da fehlt sich nichts* romantische Fragen lebhaft diskutiert wurden. Gab es detaillierte Anweisungen, durch deren Befolgung sich das Judentum der Herrschaft über die Welt bemächtigte? Lebte der König Ludwig der Zweite von Bayern noch, von dem herrschsüchtige Verwandte behaupteten, er habe sich geisteskrank in den Starnberger See gestürzt, was aber keineswegs erwiesen war? Hatten zusammen mit dem Papst die Juden den Weltkrieg angezettelt?



Hitler in Landsberg Prison, 1924

The use of humour here and in many other passages is as an auxiliary narrative element, since as a whole the novel approaches the subject of Kutzner and the emerging 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' with suitable gravitas. For example, in the chapter

¹⁵ Ibid, 217-218.

'Der Mann am Schalthebel', politicians, lawyers and businessmen are shown attempting to gauge the importance of the 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' in the context of the far right as a whole; and the Amalie Sandhuber sub-plot, in which rank-and-file 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' members commit political murder in pursuit of their ambitions, speaks for itself.¹⁶

The depiction of 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' rank-and-file members

A further aspect of the antisemitism theme is the portrayal of the aforementioned rank-and-file 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' members, who embody the threat of the growing Nazi movement. Between 1927 and 1930 Lion Feuchtwanger spent long hours in the Berlin state library reading articles from the *Münchener Post*¹⁷—the left-wing newspaper which was at the centre of journalistic efforts to monitor and actively oppose the increasingly violent NSDAP. That lengthy research yielded background material for several 'Wahrhaft Deutschen' characters, of whom the most fully rounded is the young activist Erich Bornhaak.

The skill with which Bornhaak is brought to life is much admired by two of the most successful novelists writing in Germany today. In a recent essay explaining Lion Feuchtwanger's influence on her own award-winning novels, Tanja Kinkel writes:

What draws me in every time are Feuchtwanger's characters, who are richly ambiguous and rarely cut-and-dried. [...] Contrary to all clichés, Johanna Krain has sex with a man [Bornhaak] whose ideology she despises. (He's a Nazi). She does this not because she's blackmailed, blinded, or seduced, or even because she's in love, but simply because she wants to have sex with him. And then she goes on with her life and works against the very forces the guy in question supports, leaving behind a baffled and frustrated one-night stand.¹⁸

16 For a full discussion of the portrayal of the far right in the novel, see Brückener, Egon and Modick, Klaus: *Lion Feuchtwangers Roman Erfolg: Leistung und Problematik schriftstellerischer Aufklärung in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*. Scriptor: Kronberg/Ts. 1978, 158-162.

17 See Flügge, Manfred: *Die vier Leben der Marta Feuchtwanger*. Aufbau Verlag: Berlin 2008, 127; and Heusler, Andreas: *Lion Feuchtwanger, Münchner – Emigrant – Weltbürger*. Residenz Verlag: Vienna 2014, 188.

18 Kinkel, Tanja: 'What About Lion Feuchtwanger? A Reader's Tale'. In: *Against the Eternal Yesterday, Essays Commemorating the Legacy of Lion Feuchtwanger*. Figueroa Press/USC Libraries: Los Angeles 2009, 92-97.

Award-winning novelist Klaus Modick¹⁹ is another admirer of the three-dimensionality of Bornhaak. Modick, who sees the character as a prototypical figure representing the NSDAP's appeal to nihilistic young World War I veterans, notes that Bornhaak is in fact sceptical of most aspects of party ideology and is mainly motivated by the desire for self-affirmation and by the utilitarian goals of sex and money:

Gewissenlos, ausschließlich am persönlichen Vorteil und Vergnügen orientiert, macht er mit seinem Freund, dem dubiosen Versicherungsagenten von Dellmaier, kriminelle Geschäfte. Beide schließen sich den Wahrhaft Deutschen nicht aus politischen Überzeugung an, sondern aus Bestätigungsdrang, um im Schutze der Parteiorganisation ihre zweifelhafte Geschäfte zu tätigen.²⁰

As Kinkel and Modick rightly point out, Bornhaak's mixed motives, in combination with his Freudian hatred of his Jewish father Geyer, give him an unpredictable quality that makes him highly convincing as a character capable of plotting a murder (Bornhaak's personality comes to the fore in the chapter 'Sieht so ein Mörder aus?' in particular).

Significant gap in the secondary literature

Erfolg is widely considered one of Lion Feuchtwanger's best works and much has been written about it in secondary literature and in mainstream media. However, Krüger's perceived ethnic background, as part of the overall portrayal of antisemitism in the novel as a whole, has not been discussed in much depth. That is surprising, as the Krüger plotline is central to the novel's thematic content.

A case in point is the otherwise reliable 1975 biography by Lothar Kahn, which skirts the issue of Krüger's perceived ethnicity altogether. Kahn writes: "It is astonishing that in a book on Bavaria, which he left because of anti-Semitic harassment, and of the Hitler Putsch, the Jewish factor should not play a more

19 Klaus Modick's works include *Sunset* (Eichborn: Frankfurt 2011), a biographical novel in which the aging Lion Feuchtwanger looks back on his life.

20 Brückener and Modick, *ibid*, 145. See also Modick, Klaus: 'Im Bett der Demokratie. Eine antifaschistische Männerphantasie Lion Feuchtwangers' (section 3, on Bornhaak). In: Müller-Funk, Wolfgang (ed.): *Jahrmarkt der Gerechtigkeit*. Stauffenburg Verlag: Tübingen 1987, 75-86.

significant role. It is present mainly through the person of Dr. Siegbert Geyer, Krüger's defense attorney."²¹

Volker Skierka's major biography, published in West Germany in the 1984 centenary year, did address the question of Krüger's background, though only in passing. Skierka mentions that Krüger is a composite character based not only on left-wing agitators such as Max Hoelz (as Lion Feuchtwanger himself stated²²) but also on August Liebmann Mayer, but does not go on to analyse how the antisemitism theme is developed in the text.²³

The original version of Wilhelm von Sternburg's biography, also published in 1984, does not discuss Krüger's background at all. Von Sternburg focuses solely on the Krüger character's political dimension, and in doing so produces a narrow interpretation of the character, namely that Krüger's decision to acquire modernist paintings for the museum is the sole factor driving Flaucher's personal hatred: "[...] seine unkonventionelle, moderne Einstellung zur Kunst aber ist es, die die Mächtigen, die Konservativen im Lande Bayern an dem Museumsdirektor stört, die ihn vernichtet."²⁴ Von Sternburg's biography was reissued in 2014, and though it contains additional thoughts on the Geyer subplot, it still contains no mention of Krüger's perceived ethnicity at all.

Lion Feuchtwanger's East German biographers tended to produce even narrower interpretations of the novel, perhaps because their research model, with characteristic Marxist emphasis on class conflict and binary opposition between progressives and reactionaries, meant they had limited scope for detailed analysis of the antisemitism theme. A good example of this appears in the 1967 biography by Hans Leupold:

Was Feuchtwanger in seinem neuen Roman darstellen wollte, war die Wirtschaft, Politik und Justiz des Deutschlands der Weimarer Republik, der Klassencharakter dieser Demokratie, war die Dummheit und Gleichgültigkeit so vieler Menschen der

21 Kahn, Lothar: *Insight and Action: The Life and Work of Lion Feuchtwanger*. Associated University Presses: Cranbury, New Jersey 1975, 143.

22 As stated by Lion Feuchtwanger in the essay 'Mein Roman *Erfolg*', *Centum Opuscula*, ibid, 397-400.

23 Skierka, Volker: *Lion Feuchtwanger, Eine Biographie*. Quadriga Verlag: Berlin 1984, 104-109.

24 von Sternburg, Wilhelm: *Lion Feuchtwanger, Ein deutsches Schriftstellerleben*. Athenäum Verlag: Königstein/Ts 1984, 217. Reissued edition published in 2014 (Aufbau Verlag: Berlin 2016, 278-295 (section on *Erfolg*)).

verschiedensten sozialen Schichten, aber auch der Mut und die Klarsicht derer, die Leumund und Existenz aufs Spiel setzten, ja mitunter das Leben selbst, um Unrecht und Dummheit einzudämmen.²⁵

Recommendations for further research

From today's perspective, one can certainly agree with the aforementioned biographers, and also with recent commentators such as Heike Specht,²⁶ that it is principally through the misfortunes of Geyer that the antisemitism theme is enacted (in addition to being assaulted, Geyer suffers a harrowing personal crisis over his son Bornhaak's involvement with the 'Wahrhaft Deutschen').

One must also agree with all of the above commentators that there is a socio-political dimension to the Krüger character: by virtue of his forward-looking stance on modernist art and his modern sexual ethics, he exemplifies the flowering of liberal culture and the loosening of restrictive sexual mores with which Weimar Germany - Berlin at any rate - is associated.²⁷ However, equally significant for a German Jewish studies interpretation of the novel is the fact that Flaucher, Gsell, von Dellmaier, and various other characters in the novel automatically assume Krüger to be Jewish and hence in their eyes a scapegoat for all of society's problems.

With those arguments in mind, one should also duly note the views of Marta Feuchtwanger, who, as several biographers have pointed out, had a good understanding of her husband's authorial intentions. Of particular significance is a 1972 letter to the American scholar Ulrich Weisstein,²⁸ in which Marta Feuchtwanger emphasized strongly that August Liebmayer was one of the real-life models for Krüger, notwithstanding her husband's comments about Max Hoelz.

25 Leupold, Hans. *Lion Feuchtwanger*. VEB Bibliographisches Institut: Leipzig 1967, 42.

26 Specht, Heike: *Die Feuchtwangers, Familie, Tradition und jüdisches Selbstverständnis*. Wallstein Verlag: Göttingen 2006, 219-220.

27 See Gay, Peter: *Weimar Culture, The Outsider as Insider*. Penguin Books: London 1974.

28 The 1972 letter from Marta Feuchtwanger to Weisstein is cited in Weisstein, Ulrich: 'Clio, The Muse: An Analysis of Lion Feuchtwanger's *Erfolg*'. In: Spalek, *ibid*, 178.

Her point was taken up again in 2008 by the Munich-based art historians Christian Fuhrmeister and Susanne Kienlechner,²⁹ who trace the parallels between August Liebmayer and the Krüger character. It is noticeable, however, that in their capacity as art historians Fuhrmeister and Kienlechner do not perform much analysis of the novel itself, and hence to date there is still a significant gap in the secondary literature in that respect. A systematic and comprehensive German Jewish studies interpretation of the novel would therefore be a welcome addition to the existing secondary literature, as inter alia it would foreground the issue of Krüger's perceived ethnicity within the novel's antisemitism theme as a whole.

Impact of the novel after publication

Erfolg sold to the tune of 40,000 copies in Germany and received positive reviews in liberal newspapers, for example in a 1930 review in the *Berliner Tageblatt* by fellow German Jewish author and Nobel Prize nominee Arnold Zweig, who commended Lion Feuchtwanger for having spoken out about the politicization of Bavaria's judicial and penal system.³⁰ Newspapers of the far right, including the *Völkischer Beobachter*, also felt compelled to comment:³¹

Herr Feuchtwanger hat sich neulich in irgendeinem Blättchen dahin ausgesprochen, daß man heute auf dem Kurfürstendamm auf Schritt und Tritt den Gesichtern zukünftiger Emigranten begegne.[...] Nach dieser Leistung [dem Roman *Erfolg*] bleibt dem Löb Feuchtwanger wohl nur noch zu bescheinigen, daß er sich einen zukünftigen Emigrantenpass reichlich verdient hat.³²

29 Fuhrmeister, Christian; Kienlechner, Susanne: 'Gegenwart und Ahnung: inwiefern war der Münchner Kunsthistoriker August Liebmayer (1885 - 1944) ein Vorbild für die Figur des Martin Krüger in Lion Feuchtwangers Roman *Erfolg* (1930)?' In: *Literatur in Bayern* 93 (2008), 32–44. Available at:

https://www.kunstgeschichte.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/ausstellungsprojekte/archiv/einblicke_ausblicke/biografien/mayer/gegenwart_u_ahnung.pdf (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

30 Zweig, Arnold: 'Roman einer Provinz'. In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 12 September 1930, No. 430, 1. Beiblatt. A detailed discussion of contemporary reviews of the novel is provided by Wessler, *ibid.* (Chapter IV, *Erfolg's* Reception in 1930/31), 115–141.

31 'Der Löwe Juda's, genannt Feuchtwanger'. In: *Völkischer Beobachter*, Norddeutsche Ausgabe 44, Nr. 290, 17 October 1931.

32 For a full account of how the Nazi press responded to *Erfolg*, see Jaeger, Roland: "'Der jüdische Greuelhetzer': Zur Nazi-Propaganda gegen Lion Feuchtwanger". In: *International Feuchtwanger Newsletter* Vol. 24 (2017), 5–20. Available at https://libraries.usc.edu/sites/default/files/ifs_newsletter_24_2017.pdf (retrieved: 11 March 2020). Roland Jaeger's article corrects some of the remarks about Lion Feuchtwanger that have been

At least one subsequent newspaper article, namely an article in *Der Stürmer* in 1934, took these threats to the next level, in this instance by proposing a "justifiable brutal attack" on Lion Feuchtwanger's brother Martin:

Aus dem Verräterhaufen der Greuelpropagandisten sticht ein Verbrecher besonders hervor. Als der niederträchtigste Lügner, als der eifrigste Hetzer, als der infamste Halunke. Lügner und Verräter von Beruf. Kriegs- und Boykotthetzer in einer Person. Sprühend vom Hass gegen Deutschland. Ein blutrünstiges Scheusal. Der Jude Lion Feuchtwanger. [...] Da ist der Bruder dieser jüdischen Bestie, der Jude Martin Feuchtwanger, in Halle an der Saale [...] Er flüchtete nicht mit seinem Dichterbruder. Er hätte ja sonst in Deutschland einen einträglichen Verlag zurücklassen müssen. [...] Wenn der Schandjude Lion Feuchtwanger gegen Deutschland hetzt, halte man sich an seinen Bruder Martin in Halle. Weg mit aller Sentimentalität. Der Jude kennt sie auch nicht. Ohne einen Schuss berechtigter Brutalität ist die Judenfrage nicht zu lösen.³³

Fortunately Martin Feuchtwanger was not in fact in Halle, as he had moved to Prague in 1933 following his arrest and interrogation by the authorities.³⁴



[Martin Feuchtwanger](#)

inaccurately attributed over the years, and quotes from hate articles directed at him in various media after 1933.

33 'Gebrüder Feuchtwanger. Lion der Greuelhetzer/Martin der Grossverleger'. In: *Der Stürmer* 12, 1934, Vol. 6 (Feb.), 5.

34 Feuchtwanger, Martin: *Zukunft ist ein blindes Spiel, Erinnerungen*. Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag: Berlin 1999. See also Jaeger Roland: 'Martin Feuchtwanger und sein Exilverlag >Edition Olympia< in Tel Aviv'. In: *Aus dem Antiquariat* 2/2016. Available at www.lionfeuchtwanger.de (26 June 2016 entry).

Lion Feuchtwanger's brother Ludwig was, however, still in Munich, and being a brother of Lion caused him and his family great anxiety. As his son Edgar recalls:

In the great scheme of things Lion was right to have stuck his neck out against the Nazis, even if his satire could not prevent them from coming to power. Keeping a low profile, as was my father's instinctive reaction, did no good either. [...] As it turned out, when the Nazis had my father and my uncle Fritz in their hands in Dachau in December 1938, it was sheer good luck that the camp authorities didn't discover they were brothers of Lion. Had they done so, my father and Fritz would not have been seen again.³⁵



Ludwig Feuchtwanger

A further consequence was that after January 1933 Lion Feuchtwanger's books were publicly burned, his citizenship was stripped, and his name appeared on publishing blacklists³⁶, which meant all royalties from Germany ceased. For Marta Feuchtwanger this brought financial hardship and emotional isolation when she joined up with her husband in Sanary in mid-1933:

Mit Briefen und Vollmachten von Lion reiste sie [a close friend of Marta] weiter nach Deutschland, um eventuell Geld vom Bankhaus Feuchtwanger in München herauszubringen. Dort lag der größte Teil unseres Vermögens. Sie besuchte Lions Bruder Ludwig und fuhr auch nach Berlin. Aber nirgends hat sich irgend jemand getraut, etwas für Lion zu tun. Alle waren ja in Gefahr.³⁷

35 See Edgar Feuchtwanger's memoir *I Was Hitler's Neighbour*. (Bretwalda: London, 2015, 12-15). Additional remarks: interview with Edgar Feuchtwanger, 8 September 2018. After Ludwig Feuchtwanger's release from Dachau in December 1938, Lion Feuchtwanger and other siblings helped him fund an exit visa to England for himself and his family. See also Feuchtwanger, Lion: *Ein möglichst intensives Leben, Die Tagebücher*. Aufbau Verlag: Berlin 2018, 457, diary entry dated 7 June 1939 regarding letter received from Ludwig Feuchtwanger following his arrival in England.

36 See Bibliothek der verbrannten und verbannten Bücher, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich.

37 Feuchtwanger, Marta: *Nur eine Frau*. Langen Müller: Munich 1983, 239.

***Erfolg* as cultural heritage**

Erfolg helped garner the author a Nobel Prize for Literature nomination in 1930³⁸, and after the war continued to resonate in Munich. The Munich Literature Prize affair in 1957 was a contentious episode in which conservatives on the City Council argued that Lion Feuchtwanger had "fouled his own nest" in *Erfolg* in particular, and reneged on their support for awarding him the prize.³⁹ Given the historical context of the remarks, this was an untenable position.

Nowadays, however, *Erfolg* is widely considered a valuable piece of Bavaria's cultural heritage. Lion Feuchtwanger is respected as an important commentator on Weimar Germany who read the situation correctly at an early stage and rightly saw that the Nazis would have to be fought tooth and nail from the outset. Moreover, his civil courage in having spoken out against the far right through the novel is admired, by among others Munich's current mayor Dieter Reiter.⁴⁰

For today's scholars and general readers, the broad scope of the novel, including its account of the 1923 Munich Putsch, constitutes a memorable piece of social history of various facets of early 1920s Bavaria, as filtered through the creative imagination of a reliable contemporary witness.⁴¹ And with its dramatic enactment of an antisemitic agenda pursued by an elected politician, the novel offers modern readers a reminder that ongoing public scrutiny of those in power today is always necessary.

Not least thanks to the enduring appeal of the novel's lively Bavarian vernacular, *Erfolg* remains a familiar literary presence in modern Munich, where the disagreeable fate of "ending up as a character in *Erfolg*" continues to enjoy popular currency as one to be avoided. In recent years, public funding has been provided for

38 See *Spiegel Online*, 9 October 2009 (<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/umstrittene-nobelpreise-brutale-effekte-und-bluff-a-654254.html>) (retrieved: 11 March 2020) and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 8 April 2002 (<https://www.nzz.ch/article82OCG-1.383762>) (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

39 Section on the Munich Literature Prize affair (Epilog: München 1957) in Heusler, *ibid.*, 307-315.

40 <https://www.pressreader.com/germany/abendzeitung-m%C3%BCnchen/20131107/281625303062517> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

41 For a standard history of the period, see for example Edgar Feuchtwanger, *From Weimar to Hitler* (London: Macmillan 1993), 108-117 (section entitled 'The Radical Right and the Rise of the Hitler Movement in Bavaria').

several projects relating to the novel:⁴² in 2011 a dramatized version of the novel ran at the Kammerspiele;⁴³ in 2014 the Literaturhaus staged a major exhibition entitled 'Erfolg. Lion Feuchtwangers Bayern';⁴⁴ in 2015 Bayerischer Rundfunk used the novel as the basis for the 45-minute TV documentary *Schatten über München*;⁴⁵ and the same year the Stadtarchiv held a conference entitled 'Zwischen "Erfolg" und "Exil". Lion Feuchtwanger und München'.⁴⁶ These developments are encouraging, and it would certainly be a welcome next step if Munich's NS-Dokumentationszentrum were to use the novel as the basis for new museum content focussing on antisemitism in Munich in the early 1920s.

42 See www.lionfeuchtwanger.de

43 <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/landkreismuenchen/erfolg-in-den-kammerspielen-muenchner-verhaeltnisse-1.1009925> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

44 <http://lionfeuchtwanger.de/2014/11/19/659/>

45 <https://www.br.de/br-fernsehen/programmkalender/sendung-901864.html> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).

46 <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/22740> (retrieved: 11 March 2020).