

Languages of National Socialism

Sources, Perspectives, Methods

edited by

Tullia Catalan and Riccardo Martinelli

Cogito 6

Studies in Philosophy and its History

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This volume draws on contributions from historians and philosophers to analyze the languages of National Socialism from an interdisciplinary perspective. In addition to the languages of official propaganda, it considers the languages of everyday life and of academia, from science to philosophy. In addition to the rigorous study of a variety of sources from the past, the volume also offers an insight into contemporary communication.

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In quarta di copertina: Reichsminister Joseph Goebbels delivers a speech to a crowd in the Berlin Lustgarten urging Germans to boycott Jewish-owned businesses (1st April 1933).

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Languages of National Socialism. An Introduction

RICCARDO MARTINELLI

In 2021, a small but highly motivated group of researchers at the University of Trieste organized an international conference on the languages of National Socialism. Our aim was to intensify exchanges between scholars from different disciplines and thus contribute to filling a gap. In fact, cooperation between historians, philosophers and historians of philosophy (or science) has usually been sporadic at best. The working hypothesis was that a good way to promote interdisciplinary exchange between scholars would be to focus on language: more precisely, on the interrelations between the different but interwoven *languages* of National Socialism. The more one delves into this area of research, the more one is struck by the pervasive nature of what Victor Klemperer called the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*. This language was partly shaped by propaganda, but then it began to take on a life of its own, permeating many aspects of people's lives and destinies. I am not thinking only of the official language of the Nazi Party, or of the propaganda consisting of Hitler's speeches, his (and others') book, Goebbels' dispatches, the press, leaflets and posters, the radio, and so on. Other levels should also be considered, including the ordinary language of everyday life (memories, diaries, letters, etc.) and the apparently more neutral, highly specialized language of academia: the language of science, philosophy, law, and so on. One could even think of including in this research perspective the non-verbal languages of the plastic arts, architecture, music, etc. Hence the insistence on the plural dimension of Nazi languages.

Recently, scholars have begun to detect recurring expressions, analogies, echoes, reflections, styles, tendencies among them. The threads between these different applications are sometimes visible, sometimes hidden. Hence the partic-

ular importance of interdisciplinary efforts. Researchers interested in the history of institutions, society, practices or military history, but also the history of philosophy, the history of science, the history of art (literature, the plastic arts, music), all have to deal with linguistic problems. Despite the different methodologies of each field, it is clear that we share common questions, sources, materials, insights. It is highly desirable to share methods, concepts, categories, experiences and difficulties. In other words, we felt the need to promote interactions at the stage of ongoing research, not just the dissemination of results. The aforementioned conference offered us this unique privilege. I am far from saying that nothing has been done in the past. As a philosopher, I can only think of Adorno's pioneering *Jargon of authenticity*. But there is still much to be done. All the more so because the current state of research is evolving. As new sources become available, old ones are seen in the light of innovative interpretations, correcting inaccurate - or tendentious - reconstructions that have found their way into scholarly essays, books, handbooks and monographs. Needless to say, all this makes the historian's task even more complicated.

I'll take some examples from my field of research, the history of philosophy. The state of the art seems to me to be far from satisfactory. We still lack an in-depth and comprehensive historical survey of German philosophy in the historical context of the 12 years of Nazi rule over the country. Most of the attention has been paid to Heidegger: then, as now, his case has gained public relevance and a strong resonance in the media. This focus on Heidegger, however, has not contributed to a reliable picture of the whole. Perhaps the opposite is closer to the truth: the more we build a reliable historical reconstruction, the better we will be able to understand individual cases. There are, of course, excellent studies and interesting investigations. And yet in Heidegger's case, no less than in many others, much depends and will depend on the available sources. The process of uncovering new evidence will probably continue in the future: scholars, but especially younger scholars of the new generations, should be ready by then. I'll take just one example here to show how slowly we are getting to know some relevant sources. Consider Karl Löwith's biographical text *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933*. Written in 1940, when Harvard University announced a prize for writings on life in Germany before and after Hitler's seizure of power, the book was published in 1986, many years after the author's death. But the first edition was incomplete. It omitted the parts about people who were still alive in 1986 and referred to people only by their initials, making it, at least in part, less useful from a historian's point of view. A full critical edition was only published in 2007, almost 70 years (!) after this extraordinary document was written. To mention other cases and to discuss the reasons for this general delay would go too far at this stage.

It is time to give the floor to the contributors to this volume. I would like to thank all of them for attending our conference and for their contributions. I would also like to thank the members of the research group for their support (Prof. Tullia Catalan, Prof. Paolo Labinaz, Dr. Irene Candelieri, Dr. Paolo Felluga and Dr. Andrea Sain). Last but not least, I would like to thank the University of Trieste for its financial support of the project.

Languages of “National Socialism”: From Reactionary Apocalypse to Social Media Clickbait

GEORGE LEAMAN

ABSTRACT

In this article I examine language used to define, express, and exploit “National Socialism”. These different uses vary in time and purpose, and need to be understood in context. The Nazis did not create much of the language most closely associated with National Socialism, but their use of certain language, symbols, and images has been so firmly established that we immediately recognize them even when partially spoken or indirectly referenced. This easy recognition, combined with the emotional charge of anger and horror, lends itself to commercial and political exploitation. I discuss this with examples from scholarly publishing and current events, and also discuss possibilities for crowd manipulation made possible by political use of interactive social networks.

My purpose in this article is to examine the language used to define, express, and exploit “National Socialism”, the amorphous set of recycled ideas that will forever be associated with the murderous practice that destroyed millions of lives and much of Europe¹. These different uses vary in time and purpose, and need to be understood in context. In other work I have been primarily interested in the various forms of support for Hitler and Nazism that were possible within

¹ This text is a revised version of the paper presented at the international workshop “Languages of National Socialism”, held November 12, 2021 at the University of Trieste in Italy. I thank Prof. Riccardo Martinelli for the invitation to participate in this event.

German philosophy at that time, and the mechanisms by which that support was expressed and encouraged². Here I will discuss larger issues, including commercial exploitation of this language and incentives for its continuing political use. When referring to the language or languages of National Socialism I am referring to words and symbols that have meaning within the coordinated political vocabulary of words, images, and uniformed spectacle that we recognize from the Nazi's entire self-presentation. This vocabulary is highly distinctive, and will always be emotionally charged with memories of ethnic hate, genocide, and the most destructive war in history. The original natural language and context of National Socialism was German, and Nazism will always be remembered as the uniquely German form of fascism. But the general political objectives of Nazism are familiar in any language and its murderous practice can be pursued in any country. This topic will remain relevant for continuing study as long as race and ethnic nationalism are used as justifications by any people to subjugate others.

A discussion of the language of National Socialism should begin with a brief review of familiar elements that are not specific to Nazism. The Nazis did not, for example, invent the language of anti-Semitic bigotry and racist superstitions widely shared in Europe at that time. Nor did they create German "racial science", with its analysis of the origin of Europe's populations and hierarchy of racial classifications. They also did not create the still common belief that personal character traits and cultural differences among countries can be explained by "biologically inherited factors" visible in any individual's face, skull shape, or physical features³. All of the language of "blood composition" (*Blutzusammensetzung*), "hereditary health" (*Erbgesundheit*), and the "looming demise of the Nordic race" (*drohender Untergang der nordischen Rasse*) had been in wide use in Germany well before the Nazis took power⁴. An extensive polemical literature

² G. Leaman, *Die Philosophie und Nationalsozialismus: Was ist noch aktuell?*, Arbeitskreis "Aufarbeitung" des Fachschaftrates Philosophie der Universität Leipzig, 14. Okt.2019; G. Leaman, *Offering Leibniz to Hitler: Otto Reichl Verlag and the Leibniz Ausgabe*, in: "Leibniz" in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, "Studia Leibnitiana – Sonderheft", 2012, pp. 75-86; G. Leaman, *Reflections on German Philosophy and National Socialism: What Happened and Why it Matters to Philosophy*, in: *Philosophie und Zeitgeist im Nationalsozialismus*, M. Heinz (Hrsg.) Königshausen und Neumann, 2006, pp. 233-250; G. Leaman, G. Simon, *Die Kant-Studien im Dritten Reich*, in: "Kant-Studien", Bd.85, Nr.4, 1994; G. Leaman, G. Simon, *Deutsche Philosophen und das Amt Rosenberg*, in: »Die besten Geister der Nation«: *Philosophie und Nationalsozialismus*. I. Korotin (Hrsg.), Picus Verlag, 1994, pp. 41-65; G. Leaman, G. Simon, *Deutsche Philosophen aus der Sicht des Sicherheitsdienstes des Reichsführers SS*, in: "Jahrbuch für Soziologiegeschichte" 1992, pp. 261-292; G. Leaman, *Heidegger im Kontext: Gesamtüberblick zum NS-Engagement der Universitätsphilosophen*, Hamburg, Argument Verlag, 1993.

³ For discussion of the international roots of the study of skull shape as science see J. Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815-1920*, University of Chicago Press, 2019.

⁴ Hans F. K. Günther's *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* was already in its 15th edition in 1933 and over 100,000 copies had been sold. See J.F. Lehmann Verlag in München: *Dienst am Deutschland 1890-1932*, in: "Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel", 100.Jg., Nr.1, 1933, p. 87.

based on the assumed biological supremacy of a “Germanic” or “Nordic race”, the so-called “Nordic idea”, had been in wide circulation in Germany and elsewhere for decades⁵. This supremacist belief was also a common premise of the several *Völkisch*, or German ethno-nationalist, political movements that had been a feature of the German political Right since the late 19th century. One also does not find original ideas in the Nazi Party’s official platform⁶. Each point of its “25-Point Program” could have been found in the literature of another German political party at that time. Even the concept of the German “national community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*), later seen as the core concept of National Socialism, was in wide use before the Nazi Party was established⁷.

The Nazis were unique in their combination of pan-Germanic ethnic nationalism and extreme anti-Semitism, with a mix of anti-capitalist sounding demands and collectivist goals. Their appeal combined nationalist resentment, ethnic bigotry, and hope, using language that emphasized German ethnic unity and political action for the “common good” (*Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz*). This combination was reflected in the name of the Party – *National Socialist German Workers Party* – which expressed an apparent consolidation of political forces from the nationalist Right and the working-class Left. The Nazi vision appeared to overcome German class divisions by asserting a biologically determined ethnic identity as the foundation for the German state, and followed the assumptions of German “racial science” and the “Nordic Idea” in presuming the biological superiority of Germanic peoples over non-Germans. Within this vision all “genuine” ethnic-Germans (*Volksgenossen*) shared a kind of equality, regardless of social standing or national borders. The Nazis called for invalidation of the treaties that ended World War I, expansion of Germany’s borders on the basis of national (ethnic) self-determination, and unification of all ethnic Germans in Europe. They amplified existing German prejudices, building on the popular conceit of a special German mission (*Sendung*) to lead other countries in life and culture⁸. They branded “Jews” as non-German enemies of a different “race”

⁵ A. J. Gregor, *Nordicism Revisited*, in: “Phylon”, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1961, pp. 351-360; H. J. Luthhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland 1920-1940*, Stuttgart, Klett Verlag, 1971.

⁶ “25-Punkte-Programm” der NSDAP, Februar 1920, <<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/25-Punkte-Programm>>; see also, R. Murphy (ed.), *National Socialism*, Washington, U.S. Department of State, 1943, pp. 222-25.

⁷ The original use was based on an understanding of the *Volk* that included all Germans, including Jews and Social Democrats. See M. Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft A Controversy in: Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, O. D. Pendas, M. Roseman, R. F. Wetzell (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 320.

⁸ This conceit was captured in an Imperial German political slogan taken from Emanuel Geibel’s poem “Deutschlands Beruf”. “Und es mag am deutschen Wesen, einmal noch die Welt genesen”. (And it may be up to German Spirit to heal the world once again). Similar sentiments in defense of assumed

and viewed “Jewishness” (*Judentum*) as a threat to cultural and ethnic “Germanness” (*Deutschtum*). In their view of the world, Soviet Communism, international “Marxism”, socialist labor unions, and Social Democrats were all related parts of an international “Jewish conspiracy”. The Nazis presented themselves as anti-Communist defenders of private property, but also emphasized collectivist social demands that may still resonate today, such as increasing employment and retirement benefits, nationalization of corporate trusts, land reform, profit-sharing, and abolition of unearned income. In 1942 the political theorist Franz Neumann described this combination of ethno-nationalist and strong working class appeals as “racial proletarianism”, and considered it to be the genuine theory of National Socialism and its most dangerous expression⁹. It combined the language of racial supremacy with ethnic solidarity to frame discussion of all political and economic problems. The Nazi appeal did not rely on rational persuasion and logical arguments. It could be *felt* by people who shared a sense of belonging to the same ethnic organism. Fostering this sense of belonging was a primary goal of Nazi propaganda, and it began with exploitation of shared prejudices and resentments. To succeed it needed public acceptance of an assumed “natural” superiority of racial “Germanness” as the foundation of a national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that had “natural” claims to power and territory.

Anti-Semitism was the main difference between the Nazi understanding of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and earlier conceptions. The Nazi version only included ethnic Germans identified by “German” blood (*Blut*), who were also said to share a special bond or rootedness to “German” soil (*Boden*), where ever that might be. The Nazis therefore required understandings of the “*Volk*” and the larger concept of the Germanic “race” that were broad enough to include Germans from all over central Europe, but also specific enough to exclude Jews and other non-Germans who shared the same language, history, and culture, and often the same political commitments and physical appearance. To put this in the German terms of that time, the Nazis understood the “*Volk*” to be a community of common blood (*Blutgemeinschaft*), that was also in part a community of common language (*Sprachgemeinschaft*), shared culture (*Kulturgemeinschaft*), and shared struggles and fate (*Kampf- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). The biological criteria they claimed as the essence of German strength and identity were always used in conjunction

special missions to “lead” or “civilize” other peoples have been expressed in every country that ever tried to establish colonial territories.

⁹ F. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, 1942, reprinted by Octagon Books, 1983, p. 188; note his description of the National Socialist structure as “a form of society in which the ruling groups control the rest of the population directly, without the mediation of the rational though coercive apparatus hitherto known as the state.” (p. 470); political use of social media has given this insight new urgency.

with language, culture, history, soul, spirit, and other non-biological criteria¹⁰. Widely shared assertions of a special historical mission (*geschichtlicher Auftrag*) for German culture, and claims for some unique expressive power of the German language, should also be understood in this context¹¹.

As a practical matter these inconsistencies in the Nazi discourse of racial purity and Germanic superiority were a political asset, not a problem. They made it easier for the Nazis to gain acceptance from others on the German Right who embraced some understanding of “Germanness” as their core political principle. They could look past the Nazi’s anti-Semitism and their *Blut und Boden* language of Germanic identity to find common cause with them as German nationalist voters and coalition partners. The shared desire to defend some idea of “Germanness” and eliminate perceived foreign threat, whatever the cost, was the common goal of the Nazi’s “National Revolution” in 1933. It included rejection of the supposed influence of “Jewishness” and “international finance”, and embraced a purge of the “unGerman spirit” (*undeutscher Geist*) from German public life. The Nazi language of active defense of “Germanness”, “Jewish” exclusion, and “Aryanization” was popular and widely accepted. It was used to justify the enforced process of “consolidation” (*Gleichschaltung*) that extended the Nazi Party’s reach into all aspects of German life, and was taken up and expressed in the professions, medicine, and law, as well as all fields of higher learning, including mathematics, physics, and psychology¹². In philosophy the Nazi language of Germanic superiority was expressed through the language of the philosophical tradition, including the language of Plato, Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Nietzsche. There was discussion and disagreement about the categories of German racial science, with dozens of interpretive efforts to find deeper meaning and better philosophical foundations for some understanding of National Socialism. It was conveyed in all the ways we would recognize today: university lectures, journal articles, books, conferences and meetings or professional societies, all with the general approval of multiple levels of Nazi government and Party bureaucracy. The same was true in other academic fields.

¹⁰ This is also true of the concept of race used in the most widely distributed German racial science literature. «Eine Rasse stellt sich dar in einer Menschengruppe, die sich durch die ihr eigene Vereinigung körperlicher Merkmale und seelischer Eigenschaften von jeder anderen (in solcher Weise) zusammengefassten Menschengruppe unterscheidet und immer wieder nur ihresgleichen zeugt» H. F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*, J. F. Lehmann, 1930, p. 15.

¹¹ E. Kühnemann, *Deutschtum als Sendung*, Leipzig, K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1930; R. Murphy (ed.), *National Socialism*, Washington, DC., U.S. Department of State, 1943, p.10.

¹² Understanding these efforts in each field therefore requires knowledge of the literature of the field published at that time, familiarity with the vocabulary and literature of German ethno-nationalism, and some familiarity with a spectrum of Nazi Party literature beyond *Mein Kampf* and *Der Mythos der 20. Jahrhunderts*.

Political and military success made it easy to ignore fundamental disagreements about the meaning of the racial categories in the Nazi doctrine of ethnic German supremacy and celebrate the apparent success of Germanic superiority in world historic terms. A common thread interpreted Nazi success as a historic rejection of the political legacy of the French Revolution of 1789, a shift of political thought away from the universalist assumption of the unity, fraternity, and equality of mankind¹³. A related view saw German victory in western Europe as an anti-capitalist challenge to the financial and political power of the western democracies, a rejection of “pseudo” universalism in favor of the ethnic-national community of German blood and race¹⁴. Others saw German victories as confirmation of the power of a Nordic-Germanic racial elite, and embraced a political concept for the domination of Europe that assumed Germans had the natural right to seize territory and “resettle” or eliminate whole populations however they wished. This was the SS vision of Germanic racial masters (*Herrenmenschen*) destroying “subhumans” (*Untermenschen*) and “Jews” as “vermin” (*Ungeziefer*). The mass executions in eastern Europe, systematic starvation of captured prisoners and civilian populations, and the Holocaust were outgrowths of this thinking. All of this was used to justify increasingly murderous practices that were sometimes turned on the German people themselves in the last months of the war to prevent German surrender.

The liberation of the camps in 1945 confirmed the full meaning of the Nazi language of Germanic superiority and elimination of “Jewishness”, and this was displayed to the world in the Nuremberg trials. For the Allies and victims of the Nazis the only remaining language of National Socialism was “denazification”, a flawed process whose intended purpose still retains a sense of justice¹⁵. For most Germans and Nazi collaborators, however, the remaining language of National Socialism became silence, often expressed through denial¹⁶. This was in part a consequence of defeat and the need to build new lives in a world controlled by others. But it was also due to human weakness in the face of complete moral disgrace. I didn’t know... I wasn’t there... It wasn’t me. The military version of this is now known as the Nuremberg defense: I was only following orders... These

¹³ J. Chapoutot, *How the Nazis Viewed History: The Time of Nature and the Abolition of History*, in: “Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire”, Vol. 117, Issue 1, 2013, 43-55; see also G. Krueger, *Um den Reichsgedanken*, in: “Historisches Zeitschrift”, Nr.165, Heft 3, 1941, pp. 457-471.

¹⁴ A. Baeumler, *Weltdemokratie und Nationalsozialismus: Die neue Ordnung Europas als geschichtsphilosophisches Problem*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1943.

¹⁵ This sense of just purpose can be seen in the use of the idea of “denazification” in other contexts that have nothing to do with postwar Germany; see A. K. Zeren, *From De-Nazification of Germany to De-Baathification of Iraq*, in: “Political Science Quarterly”, 132 (2), 2017, pp. 259-290.

¹⁶ This is a general statement about the behavior of individuals, applicable in particular to individuals who had been eager supporters of National Socialism in some form.

statements are seen now from the safe distance of time (*mit der Gnade der späten Geburt*) without looming threats of denunciation, disappearance, and execution. No one should say how they themselves would have behaved until confronted with the same circumstances. At the same time human weakness now is not different than it was then, and it is reasonable to see nothing deep or complicated about most of these denials of personal responsibility. Silence was accompanied by wide-spread lying, active efforts to deny and avoid legal or moral responsibility, that continued for decades. For university faculty who had been outspoken in their support of National Socialism or who joined the Nazi Party, such lying was also motivated by a desire to continue to teach and publish, and to retain pension benefits. It included quiet efforts to change the scholarly record, with unacknowledged changes of post-war editions of scholarly work originally published before 1945. This has had ripple effects through the entire system of scholarly communication and we are still working through the aftermath of this¹⁷.

Getting past silence and the distortions of the post-war period has been an ongoing effort, slowed by the need to work through archival records divided among multiple countries and jurisdictions, subject to access restrictions that reflected the post-war division of Europe. This process has unfolded differently in different subject areas, with the level of public interest often determined by the commercial success of books or films. Public discussion of this past in philosophy has been dominated by debates about the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, his support of Hitler, and the political dimension of his philosophical work. Detailed discussion of Heidegger and Nazism has been ongoing in academic and commercial publications for over *thirty years*¹⁸. It has become a subfield, with books, anthologies, special issues of journals and magazine, conferences, media discussion, filmed interviews, dedicated web sites, and on and on. How has it been possible to sustain continuing discussion of the same issues, circling around the same questions, for decades? A close look at this discussion points to circumstances and incentives that can make interpretive discussion of this past, including past use of the language of National Socialism, *more* difficult and less precise over time, even in scholarly work.

The current phase of the Heidegger discussion began in 2014 after publication of three volumes of his so-called “Black Notebooks”, as final volumes of

¹⁷ See G. Leaman, *Reflections on German Philosophy and National Socialism: What Happened and Why it Matters to Philosophy*, pp. 244-246; this problem includes post-war changes to unpublished manuscripts completed before 1945; see S. Kellerer, *Rewording the Past: The Postwar Publication of a 1938 Lecture by Martin Heidegger*, in: “Modern Intellectual History”, Vol.11, Nr.3, 2014, pp. 575-602.

¹⁸ For this article I am dating the beginning of this discussion with publication of V. Farias, *Heidegger et le nazisme*, Lagrasse, Éditions Verdier, 1987; and H. Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zur seiner Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1988, but there had been discussion of Heidegger and Nazism long before this.

his Collected Works. These volumes contain personal notes and reflections on a range of topics, and confirm the depth and continuity of his long-reported anti-Semitism. There are passages that make his Nazi Party membership and famously repeated affirmation of the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism seem obvious. They also show his anti-Semitism and reactionary political commitments framed within his philosophical language¹⁹, and reinforce questions about the political implications of his philosophical work. There was much surprise and shock at the depth of the anti-Semitism captured in his own words, and renewed interest in understanding how his political commitments are both visible and obscured in his philosophical work. It renewed attention to the disastrous supervision of the publication of his Collected Works that has been well documented as a scandal of philosophical scholarship²⁰. The fact that the content of the Black Notebooks was a surprise, after decades of research, is an indication of the impact that commercial publishing decisions and access restrictions have had on the long path of this discussion. It has also been affected by all too human denial of professional error, as some scholars have struggled to accept that past reception of Heidegger’s work had been partial or incorrect. This is a common problem in academic life, not unique to philosophy. Discussions can be carried on far longer than necessary by a refusal to accept new information. Most importantly, this discussion has been prolonged and distorted by the loss, removal, or unawareness of contextual information needed to understand words and actions from that time. It is not possible to make sound interpretive judgments about the meanings of philosophical language without knowing what was actually said and without a clear understanding of the historical setting and social context in which the language was originally used. In this case scholars have been encouraged to *avoid* reading Heidegger’s language in context and have not known what was said at the time²¹, and this has had

¹⁹ For an excellent discussion of this see D. Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks*, Cambridge, Polity Books, 2018.

²⁰ See T. Kisiel, *In Response to my Overwrought Critics*, in: “Studia Phaenomenologica”, Vol.7, 2007, pp. 545-552; T. Kisiel, *Review and Overview of Recent Heidegger Translations and Their German Originals: A Grassroots Archival Perspective*, in: “Studia Phaenomenologica”, 2005, pp. 277-300; T. Kisiel, *Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe: An International Scandal of Scholarship*, in: “Philosophy Today”, Vol.39, Nr.1, 1995, pp. 3-15; T. Kisiel, *Heidegger’s Gesamtausgabe as a Philosophical Problem: Prolegomena*, Heidegger Circle Proceedings, Vol.27, 1993, pp. 111-169.

²¹ «Stattdessen ist heute mehr denn je nötig, kritische Distanz zu Heideggers selbstreferentiellen Diskurs zu wahren und unerlässlich ist es, nüchterne Philologie in den Dienst der philosophischen Interpretation zu stellen. Eine Philosophie, die vom Leser Textthörigkeit einfordert, wird durchschaubar nur, wenn der Blick sich über die Texte hinaus auf den Kontext, und über den Kontext hinaus auf den historischen Zusammenhang richtet. Will man totalitäres Denken in der Moderne verstehen, so darf man sich Heideggers Forderung nach allein textimmanenter Auseinandersetzung mit seinen Werken nicht ausliefern. Statt losgelöst von sozialen und politischen Verflechtungen propagiert und hingegenommen zu werden, kann Ideengeschichte nur mit all ihren Wurzeln und Implikationen verstanden werden. Es ist

disastrous consequences. Discussion of meaning without contextual knowledge has sometimes had the effect of reducing unfamiliar details to a story of good and evil, accompanied by repetition of the same questions, with partial information and moral indignation. But despite this, *and perhaps because of this*, the discussion has continued, sustained by reader interest and publisher income. It seems plain that publishers have long recognized what attracts many readers and viewers to this discussion: the number of people who share some interest in the history or memory of Nazism is much larger than the number of people who share some interest in Heidegger. It is the emotional response to the legacy of Nazism that generates much of the attention that has sustained this discussion and publications can be commercially successful even when they are repetitious, historically inaccurate, or both. I will return to this below.

The language of Nazism still evoke passionate memories of ethnic hate and genocide, and their continuing potential for political mobilization is evident in the legal restrictions on the use of Nazi flags or symbols or flags in many countries²². This potential is also evident in their use by the various neo-Nazi, fascist, and ethnic supremacist groups that openly reject the idea of racial equality and multi-ethnic social cohesion²³. Use of Nazi language and symbols by different groups makes it easier for them to find common purpose. *Anti-Nazism* draws on the same passionate memories, and can mobilize resistance to ethnic hate and the politics of racial supremacy, as well as nationalist pride in the countries that fought Nazi Germany. As with commercial use of this language and memory of Nazism, any political use today may or may not accurately reflect the original context and history, but will still find political value in the emotional response to their use.

We have been witnessing a continuing demonstration of this in the Russian government's use of the language of anti-Nazism and "denazification, even the

weder philosophisch, noch philosophiegeschichtlich noch auch rezeptionsgeschichtlich belanglos, ob für Heidegger in den Jahren des Nationalsozialismus der »entfesselte Technizismus« einem geschichtlichen deutschen Auftrag diene und ob er damals der »entarteten Subjektivität« die authentische deutsche »Subjektivität« entgegenstellte. Gerade im Falle Heideggers wird deutlich, wie sehr das Herauslösen eines philosophischen Denkens aus seinem Kontext intellektuellem Leerlauf und Immunisierung gegen Kritik erzeugt», S. Kellerer, *Zerrissene Moderne: Descartes bei den Neukantianern, Husserl und Heidegger*, Konstanz University Press, 2013, p. 257.

²² Countries with such restrictions have included Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, as well as Germany and Austria. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bans_on_Nazi_symbols>.

²³ Rechtsextremismus: Symbole, Zeichen und verbotene Organisationen (2022), Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz. See also "Hate on Display" Hate Symbols Database maintained by the Anti-Defamation League at <<https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbols/search>> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identitarian_movement>.

declared goal of a “World Without Nazism” (Мир без нацизма)²⁴, to justify its invasion of Ukraine.²⁵ It has described the Ukrainian government as a group of “neo-Nazis and drug addicts”²⁶, and invoked the memory Soviet victory in the war against Nazi Germany to present itself as a defender of the people of Ukraine, and an anti-fascist liberator of Russian people and territory²⁷. In adopting this anti-Nazi posture of liberation the Russian government is claiming both self-defense and dominion over a territorial sphere defined for Russians in religious terms²⁸. Its choice of this emotionally charged language has been planned and sometimes elaborately staged (Figure 1).

²⁴ “World Without Nazism” is a Russian political organization founded in 2010 that uses anti-Nazism to mobilize support for Russian foreign policy in countries formerly occupied by the Soviet Union. See A. Zaitchik, *Anti-Anti-Semitism*, in: “Tablet Magazine”, Sept.20, 2010, <<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/anti-anti-semitism>>; see also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Without_Nazism>.

²⁵ *Decision taken on denazification, demilitarization of Ukraine – Putin*, TASS, Feb.24, 2022, <<https://tass.com/politics/1409189>>; see also: *World Without Nazism movement warns about threats Ukraine’s Nazi pose to ethnic minorities*, in: “TASS”, March 11, 2014. <<https://tass.com/world/723023>>.

²⁶ *Putin calls Ukraine government ‘drug addicts and neo-Nazis’*, Feb.25, 2022, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvneygfQ4iw>>.

²⁷ «“Antifascism” has become a central element of the new national idea and the motor of mass nationalist mobilization in today’s Russia. This “antifascism” addresses both internal and external publics: Russia’s own population and Russophones in the near abroad on the one hand, and the West on the other. With regards to the internal public, Russia’s crusade against “neo-fascism” in Ukraine and the Baltic states serves to mobilize and consolidate Russian society around a nationalist agenda, providing it with an “enemy” that resonates with the still-powerful narrative of the Great Patriotic War. Interestingly, the new Russian nationalist / imperialist discourse associates the revival of fascism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine with a Western conspiracy. Accusing the West of silent support for neo-Nazism (and evoking Russia’s historical mission of preventing its return to Europe) is part of a rhetoric that has its roots in the anti-Western propaganda of the Soviet era. At the same time, “Russia’s fight against fascism” in Ukraine and the Baltic states is a strong message to the West, above all to Europe, but also the US and Israel. Depicting the pro-western political elites in the post-Soviet states as fascist, Russia presents those states as a failed experiment in nation building (Ukraine as a failed state) and admonishes the countries of old Europe to reconsider the post-Cold War order in eastern Europe»; see T. Zhurzhenko, *Russia’s Never-Ending War against “Fascism”. Memory Politics in the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict*, in: “Eurozine”, 8 May 2015; <<https://www.eurozine.com/russias-never-ending-war-against-fascism/>> and <<https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/russias-never-ending-war-against-fascism-memory-politics-in-the-russian>>; see also M. Luxmoore, *‘Orange Plague’: World War II and the Symbolic Politics of Pro-state Mobilization in Putin’s Russia*, in: “Nationalities Papers”, 47(5), 2019, pp. 822-839.

²⁸ «The core of the Russian world today is Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the holy reverend Lavrenty of Chernigov expressed this idea with the famous phrase: ‘Russia, Ukraine, Belarus – this is Holy Russia.’ It is this understanding of the Russian world that is embedded in the modern self-name of our Church. The church is called Russian not on an ethnic basis. This name indicates that the Russian Orthodox Church performs a pastoral mission among peoples who accept the Russian spiritual and cultural tradition as the basis of their national identity, or at least as an essential part of it». Patriarch Kirill, *Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the Opening Ceremony of the Third Assembly of the Russian World*, November 3, 2009, <<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/print/928446.html>>; see also, “Article by Vladimir Putin “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians””, July 12, 2021, <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>>.



Figure 1. “For a world without Nazism, For Russia”²⁹.

For the use of anti-Nazi language to be effective in this good versus evil scenario the Russian government must be seen by its audience to be the “liberator”. This has gotten harder since the defeat of its gambit for a quick “liberation” of Ukraine, and the continuation of a full-scale war of ethno-national conquest³⁰. Russian use of the language of anti-Nazi liberation continues³¹, now explained to entail forced “de-Ukrainization” of the territory of Ukraine and elimination of Ukrainian sovereignty³². Russians who oppose the war have been denounced as “traitors and

²⁹ Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow, March 18, 2022, «За мир без нацизма, За Россию, За президента», <<https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-60798290>>.

³⁰ R. Anin, *How Putin Decided to Go to War*, in: “Istories”, May 16, 2022 (Романа Анина, “Как Путин принимал решение о войне?”) <<https://istories.media/opinions/2022/05/16/kak-putin-prinyal-reshenie-o-voine/>>.

³¹ For example: “*Putin lauds liberation of Mariupol as success and its liberators as heroes*”, April 21, 2022. <<https://tass.com/politics/1440949>>. “*Putin congratulates Russian troops on ‘liberating’ Ukraine’s Luhansk region*”, July 4, 2022. <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-congratulates-russian-troops-liberating-ukraines-luhansk-region-2022-07-04/>>.

³² «Denazification is a set of measures aimed at the nazified population [of Ukraine], which technically cannot be subjected to direct punishment like war criminals ... a significant part of the masses of the people ... are passive Nazis ... The name “Ukraine” apparently cannot be retained as the title of any fully denazified state entity in a territory liberated from the Nazi regime. ... Denazification is inevitably also de-Ukrainization: a rejection of the artificial inflation of the ethnic self-identification of the population of the territories of historical Little Russia and New Russia»; see S. Timofei, *What Russia Should Do With Ukraine*, in: “RIA Novosti”, 3 April 2022. Original text: Тимофей Сергеев (2022), “Что Россия должна сделать с Украиной”, РИА НОВОСТИ, April 3, 2022, <<https://ria.ru/20220403/ukraina-1781469605.html>>.

scum”³³, and legal restrictions have been imposed to prevent characterization of Russia as the aggressor – even to prevent the use of the word “war” to describe the invasion³⁴. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is now presented as a continuing struggle of good versus evil with shifting objectives³⁵, celebrated with traditional Russian military symbols³⁶, that Russian citizens cannot call a “war” without risk of a prison sentence. The moral force of anti-Nazi discourse of liberation is being used to fuel Russian nationalism, silence opposition, and disguise imperial ambition.

The Ukrainians have their own memories of Nazism, German invasion and anti-fascist liberation, and those memories have been used, along with the language and symbols of Nazism, to mobilize national resistance to the Russian in-

³³ “Putin warns Russia against pro-Western ‘traitors’ and scum”, March 16, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-warns-russia-against-pro-western-traitors-scum-2022-03-16/>>; “‘Scum and traitors’: Putin threatens Russians who oppose war in Ukraine – video”, March 17, 2022, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2022/mar/17/scum-and-traitors-putin-threatens-russians-who-oppose-war-in-ukraine-video>>.

³⁴ “Soviet Rock Star Prosecuted for ‘Putin’s Ass’ Anti-War Speech”, May 19, 2022, <<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/05/19/soviet-rock-star-prosecuted-for-putins-ass-anti-war-speech-a77732>>. “Moscow city councillor gets seven years’ jail for anti-war comment”, July 8, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/moscow-city-councillor-gets-seven-years-jail-anti-war-comment-2022-07-08/>>; see: “Russian 2022 Laws Establishing War Censorship and Prohibiting Anti-War Statements and Calls for Sanctions”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_2022_war_censorship_laws>; also: “Putin ally moves to up jail time for insulting the army, protect mercenaries”, March 1, 2023 <<https://www.reuters.com/world/russian-law-amendments-punish-discrediting-military-including-voluntary-2023-03-01/>>.

³⁵ “Russia does not want war with Ukraine, says Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov”, January 28, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-does-not-want-war-with-ukraine-says-russian-foreign-minister-lavrov-2022-01-28/>>.

“Russia’s Lavrov questions Ukraine’s right to sovereignty - Ifax”, February 22, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-lavrov-questions-ukraines-right-sovereignty-ifax-2022-02-22/>>.

“Russia’s Lavrov says Moscow wants Ukrainian people to be independent”, February 25, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-lavrov-says-moscow-wants-ukrainian-people-be-independent-2022-02-25/>>.

“Lavrov says Russia will continue Ukraine war till ‘the end’”, March 3, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-lavrov-no-doubt-that-solution-ukraine-crisis-will-be-found-2022-03-03/>>.

“Russia will not pause military operation in Ukraine for peace talks”, April 11, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-will-not-pause-military-operation-ukraine-peace-talks-2022-04-11/>>.

“Lavrov says Russia does not want war in Europe”, May 11, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/lavrov-says-russia-does-not-want-war-europe-2022-05-11/>>.

“Russia declares expanded war goals beyond Ukraine’s Donbas”, July 20, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/lavrov-says-russias-objectives-ukraine-now-go-beyond-donbas-2022-07-20/>>.

“Lavrov pledges ‘full protection’ for any territory annexed by Russia”, September 25, 2022, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/lavrov-un-pledges-full-protection-any-territory-annexed-by-russia-2022-09-24/>>.

³⁶ The orange and black Georgian ribbon is an old Russian military symbol used on many flags and decorations, including the Soviet medal “For the Victory Over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945”. Since 2005 it has been used in Russia on May 9 in Victory Day ceremonies and has become a symbol of nationalist support for the Russian government. See P. Kolsto, *Symbol of the War – But Which One? The St George Ribbon in Russian Nation-Building*, in: “Slavonic and East European Review” 94(4), 2016, pp. 660-701; also *Russia awash with symbols of WW2 victory*, BBC, May 8, 2015, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32650024>>.

vasion (Figure 2). This use seems less complicated and easier to understand, and likely to remain more consistent.



Figure 2. “We defeated Nazism - We will also defeat rashism”³⁷.

Possibilities for commercial and political exploitation of the languages of Nazism have been evolving in new ways since the development of interactive online networks and targeted communication between websites and individual users. The major search engines and social media platforms have created networks of individuals with common interests by recording and analyzing their online behavior. Each user’s data and search history are used to create sub-networks of like-minded users, who then communicate with others and provide more usage and search data to each site. Data on all users of a platform, or multiple platforms, can be aggregated and analyzed for identification of common preferences. The more usage and search data recorded for each individual, the greater the predictive power of the behavioral data captured for each profile. We are now in the age of unlimited data collection, storage, and commodification, with continuous collection and deployment of user data now possible on a vast scale in real time.³⁸ Analysis of this data can predict

³⁷ Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance, May 2022; <<https://www.uzhnu.edu.ua/en/news/pro-nashu-pamyat-i-nashu-peremogu.htm>>, “Rashism” combines the words “russian” and “fascism” to characterize the Russian invasion of Ukraine from the Ukrainian perspective; see <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashism>>.

³⁸ Shoshana Zuboff has described the business model behind this phenomenon as “surveillance capitalism”, defined thus: «I define surveillance capitalism as the unilateral claiming of private human experience

the behavior of likely voters as well as customers, or identify potential political opponents instead of business competitors. We are living through a revolution in the technology of commercial and political communication, with new possibilities for the control or distortion of public discussion for commercial or political benefit, driven by age-old human desires to maximize wealth and power.³⁹

While few people alive today have personal experience from the Nazi era, much of the history of the period, including the Holocaust and the anti-Nazi death struggle of the Second World War, remains familiar. It has been well documented, and is firmly established in popular culture and modern memory. Certain words, images, and symbols (even fonts⁴⁰) are instantly recognizable as signifiers of Nazism and genocide, and this makes them useful in attracting attention. What might be called the Nazi “brand” is easily recognizable because the unified iconic language of National Socialism created by the Nazis has survived them, and it is still being used as a commercial tool and a political weapon in struggles about ethnic nationalism and racial supremacy.⁴¹ The combination of easy recognition and emotionally charged political identification of good and evil can make it particularly useful in the online information space. Social media usage is increased and monetized by conflict, real or imagined, and each user’s online experience is determined in part by algorithmic responses to user action designed to hold user attention. Such use of the language of this “brand” does not require knowledge of the history of that time. In fact, *it does not require any historical knowledge at all*. It only requires recognition of the highly charged polarity of good and evil associated with this language, and awareness of predictable user reactions generated when it is invoked.

We should expect distortion and *overuse* of the language and symbols of Nazism in this environment because they generate interest and can hold user attention⁴²,

as free raw material for translation into behavioral data. These data are then computed and packaged as prediction products and sold into behavioral futures markets – business customers with a commercial interest in knowing what we will do now, soon, and later. It was Google that first learned how to capture surplus behavioral data, more than what they needed for services, and used it to compute prediction products that they could sell to their business customers, in this case advertisers. But I argue that surveillance capitalism is no more restricted to that initial context than, for example, mass production was restricted to the fabrication of Model T’s». S. Zuboff, interview with *The Harvard Gazette*, March 4, 2019. <<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/03/harvard-professor-says-surveillance-capitalism-is-undermining-democracy/>>.

³⁹ The attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 demonstrated the power of this technology. The crowd was mobilized with the help of social media memes that made explicit use of Nazi, white supremacist, and “identitarian” symbols. The actual history of these symbols or correct rendering of them was not important. What mattered was their power to generate emotional identification with the cause of the Leader among people ready for violence.

⁴⁰ For an example of such a font see “Tannenberg Fett”.

⁴¹ See N. O’Shaughnessy, *Marketing the Third Reich: Persuasion, Packaging and Propaganda*, Routledge, 2018; N. O’Shaughnessy, *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand*, Hurts & Co, 2016.

⁴² «Godwin’s law (or rule) of Nazi analogies is an Internet adage asserting that, as an online discussion grows longer (regardless of topic or scope), the probability of a comparison to Nazis or Adolf Hitler ap-

and so easily lend themselves to creation of click-bait memes. These jumbles of images and text often appear silly and just for fun, using ironic humor to attract the attention of - and identify - other social media users who get the joke⁴³. A click on the image confirms user engagement and is a voluntary form of self-identification to the social media platform that hosts it. User interest in particular topics and images is tracked across platforms⁴⁴, making it possible to choose images and texts that will generate the most response⁴⁵ and keep the audience engaged⁴⁵. The accuracy and purpose of the message is irrelevant; what matters to the platform is the ability to track and hold user interest so usage can be monetized. Social media usage tracking also makes click-bait memes useful for political organizing, with humor used as camouflage for political messages to build online communities of like-minded people. Short, funny messages can serve the same function as political leaflets, with no concern for accuracy or attribution (Figure 3).



Figure 3. “I bet you did ‘not see’ that coming”.

proaches 1. Promulgated by the American attorney and author Mike Godwin in 1990, Godwin’s law originally referred specifically to Usenet newsgroup discussions. He stated that he introduced Godwin’s law in 1990 as an experiment in memetics. Later it was applied to any threaded online discussion, such as Internet forums, chat rooms, and comment threads, as well as to speeches, articles, and other rhetoric where *reductio ad Hitlerum* occurs»; see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godwin%27s_law>.

⁴³ H. Lewis, *The Joke’s on Us*, in: “The Atlantic”, September 20, 2020. <<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/09/how-memes-lulz-and-ironic-bigotry-won-internet/616427/>>.

⁴⁴ Know Your Meme: Internet Meme Database, <<https://knowyourmeme.com/>>; see also: <<https://www.facebook.com/knowyourmeme/>> and <<https://www.youtube.com/knowyourmeme>>.

⁴⁵ M. Lewis, *How to Use Memes to Create Social Media Engagement*, in: “SocialMediaToday”, April 3, 2012, <<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/how-use-memes-create-social-media-engagement>>.

Whether one laughs or not, it is clear that humor is intended to soften the impact of an image of Hitler in full-throated roar. Perhaps the next image from the same site would be an altered image of Hitler with someone else's face and another text to demonize a contemporary politician.⁴⁶ User response to the image, filtered through the algorithms of the commercial social media platforms and search engines, would determine what comes next after that, regardless of the original context or history of what is posted. With good animation and deep fake videos, even "Pepe the Frog" could become a symbol of the Nordic hero of the future.⁴⁷ This sounds absurd, but the online information space is already full of misinformation and absurd fictions that use Nazi symbols to feed conflict and engage users for political or commercial purposes.⁴⁸ The language, images, and symbols of Nazism will continue to be used as instruments, without regard to the actual history of that time, as long as some advantage is found in their ability to hold user attention.

⁴⁶ Hitler memes have been part of U.S. politics for years. See V. Heffernan, *The Hitler Meme*, in: "The New York Times", Oct.24, 2008; N. Lederman, *Playing the Nazi Card: Comparing Obama to Hitler becomes a standard right-wing trope*, in: "FAIR", March 1, 2010; E. Greenberg, *The Meme That Cried Hitler: American Alternatives to Hitler Hyperbole in the Age of Trump*, in: "Topics of Meta", August 14, 2018.

⁴⁷ "Pepe the Frog" is an internet meme used for white supremacist messaging, in conjunction with "Kek" symbols based on National Socialist designs. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepe_the_Frog> and documentary film "Feels Good Man" (2020); also J. Demsky, *That Is Really Meme: Nazi Pepe the Frog and the Subversion of Anglo-American Holocaust Remembrance in Nazi and Holocaust Representations in Anglo-American Popular Culture, 1945–2020*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp.105-125.

⁴⁸ The evidence of this is overwhelming. See for example D. Mastrangelo, *Elon Musk blasted for tweeting Adolf Hitler meme*, in: "The Hill", Feb.17, 2022; A. Slisco, *Oklahoma GOP Posts Facebook Meme Comparing Unvaccinated to Jews in Nazi Germany*, in: "Newsweek", July 30, 2021; R. Evans, *White Boy Summer, Nazi Memes and the Mainstreaming of White Supremacist Violence*, in: "Bellingcat", July 1, 2021; "False claims about George Soros", Sept. 29, 2020, <<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-false-george-soros-claims/fact-check-false-claims-about-george-soros-idUSKBN23P2XJ>>. This also applies to online gaming. For example, "Heal Hitler" is an online game built around language from *Mein Kampf* that is presented as a psychological simulation. The premise is to "heal" Hitler with talk therapy in 1925, the year *Mein Kampf* was published. Inflammatory anti-Semitic rants are repeated in the context of "healing" (or "heil machen"), and this both obscures and reinforces their shock appeal.

National Socialist Language as Exemplified by the SS Propaganda Unit Kommando Adria: Combat Propaganda Platoon of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers

RENÉ MÖHRLE

ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that language is political and thus accomplishes political action, this article analyzes Nazi occupation propaganda in occupied northeastern Italy for the period from November 1943 to January 1945¹. Using the example of written language of the SS propaganda unit “Kommando Adria,” which has hardly been considered in research, and which was deployed in the Adriatic Littoral, a differentiation is made between internal communication and propaganda directed outward². Central questions of the analysis are: What linguistic means did the Adria Kommando use to accompany the German occupation regime? How did internal communiqués differ linguistically from the propaganda produced for the widest possible public? And finally, to what extent did language specifics exist for the multi-ethnic area inhabited equally by Italians, Slovenes and Croats

1. CONTEXT NAZI PROPAGANDA

«The victory of an idea will be all the more possible the more comprehensively the propaganda has worked on the people as a whole and the more exclusive, tight and steady is the organization that practically carries out the struggle»³.

¹ H. Kämper, A. Plewnia, *Sprache in Politik und Gesellschaft. Perspectives and Approaches*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022.

² Comparative to this method: Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust research. An analysis*, Chicago, 2001.

³ A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Munich, 1936, pp. 653-655.

Hitler's roadmap to power, formulated in "Mein Kampf" in 1925, clearly defined the functions of propaganda and the demands on it. In interplay with the still insignificant Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), it was to achieve political milestones, each of which imposed different conditions on the broad impact of propaganda: first, the recruitment of members; second, the overthrow of existing structures; third, the establishment of a new state; fourth, its expansion. As a structure of rule, the interplay of propaganda and violence was fundamentally aimed at the permanent recruitment of active and passive members. While this concept was effective domestically among large parts of the German population until 1933 and ultimately remained so until 1945, the National Socialist occupation regime lacked any basis abroad (apart from Austria and German-speaking enclaves of the former Habsburg Empire)⁴. From September 1943 onward, Nazi propaganda experts in Italy and parts of the former Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had to address the German occupation not as foreign rule but as a common defense of Europe against a Bolshevik threat.

The German oppression of Italians, Slovenes and Croats in the so-called Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland (OZAK) was characterized by terror and intensive propaganda. The high significance of propaganda in National Socialism (NS) was due, first, to the establishment of the NSDAP as a mass party and Hitler's assumption of government in this context. Second, Joseph Goebbels, with the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (RMVP) founded less than two months later in March 1933, succeeded in rapidly gaining control over all media and cultural life in Germany⁵. Third, in August 1938, Goebbels concluded an agreement with Wilhelm Keitel, the head of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), whereby "propaganda warfare was recognized as an essential means of warfare on a par with armed warfare"⁶. The propaganda companies (PK) established by the RMVP were integrated into the Wehrmacht, first on a trial basis and then systematically. War correspondents, fighting soldiers and journalists at the same time, were praised by Goebbels as a National Socialist invention and strictly distinguished from war correspondents, although Benito

⁴ With the July 1932 election, the NSDAP advanced to become the strongest party in the Reichstag with 37.4%, followed by the SPD with 21.6%. In parallel, the number of NSDAP members grew from about 100,000 in 1929 to about 850,000 in 1933 and about 8.5 million in 1945; H. A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen. German History 1806-1933*, München, C.H. Beck, 2020, pp. 515-516.

⁵ K. Dussel, *Wie erfolgreich war die nationalsozialistische Presselenkung?*, in: «VfZ», n. 4 (58), 2010, p. 546; cf.: C. Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin/New York, 2007, p. 4.

⁶ BArch: R 55/197/4; quoted from: D. Kohlmann-Viand, *NS-Presspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die ‚Vertraulichen Informationen‘ als Mittel der Presselenkung*, Munich/London/New York/Paris, Saur, 1991, p.48.

Mussolini is said to have served as a certain role model because he reported on the war as a soldier and editor-in-chief of the *Popolo d'Italia* in 1915⁷.

The PK man is not a reporter in the conventional sense, but a soldier. In addition to his pistol and hand grenade, he carries other weapons with him: the film camera, the Leica, the drawing pencil or the writing pad. He has been trained in the troops, he lives as a soldier among soldiers⁸.

In the middle of the war, Hitler strengthened Keitel's influence on the Wehrmacht propaganda units in February 1941 to the effect that they were directly subordinate to the OKW, but the RMVP continued to be responsible for the staffing⁹. This did not change until the beginning of 1943, when the new office of Chief of Propaganda Troops in the OKW under Hasso von Wedel was completely reorganized as an independent branch of the Wehrmacht. This development documented the fundamental importance of propaganda (as a weapon) in war¹⁰. It was not until 1944 that a reduction in personnel began in the Wehrmacht propaganda troops, which at their peak numbered 15,000 men. It was not until the Russian campaign and the first deployment of Waffen SS units that separate SS propaganda units came into use. While the Wehrmacht propaganda units were gradually disbanded at the end of the war, on May 2, 1945, Standartenführer Gunther d'Alquen, as head of the SS propaganda units, was given overall command of the propaganda units¹¹.

The diverse and competitive propaganda structures also formed in the Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland in the northeast of the country with the German occupation of Italy in September 1943. OZAK was largely governed by the SS, with Obergruppenführer Friedrich Rainer as Supreme Commissioner and his former companion Gruppenführer Odilo Globočnik as Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer (HSSPF). In the Adriatic Littoral, General Ludwig Kübler, as head of the local Wehrmacht units, represented the third power entity. On Gauleiter Rainer's staff, which was exclusively Austrian and had been brought from Carinthia, Obersturmführer Karl Lapper headed the Propaganda Main Office¹².

⁷ BArch: R 55/600/11, quoted from: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁸ Goebbels, quoted from: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁹ Hitler's order, 10.2.1941, quoted in: O. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz. Deutsche Propaganda im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart, Seewald Verlag, 1978, p. 24; Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 39; P. Longeric, *Propagandisten im Krieg. Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop*, Munich, de Gruyter, 1987, pp. 109-125.

¹⁰ M. Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945. Organizations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany*, London et al., Faber and Faber, 1979; Dussel, *op.cit.*, p. 543.

¹¹ BArch: R 55/603/130, quoted in: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

¹² Karl Lapper: party and SA member, former propaganda chief first of the NS youth movement then of the Gau of Carinthia; BA Koblenz, RMVP, R 55/JN 600, Akten 104/110, 8/9 October 1943; F.

After Rainer's visit to Berlin in November 1943, Himmler approved the establishment of the propaganda unit Kommando Adria for OZAK as a sub-division of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers. Hauptsturmführer Franz Hradetzky was appointed head of the unit, who, in consultation with Lapper, increasingly gained influence over "civil propaganda" in addition to organizing "combat" and "active" propaganda¹³.

The Kommando Adria provided the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Deutsche Adria Zeitung* (DAZ) and was the publisher of the quadrilingual weekly *Adria Illustrierte* (AI) as well as of the papers *Libertà*, *La Voce di Furlania*, *Sloboda*, *Svoboda*, *San Giusto*, *Nova Fronta*, and of posters, exhibitions, training booklets for German and allied soldiers, for leaflets scattered among the enemy during combat operations with paper grenade launchers, and scatter slips. Without letting the threads out of his hands, Rainer's propaganda apparatus served the structures of the OKW, RMVP and SS, which were used in parallel to establish regional coverage.

With regard to the development of Nazi propaganda, it should also be noted that, since the beginning of the war, it has contained changing enemy images and contradictions in propagandistic core statements, which were ultimately balanced out by the mythically exaggerated cult of Hitler as "savior". According to Cornelia Schmitz-Berning in her analysis of the vocabulary of National Socialism, the Nazi language reacted to political upheavals, for example, by introducing numerous neologisms, but in the end offered much less originality than modified what already existed. For example, in the context of wartime and labor service, the term "human material" was used to mean "the people available to the Führer and the party for the realization of their goals"¹⁴. Ironically, the first evidence of the use of the term human material can be found in Karl Marx's *Capital* as early as 1867 and, at the turn of the century, as a central concept of "racial hygiene"¹⁵.

The National Socialists' active language policy described a cultural turning point¹⁶. Media such as daily newspapers, high-circulation magazines and the

Albanese, "Rallegratevi della guerra temete la pace!" *Note sulla propaganda nazista nel Litorale Adriatico 1943-1945*, in: «Qualestoria», n. 1 (25), June 1997, p. 179; M. Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik*, Munich, de Gruyter Saur, 2003, p. 96, p. 130.

¹³ Franz Hradetzky (*1906 in Klagenfurt), doctor of law, since 1930 in the NSDAP, since 1932 judge, since 1935 in the SS, 1938-39 Kreisleiter in Leibnitz, 1939-43 in Carinthia, 1942-45 in Villach, on Himmler's personal staff, since November 1943 head of Kommando Adria; BAArch Berlin: DZA Potsdam, Film Nr. 6305, Aufn. 3831390; SS-Versch. Prov. film no. 6310, record 3837901; Pers. staff RFSS, film no. 1695, record 2551805.

¹⁴ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 399.

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 402.

¹⁶ V. Klemperer, *LTI. Lingua Tertii Imperii. Die Sprache des Dritten Reiches*, Leipzig 1991; D. Sternberger, G. Storz, W. E. Süskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen*, Hamburg, Claassen, 1957.

radio (“Volksempfänger”), became multipliers of Nazi ideology. The linguistic-ideological basis of all this content was formed by binding language regulations, which Goebbels announced or ordered before the representatives and correspondents of German newspapers during his daily Reich press conferences held in the Ministry of Propaganda since July 1933.

Goebbels’ systematic interventions in the use and meaning of language were divided by Jürgen Wilke into 23 categories, ranging from a ban on publication and communication, to a command or request to refrain, to permission¹⁷. From 1933 to the beginning of the war, about 15,000 language orders were issued, and about 60-80,000 more by the end of the war. According to Konrad Dussel, these instructions were implemented without any gaps, so that no “resistance or even renitence [was] to be expected - to say nothing of open resistance”¹⁸. Wilkes and Dussel’s work therefore also dispel the widespread postwar myth that German journalists offered resistance between the lines while working in the “gleichgeschaltet” media. On the contrary, as the linguistic driving force of the regime, they implemented all the language regulations from the RMVP one-to-one in their newspapers and magazines. Three examples of Goebbels interventions:

1. “The phrases *Catholic people, church people, Protestant people* are to be avoided at all costs. There is only one German people.” (11.8.1936)
2. “It is requested not to misuse the word *propaganda*. *Propaganda* is, in a sense, a legally protected term in the sense of the new state and should not be used for derogatory things. So there is no *atrocit y propaganda*, no *Bolshevik propaganda*, but only atrocit y agitation, atrocit y campaign, etc. In short - propaganda only when for us; agitation when against us.” (28.7.1937).
3. “*brave* only for German soldiers.” (11.9.1939)¹⁹;

The Nazi regime implemented a language policy that reintroduced, erased, reinterpreted, or replaced terms. Their (non-)application was taken into account via the RMVP in the entire public cultural sector as well as in ministries and authorities, in encyclopedias, dictionaries, encyclopedias, school textbooks, scientific literature, fiction, etc.²⁰ How rigorously this standardized language was imple-

¹⁷ J. Wilke, *Press Instructions in the Twentieth Century. Erster Weltkrieg, Drittes Reich, DDR*, Cologne, 2007, pp. 115-117; Dussel, *op.cit.*, p. 553.

¹⁸ H. Odermann, *Die vertraulichen Presseanweisungen aus den Konferenzen des Nazi-Propagandaministeriums*, in: «Zeitschrift f r Geschichtswissenschaft», n. 13, 1965, p. 1367.

¹⁹ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

²⁰ E.g., the “Political ABC of the New Reich,” “The ABC of National Socialism,” or the “Pocket Dictionary of National Socialism”; Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. XIV.

mented was also shown by corrections in “Mein Kampf”, in which the words fanatical or fanaticism were replaced if they had negative connotations (e.g., “fanatical savagery of Judaism”). After all, according to official language, “*fanaticism* had become the highest qualification of a National Socialist in the *Third Reich*”²¹.

2. SS COMMAND ADRIA: COMBAT PROPAGANDA PLATOON OF THE SS STANDARTE KURT EGGERS

The personnel of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers were trained in Berlin Zehlendorf. They were Waffen-SS soldiers who were also journalists and reported on (their own) battles, which they documented and published via articles, photos and films. The original task of the SS Propaganda Unit, founded in 1940, was to accompany the media presence of the Waffen-SS as a new weapons carrier with as much publicity as possible. In this way, they effectively competed with the propaganda companies of the Wehrmacht. With regard to the efficiency of SS propaganda, Goebbels is said to have called for its reduction during the early Russian campaign, since the Waffen SS units had only made up 5% of the Eastern Army, but to the displeasure of the OKW, they accounted for 30-40% of all war reports in the German media²².

The SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers did not receive its name until October 1943. It was formed in 1940 as a war correspondent company, upgraded to a war correspondent detachment in August 1941, and to a Standarte (regiment) in December 1943. Kurt Eggers was the former editor of “Das Schwarze Korps” who was killed in action for the 5th SS Panzer Division near Kharkov in August 1943. The founder and head of the propaganda unit from beginning to end was Gunter d’Alquen²³.

The Kommando Adria subdivision was set up in 1943 to operate in the multi-ethnic and partisan-ridden area of OZAK, to carry out “the elaboration and implementation of all propaganda measures in accordance with the instructions of the Supreme Commissar and Higher SS and Police Leader”²⁴. Central, according to Hradetzky, was the “enlightenment about German politics and

²¹ Ivi, p. 8.

²² W. Augustinovic, M. Moll, «Gunter D’Alquen. Propagandist of the SS State», in: R. Smelser, E. Syring, *Die SS. Elite under the Skull. 30 Lebensläufe*, Paderborn, 2000, p. 106.

²³ Gunther d’Alquen (* 14.10.1910), at last 30.1.1937 SS-Standartenführer, holder of the golden badge of honor of the NSDAP, chief editor for “Schwarzes Korps”, since 1939 Waffen-SS, since 1940 head of war reporting SS; Augustinovic, Moll, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-118.

²⁴ Other subunits of SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers: Scorpion (West), Südstern (Italy), Nordstern (North), Wintermärchen (East and North); Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (ARS): F2/III/361.

warfare (as distinct from fascism), about the goals of Bolshevism and gang leadership, about their economic, religious and personal attitudes.” As the partisan warfare increased, the focus then shifted to “calls to defect, the proclamation and explanation of the amnesty, reports of success, and accounts of the general gang warfare.”²⁵

Hradetzky reported that the unit had consisted of three men in November 1943 and in the summer of 1944 had included “50 Reichsdeutsche Führer, Unterführer, and men” and “150 national auxiliaries”²⁶. The commando squad stationed in Trieste was in charge of a total of five operational squads stationed in the urban centers of Trieste, Fiume, Pola, Gorizia, and Udine. The Command Squad was in charge of the technical organization, administration, production of leaflets, posters, photos, drawings and films. The outreach squads were responsible for disseminating the material, holding meetings and speeches, reconnoitering the mood within the population and the troops, and advising the command squad. Furthermore, the task structure of the Adria Kommando differentiated between press, broadcasting and operations squads.

Six members of the press unit, including the editor-in-chief and five editors, were with the Deutsche Adria Zeitung, which appeared daily in German from January 14, 1944, to April 29, 1945, as the newest member of the series of German occupation newspapers²⁷. Six other members of the unit performed the same duties at Adria Illustrierte, which appeared weekly as a quadrilingual revue (German, Italian, Slovenian, Croatian) from April 22, 1944, to April 28, 1945. Four members of the radio crew worked as permanent employees at the Trieste radio station, which had belonged to the Milan EIAR station during the fascist period, was first assigned to the Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft in Vienna with the German

²⁵ Hradetzky, 26.6.1944: “Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944,” in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

²⁶ Organigram Kommando Adria: Obersturmführer Franz Hradetzky (unit commander), O.strmf. Hermann Pirich (main DAZ chief), U.strmf. Wilhelm Henke (deputy; main chief AI), O.scharf. Hanns Schneider-Bosgard (deputy), O.scharf. Josef Schifko (head of film), O.scharf. Otto Jung (head of company propaganda), O.scharf. Otto Schreiber (head of Adria Verlag), O.scharf. Walter Döring (head of DAZ), O.scharf. Werner Schilf (head of shortwave broadcasts), O.scharf. Hermann Fischer (Einsatzgruppenführer Trieste), O.scharf. Werner Sauer (head of Prop. Gruppenstab Ost), U.scharf. Wilibald Janzowski (head of Adria Verlag), U.scharf. Hans Adolf Blau (Adria Verlag), U.scharf. Hans Rathmann (liaison to Wehrmacht), U.scharf. Heribert Huber (church and culture officer), U.scharf. Josef Offergeld (head of training), Oberwachtmeister Roman Zenzinger (illustrator); Hradetzky to Globočnik, 22 Oct. 1944, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

²⁷ Krakauer Zeitung, Deutsche Zeitung in Norwegen (Oslo), Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden (Amsterdam), Brüsseler Zeitung, Pariser Zeitung, Deutsche Zeitung in Kroatien (Agram), Deutsche Nachrichten in Griechenland (Athen), Donauzeitung (Belgrade), Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland (Riga), Kauener Zeitung, Revaler Zeitung, Deutsche Ukraine-Zeitung (Luzk), Minsker Zeitung and Deutsche Adria Zeitung (Trieste); S. Burmistr, *Die „Minsker Zeitung“. Selbst- und Fremdbilder in der nationalsozialistischen Besatzungspresse*, Berlin, Metropol Verlag, 2014, p. 85.

occupation, and then broadcast its own program as an independent station. The station engaged in intensive political work, using secret transmitters to influence opponents and intercepting enemy intelligence.

Popular as a media format because of its music program and the daily (news) broadcasts, some of which lasted several hours, also in Italian, Slovenian and Croatian, the radio seemed to have had the greatest impact. The DAZ, which all mayors of OZAK were required to receive, appeared only in German, but it contained all of Rainer's orders, which were not only important for survival in view of the curfews that had to be observed, but also because of the food rations for the population that were declared here every week. The AI seemed to be more popular as a print format because of its large-format picture reports including subtitles in four languages, also because the articles always had a local reference and focused on the local ethnic groups as allies at eye level.

Further personnel of the Adria Kommando were propagandists who agitated covertly in local businesses. In a propaganda school, Italian, Slovenian and Croatian informers were trained as national employees. Their task was to spread rumors via the Whispering Propaganda campaign. Temporarily, it was also possible to use airlifts, which dropped leaflets and wrote slogans in "skywriting", e.g. "Work is honor, (...) Amnesty, Run over!"²⁸.

On March 2, 1944, the higher SS and police leader Globočnik ordered Hradetzky to submit a brief report to him daily at ten o'clock on the activities of his unit²⁹. This circumstance and the personnel development of 200 men recorded by Hradetzky for that time described the point in time from which the Kommando Adria might have been fully operational and indispensable as a political factor for Rainer and Globočnik. However, since complete daily reports are only available for Einsatz-Trupp Fiume and because Hradetzky had recorded the central contents of all five Einsatz-Trupps from February 1944 to January 1945 in largely unbroken monthly reports and expanded them to include the results of the command's work, they form the object of investigation for the analysis of internal SS communication³⁰.

3. SPEECH ANALYSIS

The objects of investigation used for the present linguistic analysis have not yet been edited, nor have they been processed historically or linguistically. This ap-

²⁸ Hradetzky, 24.6.1944: „Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944“, in: ARS, F 201/III/1.

²⁹ ARS: F201/II/1; cf. Federal Archives (BArch), RS4-1121.

³⁰ Hradetzky's monthly reports are as follows: 15 Nov 1943 to 1 Apr 1944, February to mid-June 1944, July 1944; 15 Oct-15 Nov 1944, 15 Nov-15 Dec 1944, 1 to 31 Jan 1945.

plies to Hradetzky's internal reports as well as to articles written by members of his unit in the DAZ. It does not apply to the analysis of central terms of the Nazi language, which most recently were investigated by Heidrun Kämper or Cornelia Schmitz-Berning. In this respect, the following language analysis is based on researched terms, which are used for the discussion of new research material³¹.

4. INTERNAL COMMUNIQUE'S: HRADEZKY'S MONTHLY REPORTS TO RAINER AND GLOBOČNIK

In order to gain a better understanding of Hradetzky's eight to twelve page monthly reports, to understand the range of tasks of the Adria Kommando and the language of internal communication, the following is a content-quality analysis of annotated excerpts from five reports covering the period from February 1944 to January 1945.

[February to June 1944] The propaganda situation in the given period was parallel to the military one. [...] Aircraft - Ju 87 and secondly a Me 109 - [...] were used 21 times and dropped more than 2,000,000 leaflets from their drop bombs. One aircraft was lost in an attack by five British fighters, and the two occupants, including one of the command's photojournalists, died heroically. [...] The five task forces, mostly 5-7-men strong, distributed the propaganda material independently and often on individual trips in the enemy territory [...] to the German and national units [...]. In the process, the squads had contact with the enemy 15 times, which resulted only in wounds on our side, but 12 enemy casualties³².

Hradetzky's activity report was linguistically determined by action and demarcation from the enemy. Quantitatively, therefore, the term enemy stands out. He openly balanced his own losses, which were to be outweighed by the emphasis on heroic death or the enemy superiority of English fighters as well as the number of enemies killed. The broader context provides insights into the work of the Kommando Adria, which operated in the hinterland and relied on direct contact with the population. Each task force had a loudspeaker truck as well as at least one armored vehicle. In addition to announcements and speeches, posters were posted in central village squares or the churches, and leaflets, issues of Adria Illustrierte or language-specific propaganda material were distributed. The use of aircraft was rare because of British air superiority. The partisans dominating the hinterland were mainly supplied with weapons

³¹ Klemperer, *op.cit.*; Sternberger, Storz, Süskind, *op.cit.*; Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*

³² Hradetzky to Globočnik, 24.6.1944: "Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944," in: ARS, F 201/III/1, pp. 1-3, here p. 1.

and propaganda material by air or submarine by English units, but successfully produced their own material for the oppressed Slovenian population since the fascist domination of the area from 1919/20³³. The early and anti-fascist resistance of the Slovenes registered a lively influx from the Italian side since the German occupation of Italy, especially by military personnel who wanted to escape arrest and deportation by the Wehrmacht³⁴.

[July 1944] The total figures of the material distributed and self-produced so far are: 8,500,000 leaflets, 300,000 brochures, 100,000 posters, 750,000 postcards. During the last three months, Kommando Adria has suffered the following losses during propaganda operations: 5 dead, 4 missing, 11 wounded. [...] 20 cultural events took place in the province of Friuli. [...] 35,000 visitors were recorded. These choirs and orchestras, which have been set up so far, have a combined membership of about 900. [...] The 12 new soccer teams held 40 soccer games and sporting events during Sundays in the various localities. In the month of July, 102 new recruits for the active land protection can be recorded³⁵.

Irrespective of the unverifiable figures for distributed printed material, their own losses show the importance that the warring parties attached to propaganda. Interesting for the Udine area was the German cultural propaganda, which pushed for an - today recognized - independence of Friulian (language, traditions, etc.) in distinction to Italian. Music enjoyed a high popularity value. The aforementioned orchestras and popular songs served to strengthen the identity of the multi-ethnic groups of the OZAK, which, from the point of view of the occupiers, could be better controlled, especially by setting themselves apart from one another. In this context, the sporting competition was also relevant, which was intended to provide a certain distraction but, like other propaganda, relied on mobilization and the influx of war volunteers in German uniforms.

[15.10.-15.11.1944] Of decisive importance for the propaganda of the reporting period were the facts that Germany survived the collapse crisis predicted for it in October and that the enemy side expected the end of the war to be postponed until next year. For the enemy propaganda this resulted in a considerable loss of confidence, for the German propaganda some favourable moments [...]. The propaganda of the gangs and the resistance movement emerged again with a flood of writings. [...] The motives for leaflet propaganda were again the military events: the reconquest of Belgrade, the

³³ M. Kacin-Wohinz, *Gli sloveni della Venezia Giulia*; D. Sardoč, *L'orma del Tigr. Testimonianza di anti-fascista sloveno*, Gorizia, Centro isontino di ricerca e documentazione storica Leopoldo Gasparini, 2006.

³⁴ M. Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945. Die Operationszonen „Alpenvorland“ und „Adriatisches Küstenland“*, Munich, de Gruyter, 2003, p. 51.

³⁵ Hradetzky, 5.8.1944: „Kurzgefasster Arbeitsbericht des Komandos Adria für den Monat Juli 1944“, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

advance of the Soviets in the Balkans [...] the imminent liberation of the Adriatic coastal land [...]. On the other hand, newspapers also distributed in the province of Pola with pictures of captured German generals in the USSR, prisoner-of-war officers in Paris and thousands of captured German soldiers in France had some effect.

News about the advancing Allies, the successive breakthrough of the Gothic Line, and the offensive, which stagnated from the fall onward, was a daily topic for the OKW on the front page of the DAZ. The focus of these reports, however, was on the “defensive successes,” the “enemy losses,” and Germany’s own use of “new weapons.” Details of the German defensive situation, thousands of prisoners and surrendered generals, as recorded here by Hradetzky, appeared in this openness only in internal communiqués. The listing of various enemy camps in a single sentence also contradicted Goebbels’ language regulation of November 20, 1942, which permitted reporting only from the “enemy side,” since “the recognition of various enemies leads only too easily in weak and insecure characters to the beginning of doubts about one’s own right”³⁶. The same applies to the term enemy propaganda, which did not comply with the language regulation of 28.7.1937, which required the use of the term enemy agitation.

The specific interest that the propaganda of the Allies had shown towards the Adriatic coast until recently seems now to have given way to clear indifference. [...] The enemy propaganda of the period under review was therefore produced almost exclusively by the internal resistance movements or gangs, which, in view of the constantly worsening circumstances for the gangs, again recorded a further drop in their level. [...] Through the personal appointment of the Archbishop of Udine, action could be carried out in close collaboration with the clergy, who [...] worked with evident success for the population. [...] In summary, German propaganda can be described as quite active. It is now on the point of having put the enemy propaganda on the defensive by and large [...]³⁷.

In fact, the Allied offensive in Italy was stalled at the turn of 1944-45. The British active in OZAK were partly withdrawn to Greece. Although the Resistenza was extremely active in northern Italy, the German units in OZAK managed to hold the position in the urban area until early May 1945. The fact that Italian as well as Slovenian church representatives were an active part of SS propaganda work at this time shows, on the one hand, the contemporary real fear of the Soviet army, which, on the other hand, had already been targeted by fascist propaganda in Catholic Italy long before. However, Hradetzky’s conclusion that he had gained

³⁶ Hitler, *op.cit.*, p. 129, quoted from: Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

³⁷ Hradetzky to Rainer and Globočnik, 27 Dec 1944: propaganda report of 15 Nov-15 Dec 1944, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

the upper hand did not correspond to reality, neither from a propagandistic nor from a military point of view.

[January 1945] The enemy agitation in the operation zone, which had experienced a low in December, increased again somewhat in the reporting period. In addition to the usual bandit leaflets [...] produced by the peel-off method, there were various propaganda leaflets and newspaper copies [...] in Cyrillic script, obviously hauled in with the purpose of influencing the anti-Communist Serb units stationed in the coastal country. [...] In the second half of January, the dropping of leaflets in German by the RAF increased considerably. [...] The Adria Kommando's own propaganda endeavored to maintain the lead it had achieved over enemy agitation in the coastal country³⁸.

Hradetzky's latent euphoria is countered by looking at the content between the lines and instead reveals the drastic situation shortly before the end of the war: Allied air supremacy, strong partisan activity, stranded allies fleeing westward, and slogans of perseverance. To his own superiors, Hradetzky underscored authenticity, illustrating the ideological importance of the SS as the "fanatical" backbone of National Socialism. It is certain that SS propaganda remained active until the surrender.

In terms of content, Hradetzky's reports appear relatively authentic. Undoubtedly, his information on the mood of the military and the population was subjective, because it always represented an assessment of the author and never included a sense of injustice apart from Nazi ideology, i.e. it was written faithfully to the line. Overall, he summed up the work of his unit. Structurally, his monthly reports were based on those of the five task forces from Trieste, Fiume (Rijeka), Udine, Gorizia and Pula (Pola), which in turn reflected the ethnic characteristics on the ground and strove to strengthen them in the sense of *divide et impera*³⁹. For Rainer and Globočnik, Hradetzky's information was essential. They provided mood pictures from the (major) cities of the occupied territory, from the ranks of their own and allied troops, from factories and from the streets. At the same time, the unit's detachments operated mainly in remote areas, where they regularly came into contact with the enemy, identified partisan positions, collected enemy propaganda, and were thus able to prepare military situation reports on the situation in the rear.

³⁸ Hradetzky to Rainer, 8 Feb 1945: "Activity Report of the Adriatic Command from 1 to 31 January 1945", in ARS, F 201/III/1, pp. 1-8, here pp. 1-2.

³⁹ Trieste was mostly Italian with a strong Slovenian minority, Fiume/Rijeka Croatian with a strong Italian minority, Udine Italian but always demarcated by Nazi propaganda as Friulan, Gorizia Slovenian and Pola Croatian; M. Cattaruzza, «Alle frontiere dell'impero: il litorale asburgico», in: Istituto di Studi Europei del Friuli Venezia Giulia, *L'Adriatico mare di scambi tra oriente e occidente*, Pordenone, Concordia Sette, 2003.

5. ARTICLE OF THE ADRIA KOMMANDO IN THE DAZ

As a counterpart to Hradetzky's internal monthly reports, one newspaper article per month is used for the same period from February 1944 to January 1945, each published by a member of the Kommando Adria in the *Deutsche Adria Zeitung*. Of this total of twelve articles, four are examined in terms of content and quality. For the quantitative evaluation in the final part of the paper, all twelve articles are taken into account, which in terms of their total length roughly correspond to Hradetzky's monthly reports (about 12,500 words each).

[February 1944; "Trieste Communist Leader"] So this was the infamous Marega, the ex-Communist leader of Monfalcone, who now tried his luck as a gang leader? [...] It should only be mentioned that he finally ended up as a promising agitational force [...] at the Lenin School in Moscow [...]. But we also know only too well from our own struggle for our Germany the deeper causes that drove such people into the arms of Bolshevism [...] so nothing can mislead us in the belief that our will and action will one day convince all of Europe. And because we know this, we do not hesitate to give bread and work to people like Marega in Germany, so that he has the opportunity to see for himself and experience directly what the worker is up against with us⁴⁰.

The author of the article, Obersturmführer Hermann Pirich, chief editor of the DAZ, used the arrest of the resistance fighter Ferdinando Marega to transfigure his life into a story of Bolshevik failure. Marega, who was one of the founding members of the resistance group Brigata Proletaria in Monfalcone, was murdered in German custody in 1944⁴¹. This fact deconstructs Pirich's core statements, which attributed an integrative character to National Socialism, but which de facto excluded dissidents and murdered them by the millions. Pirich's article thus exemplifies the discrepancy between Nazi propaganda and occupation reality in OZAK as well.

[May 1944; "training castle of land protection"] On Sunday, the inauguration of the SS training castle Duino took place by the higher SS group leader and lieutenant general of the police Globočnik. In the future, the best of the Landschutz will be prepared in Duino for their fight against Bolshevik gangs in terms of weaponry and ideology. [...] They want to prepare there for the fight against those elements who have invaded or threaten their homeland with robbery and Bolshevik misery. [...] Are not these very men of land protection called to arms to save the culture of our continent from the

⁴⁰ H. Pirich, *Der Fall Marega. Die Erlebnisse des Triester Kommunistenführers*, in: «DAZ», 8.2.1944, p. 4.

⁴¹ Istituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione (IRSML): Fondo Riccardo Giacuzzo, Busta 3, fascicolo 63; cf. L. Gramith, *Liberation by Emigration: Italian Communists, the World War, and West-East Migration from Venezia Giulia, 1945-1949*, Morgantown (WV), West Virginia University, 2019, pp. 87-88.

onslaught of the steppe? [...] German soldiers who have seen Russia with their own eyes will describe to them the conditions in the Soviet country [...]. Thus, in addition to the mastery of weapons, the first prerequisite for the successful conduct of a battle is the recognition of the danger that threatens from the enemy⁴².

The author of the article, Oberscharführer Walter Döring, editor of the DAZ, initially suggested that the training at Duino Castle was only given to the best candidates of the so-called Landschutz. In fact, according to Rainer's decree of December 7, 1943, all Italians of the newly defined cohorts were obliged to perform military service under German command. To present the forced recruitment of Italians and Slovenians as a voluntary act on the one hand and to call it "Landschutz" on the other hand was an attempt to gloss over the systematic oppression and exploitation of the population. With regard to Döring's article, it is also necessary to specify that the SS primarily trained Slovenes in Duino Castle. The formation of a Slovene land guard, in turn, posed a problem for the Italian authorities, who had forcibly suppressed Slovenes since the end of World War I and with the award of Venezia Giulia to Italy.⁴³ While Döring in his article promoted cohesion in the sense of the Nazi concept of Europe, he passed over the parallel forced policy of division that the occupiers deliberately pursued towards the individual ethnic groups. This also applied to the ideological and, in particular, anti-Bolshevik indoctrination to which the trainees in Duino were subjected in addition to the military drill by the SS.

[June 1944; "Soviet Soldiers"] You saw the prisoners this morning, the Unterscharführer began, and you looked into fear-distorted, helpless, childishly absent faces. You heard them begging submissively [...]. Were they still the same soldiers as they had been an hour before, when they burst out of the woods against us with animalistic roars? [...] In such hours the boundlessness of the Russian soul, which can be brutal and childishly simple-minded, becomes apparent to us [...]. No idea, no fanaticism burned in their hearts to pull them up, no own initiative let them act. [...] He is so dumb in his thinking, [...] that he has forgotten to carry out an act out of his own decision. [...] Experience proves that we can successfully oppose the robot masses with the better weapons, the superior use of these means of war and the courageous, determined individual fighter⁴⁴.

Döring's distancing from Russian soldiers in this article is based on the concept of the foreign race, which became central in Nazi racial doctrine only after the

⁴² H. W. Döring, *Schulungsborg des Landschutzes*, in: «DAZ», 16 May 1944, p. 4.

⁴³ The Italian prefect and collaborator Bruno Coceani recorded in his memoirs that Slovenes trained in Duino controlled, interrogated and also arrested Italians in Gorizia; B. Coceani, *Mussolini, Hitler, Tito alle porte orientali d'Italia*, Bologna, 1948, p. 157.

⁴⁴ H. W. Döring, *Sowjetische Soldaten*, in: «DAZ», June 24, 1944, p. 1.

invasion of Poland⁴⁵. The dehumanization of those who were then murdered by the millions was systematically pursued by Nazi propaganda. Pejorative animal symbolism towards Jews had been a tradition since the 19th century and was successively applied in the Nazi regime to Jews, Poles, Russians and Communists, who were discriminated against and degraded to so-called subhumans⁴⁶. Here, Döring faked a conversation between a freshly drafted soldier and a battle-hardened soldier who seemed to be passing on paternal values of experience, but was actually trying to construct a racial-biological superiority that legitimized the killing of “foreign peoples.” SS propagandists like Döring transferred this message to the so-called Bolshevik gang warfare in the Adriatic coastal region.

[January 1945; “One Year DAZ”; Foreword Rainer] Today, as a year ago, the goal of the journalistic work of the “Deutsche Adria Zeitung” remains unchanged: to strengthen our will to fight and thus to contribute to the final victory [Endsieg] crowning the struggle of young Europe against the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist enemies of the world. [...] [Main article Pirich] From the beginning we saw our primary task in pouring out in the written word, without phrases, that strength which we receive anew from the Führer and his idea of a better Europe. [...] For hardly any area in Europe needed this calming and balancing force more than the Adriatic coastal region, where four peoples are crowded together in a small area and almost each in the endeavor to be blessed according to its own facon [...]. Our staff has long since included Italians, Slovenes and Croats, and this circle [...] is as firmly convinced as we are of the European task that the Reich, as the only organizing power, has to fulfill here at present⁴⁷.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the DAZ, Rainer published a greeting on the front page, which was supplemented by the aforementioned Pirich and editor-in-chief of the newspaper. Both became unusually clear despite the other – little squeamish – contents of the DAZ concerning the duty to have to continue the ideologically justified war. In view of the foreseeable defeat in the war, the pressure on the German and allied soldiers was increased with two references to Hitler. In addition to the well-known enemy combination of the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist enemies of the world, which was seldom so openly emphasized in the DAZ, the buzzwords “final victory” and “Europe” were given special emphasis. The Nazi concept of Europe was synonymous with the wartime goal of establishing “a new Europe with new borders - drawn according to National Socialist economic interests - and graduated dependence of the unfree

⁴⁵ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁶ M. Urban, *Von Ratten, Scheißfliegen und Heuschrecken: judenfeindliche Tiersymbolisierung und die postfaschistischen Grenzen des Sagbaren*, Konstanz (et al.), Halem Verlag, 2014.

⁴⁷ H. Pirich, *Versuch einer Bilanz; with Rainer's foreword: Ein Jahr „Deutsche Adria Zeitung“*. The greeting of the Supreme Commissioner, Gauleiter Dr. Rainer, on its first birthday, in: «DAZ», January 14, 1945, p. 1.

satellites under the suzerainty of the German Reich⁴⁸. How distant this goal was underscored by the emphasis on the term *Endsieg*, which had already been in use during World War I, was used by Goebbels in 1933 for Hitler's assumption of power, and in the course of World War II underwent a semantic shift from certainty of victory to resignation. In fact, Rainer and his staff departed OZAK for Carinthia on April 28. One day later, the last issue of the DAZ was published. On May 3, OZAK surrendered the last German troops in Trieste.

6. QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION (SUMMARY)

For the quantitative evaluation of the subjects of the study, 110 terms were determined, which were mainly based on the pool of terms discussed in Schmitz-Berning, and in some cases more specific in order to be able to take into account possible peculiarities for the Adriatic coastal area. Accordingly, Hradetzky's monthly reports and articles published by members of the *Adria Kommando* in the DAZ were reviewed for frequency in the use (frequency) of these 110 terms. The terms were subdivided and selected along the seven categories of enemy images, Nazi ideology, military, race OZAK, allies, and persons.

[Enemy Concepts] Central to Hradetzky's internal monthly reports was the aforementioned friend-enemy structure. He used or contextualized terms such as *bandit(s)/gang(s)* 35 times, *enemy(s)* 13 times, *Englishman(s)* 9 times, *Bolshevist(s)/Bolshevism* 8 times, *traitor(s)* 3 times (including two "traitorous Englishmen"), *Anglo-American* 3 times, etc. The sum of all enemies combined to the enemy side resulted in 93 uses.

In the published articles of the DAZ, however, the use of terms was clearly different: *bandit* was used only 3 times, *enemies* 28 times, *English* 24 times, *Soviet Russians* 24 times, *Bolsheviks* 21 times, *Terror(isten)* 10 times, *Anglo-Americans* 3 times, and so on. The sum of all enemy terms here amounted to 192 uses.

Accordingly, Hradetzky placed a clear emphasis on the so-called *bandits*, while the published SS reports tended to follow the official linguistic regime and spoke of enemies, albeit with similar frequency as *Bolsheviks*, *Soviet Russians*, or *British*. Neither used the official language of the "enemy side." Thus, the DAZ articles retrieved more than twice as many enemy images as the internal reports.

[Nazi Ideology] From the repertoire attributable to Nazi ideology, Hradetzky mentions *work and propaganda* 53 times, *Deutsch(e)/Germany* 25 times, *Volk* 24 times, *politics/political* 14 times, *SS* 7 times, but *National Socialism*, *Comrade*, or *Europe* not once.

⁴⁸ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

The DAZ articles use German most frequently in this category (77 times), followed by Volk (37), Arbeit and Politik/politisch (24 each), SS and Propaganda (21 each). Europe (22) and comrade (18), two terms that Hradetzky did not mention, also played a not insignificant role here in the sense of allied ethnic groups.

[Military] Hradetzky's military component turned out to be lower than expected, with the terms Einsatz (35 times), Krieg (5), Truppe (4), and Waffe (2) used most often, although he reported primarily on war in terms of content. In contrast, the DAZ articles most frequently mentioned the terms war (57), tank (38), soldier (35), weapon (25), front (24), combat (21), and troop (16). In this respect, the DAZ operated close to military personnel, who also constituted the newspaper's main group of recipients.

The remaining categories of race, allies, OZAK and persons are summarized briefly due to the low frequency of their keywords. Of importance is the fact that racial-political aspects played almost no role in either of the objects of investigation, although the DAZ regularly published anti-Semitic and racist articles⁴⁹. The terms race, Aryan, Jew, blood, etc. did not appear at all in Hradetzky's work, whereas in the selected DAZ reports only Rainer spoke of Jews once and the term blood, which was used seven times, always appeared in the context of war and not race. Local terms did show a certain frequency, e.g. Adria (22), Triest (13) or Landschutz (13), but in this respect they did not differ from other occupation newspapers and thus did not develop their own language specifics. Contrary to existing research opinions, it is interesting to note that German propaganda did not prominently ignore the Italians, but nevertheless clearly demarcated them from fascism⁵⁰. In the category of allies, the keyword Italy/Italian(s) was used 12 times by Hradetzky and 51 times in the DAZ articles. In the category Persons, Mussolini was not mentioned at all by Hradetzky. In the DAZ articles, he appeared twice, as often as Badoglio and Eisenhower, with Stalin mentioned four times, Churchill ten times and Hitler eleven times.

Both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis have shown that between internal communiqués and published propaganda, first, there were definitely linguistic differences with regard to the (non-)use of terms and the frequency of their use; second, official language regulations were not always adhered to, but were mostly implemented consistently; third, the conceptual-ideological congruence was so high and deviations so marginal that the implementation of the Nazi language had also become a lasting reality for the OZAK and their population;

⁴⁹ DAZ, Nr. 2 (1) 15.1.1944, S. 3; DAZ, Nr. 10 (1) 23.1.1944, S. 2; DAZ, Nr. 48 (1), 1. März 1944, S. 1; DAZ, Nr. 92 (1) 15.4.1944, S. 1; DAZ, Nr. 123 (1) 16.5.1944; DAZ, Nr. 138 (1) 1.6.1944, S. 2; DAZ, Nr. 188 (1) 21.7.1944, S. 1.

⁵⁰ E. Collotti, *L'occupazione tedesca della Venezia Giulia in un rapporto della propaganda nazista*, in: «Studi storici», vol. IV, n.3 (July-September 1963), pp. 521-537.

fourth, regional specifics hardly played a role in the uniformity of the Nazi language; fifth, the discrepancy between propaganda content and occupation reality must be understood as considerable.

In summary, the quantitative method has certain weaknesses. For example, within the DAZ, the use of the term *bandit* was absolutely standardized for articles that directly concerned the OZAK. In this respect, the articles written by the *Adria* command stand out because they name multiple enemy images - also contrarily to Goebbels' rules of language. On the one hand, this is surprising because the chief editor of the DAZ belonged to the *Kommando Adria*. On the other hand, however, it reflected the aforementioned competition between the various national socialist players. In the end, Rainer and his propaganda experts Lapper and Hradetzky succeeded in taking all instances into account. However, neither Hradetzky's reports nor the DAZ articles consistently implemented Goebbels' language rules. Moreover, Nazi propaganda was unable to conceal the vast discrepancy between propaganda content and occupation reality, as the *Marega* case, for example, may have shown already at the time.

The extent of implemented violence as a fundamental factor of the National Socialist occupation and terror regime was concealed by Nazi propaganda, especially with regard to the arbitrary mass murders of the civilian population and those committed specifically by the SS, although violence was omnipresent as a theme in the coverage of the war and the struggle against Tito's partisans. The concentration camp *Risiera di San Sabba*, installed in the city of Trieste, where several thousand people were murdered and from where several tens of thousands were deported to extermination camps, remained unmentioned⁵¹. Also, in internal reports, the NS racial ideology played only a subordinate role, but conversely and as shown above, it was an integral part of the propaganda canon of the *Deutsche Adria Zeitung*. In this respect, the quote by Kämper mentioned at the beginning can be supplemented to the effect that not only language is political and carries out political action, but also contents deliberately suppressed by language.

⁵¹ E. Apih, *Risiera di San Sabba: guida alla mostra storica*, in: «Quaderni didattici», (9), 2000; A. Scapelli, *San Sabba. Istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera*, Milano 1988.

«Necessity» and «Destiny». Nicolai Hartmann and National Socialism

ANDREA SAIN

ABSTRACT

*The question of the alleged involvement of Nicolai Hartmann with National Socialism has often been circumscribed by critics to the famous “Magdeburg speech” given in October 1933. In this contribution, I would like to attempt to offer a broader overview that also considers the years following 1933. First, I start from emphasizing how the political ambiguity of Hartmann’s attitude can already be found in the 1933 text *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*. In the second instance, I propose a reading to understand Hartmann’s political behavior from a wider perspective, based on the concept of «necessity» and «destiny», two conceptual keys pervasively present both in his writings and in his unpublished letters.*

INTRODUCTION

The question Nicolai Hartmann’s (1882-1950) involvement with National Socialism has found its decisive theoretical cornerstone in the critical literature in the so-called “Magdeburg Speech” of October 1933, in which, by a resemblance of terminology close to that of National Socialism, Hartmann traced the advent and justification of Hitler’s dictatorship in the history of philosophy. However, the structural ambiguity of the Magdeburg speech left room for varying interpretations¹.

¹ Regarding the “ambiguity” of the Magdeburg speech see W. F. Haug, *Nicolai Hartmanns Neuordnung von Wert und Sinn*, in W. F. Haug (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Philosophen 1933*, Hamburg, Argument, 1989,

In this brief contribution, I would like to analyze some unpublished letters that I believe allow us to understand Hartmann's attitude towards National Socialism from a different and broader perspective. Unfortunately, we do not have many private letters in the years from 1933 to 1938. Therefore, I will focus on the analysis of some of Hartmann's letters from the period 1938-1946. I think that Hartmann's attitude is to be traced in an essential ambiguity of his thought, which I believe determined both the intellectual articulation of his philosophy and the conduct of his personal life. First of all, I would like to emphasize that Hartmann never expressed himself in racist or anti-Semitic terms, neither in his public writings nor in his private letters. Hartmann doesn't belong to the narrow circle of philosophers who were somehow closer to National Socialism². In the first section, I analyze the interpretative ambiguity of the 1933 book *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*. In the second section, I attempt to trace the ambiguity of Hartmann's thought in the concept of «necessity», which in private letters takes on the meaning of «destiny». In conclusion, I note how the apparently "neutral" concepts of Hartmann's ontology take on an inevitably political meaning, which has led to the recognition – by his contemporaries – to some «disturbing consequences» of Hartmann's political thought.

1. BEYOND THE SPIRITUAL BEING

Hartmann wrote the book *Das problem des geistigen Seins* during his time as a professor in Köln and it was finalized in August 1932, therefore it reflects the political crisis of Weimar. But in order to inherit Ernst Troeltsch's chair in Berlin in 1931, it was necessary to confront the humanistic tradition, and therefore the spiritual being. In the preface of the second edition, published in 1949, Hartmann wrote that the book did not receive a good reception precisely because of Nazism: «Spät kommt es zu dieser zweiten Auflage. Vor zehn Jahren wäre sie fällig gewesen, schon damals war das Buch ausverkauft. Aber ein Buch vom Geiste und seinem geschichtlichen Leben, von seiner Macht und Realität, war denen unerwünscht, die damals darüber entschieden, was deutsche Leser lesen sollten und was nicht»³.

It is worth noting, the book was received in diverse ways among scholars. Hans Freyer, an author notably close to the so-called «conservative Revolution», quoted Hartmann in the preface of the third edition of his *Theorie des objektiven*

p. 168; H. Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis*, Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 157-161; U. Kuchinsky, M. Schefczyk, «Grosse Dinge geschehen, man ist immerhin gewürdigt, sie zu erleben». Nicolai Hartmann und der Nationalsozialismus, in W. Konitzer (Hrsg.), «Arbeit» «Volk» «Gemeinschaft», *Ethik und Ethiken im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt/New York, Campus Verlag, 2016, p. 93.

² See M. Leske, *Philosophen im «Dritten Reich»*, Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1990, pp. 7-9.

³ N. Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1949, p. V.

*Geistes*⁴. Even though Hartmann's book is abstract and written with a philosophical «distance» (*Distanz*) to the political events of the present⁵, the text is inevitably the child of his time. We will see later how the concept of «distance» is important to understand Hartmann's political disinterest even in relation to his political attitude. Here I do not want to dwell on the text's analysis but instead attempt to understand it by starting from an ambiguity in its political interpretation from the voices of scholars of his time⁶. In his lengthy review of the book, Plessner noted how Hartmann's analysis stood against all forms of reductionism. Plessner appreciated Hartmann's analysis precisely because, by not placing a metaphysical principle at the origin of the research, he let the phenomena decide (*die Phänomene entscheiden*). As Plessner wrote: «Nur das Heteronome in der Welt lässt sich nach Hartmann erklären. An das Autonome, und das sind die fundamentalen Seinsstrukturen, kann keine Theorie heran»⁷. In this sense, Plessner continues, Hartmann's analysis of the spirit takes us to a new land and allows us to discover all its different manifestations⁸. From an entirely different perspective, Otto Freidrich Bollnow gave his own political interpretation of the text. In his brief review Bollnow wrote: «Aufschlussreich ist vor allem die überzeugende Deutung des politischen Führers, die sich aus der Unpersonalität des objektiven Gesites ergibt [...]. Die Notwendigkeit des politischen Führers lässt sich so aus der Wesensstruktur des objektiven Geistes einsehen»⁹.

Why are the interpretations of this text so disparate? Was Plessner right in saying that Hartmann opened the research to the «Groundlessness» (*Bodenlosigkeit*) of philosophy¹⁰ – and therefore the absence of a strong and authoritative political thought – or Bollnow, who deduced the «necessity of the political Führer» by the «essential structure of spiritual being»? Hartmann's text left room for both interpretations. An excerpt of the book (§38 of *Das Problem of gesitigen Seins*) was published in a journal resembling National Socialist ideas «Natur und Geist»¹¹.

⁴ H. Freyer, *Theorie des objektives Gesites*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966, p. III.

⁵ N. Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, p. 33: «Das wissenschaftliche Geschichtsbewusstsein dagegen beginnt damit, sich zu alledem eine Distanz zu schaffen».

⁶ Regarding the different interpretations of the text see S. Kluck, *Nicolai Hartmanns Philosophie des Geistes im Spiegel der Rezensionen*, in: «Horizon», 8 (1) 2019, pp. 160-181.

⁷ H. Plessner, *Geistiges Sein. Nicolai Hartmanns Neues Buch*, in: «Kant-Studien» n. 38, 1933, p. 420.

⁸ Ivi, p. 413: «Immerhin, wir alle befanden uns in Amerika. Gesitiges Sein ist Boden, den wir bebauen, Luft, die wir atmen. Es ist das Vertraute, das Allzuvertraute und Alzzunahe, das entfernt und entfremdet sein will, um als Phänomen in den Blick zu kommen»

⁹ O. F. Bollnow, *Das geistige Problem des Seins. Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der Geschichtsphilosophie und der Geisteswissenschaften von Nicolai Hartmann*, in: «Die Literatur», Vol. 36, 1933, p. 241.

¹⁰ H. Plessner, *Macht und menschlicher Natur*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2019, p. 229.

¹¹ U. Hossfeld, *Geschichte der biologischen Anthropologie in Deutschland*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, p. 327.

In this article entitled «Majorität und öffentliche Meinung», Hartmann analyzes the possibility of finding a criterion of truth for public opinion. In essence, the question is: how is democracy possible? First and foremost Hartmann acknowledges that the «majority principle» – on which democracy is founded – assumes that the individual is politically competent (*urteilsfähig*), yet the judgment of the individual – continues Hartmann – can only find expression in the party form.

Hartmann wonders: is there a criterion for establishing the truth of the totality of the multiplicity expressed by the different parties?¹² Here Hartmann is questioning whether through the democratic system the individual can be represented. At the same time, he recognizes that the democratic process starts from an unrealizable assumption: that everyone is politically competent, and that everyone is indeed democratic¹³. Since these conditions are not met, democracy can only be understood in its ideal expression. In this sense, the only way to understand democracy is as a real approximation (*Annäherung*) to its unrealizable idea. In conclusion, the only way to avoid the «dead end of the majority principle» (*aus der Sackgasse des Majoritätsprinzip*) consists at the same time in the «greatest danger to the state» (*die höchste Gefahr für den Staat*): entrusting power to the «statesman»¹⁴.

We understand how Hartmann perceives the structural instability of democracy, and the need for a statesman to stand above it. In a note to the text, found in the book, not in the article, Hartmann writes: «it is a highly instructive fact that every form of government built most clearly on the majority principle, and which has executed the council system, has practically stayed furthest from these principles. Dictatorship has replaced it»¹⁵. In this sense, we can understand Hartmann's attitude immediately after Hitler's seizure of power. The statesman must rise above public opinion. In a 1933 self-presentation Hartmann wrote: «Gerade darum aber muss umgekehrt der Führer selbst zu allerst sich freimachen von der öffentlichen Meinung, über sie hinauswachsen»¹⁶. In his Magdeburg speech¹⁷ Hartmann explained how «the idea of the political Führer» (*die Idee des politischen*

¹² N. Hartmann, *Majörität und öffenteliche Meinung*, in: «Natur und Geist», Bd. 1, Heft 5, 1933, p. 131: «Wo bleibt in der Herrschaft der Majoritäten das Echte und Eigentliche des objektiven Geistes?».

¹³ Ivi, p. 132: «[...] es ist im Grunde ein Ideal: jeder soll politisch unteilfähig und jeder soll überparteilich gesinnt sein. Das Ideal ist aber nicht erreichbar».

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ N. Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, p. 350: «Es ist in diesem Zusammenhang eine höchst belehrende Tatsache, dass gerade diejenige Regierungsform, die am eindeutigsten auf der Majorität aufgebaut ist und das Rätssystem am prinzipiellsten durchgeführt hat, praktisch am weitesten von ihr abgekommen ist. Die Diktatur has sie ersetzt».

¹⁶ N. Hartmann, *Systematische Selbstdarstellung*, in *Kleinere Schriften I*, Berlin, De Gruyter, p. 35.

¹⁷ Regarding the context of the speech see T. Laugstein, *Philosophie-Verhältnisse im deutschen Faschismus*, Hamburg, Argument, 1990, pp. 127-130.

Führers) was to be found in the philosophical tradition, precisely in Hegel¹⁸. How will Hartmann's political behavior appear from 1933 onwards? How will he interpret history at the heart of its darkest moment?

2. NECESSITY AND ACTUALITY

The ambiguity of Hartmann's attitude - which continues in the following years - is to be found in the concepts of «destiny» and «necessity». In particular, the idea of destiny (*Schicksal*) is the great protagonist of the private letters, revealing its importance both on a philosophical and psychological-personal level. In an unpublished private letter, Hartman describes his own personality in these terms: «A certain amount of general skepticism about life, tempered by the gift of being able to wring the best part out of any situation, has allowed me to navigate through so-called 'fates' (*die sogenannte Schicksale*) with ease»¹⁹. In 1931, following the refusal of Martin Heidegger, Hartmann assumed the prestigious chair at the University of Berlin²⁰. He will then write to psychiatrist and friend Kurt Schneider: «The fact that I had to get involved in this colossal Berlin affair is a great misfortune for me (*Missgeschick*); you will understand that I could not refuse. We must take our destiny upon ourselves (*man muss seine Schicksale auf sich nehmen*), we have no choice. Only on which side we decide to compromise, in that we have a choice»²¹. The idea of destiny fills Hartmann's private letters. What implications does this idea of destiny have for the interpretation of the historical events of his present? What political consequences does this perspective lead to? Let us remember that Hartmann was a professor at the prestigious University of Berlin from 1931 to 1945, and the political centrality of this university made the implementation of an absolute political neutralism difficult²².

The central role of the concept of necessity will find its highest expression in the text *Possibility and Actuality* (*Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit*) published in

¹⁸ N. Hartmann, *Sinngebung und Sinnerfüllung*, in *Kleinere Schriften I*, Berlin, De Gruyter, p. 257.

¹⁹ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to P. Wust 10.04.1924): «Eine gewisse Dosis allgemeiner Lebensskepsis, gemildert durch die Gabe, jeder Situation goldene Seiten abzugewinnen, hat mich die sogenannte Schicksale stets leicht empfinden lassen».

²⁰ Regarding Hartmann's transfer to Berlin see A. Schölzel, *Zur Tätigkeit Nicolai Hartmanns an der Berliner Universität*, in: "Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin", 1984.

²¹ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to K. Schneider 20.07.1931): «Dass ich mich in den riesenhaften Berliner Betrieb hereinwagen musste, ist für mich ein Missgeschick; dass ich nicht ablehnen konnte - bei der Sachlage des faches in Berlin - werden Sie ebenso verstehen. Man muss seine Schicksale auf sich nehmen, da hat man keine Wahl. Nur nach welchen Seiten man seine Compromisse macht, darin hat man die Wahl».

²² In this sense, it seems difficult to argue only for «inner immigration», as it has been proposed in W. Harich, *Nicolai Hartmann. Der erste Lehrer*, Baden-Baden, Tectum, 2018, p. 145.

1938, in which Hartmann argues that the mode of real actuality, and therefore of the real historical happening, is indissolubly linked to necessity (*Notwendigkeit*)²³. In opposing the empty Aristotelian conception of possibility, Hartmann regains Diodorus Cronos's argument on modalities²⁴. The ultimate consequence consists in the affirmation that the «actuality» is somehow closely connected to the modality of «necessity». As Oskar Becker wrote in his review of Hartmann's text: «denn es ist in der Tat das Kennzeichen der Realität, dass in ihr durchgängig die Notwendigkeit in ihrer positive wie im negative Form allein herrscht. Es ist eben die völlig determinierte "stoische" Welt in die wir eintreten»²⁵.

I do not want to enter into the specific analysis of the modalities carried out by Hartmann²⁶, but only to underline the ontological asymmetry between «ideality» and «reality» that Hartmann arrives at. Precisely because the real, in its connection with necessity, finds no room for the casual²⁷, reality reveals itself to be the strongest being: «ideales Seins ist ein unvollständiges Sein, ein im bloss Allgemeinen verharrendes, im Verhältnis zum Realen nicht das höhere, sondern das nieder ist»²⁸. While on one side we have the real being, which is always the perfect being²⁹, on the other side we have the ideal being, which is constantly imperfect, due to the fact that it cannot enter into the chain of conditions of reality. Although Hartmann acknowledges the total independence and autocracy (*Alleinherrschaft*) of the ideal being, he also recognizes that this «autocracy is totally weightless» (*aber die Alleinherrschaft ist gewichtlos*)³⁰.

Are there political consequences of such an ontology of the real? Hartmann himself gave a political interpretation of this concept in a letter directed to Gerhard Lehmann, an author very close to the regime:

I look at it this way: my second volume consists of an attempt to continue the line of German systematic philosophy in a new way [...]. Still in Neo-Kantianism the

²³ N. Hartmann, *Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1966, §20.

²⁴ Ivi, §22.

²⁵ O. Becker, *Das formale System der ontologischen Modalitäten*, in: "Blätter für deutsche Philosophie", Bd. 16, Heft 4, 1943, p. 400.

²⁶ For a logical critique of Hartmann's modalities which follows in part Becker's review see G. Seel, *Die Aristotelische Modaltheorie*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1982, pp. 1-134.

²⁷ N. Hartmann, *Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit*, p. 322: «Das Reale kennt innerhalb seine Grenzen den Zufall nicht, es ist ein einziger geschlossener Zusammenhang durchgehender Determination».

²⁸ Ivi, p. 321.

²⁹ As Erst von Aster wrote in reference to Hartmann: «Reales Sein ist volleres, gewissermassen eigentlicheres Sein»; see E. von Aster, *Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Neudruck der 1935 Ausgabe, Leiden, A. W. Sijthoff, 1967, p. 99.

³⁰ N. Hartmann, *Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit*, p. 197; also in Hartmann, *Zur Grundlegung der Ontologie*, p. 291: «Das Ideale Sein ist, verglichen mit dem Realen, das geringere Sein».

“systems” have dominated. We stand in the great reaction against them. Philosophy must not build castles in the air. Philosophy must not pretend to deal with timeless things. [...]. I have already anticipated the consequences in my *Ethics*: no false fear of “power of such”. Also in *The Problem of spiritual being*: “historical autonomy of a popular-objective spirit (*völkisch-objektiven Geistes*)”. [...]³¹.

What implications can we draw from this letter? First, we note how Hartmann’s distancing of himself from Neo-Kantianism was not politically innocent. Although Hartmann publicly distanced himself, for purely theoretical reasons, from Marburg Neo-Kantianism with his 1921 text³², this separation had political implications in the following years. During the thirties, Marburg Neo-Kantianism was attacked because its founder, Hermann Cohen, was Jewish. In this sense, Neo-Kantian formalism was considered – by authors close to Nazism – a highly abstract philosophy and an enemy of “German science”³³. When Gerhard Lehmann attempted to enter the University of Berlin in 1939, the topic of the trial lecture was the German Kantian movement (*die deutsche Kantbewegung*). Lehmann classified the Neo-Kantian school as mere Jewish logicism³⁴. Hartmann, who was on the judging committee, gave Lehmann a positive assessment. Secondly, we note that Hartmann gives his own political interpretation of his philosophy: the idea of necessity is immediately linked to the problem of spiritual being. In particular, the idea of the «historical autonomy of a popular objective spirit» (*völkisch-objektiven Geistes*), which was the subject of the 1933 text *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*. In this sense, we can understand some expressions very close to Hegel from the Magdeburg Speech, in which Hartmann said: «the idea of the political Führer is rooted in the objective spirit, in the substance of the present»³⁵.

³¹ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to G. Lehmann 11.07.1938): «So sehe ich es: mein zweiter Band ist der Versuch, die Linie der deutschen systematischen Philosophie in neuartigen Weise fortzusetzen [...]. Noch im Neukantianismus haben die “Systeme” geherrscht. Wir stehen in die grosse Reaktion dagegen. Philosophie soll nicht Luftschlösser bauen. Sie soll auch nicht vorspiegeln, zeitlose Dinge zu treiben: aus ihre Zeitlange heraus die Probleme angreifen soll sie, so wie diese spruchreif geworden sind. [...]. Darum die ungeheure Mühsal der Möglichkeitsanalyse. Hier liegt ein über zweitausendjährigesvorurteil – nicht nur der Spekulation, sondern erst rech der Lebenseinstellung. [...]. Die Konsequenzen habe ich schon vor Jahren in meiner Ethik vorweggenommen: keine falsche Angst vos das leere “So oder so können”. Ebenso im “Problem des geistigen Seins”: geschichtliche Autonomie eines völkisch-objektiven Geistes bedeutet etwas ganz anders als das Herder-Hegelsche Anlageprinzip. [...]».

³² N. Hartmann, *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*, Berlin und Leipzig, De Gruyter, 1921.

³³ See U. Sieg, ‘Deutsche Wissenschaft’ und Neukantianismus. *Geschichte einer Diffamierung*, in: H. Lehmann & O.G. Oexle (Hrsg.), *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften. Bd. II: Leitbegriffe, Deutungsmuster, Paradigmenkämpfe*, Göttingen, 2004 pp. 199-222.

³⁴ C. Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2002, p. 708: «Lehmann [...] klassifizierte jetzt aber die neukantianischen Schulen rassenideologisch und grenzte den “blossen Logizismus” der “judischen Vertreter der Marburger Schule” als zur “judischen Geistesgeschichte” gehörig aus der deutschen Kantbewegung aus».

³⁵ N. Hartmann, *Sinngebung und Sinnerfüllung*, p. 257.

We can also understand Hartmann's general attitude, which consists in a passive acceptance of the historical happening of his present, a sort of fatalism (*Schicksalhaftigkeit*)³⁶, even if the reality of the present manifests its contradiction towards the ideal structures of justice and equality, as for example, in the case of anti-Semitism. When Gerhard Lehmann sent Hartmann the book *Die deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart*, published in 1943, which in its intentions stood closely to National Socialism, Hartmann noticed some important absences in the text. For example, despite being two of the most important Jewish philosophers in Germany in the early twentieth century, Cohen's name does not appear, while Husserl is only briefly evoked in polemical terms³⁷. In his reply Hartmann can only acknowledge that it is the conditions of the reality of the historical moment that dominate: «Where you have left gaps, they are conditioned by the circumstances of our time - for example, phenomenology as a cohesive group is treated too hastily; but they are predominantly Jews, and there is nothing to be done about it»³⁸.

There is one last letter I would like to propose in order to understand the ambiguity of Hartmann's attitude. In March 1939 when Hartmann writes to his friend Joseph Münzhuber about the situation at the University of Berlin, Hartmann expresses his intolerance for some authors who were close to the ideological structures of National Socialism, such as Alfred Baeumler, with whom Hartmann established a sort of rivalry at the University of Berlin from 1930. In Berlin, Baeumler began a "politicization of the student youth", and the plan was to attempt to put an end to Hartmann's fatal influence on students³⁹. In the first part of the unpublished letter, Hartmann explains that in Berlin, Alfred Baumlér had the role of a "political lookout" (*Politischer Aufpasser*) and that in his eyes, older philosophers such as Hartmann and Eduard Spranger were considered to be "liberal":

In 1933 Alfred Baeumler was transferred here as a full-time professor. He plays the role of the political outlook for the so-called "ideological department", and he is an obvious opponent of us old-fashioned people, Spranger and I. In his eyes we are liberals, we are entirely superfluous and yet temporarily tolerated⁴⁰.

³⁶ N. Hartmann, *Zur Grundlegung der Ontologie*, p. 166.

³⁷ G. Lehmann, *Die deutsche Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1943, pp. 300-307.

³⁸ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to G. Lehmann 02.04.1944): «Wo Sie dabei Lücken gelassen haben, da sind diese durch die Zeitumstände bedingt – so ist z. B. die Phänomenologie als geschlossene Gruppe zu kurz gekommen; aber sie sind eben vorwiegend Juden, und da ist nun nicht zu machen».

³⁹ C. Tilitzki, *Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie in der Weimarer Republik und im Dritten Reich*, p. 549.

⁴⁰ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to J. Münzhuber 15.04.1939): «Seit 1933 ist Alfred Baeumler hierher als Ordinarius veretzt. Er spielt die Rolle des politischen Aufpassers für die so. "weltanschauliches

In the second part of the letter, however, Hartmann writes specifically about the historical moment:

So, regarding the «disgusting century»: doesn't it seem to you, that only «we» are on the dark side (*Schattenseite*)? When I say «we» I mean old-fashioned people, academics, scientists, and a few others who can breathe free? History doesn't follow the path of reason (*nicht den Weg der Vernunft*), but the path of necessity (*Not*). «Great things» happen, and one is always grateful to experience them; one is also forced to appreciate them. It's not easy if you're on the side of the neutralized and the superfluous. These happenings neglect their life perspectives, which were ones different [...]. Have you ever read Ranke's great historical works? You're able to distance yourself from everything and learn something about justice that otherwise only epigones can have. It is not easy to be in this eternal "tua res agitur". But we must. We must, in spite of everything, not ignore. Otherwise, we would be where the Jews are⁴¹.

What implications are allowed to be drawn from the letter? Once again, we find the affirmation of the necessity of historical happening: History doesn't follow the path of reason (*nicht den Weg der Vernunft*), but the path of necessity (*Not*). In this sense, Hartmann attributes the role of philosophy as a rational attempt to justify the irrationality of the historical present: «“Great things” happen, and one is always grateful to experience them; one is also forced to appreciate them». When Hartmann speaks of “great things,” he is obviously referring to the political events of 1939⁴². But on the other hand, Hartmann recognizes that he finds himself on the shaded side (*auf den Schattenseite*) of history, and in this sense, he feels a moral responsibility: «it's not easy if you're on the side of the superfluous and the neutralized».

Fächer” und ist natürlich der Gegner von uns Leuten alten Schlages, Spranger und mir. In seinen Augen sind wir “Liberalisten”, sind gänzlich überflüssig und nur nicht einwillen geduldet».

⁴¹ DLA Marbach (N. Hartmann to J. Münzhuber 15.04.1939): «Sodann, was das “wiederliche saeculum” anlangt: scheint Ihnen nicht, dass nur «wir» auf den Schattenseite stehen? Mit “wir” meine ich die Leute alten Schlages, Akademiker, Wissenschaftler und einiges mehr, was eben nur in grösserer Freiheit atmen kann? Die Geschichte geht nun einmal nicht den Weg der Vernunft, sondern der Not. Grosse Dinge geschehen, man ist immer gewürdigt, sie zu erleben, ist auch verpflichtet, sie zu würdigen. Das ist nicht leicht, wenn man bei den Ausgeschalteten und Überflüssigen steht, über deren einst anders angelegte Lebensperspektive dieses Geschehen hinweggeht. [...]. Haben Sie einmal Rankes grosse Geschichtswerke gelesen? Man gewinnt daraus Distanz gegen alles und lernt etwas von der Gerechtigkeit, die sonst nur der Epigone haben kann. Es ist nicht leicht, sich in das ewige “tua res agitur” zu finden. Aber wir dürfen. Aber wir dürfen es trotz allem nicht verkennen. Sonst stünden wir ja wirklich dort, wo die Juden stehen».

⁴² U. Kuchinsky, M. Schefczyk, «Grosse Dinge geschehen, man ist immerhin gewürdigt, sie zu erleben». *Nicolai Hartmann und der Nationalsozialismus*, p. 102: «Wir verstehen dies so, dass sich Hartmann mit der Rede von den “grossen Dingen” im Frühjahr 1939 auf die Konsolidierung und Ausdehnung des NS-Regimes bezieht: Entrechtung der Juden, aussenpolitische Aggression, die Opposition in Konzentrationslager [...]».

But in the end, the concept of «distance», to which Hartmann attributes a fundamental function, allows him to attempt to justify the evil of his present. We recall that in his 1933 text Hartmann affirmed that the concept of distance and objection (*Objektion*) makes it possible not only to establish the principle of scientific knowledge, but also the anthropological difference that distinguishes man from animal. Precisely because knowledge is a relationship of transcendence with the object, the animal is not able to place the proper distance between itself and the object. For the chimpanzee, the banana is only for him, while the man, the spiritual consciousness, is able to assume distance from the object⁴³. But does the concept of «distance» therefore allow one to rise from the «dark side of history» to get closer to the «neutralized» and the «superfluous», to not «ignore» (*verkennen*) what was happening to the Jews, or is it only a pretext to interpret and appreciate (*würdigen*) in an objective way the great historical events, the «great things» that, even in evil, were happening? This letter, full of ambiguity, on one hand shows us how Hartmann recognized the ideal injustice of what was happening, but on the other hand reveals Hartmann's immobility and inability to react concretely. Even while recognizing the autonomy of the ideal structure of the idea, Hartmann will always preclude the idea from the power of modifying the necessity of reality.

CONCLUSION

I would like to highlight some problematic issues in Hartmann's philosophical system: it is possible to read the historical present only through the category of the necessity of the reality? What about the status of the idea, which in Hartmann's philosophical system will always find a marginal position? If the historical present always proves necessary, what is the role of the ideal being within history? In conclusion, returning to the 1933 text *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, I would like to point out that it was a historian, Gerhard Ritter, who grasped how Hartmann's tendency to justify the reality of the historical present at any cost is a thought that would lead to «disturbing consequences». Commenting Hartmann's Paragraph of *The Problem of Spiritual Being*, dedicated to the relation on power (*Macht*) and justice (*Recht*), in which Hartmann wrote that «a right without power is not a valid right»⁴⁴, Ritter wrote to Hartmann:

⁴³ N. Hartmann, *Das Problem des geistigen Seins*, p. 120: «Der Schimpansee also, der nur das Für-ihm-sein des Begehren als solchen fasst, bringt es nicht dazu, dass die Banane, was sie an sich ist, auch für ihn sei. Das geistige Bewusstsein dagegen, das gegen das Begehrtsein Distanz hat, bringt es ohne weiteres dazu, etwas von den Bestimmtheiten, die an sie an sich hat, zu fassen».

⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 274: «Ein Recht ohne Macht ist nicht geltendes Recht».

I am particularly disturbed by the way you seem to derive the origin of law (*der Ursprung des Rechtes*) exclusively from the general convictions of a time and a people. We all experience today with our own skin, what disturbing consequences (*unheimliche Konsequenzen*) can this lead to. Is it really possible to build a juridical system without reference to the supertemporal validity of values? Isn't justice itself (*Gerechtigkeit*) an ethical concept, elevated in its core by every change of opinion in a historical time?⁴⁵.

Although Hartmann never explicitly commented on the historical events of his present, certain seemingly “neutral” philosophical concepts take the form of a political reading if they are placed in their historical contexts. When Hartmann is apparently speaking about ontology, he is actually trying to rationally justify – through philosophical concepts – his historical present. Even though Hartmann doesn't express his own philosophy in a biologicistic racism or anti-Semitism, and he does not belong to the narrow circle of philosophers who were closer to National Socialism, his theoretical system led him to a passive acceptance of the historical present through the concepts of «destiny» and «necessity». I think it is only in this sense that we can understand the apparently conflicting judgment that the security service (*Sicherheitsdienst*) gave, according to which Hartmann is considered to be politically uninterested, and yet at the same time «loyal to National Socialism»⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ K. Schwabe, R. Reichart (Hrsg.), *Gerhard Ritter, Ein politischer Historiker in seinen Briefe*, Boppard am Rhein, Haraldt Boldt Verlag, 1984, (G. Ritter to N. Hartmann 01.10.1936), p. 305: «Insbesondere beängstigt mich die Art, wie Sie in den Kapitel 28 den Ursprung des Rechtes ausschliesslich aus dem gemeinsamen Rechtsüberzeugung einer Zeit bzw. einen Volkes abzuleiten scheinen. Zu welchem unheimlichen Konsequenzen das führen kann, erleben wir ja alle heute sozusagen am eigenen Leibe. Ist es wirklich möglich, ein vernünftiges Rechtssystem ohne Bezugnahme auf die überzeitliche Gültigkeit Werte zu konstruieren? Ist Gerechtigkeit nicht selbst zuletzt ein ethischer Begriff, in seinem Kern allem Wandel zeitlicher Meinungen enthoben?».

⁴⁶ G. Leaman, G. Simon, «*SD über Philosophie*», <<https://homepages.uni-tuebingen.de/gerd.simon/philosophendossiers.pdf>>, p. 24: «Politisch? Von jeher national. Loyal gegenüber dem Nationalsozialismus. Ohne politische Aktivität, aber durchaus sozial eingestellt».

Navigating through Discourses of Belonging: Letters of Complaint and Request during National Socialism

STEFAN SCHOLL

ABSTRACT

National Socialism, one could argue, was all about belonging: belonging to the 'Volk' or the 'Volksgemeinschaft', belonging to the 'Aryan' or 'Non-Aryan race', belonging to the National Socialist 'movement', and so on. These categories of belonging worked both inclusionary and exclusionary and they were constituted, proclaimed and enacted to a great part through language. What is more, they had to be performed through communicative acts. For the normative side of National Socialist propaganda and legislation, this seems rather obvious and one-directional. On the side of the general population, however, this entailed a mixture of communicative need to position oneself vis-à-vis National Socialism (mostly in affirmative ways), but also the urge to do so willingly. When we look at the language use of 'ordinary people' in different communicative situations and texts during National Socialism, we have to focus on these dimensions of discursive collusion, co-constitution and appropriation. People during National Socialism, such is our hypothesis, navigated through discourses of belonging and by that made them real and effective. Besides diaries, war letters and autobiographical writings, one way to grasp this phenomenon is to analyse petitions, i.e., letters of complaint and request sent in large numbers by 'ordinary people' to public authorities of the party and the state. As I will show by some examples, letter-writers tried to inscribe themselves within (what they took for) National Socialist discourses of belonging in order to legitimate their claims. By doing so, they co-constituted and co-created the discursive realm of National Socialism.

1. INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS A HISTORY OF LANGUAGE USE UNDER NATIONAL SOCIALISM

How and in which contexts did ‹ordinary Germans›¹ use discursive elements of National Socialist ideology? In which situations was the linguistic display of ideological conformity and the emphasis on belonging to society moulded according to National Socialist criteria deemed to be important and advisable by citizens living in the Third Reich? And what does this use tell us about the spread and the subjective value of ‹speaking Nazi›? Questions like this² are posed by recent historiographical approaches which try to go beyond the – albeit still important and productive – analysis of rhetorical, stylistic and lexicographical peculiarities of *the* National Socialist language, often identified on the level of speeches and writings of the foremost representatives of National Socialism, i.e., Goebbels and Hitler. Without a doubt, studies of this kind have since the early works of Victor Klemperer³, Dolf Sternberger, Gerhard Storz and Wilhelm E. Süskind⁴ as well as Eugen Seidel and Ingeborg Seidel-Slotty⁵ provided important insights into the linguistic dimensions of the National Socialist regime⁶. However, there has been a general tendency to view the subject as quite closed and monolithic: *the* National Socialist language, with original vocabulary and specific meaning, installed by National Socialist propaganda and somehow imposed on the general population. Already in Klemperer, for example, we find the strong metaphor of poison that was somehow secretly infused to the people⁷.

Since the 1970s the view of *the* National Socialist language has for that reason been challenged, first within the discipline of linguistics itself⁸. Scholars such as

¹ The term ‹ordinary Germans› is used here to describe those parts of the population during the Third Reich that were officially part of the German ‹people's community› as defined by the racist categories of National Socialism and that were not part of the top ranks of the National Socialist apparatus.

² See also W. Steinmetz, *New Perspectives on the Study of Language and Power in the Short Twentieth Century*, in *Political Languages in the Age of the Extremes*, W. Steinmetz (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 46f.

³ V. Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 2018 [1947].

⁴ D. Sternberger, Dolf, G. Storz and W.E. Süskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen*, Hamburg, Claassen. 1957.

⁵ E. Seidel, I. Seidel-Slotty, *Sprachwandel im Dritten Reich. Eine kritische Untersuchung faschistischer Einflüsse*, Halle an der Saale, Sprache und Literatur, 1961.

⁶ See for example the recent work of C. Braun, *Nationalsozialistischer Sprachstil. Theoretischer Zugang und praktische Analysen auf der Grundlage einer pragmatisch-textlinguistisch orientierten Stilistik*, Heidelberg, Winter, 2007.

⁷ V. Klemperer, *LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen*, p. 26 and 74.

⁸ For a good overview, see M. Marek, ‹Wer deutsch spricht, wird nicht verstanden!› *Der wissenschaftliche Diskurs über das Verhältnis von Sprache und Politik im Nationalsozialismus – ein Forschungsbericht*, in: ‹Archiv für Sozialgeschichte› 30: 1990, pp. 454-492.

Peter von Polenz⁹, Gerhard Voigt¹⁰, Wolfgang Werner Sauer¹¹ and Utz Maas¹² have pointed to the continuities of discourses linking the 1930s and 1940s to the preceding period which contradicted the proclaimed novelty and originality of National Socialist language. In addition, it has been criticized that many «classical» accounts tended to overemphasize the persuasive power of language on the one hand as well as the power Nazi officials possessed over language use on the other hand. Utz Maas therefore proposed to speak of «language relations» within National Socialism instead of a «language of National Socialism» or «National Socialist language». In his own work, he shed light on the polyphonic nature of official National Socialist texts which could transport different messages, threats of exclusion as well as offers of inclusion, for different audiences at the same time. Especially the identificatory potential was stressed by him in what he called a «ferry function», meaning that many National Socialist texts used elements of traditional (conservative, socialist, nationalist, youth movement) discourses in order to «transport» the addressees to the National Socialist communicative space¹³.

In the context of the linguistic turn and a stronger focus on the history of the everyday life of «ordinary people» within historiography in general, historical research has only really started considering the linguistic dimensions of National Socialism from the 1990s onward¹⁴. Since then, it has added important modifications and differentiations to the subject:

Firstly, several contributions have shown that National Socialist ideology (and the language connected with it) was less closed, unambiguous and all-encompassing than often portrayed¹⁵. While central concepts or discursive elements such as «*Volk*», «*Volksgemeinschaft*», «*Führer*» or «*Rasse*» served of course as strong

⁹ P. von Polenz (ed.), *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, 7, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1970.

¹⁰ G. Voigt, *Bericht vom Ende der «Sprache des Nationalsozialismus»*, in: «Diskussion Deutsch» 5, 1974, pp. 445-464.

¹¹ W. W. Sauer, *Der Sprachgebrauch von Nationalsozialisten vor 1933*, Hamburg, Buske, 1978.

¹² U. Maas, «*Als der Geist der Gemeinschaft eine Sprache fand*». *Sprache im Nationalsozialismus. Versuch einer historischen Argumentationsanalyse*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1984.

¹³ See G. Bauer, *Sprache und Sprachlosigkeit im «Dritten Reich»*, 2. rev. ed. Köln, Bund, 1990, p. 30.

¹⁴ For a more detailed overview see S. Scholl, *Für eine Sprach- und Kommunikationsgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Ein programmatischer Forschungsüberblick*, in: «Archiv für Sozialgeschichte», 59, 2019, pp. 409-444.

¹⁵ L. Raphael, «*Pluralities of National Socialist Ideologies. New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung*», in *Visions of Community. Social Engineering and Private Lives*, Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 73-86; M. Steber, *Regions and National Socialist Ideology: Reflections on Contained Plurality*, in *Heimat, Region, and Empire. Spatial Identities under National Socialism*, Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann and Maiken Umbach (ed.), Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, pp. 25-42; C. C. Szejnmann, *National Socialist Ideology*, in *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, Shelley Baranowski, A. Nolzen and C. C. W. Szejnmann (ed.), Hoboken/Chichester, Wiley Blackwell, 2018.

reference points, their meaning was not fix, but it was debated, sometimes heavily, and filled with diverging semantic ascriptions. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan¹⁶, for instance, has shown that even in the main National Socialist journal *Der Völkische Beobachter* the category of ‹race› in relation to ‹Jewishness› was all but clear. Rather, the denominations oscillated between racial and religious attributions for a long time. As late as in November 1938, the term ‹German Jew› could be found in an editorial article written by Goebbels¹⁷.

Secondly, new (groups of) actors and speakers were taken into consideration besides leading politicians or ideologists. As Geraldine Horan has aptly formulated:

Ironically, despite apparent homogeneity due to regulation of public utterances, the speech community under National Socialism was in fact fragmented, consisting of a variety of groups and niches, with loyal, compliant, semi-compliant/-oppositional and oppositional discourses co-existing, even employed by the same individual or community of practice¹⁸.

In her study *Mothers, Warriors, Guardians of the Soul*, she shows how female supporters of National Socialism developed a specific group discourse through processes of «semantic inheritance», rather than through patriarchal persuasion or manipulation, thus taking the actors serious as co-producers and -performers of discourses¹⁹. Oppositional speech acts and group discourses have also recently been the subject of investigation²⁰. Other important studies have attempted to enquire the language of the victims of National Socialism, both within the ghettos as well as the concentration camps²¹.

¹⁶ K. T. Pegelow, *The Language of Nazi Genocide. Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 127f.

¹⁸ G. Horan, «‹Er zog sich die ‹neue Sprache› des ‹Dritten Reiches› über wie ein Kleidungsstück›: Communities of Practice and Performativity in National Socialist Discourse», in: “Linguistik Online” 30 (1): Accessed May 9, 2022, 2007, p. 61.

¹⁹ G. Horan, *Mothers, Warriors, Guardians of the Soul: Female Discourse in National Socialism 1924-1934*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 2012.

²⁰ I. Richter, *Faced with Death: Gestapo Interrogations and Clemency Pleas in High Treason Trials by the National Socialist Volksgerichtshof*, in: *Political Languages in the Age of the Extremes*, W. Steinmetz (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 151-167; B. M. Schuster, *Heterogene Widerstandskulturen zwischen 1933 und 1945 und ihre sprachlichen Praktiken*, in *Sprachliche Sozialgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, H. Kämper and B. M. Schuster (ed.), 27-49, Bremen, Hempfen; F. Markewitz, *Das sprachliche Widerstehen Hermann Kaisers. Zur linguistischen Aufarbeitung des Widerstands im Nationalsozialismus*, in “Sprachwissenschaft” 43, 2018, pp. 425-453.

²¹ See for example J. Riecke, *Schreiben im Ghetto. Annäherungen an den Sprachgebrauch der Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, in: “Sprache und Literatur” 97, 2006, pp. 82-96; A. Garbarini, *Numbered Days. Diaries and the Holocaust*. New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 2006; A. Löw, *Tagebücher aus dem Ghetto Litzmannstadt: Autoren, Themen, Funktionen*, in «Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten». *Tagebücher und persönliche Zeugnisse aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und des Holocaust*, F. Bajohr and S. Steinbacher (ed.),

Thirdly, and in line with the former two aspects, new sources have been detected that are more appropriate to evaluate the question of how ‹ordinary people› wrote and talked during National Socialism and to what degree they used and made sense of a specific vocabulary or argumentative patterns. Seminal research has been done on war letters, describing how soldiers (and their relatives on the ‹home front›) used linguistic elements of nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, but also more subcutaneous cultural matrices such as the idea of ‹cleanliness› in order to explain the war and to construct themselves within it²². Another important group of sources that has recently gained attention are autobiographical writings, namely in the form of diaries²³. Here, Janosch Steuwer²⁴ has provided us with a thorough account of the way ‹ordinary Germans› made sense of their time and their own relationship to it, even if it does not go deep into a more specific linguistic analysis. But he too stresses the aspect of co-constitution of meaning: ‹The abundance of ideological demands and concepts required an active role of the individual contemporaries: Amongst a wide spectrum of translations that transferred National Socialist worldviews in models of every day conduct, they had to choose and refer them to their own living›²⁵.

From 2018 to 2021 a joint research group at the Institute for German Language in Mannheim and at the university of Paderborn carried out further research in this field with a specific focus on specific text types, key concepts and communicative acts used or performed by different actors during National Socialism²⁶. Thus, in line with the recent historiography on National Socialism that looks for the heterogenous and often ambiguous patterns of behaviour, individual interpretations and appropriations of the social and political world during National Socialism, the project assumed that the members of the ‹people’s community› were far more than passive recipients of National Socialist discourses, but

Göttingen, Wallstein, 2015; D. Schröder, ‹Niemand ist fähig das alles in Worten auszudrücken›. *Tagebuchs schreiben in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern 1939-1945*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2020.

²² K. Latzel, *Deutsche Soldaten – nationalsozialistischer Krieg? Kriegserlebnis – Kriegserfahrung, 1939-1945*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1998; M. Humbug, *Das Gesicht des Krieges. Feldpostbriefe von Wehrmachtssoldaten aus der Sowjetunion 1941-1944*. Opladen/Wiesbaden, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998; S. O. Müller, *Deutsche Soldaten und ihre Feinde. Nationalismus an Front und Heimatfront im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, München, S. Fischer, 2007; M. Kipp, ‹Großreinemachen im Osten›. Feindbilder in deutschen Feldpostbriefen im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2014.

²³ F. Bajohr, S. Steinbacher (ed.), ‹Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten›. *Tagebücher und persönliche Zeugnisse aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und des Holocaust*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2015; J. Steuwer, G. Rüdiger (ed.), *Selbstreflexionen und Weltdeutungen. Tagebücher in der Geschichte und der Geschichtsschreibung des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2015.

²⁴ J. Steuwer, ‹Ein Drittes Reich, wie ich es auffasse›. *Politik, Gesellschaft und privates Leben in Tagebüchern 1933-1939*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2017.

²⁵ Ivi, p. 214 [translation by myself].

²⁶ H. Kämper, *Sprachliche Sozialgeschichte 1933 bis 1945 – ein Projektkonzept*, in: ‹Sprachliche Sozialgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus›, H. Kämper, B. M. Schuster (ed.), Bremen, Hempen, 2018, pp. 9-25.

that they individually interpreted, co-constituted and/or contradicted them. As Maiken Umbach has phrased it, besides asking what National Socialism did with people, it has to be asked what people did with National Socialism²⁷. What comes to the foreground, then, are layers of discursive participation and collusion, of active individual endeavours to position oneself to and within National Socialism. Especially for the vast majority of the population that was not stigmatized and persecuted for reasons of 'race' or political affiliation, it has to be taken into account that the «use and effectiveness» of National Socialist discourse «is best measured not only in terms of persuasiveness and manipulation, but rather in the population's willingness and ability to use it»²⁸. This use could be voluntary, strategic or coerced and it was certainly marked by strong asymmetries of power. Yet, it discloses National Socialist discourses as «collective efforts»²⁹.

It is in line with this perspective that we aim at looking at yet another type of sources in the following, that is petitions, or more concretely: letters of request and complaint sent by ordinary people to state and party authorities on the local, regional and state level.

2. PETITIONS DURING NATIONAL SOCIALISM: SELF-POSITIONING AND CLAIMS OF BELONGING

While historical research on other periods has extensively dealt with these instances of communication between parts of the population and the authorities³⁰, they have only occasionally been taken into consideration by the historiography on National Socialism³¹. This is all the more deplorable, because these sources

²⁷ M. Umbach, *(Re-)Inventing the Private under National Socialism*, in: *Private Life and Privacy in Nazi Germany*, Elizabeth Harvey, Johannes Hürter, Maiken Umbach and Andreas Wirsching (ed.), Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 130.

²⁸ G. Horan, *«Lieber, guter Onkel Hitler»: A Linguistic Analysis of the Letter as a National Socialist Text-Type and a Re-evaluation of the «Sprache im/des Nationalsozialismus» Debate*, in: *New Literary and Linguistic Perspectives on the German Language, National Socialism, and the Shoa*, P. Davies and A. Hammel (ed.), Rochester/New York, Camden House, 2014, p. 56.

²⁹ G. Horan, *«Er zog sich die «neue Sprache» des «Dritten Reiches» über wie ein Kleidungsstück»: Communities of Practice and Performativity in National Socialist Discourse*, in: "Linguistik Online" 30 (1), 2007, p. 69.

³⁰ See for example A. Gestrich, *German Pauper Letters and Petitions for Relief. New Perspectives on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Poor Relief*, in: *Poverty and Welfare in Modern German History*, L. Raphael (ed.), New York, Berghahn Books, 2017, pp. 49-77; F. Mühlberg, *Bürger, Bitten und Behörden. Geschichte der Eingabe in der DDR*, Berlin, Dietz, 2004; M. Fenske, *Demokratie erschreiben. Bürgerbriefe und Petitionen als Medien politischer Kultur 1950-1974*, Frankfurt am Main/New York, Campus, 2013.

³¹ Only in two thematic fields research on National Socialism has rather intensively dealt with letters of complaint and request: On the one hand, most of the studies on forced sterilization include strategies of protest and complaint used by those concerned and their families. See for example G. Bock, *Zwangsterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*, Opladen, Westdeutscher

promise to give us new insights about the use of ideologically-laden language and the way ordinary men and women – party-members and non-party-members alike – referred to and thus co-constituted discursive nodal points in order to legitimize their claims or complaints when writing to public authorities during National Socialism. As Robert Gellately mentioned marginally some twenty years ago, «requests, supplications, and complaints were made to the authorities» from «all over the country [...]. Even when such entreaties to Party and state proved fruitless they were repeated endlessly or sent elsewhere»³². Unlike the impression that could be gained from the popularity of editions of letters to the *Führer*³³, Hitler was by far not the only addressee. People sent their requests to all levels of the Nazi party, government and administration, from the *Kreis-* and *Gauleiter*, mayors and administration officials up to the heads of the *Reich* Ministries and Hitler. This practice, Gellately suggests, proves that citizens in the Third Reich «acted in the new opportunities that opened up and were not merely passive, dependent, or powerless»³⁴. Valuable contributions by John Connelly, Moritz Föllmer, Florian Wimmer and Anette Blaschke³⁵ have already pointed to the strategic usage of the rhetoric of the «people's community» (*«Volksgemeinschaft»*) and other elements of National Socialist discourse within the communication by letter between the population and local authorities. Also, Birthe Kundrus and

Verlag, 1986; H. W. Heitzer, *Zwangsterilisation in Passau. Die Erbgesundheitspolitik des Nationalsozialismus in Ostbayern (1933-1939)*, Köln/Weimar/Wien, Böhlau, 2005, pp. 306–316; C. Braß, *Zwangsterilisation und «Euthanasie» im Saarland 1935-1945*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2004, pp. 156–169; J. Vossen, *Gesundheitsämter im Nationalsozialismus. Rassenhygiene und offene Gesundheitsfürsorge in Westfalen, 1900-1950*, Essen, Klartext, 2001, pp. 271–324; A. Christians, *Amts Gewalt und Volksgesundheit. Das öffentliche Gesundheitswesen im nationalsozialistischen München*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2013, pp. 189–197; on the other hand, important contributions have analyzed discursive strategies that people categorized as Jews or *Mischlinge* employed when writing to state and Party organizations in order to better their fate. See for example K. T. Pegelow, *The Language of Nazi Genocide. Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 86–93, 150–159, 202–218; B. Meyer, *«Jüdische Mischlinge». Rassenpolitik und Verfolgungserfahrung 1933-1945*, Hamburg, Dölling und Galitz, 1999, pp. 103–108.

³² R. Gellately, *Denunciation as a Subject of Historical Research*, in: “Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung” 26 (2-3), 2001, p. 25.

³³ H. Eberle (ed.), *Briefe an Hitler. Ein Volk schreibt seinem Führer. Unbekannte Dokumente aus Moskauser Archiven – zum ersten Mal veröffentlicht*, Bergisch Gladbach, Lübbe, 2007; T. Ebeling, M. Heidrich, J. Kai (ed.), *«Geliebter Führer». Briefe der Deutschen an Adolf Hitler*, Berlin, Vergangenheitsverlag, 2011.

³⁴ R. Gellately, *Denunciation as a Subject of Historical Research*, p. 26.

³⁵ J. Connelly, *The Uses of the Volksgemeinschaft. Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939-1940*, in: “The Journal of Modern History” 68, 1996, pp. 899-930; M. Föllmer, *Wie kollektivistisch war der Nationalsozialismus? Zur Geschichte der Individualität zwischen Weimarer Republik und Nachkriegszeit*, in: *Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten. Der Nationalsozialismus in der Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, (ed.) B. Kundrus, S. Steinbacher, Göttingen, Wallstein. 2013, p. 39f; F. Wimmer, *Die völkische Ordnung der Armut. Kommunale Sozialpolitik im nationalsozialistischen München*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2014, pp. 213-222; A. Blaschke, *Zwischen «Dorfgemeinschaft» und «Volksgemeinschaft». Landbevölkerung und ländliche Lebenswelten im Nationalsozialismus*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2018.

Nicole Kramer³⁶ have shown how self-confidently women and widows during wartime wrote to the administration and used propaganda terms such as ‘heroic death’ (*Heldentod*) to legitimize their requests for provision. Despite the existence of these studies, a systematic and thorough analysis of the role of petitions during National Socialism, and especially the communicative and linguistic dimensions of these letters, still needs to be carried out.

In particular, such an approach would further amplify recent perspectives and findings within the historiography of National Socialism which emphasize that the positioning practices of contemporaries formed a central part of the National Socialist dictatorship of consent and participation³⁷. These practices reached from the display of the ‘Hitler salute’³⁸, flagging of houses with swastikas to the writing of ideologically ‘correct’ essays at school or entries in a diary. As Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto explain, contemporaries had to constantly (re-)affirm their legitimate place within the ‘people’s community’ through symbolic and discursive acts³⁹. Similarly, Armin Nolzen⁴⁰ has noted the existence of a mixture of (forced) pressure and (voluntary) urge to express commitment and loyalty during the National Socialist regime. Since the criteria of belonging were in many ways incoherent and ambiguous, these acts could open up space for maneuver and negotiation, for example complaining about the behavior of an employer or a *Gauleiter* with reference to National Socialist buzz words or promises made in the past. It is important to note, however, that these acts of self-positioning and claiming belonging were of course not open for everyone on equal terms. For example, it was far easier to claim affiliation and ideological determination for a long-term party-member than for someone who had been member of an op-

³⁶ B. Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen. Familienpolitik und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Hamburg, Wallstein, 1995, pp. 273-295; N. Kramer, *Volksgenossinnen an der Heimatfront. Mobilisierung, Verhalten, Erinnerung*. Göttingen, Wallstein, 2011, pp. 229-245.

³⁷ F. Bajohr, *Die Zustimmungsdiktatur. Grundzüge nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft in Hamburg*, in: *Hamburg im «Dritten Reich»*, (ed. by) the Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2005, 69-121; S. Reichardt, *Beteiligungsdiktaturen in Italien und Deutschland. Vergleichende Anmerkungen zur ‘Volksgemeinschafts-Debatte*, in: *Der Ort der ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in der deutschen Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, D. Schmiechen-Ackermann, M. Buchholz, B. Roitsch, C. Schröder (ed.), Paderborn, Schöningh, 2018, pp. 118-133;

see also M. Wildt, *Das Ich und das Wir. Subjekt, Gesellschaft und ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ im Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Der Ort der ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in der deutschen Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, D. Schmiechen-Ackermann, M. Buchholz, B. Roitsch C. Schröder (ed.), Paderborn: Schöningh, 2018, pp. 37-49.

³⁸ K. H. Ehlers, *Der ‘Deutsche Gruß’ in Briefen. Zur historischen Soziolinguistik und Pragmatik eines verordneten Sprachgebrauchs*, *Linguistik online* 55 (5), 2012, pp. 3-19.

³⁹ M. Steber, B. Gotto, *Volksgemeinschaft im NS-Regime. Wandlungen, Wirkungen und Aneignungen eines Zukunftsversprechens*, in: “Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte” 62 (3), 2014, pp. 440f.

⁴⁰ A. Nolzen, *Zum Sagen gezwungen? Janosch Steuwer liest Tagebücher aus der NS-Zeit und lotet Selbstreflexionen der Zeitgenossen aus*, in: “literaturkritik.de”, 2019. <<https://literaturkritik.de/steuwer-ein-drittes-reich-wie-ich-es-auffasse-zum-sagen-gezwungen,25801.html>>.

posing political current. Also, we have to bear in mind that the «correct» use of discursive elements, specific terms or argumentative patterns ascribed to National Socialism was not always clear to those writing to the authorities. Thus, we propose here to describe the practice of the letter-writers as a sort of navigation through National Socialist discourses of race, nationalism, loyalty and belonging.

3. EXAMPLES: NAVIGATING THROUGH DISCOURSES OF BELONGING

In order to give a more detailed and nuanced impression of the way these practices of navigating through discourses of belonging manifested themselves in petitions, we have chosen three exemplary cases that will be discussed in the following.

3.1. A FORMER FREEMASON CLAIMING HIS NATIONAL SOCIALIST CONVICTION

The first letter that we will analyse more in detail stems from a civil service employee (W. T. 1937). In June 1937, he sent a request to Rudolf Heß, the so-called «deputy of the Führer» (*Stellvertreter des Führers*) and leader of the party office. As it turns out from the introductory lines of his letter, he was about to be promoted in his job. By way of precaution, he wanted to «smooth out all eventual constraints and provide the requirement for a quick execution»⁴¹. The background for this was that for employment and promotion in the civil service (as in other circumstances), political assessments were compiled by party organizations in which information about the person's former party affiliations and political leanings, practical engagement within National Socialist organizations as well as the general attitude towards the National Socialist state were gathered⁴². A negative evaluation could lead to dismissal or the denial of promotion. In the case presented here, the letter-writer seems to know that one feature of his past could pose a problem for his political assessment: He had been member of a Masonic Lodge. Within Nazi Germany, Freemasonry was openly fought, because it was seen as «Un-German» and equated with «Jewish». In 1935, Masonic Lodges were eventually forbidden. It is thus against this background that W. T. tried to explain his Freemasonic past and at the same time assert his loyalty to National Socialism. The letter, or as he calls it at the end: his «confession of faith», is seven pages long, so only some passages can be quoted here.

Right after describing his reason to write, he states:

⁴¹ All translations from German to English were done by me. For longer passages, the German original will be quoted in the footnotes.

⁴² K. Thieler, «*Volksgemeinschaft*» unter Vorbehalt. *Gesinnungskontrolle und politische Mobilisierung in der Herrschaftspraxis der NSDAP-Kreisleitung Göttingen*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2014.

As a National Socialist who not only talks about commitment to the National Socialist movement, but who is recognized and respected as a National Socialist through his actions, I do not have to fear that the information gathered about me could be unfavourable. However, there lies a risk in the generalization of some views about Freemasonry expressed within the party but also in official decrees which are true when it comes to *world* Freemasonry, but which are hurting many former *German* Freemasons» (emphasis in the original)⁴³.

Thus, very explicitly, he identifies as a «National Socialist», even it stays unclear whether he actually was a member of the NSDAP at that moment – in the head of the letter, he only gives a «former membership number». But more interestingly, he tries to back up his self-identification by introducing a characteristic differentiation within National Socialist discourses of belonging and commitment, namely the one between those who only «talk» and those who really «act» in National Socialist ways, of course positioning himself on the «acting» side. In the second part of the quote, he then makes another differentiation between «world Freemasonry» and «German Freemasons», insinuating that national belonging played an important role when judging Freemasonic membership.

He goes on proclaiming that while in general he was not even convinced that the official decrees against «German» free masons were justified at all, especially for his own person, an exception clearly had to be made. He reiterates: «I am able to count myself to those German men who championed the same goals even long before the National Socialist movement was born, and this not with thoughts and words, but with my whole life and work». His attitude towards National Socialism, he explained, could not be brushed aside by saying that «this could be claimed by anyone who (as the phrase goes so well) has only found his National Socialist heart after the takeover». This objection, W. T. wrote, could only be made to «those whose attitude was not in line with their past being and actions». But it did not count for him, as he tried to «prove» by generating a list of actions and character traits that were supposed to show that he had always lived according to National Socialist «principles». Within this list, he firstly referred to social aspects which for him seemed to fit in the National Socialist concept of the «people's community». Already as a young attorney, he claimed, he had always cared about the neediest in in a «fatherly» way, he had always struggled for «social balance and peace», and, especially towards employers, he had always tried to remind them of their social duties. Besides, in his own office, he had «realized the claim of a real work commu-

⁴³ «Als Nationalsozialist, der nicht nur bloß das Bekenntnis zur n.-s. Bewegung im Munde führt, sondern gewiß sein darf, in allem seinem Handeln als Nationalsozialist erkannt und anerkannt zu werden, brauche ich nicht zu befürchten, daß die in der Angelegenheit einzuholenden Auskünfte der zuständigen Parteidienststellen ungünstig lauten könnten. Eine Gefahrenquelle liegt jedoch in der viele ehemalige *deutsche* Freimaurer verletzenden Verallgemeinerung mancher richtiger Erkenntnisse über das *Weltfreimaurertum*».

nity [*echte Arbeitsgemeinschaft*]). Secondly, in his list of credentials, he appropriated major concepts of enemies as defined by National Socialism: Already as a school student, he had been aware of the «danger of Judaism» and he had disseminated this idea. Also, he had «resolutely fought the danger of ultramontanism», i.e., the Catholic Church, «and tried to recruit fellow combatants». Thirdly and finally, he connected to the National Socialist and agrarian discourse of blood and soil by presenting himself as a «land reformer» who had always promoted the idea that every member of the «people's community» [*jeder Volksgenosse*] should have access to the «soil of the fatherland» and that the legal system should be changed in order to prohibit any «abuse of the soil». The fact that plans for land reform were long abandoned by the National Socialist regime when W. T. wrote his letter in 1937 is not decisive here. Rather, it underscores the argument that petitioners took out of the conglomerate of National Socialist discourses whatever seemed to match their own personal story. In the case of W. T., his whole letter consists of trying to prove his belonging to the National Socialist community. In a later passage, he summarizes: «The only reason why I did not enter the National Socialist party when I first came in contact with National Socialism in 1932 [...] was that I already had fought for the same goals, so that the sheer formal membership within a movement, that I already belonged to, seemed negligible to me». So, even if he cannot show a long-term membership and he instead has to explain his membership in a Freemasonic lodge, he tries to engage in what he thinks are markers of National Socialist identity: living according to National Socialist principles instead of only paying lip service to it or instead of only being a formal party member, having fought against the proclaimed enemies of National Socialism, in this case Jews and Catholics, etc.

In sum, the letter shows that navigation through National Socialist discourses in petitions was not always easy and smooth, because it depended on the petitioner's status within the social categories established by National Socialism as well as on the petitioner's perception and interpretation of National Socialist discourses.

3.2. A NATIONAL SOCIALIST DEFENDING A 'JEWISH' BUSINESS

The petitioner of our second case seemingly started from a better initial position, since he identifies himself as an old member of the National Socialist party⁴⁴. Right at the beginning, he positions himself as «an old party comrade [*alter Parteigenosse*] who stood loyal on the side of his Führer Adolf Hitler during his first

⁴⁴ «Anonymous letter to the Reich's Office, the Reich's Economic Department, the Reich's Department of the Interior and the Federal Government of Braunschweig, 26.11.1934», in: *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933-1945. Band 1: Deutsches Reich, 1933-1937*, W. Gruner (ed.), München: Oldenbourg, 2008, 386-388.

fight for power», by which he supposedly meant the attempted coup in 1923. With this long-term membership, he would fall within the category of an «old fighter», even the «old guard» (*alte Garde*), a group of members of the National Socialist party that had high official standing within the party folklore and, indeed, was granted special benefits for some time⁴⁵. In November 1934, he sent his letter to several high authorities at once: the *Reich's* office (*Reichskanzlei*), the *Reich's* economic department, the department of the interior as well as the Braunschweig federal state government. The reason for his writing, however, was quite delicate and surprising and this might explain why he chose to write anonymously: He sought for help on behalf of all employees of «Jewish firms» in Braunschweig. As he complained, local Nazi activists organized boycotts against Jewish stores and the local police as well as the local government did nothing against it, even when, as he claims to have read in the newspapers, every overt action against Jewish businesses was officially prohibited. So here, we have the case of a long-term National Socialist party member who questions one of the central tenets of National Socialism, i.e., to «take action» against «the Jews». Quite astonishingly, he does this by discursively appealing to National Socialist «ideals». In a rather straightforward way, he asks:

What do you plan to do when despite your order people who are doing harm to our National Socialist idea and worldview, but are calling themselves National Socialists, are disturbing the population? [...] Should employees of Jewish firms and party members defend themselves against these agitators? Should they become traitors of a cause, for which many of our fellow party members have fought in Jewish firms only to be mocked by people who have found their National Socialism only after the revolution? Should they show to these parasites what our Führer expects from a true National Socialist?⁴⁶

Once again, as in the first letter, we find here the important differentiation made between «true» National Socialists and latecomers respectively people who are only «calling themselves National Socialists». This differentiation, together with

⁴⁵ F. Bajohr, *Parvenüs und Profiteure. Korruption in der NS-Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 2001, pp. 17-21; C. Schmidt, *Zu den Motiven «alter Kämpfer» in der NSDAP*, in *Die Reihen fast geschlossen. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Detlev Peukert and Jürgen Reulecke, 21-44. Wuppertal, Hammer, 1981.

⁴⁶ «Was gedenken Sie aber zu tun, wenn trotz ihrer Anordnungen Schädlinge unserer nationalsozialistischen Idee und Weltanschauung, die sich Nationalsozialisten nennen, Maßnahmen ergreifen, die nur dazu angetan sind, Unruhe unter der Bevölkerung Braunschweigs zu entzünden? [...] Sollen sich die Angestellten der jüdischen Geschäftshäuser und Parteigenossen gegen diese Provokateure zur Wehr setzen und zur Selbsthilfe greifen? Sollen sie Verräter einer Sache sein, für die zahllose unserer Parteigenossen in jüdischen Betrieben gekämpft haben, um von denen verhöhnt zu werden, die ihren Nationalsozialismus erst nach der Revolution entdeckt haben? Sollen sie diesen Schmarotzern vor Augen halten, was unser Führer von einem wahren Nationalsozialisten verlangt?»

the reference to official proclamations that prohibited ‹disturbances› of the public order, allows the letter-writer to qualify the troublemakers as ‹parasites› who supposedly acted against the ‹will of the Führer›.

He then concludes his letter with the following sentences:

As a party member, I will not give this letter to the foreign press. As a member of a people's community, however, I demand that this crying injustice will be venged. Put a stop on every boycott of Jewish firms, then you will have worked towards the great goal that our Führer has set, that is, to create jobs for every people's comrade and to keep them. Heil Hitler, an old party member.⁴⁷

Again, we can clearly discern key elements of National Socialist discourses, crystallized in specific terms (‹people's community›, ‹our Führer›, ‹people's comrade›) and argumentative patterns (‹work[ing] towards the great goal that our Führer has set›, ‹create jobs for every people's comrade›). Of course, since this letter is anonymously written, we cannot know if it really stems from a long-term party member. However, it is not totally unthinkable, since we have other letters like this in our collection. But for the argument that petitioners navigated through discourses of belonging when writing to the authorities, it is not even that important, because even if it was written by somebody else, it shows how this person thought he could combine his criticism of anti-Semitic actions with trying to present a loyal attitude towards National Socialism. What is crucial here is that he – similar to the writer of the first letter – creates a difference between ‹true National Socialists›, this time proven by long membership, being in line with the ‹Führer›, and local agitators who are harming the National Socialist project by their actions and who are presented as latecomers to the National Socialist cause.

3.3. A NATIONAL SOCIALIST SUPPORTING HIS 'JEWISH' FRIEND

The third letter presented in this article differs from the first two examples insofar as it is written by a National Socialist working within the party bureaucracy in support of a close friend – a Jewish lawyer who has been banned from practising his job because of his status of a ‹Jew› (E. V. 1933). The context of this letter, written in early April 1933, is one of the first anti-Semitic laws that banned ‹non-Aryans› from working in the civil service and the legal system, the so-called *Gesetz*

⁴⁷ ‹Als Parteigenosse habe ich keine Veranlassung, diesen Brief der Auslandspresse zuzuleiten. Als Mitglied einer Volksgemeinschaft fordere ich aber, daß man dieses schreiende Unrecht sühnt. Veranlassen Sie, daß jeglicher Boykott jüdischer Geschäftshäuser unterbleibt, dann haben Sie an dem großen Ziel, das sich unser Führer gesteckt hat, mitgearbeitet, allen Volksgenossen Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen und zu erhalten. Heil Hitler. Ein alter Parteigenosse›.

zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums⁴⁸. In many cases, persons concerned by this law tried to protest by writing letters to public authorities. As Thomas Pegelow Kaplan explains, «thousands of German-Jewish civil servants and members of other professions sought exemptions from the regime's racial legislation like the Civil Service Law»⁴⁹ by petitioning government and party bodies⁵⁰. In some of these cases, persons with a better «status», i.e., «Aryans», tried to help their colleagues or friends in this effort⁵¹.

In our example, the author makes this clear right in the beginning of his letter: «In order to legitimate my supplication, let me tell you that I am purely German [*rein deutschstämmig*]. I am 53 years old, was a member of the German emperor's navy for 20 years until 9th November 1918 and I am an official member of the NSDAP since September 1930». So, these are his credentials of belonging – and they are quite compelling within the discursive space of National Socialism: «purely German», member of the Nazi party since 1930, former soldier in the navy during World War I⁵². He then passes on to his request on behalf of his friend that he was closely related with «since birth», as he tells. He describes him as follows: «C. stems from a Jewish, but ever since strictly national family, loyal to the King. At a time, when there was no talk of a Jewish movement in Germany, C. converted to the Protestant church out of inner conviction».⁵³ He then describes his friend's service in the army during the First World War, where he had been honoured with the iron cross, one of the highest decorations of war. After the war, «[t]he revolution of 1918 hit C. as hard as it can hit someone who feels German to the core. He was not able to come to terms with the new regime»⁵⁴.

⁴⁸ Cf. H. Göppinger, *Juristen jüdischer Abstammung im «Dritten Reich»*. *Entrechtung und Verfolgung*, 2. ed. München, C. H. Beck, 1990.

⁴⁹ K. T. Pegelow, *The Language of Nazi Genocide. Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry*, p. 89.

⁵⁰ For another detailed analysis of such a letter see S. Scholl, *Beschwerde- und Bittschreiben von Mannheimer Bürgern während des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Analyse alltagsprachlicher Kollusion anhand von ausgewählten Beispielen*, in: «Sprachreport. Informationen und Meinungen zur deutschen Sprache» 35 (4): <<https://pub.ids-mannheim.de/laufend/sprachreport/sr19-4.html>>, 2019. pp. 11-14.

⁵¹ Later on, this phenomenon was fiercely attacked by anti-Semitic National Socialist propagandists who criticized that many «Germans» would still believe that the «Jew» they personally knew was a «descent Jew»; see M. Dang-Anh, S. Scholl, *Zur kommunikativen Hervorbringung von Moral zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, in: *Diskurs – ethnisch*, H. Kämper and I. Warnke (ed.), Bremen, Hempen, 2020, p. 40.

⁵² That he explicitly mentions the 9th November 1918 as the date of his retirement from the navy is also quite telling, since this date had a special place within the National Socialist's narrative of Germany's «defeat from within».

⁵³ «C. entstammt einer jüdischen, aber von jeher streng nationalen, königstreuen Familie. Zu einer Zeit, als in Deutschland von einer Judenbewegung noch nicht die Rede war, trat C. aus innerster Überzeugung der evangelischen Landeskirche bei».

⁵⁴ «Die Revolution 1918 [...] traf C. so schwer, wie das nur bei einem bis ins Innerste deutsch-fühlenden Manne möglich ist. Mit dem nun einsetzenden Regime konnte er sich nicht abfinden».

According to the letter's author, this was also the reason why his friend left the civil service and instead became a lawyer. To depict the political attitude of his friend, he adds further descriptions:

In view of his political attitude, I can say that C. had been member of the conservative party and then after the war belonged to the German National People's Party. With the appearance of our Führer, C. in his inside belonged to our movement. Quite often, he has expressed his grief that he was not allowed to become a member of the party because of his descent. No man of pure German blood could have felt the liberation of 30th January 1933 more gratefully towards the Führer than him. [...] This man of extraordinary spiritual and moral integrity, even compared to core German standards was crushed down by the decree banning lawyers of foreign race. The feeling of having always given the best to the fatherland, of having always felt, thought and acted German as a true German, of having been a loyal advisor to his clients, a benefactor for all those without means seeking legal help, and now suddenly being excluded is terribly hard for this man⁵⁵.

To be sure, it is not the purpose here to judge the writings that victims of National Socialist stigmatization and persecution or, in this case, people trying to help them, addressed to Nazi authorities. In many instances, it was one of the last things they could do to better their fate. Rather, it points to the fact that the challenge of navigating through National Socialist discourses of belonging was just as important, but also more difficult for this group of people, because they did not belong to the racially defined 'people's community' according to National Socialism. And yet, in many cases, in their petitions they tried to inscribe themselves at least into a German national conservative community. That is why, in our example, the writer repeatedly points to the 'inner Germanness' of his friend as well as his service in the army during World War I which significantly ended with the revolution of 1918. Even more, and this is something we do not find frequently in petitions from people labelled as 'Jews', the letter-writer portrays his friend as a supporter of National Socialism: He allegedly had been against the Weimar Republic, he had welcomed the National Socialist movement and had

⁵⁵ «Bezüglich seiner politischen Gesinnung ist zu sagen, dass C. früher der Konservativen, nach dem Kriege der Deutschnat. Volkspartei angehört hat. Mit dem Auftreten unseres Führers hat er innerlich unserer Bewegung angehört. Oft hat er mir seinen Kummer darüber zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass er infolge seiner Abstammung der Partei nicht beitreten könne. Kein rein-deutscher Mann kann die Befreiung am 30. Januar 1933 tiefer und mit heisserem Dank gegen den Führer empfunden haben als C. [...] Diesen auch für kerndeutsche Verhältnisse auf ungewöhnlicher geistiger und moralischer Höhe stehenden Manne hat die Verordnung über die Entfernung fremdstämmiger Anwälte niedergeschmettert. Das Gefühl, dem Vaterlande stets das Beste gegeben zu haben, nur deutsch wie ein Deutscher gefühlt, gedacht und gehandelt zu haben, ein treuer, selbstloser Berater seiner Klienten, ein Wohltäter besonders für rechtsschutzsuchende Mittellose gewesen und jetzt plötzlich ausgestoßen zu sein, ist für diesen Mann furchtbar hart».

wished to be part of it, he had celebrated the National Socialist takeover of power and suffered now because of his exclusion from his job, but moreover from the German «people's community».

4. CONCLUSION

Petitions to public authorities during the Third Reich tell us a lot about the way «ordinary people» linguistically adopted and appropriated elements of National Socialist discourses of belonging. However, when looking at the language used in these letters, we have to keep in mind that these texts were embedded in a specific communicative setting marked by asymmetries of power – people who addressed government or party bodies wanted or needed something from them and they had to legitimate their demands. In addition, we have to take account of the variety of different writers' positions within the social categorizations of National Socialism and thus their ability of taking up specific elements of National Socialist discourses. They did so quite creatively, because they had to reconcile them with their positioning within National Socialist categories, and because National Socialist discourses were not that fixed. Thus, within the letters that people sent to public authorities during National Socialism, we can see that, by navigating through discourses of belonging, people made use of and thereby co-constituted National Socialist discourses. A more thorough and systematic look on the linguistic dimensions of petitions during the Third Reich could thus help us to further comprehend the discursive conditions of the political communicative space during National Socialism and the role language use played in it.

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“Wir lehnen ab, was fremd ist”. Eugen Fischer and the Language of German Anthropology (1909-1945)

RICCARDO MARTINELLI

ABSTRACT

Nineteenth-century German anthropology was long inspired by the humanistic values of Rudolf Virchow (although its practices were not entirely ethical by today's standards). Even before 1914, however, there was a clear shift in the language and practice of the discipline. In 1909, Eugen Fischer went to Namibia to study human heredity. He concluded that any mixing with local “inferior” races was invariably detrimental to the whites. In a 1927 monograph, Fischer generalized these findings in collaboration with German eugenicists who sought to establish “racial hygiene”. Hitler read the book and appreciated it. As head of the Institute of Anthropology, Fischer praised the new regime in 1933 and was appointed rector of the University of Berlin. Since then, he has repeatedly lent “scientific” support to the racist theories and practices of his time. To avoid biological degeneration, he argued, Germans should rigorously reject the “foreign”. Among other aliens (e.g., the mentally retarded, etc.), Jews should be segregated and expelled for the sake of racial purity. No wonder Fischer collaborated with the Nazi eugenics programs and the drafting of the Nuremberg Laws.

1. GERMAN ANTHROPOLOGY BEFORE FISCHER

In the course of the twentieth century, scientific anthropology evolved from physical anthropology, mostly understood as racial theory, to the cultural anthropology of today. Depending on the history of each country, this process has taken

place in different ways and at different times. In fact, national traditions have played a much greater role in the development of anthropology than in other fields of scientific knowledge¹. As far as Germany is concerned, one of the most important impulses in the process of its institutionalization came from Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902)². A physician with wide-ranging interests in anthropology and paleontology, Virchow was also politically engaged: he founded the Progressive Party, a liberal democratic formation that opposed anti-Semitic movements. In 1862, three years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Virchow started the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory). German anthropology was then undoubtedly marked by some of the ambiguities characteristic of the European tradition: systematic measurement of limbs and skulls of different racial groups was the norm. However, partly as a legacy of the national scientific and philosophical tradition – ideally embodied by the Humboldt brothers – German anthropology in Virchow's era retained a humanitarian spirit that was lacking elsewhere, for example in France³.

A few decades after Virchow, German anthropology took on radically different characteristics. In this paper I refer to one of the most prominent German anthropologists of the 1930s and 1940s: Eugen Fischer (1874-1967)⁴. Trained as a physician with a special interest in human genetics, Fischer was appointed full professor at Freiburg in 1918. In 1927 he became director of the newly founded *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik*, based in Dahlem, a suburb in the south-west of the capital⁵. In 1933 Fischer was appointed Rector of the University of Berlin and, in the same year, he stood next to Minister

¹ F. BARTH, A. GINGRICH, R. PARKIN, S. SILVERMAN, *One Discipline, Four Ways. British, German, French, and American Anthropology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005.

² Cf. C. GOSCHLER, *Rudolf Virchow: Mediziner - Anthropologe - Politiker*, Köln, Böhlau, 2009; P.J. WEINDLING, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism 1870-1945*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 53-57.

³ B. MASSIN, "From Virchow to Fischer. Physical Anthropology and „Modern Race Theories“ in Wilhelmine Germany", in: G.W. STOCKING (ed.), *Volkegeist as Method and Ethics. Essays on Boasian Ethnology and the German Anthropological Tradition*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, pp. 79-154.

⁴ Cf. N.C. LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt. Leben und Werk Eugen Fischers*, Frankfurt a.M., Lang, 1997, and B. GESSLER, *Eugen Fischer (1874-1967). Leben und Werk des Freiburger Anatomen, Anthropologen und Rassenhygienikers bis 1927*, Frankfurt a.M., Lang, 1999.

⁵ Cf. P.J. WEINDLING, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 436-439; C. SACHSE, B. MASSIN, *Biowissenschaftliche Forschung an Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten und die Verbrechen des NS-Regimes. Informationen über den gegenwärtigen Wissensstand*, Berlin, Forschungsprogramm "Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus", 2000; D. KAUFMANN (Hrsg.), *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus. Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven der Forschung*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2000.

Goebbels at the burning of books in Berlin on 10 May⁶. Fischer helped to draft the *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses* (Law on the Prevention of Hereditary Diseases in Offspring) of 14 July 1933, which ultimately led to the compulsory sterilization of people suffering from various diseases⁷. He also supervised the courts responsible for the trials, occasionally protesting against absolutions. Under Fischer's direction, the Anthropological Institute was involved in dozens of racial identification trials and, from 1934, began to give courses for SS-doctors. In 1937 Fischer provided the medical expertise required for the (unlawful) sterilization of German colored children, in particular the so-called *Rheinlandbastarden*, offspring of black French occupation troops in the Rhein region after 1918, and native German mothers⁸. In 1941, together with Hans Günther, Fischer was the guest of honor at the conference *Die Gesamtlosung der Judenfrage* (The global solution of the Jewish problem) organized by Alfred Rosenberg in Frankfurt. He had also enthusiastically⁹ accepted Rosenberg's invitation to Krakow (not far from Auschwitz) for a planned international anti-Jewish conference which was eventually canceled due to the unfavorable war situation. In occupied Paris in 1942, Fischer delivered a propaganda speech, in which he concluded that "the moral tendencies and all the activities of the Bolschewist Jews bear witness to such a monstrous mentality that we can only speak of inferiority and of beings of another species [*êtres d'une autre espèce que la nôtre*]"¹⁰.

When Fischer retired, the leadership of the Dahlem Institute was taken over by his pupil Otmar von Verschuer, who was, among other things, Josef Mengele's mentor¹¹. In the denazification process, Fischer was recognized as a "follower"

⁶ H. HEIBER, *Universität unterm Hakenkreuz*, Teil 2. *Die Kapitulation der hohen Schulen: das Jahr 1933 und seine Themen*, vol. 2, München, Saur, 1994, p. 89.

⁷ Already in 1910, in *Sozialanthropologie und ihre Bedeutung für den Staat*, Fischer stigmatized the reproduction of "mentally retarded", "epileptics", "born criminals" and other categories as an "absurdity" resulting from "excessive humanitarianism". Cf. L. CRIPS, *Les avatars d'une utopie scientiste en Allemagne: Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) et l'hygiène raciale*, in: "Le Mouvement social", 163, 1993, pp. 7-23 (p. 12).

⁸ Cf. R. PROCTOR, *Racial Hygiene. Medicine under the Nazis*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 112-113.

⁹ B. MÜLLER-HILL, *Murderous Science. Elimination by scientific selection of Jews, Gypsies, and others, Germany 1933-1945*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 13.

¹⁰ E. FISCHER, *Le problème de la race et la législation raciale en Allemagne*, Paris, Cahiers de l'Institut Allemand, 1942, pp. 84-109. Cf. L. CRIPS, *Les avatars d'une utopie scientiste en Allemagne: Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) et l'hygiène raciale*, p. 21.

¹¹ Mengele collaborated with the Dahlem Institute before and after he moved to Auschwitz in 1943. Among other atrocities, he killed several twins in order to send their eyes to von Verschuer. Cf. B. MÜLLER-HILL, op. cit., pp. 77-79; B. MASSIN, "Mengele, die Zwillingsforschung und die »Auschwitz-Dahlem Connection«", in: C. SACHSE (Hrsg.), *Die Verbindung nach Auschwitz. Biowissenschaften und Menschenversuche an Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2003, pp. 201-254; P. WEINGART, J. KROLL, K. BAYERTZ, *Rasse, Blut und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland*, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1992, p. 421.

[*Mitläufer*] and had to pay a fine. From the US, Franz Weidenreich protested that “if anyone, he is the man who should be put on the list of war criminals”¹². As early as 1954, Fischer was reinstated as Ordinary Emeritus of the University of Freiburg and was able to help many of his former students, such as von Verschauer, who was given a post in Münster.

Fischer was indeed a “political chameleon par excellence”¹³, able to successfully navigate the Wilhelmine era, the Weimar Republic, the Nazi regime and the post-war Federal Republic of Germany, without being held accountable for anything. In view of such a long and successful career, one might ask who Eugen Fischer was and, more importantly, how he conceived of anthropology. I will argue that Fischer never changed his largely pseudo-scientific language, from his early research to his most compromising assessments – and deeds – in the Nazi era. From his debut, Fischer shaped the language of German anthropology in such a way that it could later incorporate the most trivial parables of racism, segregationism, and anti-Semitism.

2. FISCHER’S EARLY RESEARCH IN AFRICA (1909)

In 1908, Fischer undertook anthropological fieldwork in Rehoboth, a town in what is now Namibia, then known as German South West Africa. His study included the population then called the *Rehobother Bastards* (Basters)¹⁴, offspring of Namibian indigenous mothers and Boer fathers. Fischer had long planned to apply classical genetics to humans; but while Mendel could easily cross sugar peas plants to study the transmission of traits, human genetics was obviously more complicated. Hence his interest in the large group (about 2000 individuals) of Basters, which seemed an excellent opportunity to study human genetics.

The results of his research, Fischer believed, confirmed classical heredity. The effects of climate and environment were not passed on to offspring, and each race possessed a fixed set of physical and mental characteristics. In the case of mixed races, transmission followed Mendelian laws. Fischer had thus developed his theory of the supposed immutability of racial characteristics. On this basis, he did

¹² F. WEIDENREICH, *On Eugen Fischer*, in: “Science”, N.S., 104, No. 2704, Oct. 25, 1946, p. 399.

¹³ S.F. WEISS, *The Nazi Symbiosis. Human Genetics and Politics in the Third Reich*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 70.

¹⁴ E. FISCHER, *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen. Anthropologische und ethnologische Studien am Rehobother Bastardvolk in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, Jena, Fischer, 1913. Cfr. LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 54. At the time, a genocide was being perpetrated against the local population: cf. J. ZIMMERER, J. ZELLER (eds.), *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika: der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen*, Berlin, Christoph Links Verlag, 2003.

not miss the opportunity to speak out against any mixing of the “white race” with others considered inferior:

If the bastards [of Rehoboth] were in any way on a par with the whites, there would inevitably be a flow of Hottentot blood into the white race. In the long run, this could not be avoided. Now we do not know much about the effects of racial mixing. But one thing we know with absolute certainty: every European people without exception [...] who has accepted the blood of inferior races - and that Negroes, Hottentots and many others are inferior is something only fanatics can deny - has paid for the acceptance of inferior elements at the price of spiritual and cultural decline. That some individual half-breeds may be people of worth - America has several such cases to show - does not contradict this thesis [...]. For those of us who are familiar with Mendel's laws, such cases are entirely predictable. But we must also expect just as many individuals to be utterly worthless, and the majority to be of less value. This applies not only to the people of the Bastards [of Rehoboth], but to every half-breed produced by Europeans together with Negroes, Hottentots, etc. [...]: an improvement of our race by such cross-breeding is impossible; while a degeneration is certainly to be expected, at least - in the best case - in the form of an outbreak of disharmonious dispositions¹⁵.

Because they have a certain amount of white blood, the Basters rank higher than the natives: they can therefore serve the German colonists better than the natives. Nevertheless, Fischer argues, they must be carefully segregated from the whites, on pain of degeneration. The book was relatively well received at the time, both at home and abroad¹⁶. This is unsurprising; Fischer's openly racist and segregationist language was in keeping with widespread prejudices, which he embellished with a patina of pseudo-scientific respectability. In this way, from 1909 onwards, he was prepared to move German anthropology further and further away from the humanitarianism of Virchow's time.

Fischer generalized the results obtained in Africa in the 1920s, in *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, an ambitious and fortunate work co-authored with Erwin Baur and Fritz Lenz¹⁷. No less than the title, the (unsigned) introduction reveals the purpose of the work: to put genetics at the service of “racial hygiene”¹⁸. Fischer's interest for racial hygiene was not new:

¹⁵ E. FISCHER, *Die Rehobother Bastards und das Bastardierungsproblem beim Menschen*, pp. 302-303.

¹⁶ See e.g. an unsigned review in “Nature”, 92, n. 2293, 9 October 1913, pp. 162-163. However, LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, pp. 65-75 has shown that Fischer methodology was flawed and that he failed to provide convincing evidence for his main claims. And yet, with this Fischer introduced a biological notion of ‘race’ into anthropology (*ibid.*, p. 152).

¹⁷ E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, München, Lehmann, 1921 (1924², 1927³). Each author was responsible for a part of the book: Baur wrote on classical genetics, Fischer on human heredity, Lenz on “racial hygiene”.

¹⁸ Cf. LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 95. On “Rassenhygiene” and its German proponents A. Ploetz, F. Lenz, E. Rüdin, etc., cf. PROCTOR, *Racial Hygiene*; WEINDLING, *Health, Race and German Politics, passim*;

since 1909, he headed the Freiburg branch of the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene* (Society of racial hygiene) founded in 1905 by Alfred Ploetz and Ernst Rüdin¹⁹.

The focus of the introduction is on a process “taking place in Germany”: a hybridization or “bastardization” [*Bastardierung*] of the population through the mixing of different races. The authors insist that this process always involves “a decline, a degeneration” similar to that experienced by the ancient Romans in the late imperial period. It was no coincidence that in Germany there was “a widespread feeling that these threatening processes are manifesting themselves in our people and that we, like all developed peoples, are in decline”²⁰. Based on the solid foundations of science, however, there is a solution:

Just as medical science is not possible without a sound knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology, so a broad scientific basis is necessary for the study of human sociology, for any purposeful population policy and for any effort at racial hygiene (eugenics)²¹.

The book was intended to provide this scientific basis. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that the intention remained on paper. The Baur-Fischer-Lenz was reprinted several times and translated into English and Swedish. There were numerous reviews, many of them outside of Germany²². The popular prejudice of a decadence resulting from “racial mixing”, was thus confirmed and supported by recognized scientists. Adolf Hitler possessed the third edition of Baur-Fischer-Lenz (1927), the second edition of which he had already read during his time at Landsberg²³.

Fischer begins his chapter²⁴ by arguing that the application of human genetics to racial hygiene requires a change of perspective: the purely “anatomical” approach (typical of Virchow and von Luschan), i.e. the measurement of limbs, skulls and other parts of the human body, is not sufficient. A “biological” ap-

P. WEINGART, J. KROLL, K. BAYERTZ, *Rasse, Blut und Gene, passim*. For eugenics in England and the US, see D.J. KEVLES, *In the Name of Eugenics. Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1985.

¹⁹ R. PROCTOR, *Racial Hygiene*, p. 17.

²⁰ E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, cit., p. 1.

²¹ Ivi, p. 2.

²² Cf. H. FANGERAU, I. MÜLLER, *Das Standardwerk der Rassenhygiene von Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer und Fritz Lenz im Urteil der Psychiatrie und Neurologie 1921–1940*, in: *Nervenarzt* 73, 2002, pp. 1039–1046. The authors count 342 reviews of the book (in the various editions), in Germany and abroad (p. 1042). See also LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, pp. 146–151.

²³ See the editorial notes in A. HITLER, *Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, hrgs. von C. Hartmann, T. Vordemayer, O. Plöckinger, R. Töppel, München-Berlin, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016, pp. 741, 762.

²⁴ E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, ch. 2: *Die Rassenunterschiede der Menschen*, pp. 81–154.

proach was also needed: racial characteristics should be considered “according to their origin and their significance for individuals and groups”²⁵. Otherwise, Fischer’s own contribution to the volume was in line with his earlier studies²⁶. He drew a sharp distinction between non-hereditary variations, due to environmental factors, and supposedly authentic ‘racial’ characteristics, which he believed to be of ancestral origin: “The strongest differences between human beings today, that is, what we consider to be the deepest racial differences, had their origin in the very first moment of the origin of man”²⁷. In short, the origin of man coincides with the origin of the races [*Artbildung its zugleich Rassenbildung*]. Races are co-original and *per se* unchangeable: “There is an aging of peoples, but there is no aging of races”: human races neither grow old nor die out²⁸.

Equally ancient, according to Fischer, is “racial interbreeding”. What is inherited is usually a single “disposition” [*Anlage*]: for instance, an (unspecified) “exact study of interbreeding with Jews has shown that [...] only a single dominant trait prevails”, such as the black hair or the convex nose²⁹. Historical events such as wars, invasions and the domination of one people over another usually lead to racial mixing: the physical and mental characteristics inherited according to Mendel’s laws are then subjected to the process of selection. Occasionally, hybridization can be successful: this happened “for example, in the construction of the Indo-Germanic peoples, the ancient Greeks, the Latins, etc.”: in all these cases, there was a sudden spiritual progress due to the good match of mental traits. In other cases, the mixing has a negative effect: for instance, mulattos are “less resistant” than the original races to “every kind of disease and damage”³⁰.

In line with the ideas expressed by Fritz Lenz in the same volume, and more popularly by Houston Stewart Chamberlain³¹, Fischer insists that the divergence between the races is not only physical, but also - and most importantly - mental. From this point of view, of course, the Europeans have the upper hand. For instance, the Native Americans sat “generation after generation” on the copper

²⁵ Ivi, p. 82.

²⁶ B. KUNDRUS, *Von Windhoek nach Nürnberg?: Koloniale “Mischeh enverbote” und die nationalsozialistische Rassengesetzgebung*, in: ID. (Hrsg.), *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus*, Frankfurt a.M., Campus, 2003, pp. 110-131, highlights the differences between German colonial policy, with all its ambiguities, and racial legislation after 1933. But the continuity in Fischer’s basic ideas is undeniable.

²⁷ E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, p. 123.

²⁸ Ivi, p. 132.

²⁹ Ivi, p. 126. The study of the relation between the “disposition” and the actual development of a certain feature was called by Fischer “Phaenogenetik”. Cf. LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 373.

³⁰ E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, p. 128.

³¹ Cf. P. WEINGART, J. KROLL, K. BAYERTZ, *Rasse, Blut und Gene*, pp. 102-103; LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 133.

beneath their territory, but never had the mental capacity [*Intelligenz*] to exploit it³². Clearly, a “mental disharmony” can arise “because of the mental disposition of two races that do not complement each other well”: Europeans were warned. In fact, the inheritance of mental traits is much more delicate because they must be harmoniously assimilated to form a whole, whereas physical traits (e.g. eye color and nose shape) can coexist without interfering with each other.

Finally, in preparation for his next radical steps, Fischer undermines the distinction between peoples and races, because “the concept of race has the most decisive meaning for the concept of people [*Volk*]”. In his view, the bearers of a certain culture and language are “obviously” individuals belonging “to a certain race, or to a certain mixture of races”³³.

3. SUPPORTING HITLER (1933)

To understand the relationship between Fischer’s scientific theories and the regime, let us now consider the *Kundgebung der deutschen Wissenschaft* (rally of German science) in support of Hitler held in the Alberthalle in Leipzig on 11 November 1933. This demonstration took place the day before a double election: the plebiscite, in which Germans were asked to express their support for Hitler’s policies, and the election of representatives to the Reichstag, in which only NSDAP candidates were allowed to stand. In fact, the Social Democratic Party had been banned in June (the Communist Party much earlier), the Centre Parties had dissolved, and the law of 14 July prohibited the formation of any new party. In short, any residual form of democratic life in Germany came to an end with the election on 12 November.

The Leipzig demonstration on the eve of the vote was one of the highlights of the Nazi plebiscite campaign. At the same time, however, it was a propaganda event whose real purpose lay abroad. The occasion was Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations, decreed by Hitler on 14 October. The demonstration was a message from the German scientific elite to their foreign colleagues of their support for Hitler’s decision as a harbinger of peace and harmony between nations. The proceedings were published in a booklet that combines the original German texts with translations in four languages: English, French, Italian and Spanish³⁴. In addition to the texts of the Leipzig speakers, the booklet also

³² E. BAUR, E. FISCHER, F. LENZ, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene*, p. 131.

³³ Ivi, p. 128.

³⁴ *Bekanntnis der Professoren an den deutschen Universitäten und Hochschulen zu Adolf Hitler und dem nationalsozialistischen Staat*, Dresden, Nationalsozialistischer Lehrererbund Deutschland/Sachsen, s.d. (1934).

contains the *Ruf an die gebildeten der Welt* (translated in the booklet “Appeal to the intelligentsia of the world”) and a list of its signatories. The following day, the Sunday of the vote, 12 November 1933, the *Illustrierte Zeitung* published a photograph of the stage³⁵. The photograph shows some of the speakers seated around a table under a cloud of swastikas, ready to take the podium in front of the hundreds of participants who had crowded into the Alberthalle. Remarkably, the group included two university Rectors appointed by Hitler: Eugen Fisher and Martin Heidegger. It must be emphasized that they were not acting in a personal political capacity or out of institutional obligation. Rather, they were supposed to put their share of “German science” at the service of Hitler’s politics. Their statements confirm this role. No less than Heidegger, who delivered a dense philosophical speech, Fischer was there to represent his discipline: German anthropology.

Fischer’s attitude in early 1933 had been that of a “turncoat”³⁶: in Leipzig he was ready to deliver his speech in pure nationalist (*völkisch*) style. Fischer begins by praising the allegedly bloodless German “moral revolution” led by the “mighty architect” Adolf Hitler. He then extols the construction of a new politics: “A people’s state has been established, the new national socialistic state made of blood and soil”, and goes on: “A nation – under the influence of the genial personality of the leader – becomes mindful of its own, old dried up fountains, its national resources, its blood, its race and its soul”³⁷. Since “a *Great man* has placed his hand on the spoke of the wheel of world history” and “has reversed the rudder”, there is now a “people’s government, in the form as has existed hundreds of years ago [...] with men who know again that they are of the *same blood*”. The conclusion has the tone of a purely political speech. Fischer urges: “no one must be absent when tomorrow the whole nation gives the leader the oath of faith; like in a veritable legislative assembly which our forefathers used to hold in the open, a distinct ‘yes’ must be heard to Hitler’s question, whether he is really speaking for the whole German nation”³⁸.

Fischer is careful to make it clear that the unity of the nation, based on common blood, *excludes* those who don’t belong to that community. Interestingly, the English translation is far less explicit than the German original on this point. When Fischer says “we reject what is alien” [*wir lehnen ab, was fremd*

³⁵ *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, n. 181, 12. November 1933. On the Leipzig event cf. V. FARIAS, *Heidegger and Nazism*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1989, p. 156 ff.

³⁶ WEINDLING, *Health, Race and German Politics*, p. 508.

³⁷ “Prof. Dr. Fischer, Berlin”, in *Bekennnis der Professoren an den deutschen Universitäten und Hochschulen zu Adolf Hitler*, cit., p. 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p 32.

ist] the translator renders “we refuse to have foreign things”. More specifically, Fischer rejects

elements which do not belong to our kind; although they have been of aid sometimes in certain achievements, the greater part of their effects were of a disintegrating nature to mental values, poison to numerous wells of national thinking and destruction to land-linked prosperity and numerous families of old estate. They are shouting when, during the building and erection of this people’s house, shavings fall from the plane; but they are quite when the blood runs in other revolutions and hunger eradicates whole villages. All we want is security and to be masters of our own house. And to build up the nation as a people which is of *one* blood [...]

The Leipzig audience could hardly fail to notice the allusion to the Jews at this point. Echoing his words of 1920, Fischer blurs the distinction between race and people: the people is ultimately a racial community. In Fischer’s chilling words of rejection, this is the prelude to a cleansing of alien subjects, of any heterogeneous blood.

I have chosen the Leipzig Demonstration to illustrate Fischer’s attitude at the time, but his allocution as Rector of the University of Berlin was already written in a similar tone³⁹. Fischer says that as long as the concept of race is considered from a purely “descriptive” point of view, i.e. anthropology is reduced to “measuring skulls”, any chance of improving the state is lost. Yet everything has changed with the recent progress of the discipline: “the meaning of heredity and race for the state appears in a completely new light”⁴⁰. We now know why a solid state community should “reject the elements alien to the people”. But governments are still reluctant to implement what science has to offer: “only the National Socialist state accepted a eugenic and a racial hygiene program and began to put it into practice”⁴¹. Fischer finds it perfectly understandable that “Nazi policies attacked the Jews first and foremost [...], because they were the only numerically significant racially alien element in our country and among our people”. No one could deny that there were “physical and mental differences” between Aryans and Jews. Now, Jews are not necessarily inferior and a mixture of an Aryan people and the Jews might even be considered somehow worthwhile *per se*: what Fischer is implying here, is that - all things considered - the Jews were better than the “Negroes”⁴². However, such a mixture “could never happen

³⁹ E. FISCHER, *Der Begriff des völkischen Staates, biologisch betrachtet* (29. Juli 1933), Berlin, Preußische Druckerei- und Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft, 1933.

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 9.

⁴¹ Ivi, p. 11.

⁴² Cf. MÜLLER-HILL, *Murderous Science*, p. 39, quoting from a 1939 speech by Fischer: “The Jew is [...] an alien and, therefore, when he wants to insinuate himself, he must be warded off. This is self-defence.

the one on German people's soil: it would not be something German, but rather something completely different - for example, Middle Eastern"⁴³. As a consequence, such a thing must be "rejected" according to the "nationalistic [*völkisch*] state concept of a German state and people". Fischer deserves the same approval for the Nazi eugenic policy "on large scale", which aimed to "multiply the hereditary healthy and reduce the hereditary sick"⁴⁴. Having argued that German Jews weren't *inferior*, but 'different', in 1933 and 1934 Fischer was criticized and attacked for not being sufficiently anti-Semitic⁴⁵. How could Fischer affirm that the Jews were not necessarily inferior and nevertheless argue for their segregation? And more generally, what was his attitude towards the Jews?

Let us take a look at the book *Das antike Weltjudentum* (World-Judaism in ancient times), written together with the Viennese professor of Studies in Ancient Judaism Gerhard Kittel for the series on the "Jewish question" sponsored by Rosenberg⁴⁶. The authors take as their starting point "the problem of world Jewry [*Weltjudentum*] and its effects on non-Jewish humanity", which they regard as the most sinister threat posed by the Jews. The Jews have been in Europe for a long time, but they are now taking on the character of a worldly, trans-national power. This is due to their traditional "double tendency" towards assimilation and simultaneous proselytism, with one aim in mind: to gain "power over the world"⁴⁷. The aim of Fischer and Kittel is to show how and why this attitude results from an essential, original and permanent character of the Jews. Fischer's contribution to the volume mostly consists of an analysis of ancient portraits from the point

In saying this, *I do not characterize every Jew as inferior, as Negroes are [...]* but I reject Jewry with every means in my power, and without reserve, in order to preserve the hereditary endowment of my people". Emphasis added.

⁴³ Fischer believes that the Jews are, from a racial point of view, a "mixture of Oriental and Near-Eastern races": cf. E. FISCHER, G. KITTEL, *Das antike Weltjudentum. Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder*, Hamburg, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1943, p. 111 (this part of the book was written by Fischer). Basically, that's why he considers Jews *different* from the Europeans. See also LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 244: according to Fischer the Jews were not inferior (*minderwertig*) but rather extraneous (*anderwertig*).

⁴⁴ E. FISCHER, *Der Begriff des völkischen Staates*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ MÜLLER-HILL, *Murderous Science*, pp. 84-85. As a consequence of this polemic, Fischer wrote a Memorandum for the Ministry of Interiors in which he explained that he had been an anti-Semite since his youth but he was also "a scientist, and, therefore, could not change his statements at will" (p. 85).

⁴⁶ E. FISCHER, G. KITTEL, *Das antike Weltjudentum* (Forschungen zur Judenfrage, vol. 7). The book took up (ivi, p. 5) a research programme that Kittel had outlined in a paper for the Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands (Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany) directed by Walter Frank, and published in Rosenberg's series: G. KITTEL, *Die ältesten Jüdischen Bilder. Eine Aufgabe für die wissenschaftliche Gemeinschaftsarbeit*, in: *Sitzungsberichte der Dritten Münchener Arbeitstagung des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands vom 4. bis 6. Juli 1939*, Hamburg, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1940, pp. 237-249 (Forschungen zur Judenfrage, vol. 4). Fischer had attended Frank's annual conference at the Reich Institute in Munich in 1938.

⁴⁷ E. FISCHER, G. KITTEL, *Das antike Weltjudentum*, p. 10.

of view of racial traits, psychologically interpreted. In some female portraits, for example, Fischer individuates the typical “Jewish hussy” on the basis of her “facial expression”; in others, he identifies the “rich Jewish ladies” that one could have met on the Kurfürstendamm until ten years earlier. His conclusion is that there is a remarkable persistence of these traits from antiquity to the present day⁴⁸.

Racial science thus confirmed that Jewry had not changed its character over time. In Fischer’s eyes, the racially mixed nature of the Jews explains the above-mentioned duplicity, the origin of which can be traced back to the “Oriental” and “Middle Eastern” component races. The Jewish psychological profile holds both elements together in a most dangerous mixture: “Even in the early history of the Jewish people, the emotion, hatred and cruelty, often developing into bloodlust, of the shepherd of the Oriental race is seen together with the skill, adaptability, cunning and desire to dominate of the city-builder of the Middle Eastern race”⁴⁹. Jews are all the more dangerous *because they are not simply inferior*, but cunning, violent, and systematically longing for world domination, since ancient times. The view that Fischer was a racist *but not* an anti-Semite is then completely unjustified, although this may be consistent with Fischer’s self-representation⁵⁰. In some ways, his sophisticated form of scientific and genetically based anti-Semitism was no less despicable than the more commonplace prejudices of less cultured Germans of the time. And it could be even more useful to the regime - as his relationship with Rosenberg testifies.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Fischer explicitly approved of the Nuremberg Laws and probably helped to draft them. In 1936, he publicly thanked Hitler “for giving geneticists the opportunity, by means of the Nuremberg laws, of making the results of their researches useful to the general public”⁵¹. This commitment was confirmed by Fischer’s successor, von Verschuer, who retrospectively referred to the work done at Dahlem in these terms: “we had to face up to the urgent need to provide the scientific basis for racial hygiene legislation, oriented towards practice”⁵².

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 162. Cf. MÜLLER-HILL, *Murderous Science*, p. 86.

⁴⁹ E. FISCHER, *Rassenentstehung und älteste Rassengeschichte der Hebräer*, in: *Sitzungsberichte der Dritten Münchner Arbeitstagung des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands vom 5. bis 7. Juli 1938*, Hamburg, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1940, pp. 121-136 (Forschungen zur Judenfrage, vol. 3).

⁵⁰ This overindulgent interpretation is defended by LÖSCH, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 295.

⁵¹ MÜLLER-HILL, *Murderous Science*, p. 36; see also E. KLEE, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich*, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer, 2003, p. 152.

⁵² WEISS, *The Nazi Symbiosis*, p. 98.

4. *MEA CULPA?* (1945)

That an individual scientist wholeheartedly embraced Nazism is a matter of interest primarily to his biographers. That an entire discipline gave scientific support to racial politics is, in my view, a matter that raises more disturbing questions. In the short span of two scientific generations, from Virchow to Fischer, German anthropology underwent a profound mutation. The discipline began its “biological” turn: it opened up to racial genetics and racial hygiene under the hypothesis of the immutability of “primitive” races, which deserved to be defended or, if necessary, restored. The ancestral races were endowed with different mental capacities: any mixing could only be detrimental to the “superior” races. Accordingly, the goal of anthropology became the entrenchment or restoration of racial barriers, both in South West Africa and in Germany. Language and practice followed suit: the marriage of anthropology and racial hygiene, celebrated by Baur-Fischer-Lenz, did the rest as early as the 1920s. In the long run, any inhibiting brake potentially dictated by empathy, morality, religion - or scrupulous science - couldn't help but prove recessive to the results and imperatives of the dominant anthropology, full of pseudo-scientific, extra-scientific, ambiguous and false presuppositions.

It was not Nazism that corrupted Fischer's anthropology. The truth is that long before 1933, and even before the First World War, Fischer had independently embarked on the road that would later lead him to support unethical practices, discrimination and persecutory racial legislation. Of course, like so many others, Fischer would have had to make several corrections of purpose along the way, before and after 1933⁵³. The hypothesis of mere opportunism must be dispelled in his case, in both the “far-sighted” and the “selfish” versions. Fischer was neither the tormented scientist who had to fund research somehow making unwilling concessions for the sake of science, nor the pragmatic academic who acted in the name of personal interests, such as career. Both claims fail to grasp the most important aspect, which has little to do with impartial love of science or personal weakness. Rather, I agree with the interpretation of Sheila Faith Weiss, who spoke of a “symbiosis”, i.e. a meeting and interlocking, sometimes with resistance and obstacles on both sides, of independently developed scientific doctrines and the demands of the regime⁵⁴.

This is why the protagonist's attempt to evade responsibility sounds ambiguous. “I sincerely recognize”, Fischer wrote for a planned autobiography, “my

⁵³ See H.-W. SCHMUHL, *Grenzüberschreitungen: Das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik, 1927–1945*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2005, p. 314.

⁵⁴ WEISS, *The Nazi Symbiosis, passim*.

great faults: blindness, gullibility, carelessness, complete ignorance of all evil - but only these. And I am ready to pay for them”⁵⁵. Yet these words, written in 1945 by an emeritus professor in the privacy of his quiet home, remained locked in a drawer for more than 20 years, until Fischer’s death in 1967. In the end, Fischer was unwilling to take responsibility or pay for it, even to the comparatively small extent that his own self-indulgent admissions might have entailed. He elusively entitled his autobiographical pages *Memories of an Anatomist*.

⁵⁵ F. HORST, K.E. MAIER, “Eugen Fischer”, in: B. OTTNAD, F. L. SEPAINTNER (Hrsg.), *Baden-Württembergische Biographien*, vol. 3, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2002, pp. 78-85. Müller-Hill describes Fischer’s autobiography “a remarkably colorless book with every trace of reality filtered off. Not a word appear in it about his fatally wounded son, about the Third Reich, or about the dead Jews”. MÜLLER-HILL, op. cit., p. 119.

The Economic Persecution of Jews in the Press of Nazi-Occupied Europe. *Le Matin de Paris* and *Il Piccolo di Trieste*: Two Editorial Policies Compared (1940-1945)

PAOLO FELLUGA

ABSTRACT

This paper examines, with comparative perspective, the strategies that the press of Nazi-occupied Europe used to deal with anti-Jewish persecution. The analysis focuses on the articles devoted to the spoliation of Jewish property edited by Il Piccolo di Trieste and Le Matin de Paris, two newspapers published under the close control of the German occupier respectively in the major cities of the Adriatisches Küstenland (1943-1945) and Occupied France (1940-1944). In particular, the surprising differences of such analysis will be questioned. In fact, on the one hand, the publications of Il Piccolo were completely silent about the economic persecution of the Jews in Trieste, although it was particularly violent; while on the other hand Le Matin used the economic redistribution of Jewish seized property as a propagandistic tool to show the benefits of the anti-Jewish policies. The reasons for this fundamental difference will be researched with the methodology of comparative history, questioning both the different socio-political context of the two cities and the politics of the occupier, which were very different in the two areas of occupation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to study the way the press reported the economic persecution of Jews in two local areas occupied by the Nazi administration and army. In particular, the paper will analyse from a comparative perspective the editorial

policies and the language used by two local newspapers published in the occupied cities of Paris and Trieste.

The study of journalistic reports of anti-Jewish persecution is of considerable interest. Newspapers, alongside with the radio, were the most widely used information media in the first half of the 20th century. For totalitarian states in particular, radio and newspapers represented an essential pedagogical medium. In 1921, in an article written in the columns of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, planning the construction of a great national socialist movement, Hitler warned about the need to develop «l'arma più tagliente al servizio di una simile causa: la stampa»¹. This project was put into action in the years between the Nazi seizure of power and the outbreak of the Second World War: within six years, more than 200 newspapers aligned with National Socialism appeared in Europe, reaching an estimated circulation of more than six million copies².

During the Second World War, newspapers kept citizens constantly informed about the progress of the conflict. In this period, censorship and Nazi propaganda controlled the publication and the language used in the news. For this reason, studying the press that circulated in occupied areas also means delving into the communication strategies of the occupiers, analysing their interests and plans through the analysis of the language used in the articles. The articles published in local newspapers of occupied areas can also be seen as the result of a relationship between the occupier and the occupied, between the oppressor's offices in charge of censorship and the indigenous staff of the newspaper. An analysis of both the collaboration between the local population and the occupying forces, and the possibilities of resistance for journalists, represented by the writing and publication of their articles.

This language, which permeated all themes in all newspapers in wartime Nazi-occupied Europe, will be analysed from a specific point of view: the economic persecution of the Jews. This theme, also known as the “anti-Jewish spoliation”, remained in the background of European and world historiography for a long period, especially in comparison to the other themes of Jewish persecution. While the latter was systematically examined since the 1960s, (starting with the work of Raul Hilberg, who gave a comprehensive and European interpretation of the matter and who, without going into it in depth, recognised the spoliation as a central and obligatory step in Jewish destruction's process), the first works on the specific economic persecution were published only at the end of the last decade of the 20th century, thanks to some journalistic scandals and the opening of new

¹ M. Olmi, *I giornali degli altri: storia contemporanea del giornalismo inglese, francese, tedesco ed americano, dal primo dopoguerra a oggi*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1990, pp.277-278.

² G. Salemi, *Europa di carta: guida alla stampa estera*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007, p.17.

archives³. The debate that took place during the last decade of the 20th century was such that 23 countries around the world appointed specific commissions to conduct investigations to quantify the belongings of Jews that had been spoiled in their territories and to ascertain possible responsibilities.

Since then, the topic of spoliation has emerged as an autonomous theme within the historiography of the Second World War and the Shoah. The first comparative works about the spoliation of European Jews' properties appeared, and other publications on the various national situations supplemented and complemented the work of the parliamentary commissions⁴.

Moreover, the importance of spoliation in the management of public opinion was noted from many quarters, as anti-Jewish spoliation and the consequent wealth redistribution often brought undeniable economic benefits. In occupied Europe, redistribution became one of the main reasons that brought to collaboration. It has been noted that:

The expropriation of the Jews, therefore, was not limited simply to the implementation of German orders but, was also linked to the behaviour of local societies towards the Jews, that is, to the different forms of antisemitism. As in the German Reich, the corruptive influence that spread with the enrichment from Jewish properties in the occupied territories could also lead to various forms of accommodation to the policies of Nazi Germany⁵.

In order to examine in depth the social dimension of the phenomenon of the anti-Jewish spoliation, this contribution is based on the study of these works, and tries to add a particular and completely new analysis on the language used in local newspapers to describe the economic persecution of the Jews.

The two newspapers chosen for this paper were published respectively in Trieste and in Paris. These areas are quite different from each other. On one hand Paris, the French capital and megalopolis; on the other hand Trieste, a rich harbour city by the Adriatic Sea. Both cities were home to Nazi military and administrative commands, albeit at different periods. In both cities, persecution against the Jews was mixed with economic interests of local people and German officials and soldiers, which were systematically reflected in the persecution practices and in their news reports. The Jewish communities of Trieste and Paris were among

³ M. Dean, *Robbing the Jews. The confiscation of Jewish property in the Holocaust, 1933 – 1945*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 4-5.

⁴ M. Dean, *Robbing the Jews. The confiscation of Jewish property in the Holocaust, 1933 – 1945*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

⁵ C. Goschler, P. Ther, «A history without boundaries. The robbery and restitution of Jewish property in Europe», in: M. Dean, C. Goschler, P. Ther (a cura di), *Robbery and restitution. The conflict over Jewish property in Europe*, Oxford/New York, Berghan Books, 2007, p.10.

the richest in their respective countries. Among the Paris Jewish community there was the undoubtedly richest and wealthiest group of France – the so-called *Israélites*, to be read as “French citizens practising Israelite religion”. This term was coined by the Jewish upper class itself between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century to distinguish themselves from the poorer, foreign or recently naturalized Jews, who were commonly called *Juifs* (i.e., Jews). On the eve of the Second World War, Trieste was the city with the largest Jewish community in relation to the total number of residents: the percentage was about 3%, much higher than a national average of no more than one per thousand. Moreover, in the Jewish community of Trieste, there was a small nucleus of very important personalities from an economic and political point of view, grouped around the two major insurance companies, *Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà* (RAS) and *Assicurazioni Generali*.

I decided to consider two newspapers quite different from each other. On one hand, *Il Piccolo di Trieste*, a local newspaper with a circulation limited to the city. Founded in 1881 by Teodoro Mayer, an exponent of Jewish life in Trieste, *Il Piccolo di Trieste* always followed a pro-Italian editorial line in the years before the annexation of the Adriatic city to the Italian Kingdom, maintaining moderate positions until the establishment of the Fascist regime. Since the 1920s, the figure of Rino Alessi became increasingly important. He arrived in Trieste during the First World War as a correspondent and became editor of the newspaper in 1920; his arrival at the newspaper opened a phase of emphatic support to the regime that lasted from the March on Rome to 1938. In that crucial year, in fact, the newspaper was distinguished by a strong criticism towards the anti-Semitic campaign and the anti-Jewish policy introduced by the regime. This cooling of relations between the Trieste newspaper and the regime led to an open contrast in January 1938, when Rino Alessi wrote an article titled *Un Problema* (A Problem), in which he openly repudiated anti-Semitism and biological racism. This piece provoked harsh reactions from the more markedly anti-Jewish fascist press, in particular the ones from the director of *Il Regime Fascista*, Roberto Farinacci, who wrote an article in his newspaper, describing Trieste as a city totally in the hands of the Jews and asking the regime to intervene harshly. This article was followed by other publications by Farinacci himself and other anti-Semitic journalists such as Giovanni Preziosi and Piero Pellicano. They identified Trieste as an economic centre fully controlled by Jews, and *Il Piccolo* as a newspaper completely subservient to Jewish capital and Jewish interests⁶. After the publication of the racial laws, in November of the same year, Teodoro Meyer had to leave his position as owner to Rino Alessi who, at least until July 25th, 1943 cancelled all the voices

⁶ S. Bon, *Gli ebrei di Trieste. Identità, persecuzione, risposte*, Gorizia, LEG, 2000, pp.45-51

against the fascist anti-Semitism and the Pact of Steel. After the occupation of Trieste, the newspaper changed editors and directors several times, but continued to publish its papers until the end of 1944.

Le Matin was founded in 1884 in Paris, inspired by the British journalism that began with the *Morning News*. The leadership of the paper itself remained in English hands until 1895, those of Sir Alfred Edwards, who decided to sell the paper following the Panama scandal. After a couple of years, under the direction of Henri Poidatz, Maurice Bunau-Varilla took over the presidency of the newspaper and held the position until 1944. As Christian Delporte described it in the preface to Dominique Pinsolle's book, it was an «anticommuniste, antiparlementaire, xénophobe, munichoïse»⁷ newspaper. In the 1930s, the newspaper took an increasingly anti-communist stance, supporting all right-wing authoritarian regimes that were resolutely opposed to Marxist doctrine, such as Japan, Fascist Italy, the Franco front in Spain during the civil war and finally Nazi Germany⁸. With the latter, between 1933 and 1939, the newspaper found a real community of intent, as seems to be confirmed by Hitler's interview for *Le Matin*, which was the first interview granted by Hitler to a French newspaper. The newspaper's management forged a relationship with Ribbentrop, testified by the journalistic Pro-Germany campaigns concerning international issues such as the annexation of Saar to Germany in 1934 and the Sudeten crisis in 1938. These positions also led Nazi Germany to grant financial subsidies to the newspaper⁹. This cooperative would end in 1939, with the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the upcoming war. After that year, the articles in *Le Matin* began to be characterised by an integral and bellicose patriotism and by a criticism towards German expansionism. However, with the defeat in the spring of 1940 and the Nazi occupation, the newspaper changed course again coming to an agreement with the German occupier. *Le Matin* gained a privileged position in Paris and the opportunity of starting its publications – under strict Nazi control – before the signing of the armistice, on June 17th, 1940.

The two newspapers are therefore very different from each other, especially for their relationship with the Germans. In its first phase, *Il Piccolo di Trieste* was explicitly opposed to the Germans but it was later forced to align with by the Fascist regime; since the early 1930s, *Le Matin* was explicitly aligned with the regime but after the occupation, it had no choice but to resume an editorial line abandoned only a few months before, and to which the German invasion «donne

⁷ D. Pinsolle, *Le Matin (1894-1944). Une presse d'argent et de chantage*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, p.13

⁸ D. Pinsolle, *Le Matin (1894-1944). Une presse d'argent et de chantage*, op. cit., pp.242-244

⁹ D. Pinsolle, *Quand la presse défie les états. Les ambitions internationales du Matin (1897-1944)*, in : «Relations internationales», n.153, 2013, pp.45-56

l'occasion de régler ses comptes et de clamer enfin haut et fort ce qu'il ne pouvait que sous-entendre ou dire avec une certaine prudence dans les années 30»¹⁰.

These differences do not interfere with the comparative mode if they are taken into consideration from the beginning of the research. Moreover, we must not forget the freedom of action of the Nazis who, both in Trieste and Paris had strict control over the press and could easily ban or modify the publications of *Il Piccolo*. *Le Matin* too, despite the trust from the Nazi regime, was under strict control of the *Propaganda Abteilung*. As a matter of fact, both newspapers were published in similar and comparable contexts. They had profound differences, to be analysed either from a bottom-up or from a top-down perspective. In other words, conscious of the different history behind the two newspapers, one can ask whether these differences were caused by different and free choices of the two editorial offices, or by two different approaches of the Nazi occupier in two different areas of occupation. However, this article will simply attempt to introduce these questions and establish a first attempt at comparison. The answer to these questions, due to their complexity, will therefore remain open.

2. IL PICCOLO IN TRIESTE: THE SILENCE OF THE NEWSPAPER IN THE OPERAZIONSZONE ADRIATISCHES KÜSTENLAND

After the occupation of Trieste by the German troops on September 8th, 1943 *Il Piccolo* became an editorial space which could satisfy the demands of the occupier. On September 16th, 1943, an article took an explicit position, stating that the defeat was not Italy's fault, but only of its weakest part, using the term "Jew" – for the first time since the occupation – in an instrumental way.

La vera Italia, quella degli operai, dei contadini, dei soldati l'Italia dei giovani consci della tragica fatalità dell'attuale conflitto e convinti che non esiste salvezza all'infuori della vittoria sui finanzieri, sui banchieri, sui plutocrati ebrei di ogni categoria, non ha capitolato, né capitolerà mai, quand'anche questo atteggiamento dovesse costarle più dolorosi sacrifici¹¹.

Starting from this article, terms such as "Ebreo", "Giudeo" and "Israelita" never left the pages of *Il Piccolo*, although they did not become a recurring and central theme in the pages of the newspaper. Between July 25th, 1943 and May 1945, less than forty articles concerning the "Jewish race" appeared on the journal. In this period, the language used by *Il Piccolo* is quite interesting, because it proves the

¹⁰ D. Pinsolle, *Le Matin (1894-1944). Une presse d'argent et de chantage*, op. cit., p. 270.

¹¹ *La vera Italia non ha capitolato*; in: «*Il Piccolo*», 16 September 1943.

reception and introjection of linguistic principles that had become the rule, even in a context in which one does not find a wide and repeated use of anti-Semitism in the pages of the newspaper. The figure of the Jew appeared overbearing when the newspaper dealt with topics such as, for example, foreign policy. The figure of the Jew stood out when the newspaper dealt with Jewish immigration to Palestine, the spread of anti-Jewish protests and measures throughout Europe and the world, the continuation of the war and the subjugation of the Allied powers to world Jewry. Outside the articles devoted to foreign policy, Jews were presented as criminals, spies, saboteurs in a wide variety of articles. In an apparently “light” article, which gave a historical reconstruction of the “betole” (i.e., popular taverns) of Trieste in the modern era, the Jew is described as the one who had given the order to kill the owner of one of these taverns¹². The day after, an article was entirely dedicated to the death of Abram Trebic Lincoln, a Hungarian “Jew” whose life was characterised by theft and misdeeds, which led him to work as a journalist and politician in Vienna («dove, più che in ogni altro centro europeo, aveva messo radici e si sviluppava la morbosa letteratura giudaica»), and in Budapest, where he influenced European foreign policy during the First World War. He was, in short, the embodiment of the Nazi-fascist stereotype of the thieving, scheming, chameleon-like Jew. As a Jew, public opinion should be pleased with his death: «Questa, a larghi tratti la vita avventurosa quant'altra mai di questo ladruncolo, che dovunque andava seminava rovina e discordia; sfrattato ed arrestato più volte, ricomparve poi sulle stesse scene a continuare la sua iniqua attività. Ora anche questa disgraziata e spregevole vita ha avuto fine»¹³.

However, the references to Judaism in *Il Piccolo* remained very general – except for situations as in the article just reported – and above all they never referred to the anti-Jewish persecution that was taking place in Trieste. The press never reported on the persecution and repression of the Germans, which were simply and systematically concealed. References to the measures taken by the Nazis against the Jews in Trieste were completely absent: there was no mention of expulsions, deportations, arrests, or confiscations. German ordinances were certainly published in Italian, starting with the first one, issued on September 11th, 1943 and published in *Il Piccolo* the following day¹⁴. The ordinance by which Nazi power asserted itself in the city was also published, but without any reference to the

¹² *Locande e bettole del passato*; in: «Il Piccolo», 20 October 1943.

¹³ *Un soggetto per film e romanzi. Le molte vite di Abramo Trebic-Lincoln. Deputato ai comuni, scrittore francese, uomo politico tedesco, venditore d'oppio in Cina e sacerdote buddista*; in: «Il Piccolo», 21 October 1943.

¹⁴ *Ordinanza del Colonnello Barnbeck*; in: «Il Piccolo», 12 September 1943.

persecution of the Jews¹⁵. According to the newspaper, the “Jewish problem” no longer existed in Trieste. On closer inspection, all references to the Jews of Trieste disappeared from the pages of *Il Piccolo*: therefore, it was not only the “Jewish problem” but also the Jewish community of Trieste itself that ceased to exist, which was in fact the actual aim of the occupier. In the twenty months of occupation, events such as the flight of the major Jewish financiers from Trieste, the arrests of Jews, the looting of their property and their resale to the retail trade were never reported.

The newspaper’s position appears rather complex. Anti-Jewish demands and themes had become part of its language, there were no qualms about using anti-Semitism to support its theses and to “colour” the tone of its articles. It is worth reflecting on the failure in the use of the newspaper for anti-Jewish propaganda and for the economic persecution of Jews, especially about the sale of their property. In Trieste, in fact, the spoliation of the Jews provided a rapid redistribution of low valued goods, which were sold at auction to the citizens of Trieste. This redistribution could have received wide publicity in the pages of *Il Piccolo*, it could represent an important issue in favour of the occupiers’ policies. Given the wide instrumental use that was made of the stereotype of the Jew throughout the years of the Nazi occupation of Trieste, it seems unlikely to attribute the choice of not using the newspaper as an advertising space to a sort of sentimentalism of *Il Piccolo* towards the Jews of Trieste. In my opinion, this very aspect supports the idea that the systematic silences on the anti-Jewish persecution policies (economic and otherwise) were due to a precise editorial choice: the question of whether this choice was wanted by the occupier, defended by the newspaper, resulted of an explicit agreement between the two actors or of converging interests, obviously remains open.

3. LE MATIN DE PARIS: A PRINTED CAMPAIGN ON PERSECUTION

In June 1940, German troops entered in Paris where they set up their offices, commands, and officers’ quarters, also in many of the *hotels particuliers* belonging to the wealthy families of French Israelites who had left Paris in the days of the *débaclé*. The editorial staff of *Le Matin*, like that of *Il Piccolo*, suffered some consequences. The reaction of *Le Matin*, however, was very different from what we have seen in Trieste as it reported daily about the persecution of the Jews. Economic persecution was also a recurring theme during the four years of occu-

¹⁵ *L’insediamento del Supremo Commissario della zona di operazioni ‘Litorale Adriatico’*; «Il Piccolo», 16 October 1943.

pation. While in *Il Piccolo* the term “Jew” is used in various ways in less than 40 articles, 41 articles in *Le Matin* specifically reported on the economic persecution of the Jews over the four years, and the number of occurrences of the term “Jew” is almost incalculable.

The economic persecution of the Jews was used by the newspaper in an instrumental way in relation to certain themes. In the first period of the Nazi occupation of Paris, the newspaper was concerned with explaining to the public why the German command and the Vichy government persecuted the Jews. In this context, the issue of the economic redistribution of Jewish wealth to the “French people” had a central role. The Jews, presented to public opinion as the war-mongers and the culprits of the 1940 defeat, had to be removed from the French national body to prevent them from further harming the community. Thus, on October 2nd, 1940, presenting the German order of September 27th, 1940, *Le Matin* stated that:

Les autorités occupantes ont pris une décision qui était attendue. Depuis quelques temps, les juifs qui étaient revenus à Paris et dans les grands centres se montraient particulièrement arrogants. Ils semblaient n’avoir aucune conscience de leurs lourdes responsabilités dans les événements qui ont conduit la France à la catastrophe. La population française supportait impatiemment cette attitude¹⁶.

Three days later, the newspaper published an article that explored the meaning and the consequences of the ordinance against the Jews, portraying them as «l’ennemi n°1, non seulement du peuple allemand mais de la paix et de la civilisation européenne tout entière»¹⁷.

In September 1940, in addition to the explanation of the reasons for conducting anti-Jewish policy, *Le Matin* began to complain about the presence of Jews in various economic sectors. On September 15th, an article mentioned the luxury trade, reporting on a measure taken independently by the Paris traders’ association, which introduced a sort of pass for commerce:

Trop des juifs encombrant des industries de luxe de Paris qui représentent aux yeux du monde le chic, le gout français. Il ne s’agit pas là d’un sectarisme exagéré mais bien d’un mouvement réfléchi et étudié, d’une épuration nécessaire au relèvement économique du pays, à la défense des intérêts français.

In order to obtain the pass, people had to satisfy the following requirements:

¹⁶ *Mesures contre les juifs. Ordonnance du chef de l’administration militaire en France du 27 septembre*; in: «Le Matin», 2 October 1940.

¹⁷ *Ce qui signifient les mesures contre les juifs*; in: «Le Matin», 5 October 1940.

Être français, né de père français non naturalisé, et ne pas être israélite; Être français, né de père français non naturalisé, patenté en France, sans distinction confessionnelle; Être titulaire de la carte de combattant de 1914 ou 1939, sans distinction confessionnelle; Être étranger et non israélite patenté à Paris avant 1914¹⁸.

The introduction of this article clarifies the reasons that brought France to exclude Jews from the economic field. The Jews “cluttered the luxury industries” and sullied one of France’s most famous sectors, which had to return to France as soon as possible. With these words, the article established a clear difference between Jews and French, as if they were two distinct categories: people could only be part of one of them. Even in January 1941, the economic measures taken to limit the influence of the Jews were still making news¹⁹.

In addition to the news concerning the measures taken in the economic field, there were also proposals to speed up and improve the spoliation, allowing a smoother transfer of property from “Jewish” to “French” hands. A few days before the promulgation of the framework law on economic Aryanisation, an article criticised the taxes on the transfer of property taken from the Jews. The author, in fact, complained that such high taxes would have affected French people intentioned to buy Jewish property. He presented a possible solution, the use of expropriation in the public interest:

Dans les cas des aryanisations, il faut faciliter les ventes et permettre au citoyen français qui se porte acheteur de parfaire sa transaction sans la grever d’une charge inutile. Le dégrèvement est possible, si l’on rattache, administrativement, l’aryanisation à une institution bien connue du droit français: l’expropriation pour cause d’utilité publique. [...] L’intérêt général est d’ailleurs évident: il s’agit d’aider un certain nombre de Français à devenir propriétaires au moment où les juifs campés sur la terre de France vont quitter ce pays. Car l’aryanisation doit être un grand bienfait national et social²⁰.

To ensure the success of this “grand bienfait national et social”, the newspaper not only published the full texts of the German ordinances, but also the short articles concerning the purchase of the Jews’ property²¹.

Le Matin stated that the Jewish question had existed for a long time and needed to be resolved. In this sense, the newspaper introduced various cultural-historical insights, to put the persecution of the Jews in a broader historical context, hoping for the introduction of extreme measures to reach a final solution. In one

¹⁸ *Plus des juifs dans le commerce de luxe parisien*; in: «Le Matin», 15 September 1940.

¹⁹ *Le Statut des Juifs commerçants*; in: «Le Matin», 11 January 1941.

²⁰ *Un point de droit. Aryanisation = expropriation*; in: «Le Matin», 19 July 1941.

²¹ *Les immeubles privés appartenant à des juifs vont être mis en vente*; in: «Le Matin», 24 November 1941.

of these insights, referred to past decisions taken in the 17th century and involved the expulsion of Jews from the country, under penalty of confiscation.

Des siècles durant la France fut puissante, et cela à l'époque où les juifs étaient éliminés en tant que facteur de puissance. En 1615, le roi de France ordonna que tous les juifs fussent chassés du pays. [...] Que notre gouvernement actuel ne prend-il une décision identique, l'assainissement total de la France ne se ferait pas attendre longtemps après une mesure aussi simple que nécessaire²².

One very interesting aspect is the persistence with which *Le Matin* described the spoliation and sale of the goods of one family, the Rothschilds. This obstinacy is evident from a simple statistical observation: 23 of the 41 articles concerning the economic restraints taken or to be taken against Jewish economic power were dedicated to the despoliation of the properties of the Rothschild family. Before the introduction of anti-Jewish legislation, some members of this noble and well-known family had already had their property confiscated: the laws on the withdrawal of French citizenship, in fact, punished those who had left France following the defeat, by seizing all their assets and transferring them to the Secours National. On September 10th, 1940 (before any law on the Jews was published), *Le Matin* stated that more than a hundred properties in Paris owned by the Rothschild family would be confiscated²³. This article was followed by other publications about different people and different properties. During the four years of occupation, there were so many reports of the Rothschilds' assets being seized that *Le Matin* gave to the family the ironic epithet of «bienfaiteurs du Secours National»²⁴.

The most important theme in the pages of *Le Matin* was the replacement of the rich and profiteering Jews with the true French and the Rothschild family represented a great propaganda tool. Their pomp and luxury were taken as a generic example of the injustice suffered by the “real French”, caused by the Jewish presence in France:

Un château, un domaine historique, 900 hectares de parcs et de forêts vont revenir à la communauté française. La France recouvre, enfin, grâce à une décision du ministre de l'Agriculture, l'un des plus beaux domaines de la région parisienne, l'abbaye de Vaux-de-Cernay et les immenses terres qui l'entourent, soit 900 hectares. [...] Cernay, c'est aussi un peu de l'histoire de France. Ici le roi séjourna souvent depuis le XV siècle, et, aux environs, de nombreux grands seigneurs dont les noms sont restés à des cités comme autant des témoignages de leur renommée [...]. Pourquoi a-t-il fallu

²² *La France et les juifs*, in: «Le Matin», 12 December 1942.

²³ *Les Rothschild possédaient sous leur nom à Paris près de cent immeubles*, in: «Le Matin», 10 September 1940.

²⁴ *Bienfaiteurs du secours national. Les Rothschild, les loges, les fuyards*, in: «Le Matin», 22 November 1940.

que parmi que parmi ces noms de France vint s'en glisser un étranger et, de surcroît, celui d'une famille internationale? Parce qu'à Cernay comme ailleurs le Juif a tenu à mettre sa griffe sur un souvenir du passé de la France. [...] S'il lui manquait le sens de la décence, les Rothschild possédaient celui de la propriété²⁵.

The Vaux-de-Cernay estate was later sold in August 1943 for almost six and a half million francs, as reported in detail by the newspaper²⁶.

The story of the theft and removal of the Rothschilds' properties became a way describing the power, the evil and the influence of the Jews. This is particularly evident in the article dedicated to the description of the Rothschild bank. This building, "occupied" by the Rothschild family for years, finally returned to the real France, who could use it for new and noble purposes:

Une banque comme les autres? Que non pas! C'est dans ces bureaux que les dynasties des fameux banquiers juifs ont comploté leurs grandes combines, c'est de la que sont partis les ordres qui devaient changer les sorts des États, affoler les puissants, ruiner les nations. Les murs sont les dépositaires de terribles secrets. Cependant, depuis la fuite de la tribu en juin 1940, quelques-uns de ces secrets ont été percés à jour. L'hôtel Rothschild nous apparait maintenant tel qu'il était en réalité, une sorte de temple maçonnique, dans lequel le Veau d'or s'était embusqué, bien à l'abri de regards indiscrets. Un ascenseur pour vingt-trois marches. [...] Vingt-trois marches à gravir, vingt-trois marches seulement pour accéder au saint des saints, un parcours trop lassant sans doute pour des jambes de financiers. [...] un réseau inextricable de fils électriques, sonneries d'alarme - on ne sait jamais - tableaux d'appels sur lesquels on lit des noms bien français: M. Dreyfus, M. Lévy, M. Loeb...on s'étonne de ne pas les voir écrits en caractères hébraïques. [...] Actuellement, la banque est occupée par les services du Secours National. Là où trônait, dans le mystère, la force corruptrice se sont installés maintenant la solidarité et le devoir social. Sic transit... Et le Secours national s'efforce de mettre de l'ordre et de nettoyer la maison qui en a grand besoin. Les Rothschild, en effet, malgré leurs titres et leurs richesses, n'avait jamais pu se débarrasser de leur crasse, spécifiquement juive²⁷.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis between the editorial line of *Le Matin* and *Il Piccolo* gives us two completely different point of views. These differences are partly

²⁵ *Fief des juifs Rothschild, le château des Vaux-de-Cernay redevient enfin français*; in: «Le Matin», 5 February 1942.

²⁶ *Le domaine de Vaux-de-Cernay qui appartenait au Juif Henri de Rothschild a été adjugé pour 6 millions 400.000 francs*; in: «Le Matin», 2 August 1943.

²⁷ *Dans l'antre traqué des barons de Rothschild. Une visite à la banque de Rue Lafitte*; in: «Le Matin», 26 march 1941.

caused by the history of the two newspapers: the first one, owned by Jews for almost fifty years, until the introduction of the racial laws; the second one, close to German positions, if not in terms of anti-Jewish policy at least in a geopolitical sense. The very different use of economic persecution can undoubtedly derive from the chronology of the two occupations and their characteristics: the occupation of Trieste was brief and intense, while the French occupation was long and fluctuating in the relations between occupiers and occupied.

The chronology can also help us to better understand the different approaches of the two newspapers. Most articles on anti-Jewish plundering were published by *Le Matin* between 1940 and 1942. Only seven of the 41 articles identified were published between the beginning of 1943 and the liberation of Paris in August 1944. 28 of the remaining 34 articles were published between June 1940 and the end of 1941. According to this quick analysis, most of the publications of articles concerning despoliation emerged in the period during which despoliation was taking shape. This aspect can be interpreted as the need of the Germans and their collaborators to justify and explain what was happening, to a public opinion that for the first time had to deal with racist and discriminatory laws towards a minority of the State body. In Trieste there was no need of that: first, because during the occupation there was no legislation concerning anti-Jewish spoliation; second, because the occupier did not fear the reaction of public opinion, which was already accustomed to the discrimination and anti-Jewish persecution introduced by the fascist regime five years before.

It must be pointed out that the profound difference between the policies of the two newspapers concerned “only” the use of the chronicle of persecution at a local level, and not the general approach to anti-Semitism. This seems even more important in its influence on issues of collaborationism. As we have seen, although *Il Piccolo* did not report on the local anti-Jewish persecution, it was also completely aligned with anti-Semitism, which is evident in a substantial number of articles, in ways that we have partly described above. In the two newspapers the main themes were similar: reporting on the Nazi victories, the Allied bombing of the cities of one’s own nation, reporting on the nefarious deeds carried out by individual Allied figures and by the Anglo-American armies, in-depth coverage of the corruption and rot of the capitalist world, reporting on the protests the Jews and the measures that states were taking to solve the Jewish problem, and so on. What profoundly differentiates the two newspapers is their relationship with the events that took place in their local area, on which in one case there is a silence and in the other, there is the intention to use the themes of anti-Jewish persecution as an instrument. The question of responsibilities, reasons, and roles in such a choice remains open.

More Than Words: Klemperer's *Lingua Tertii Imperii* as a Network of “Dangerous” Speech Practices

PAOLO LABINAZ, IRENE LO FARO¹

ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with Victor Klemperer's observations on the dangerous nature of the Nazis' usage of German, which constitutes what he called Lingua Tertii Imperii (the Language of the Third Reich). Our aim is to place these observations within the general theoretical framework of dangerous speech studies, integrated with a practice-based conception of language. After highlighting the crucial role played by Klemperer's work in the understanding of Nazi propaganda, we consider the contextual and content-related factors contributing to violence escalation identified in dangerous speech studies and examine whether (and if so, to what extent) they were also present in Nazi speech. We then argue that its dangerousness depended on how the network of speech practices it constituted led Germans to frame the social fabric they were part of in a distinctive way which mirrored oppressive Nazi ideology. Finally, we discuss two examples of how words used during the Nazi period could activate distinctive speech practices with “poisonous” effects.

¹ The authors collaborated on the research that this paper is based on and have discussed all aspects of it. However, Irene Lo Faro authored Sections 1, 2.3, and 2.5, while Paolo Labinaz authored Sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates upon Victor Klemperer's first-hand, anecdotally-based investigation into the National Socialist (henceforth, for the sake of simplicity, Nazi) usage of German in the light of more recent studies on dangerous speech. These studies analyze those forms of speech that play a role in creating and encouraging a climate of violence and intolerance towards one or more social groups, as well as normalizing acceptance of (and sometimes participation in) acts of violence towards them, thereby increasing the risk of genocide or other forms of mass atrocity. Although Klemperer made some interesting observations on the dangerous nature of the Nazis' usage of German, these were mostly fragmentary: more specifically, they mostly refer to the role played by individual words, images, and speeches in Nazi propaganda. Here, we aim to place these remarks within the general theoretical framework of dangerous speech studies, integrated with a practice-based conception of language, in order to provide a better and more systematic understanding of the "poisonous" effects of what Klemperer called *Lingua Tertia Imperii* (the Language of the Third Reich). In particular, we consider the two most significant effects of the adoption in people's everyday speech of the Nazi usage of German, and namely, the denial of the worth and dignity of all alleged internal enemies (and especially of the Jews), and that insidious spread of ideological conformity among those not belonging to the target group which prevented the emergence of dissenting voices in much of the population. We shall argue that in order to understand how this could happen, and how the Nazis were able to use German as an instrument of power and domination over the population, we must conceive *Lingua Tertia Imperii* not simply as a linguistic system regulated by its own norms or as a vocabulary made up of a certain number of words with their distinctive meanings, but as a complex network of speech practices. By relying on a practice-based view of language, we hope to show the importance of speech practice in spreading and inculcating an oppressive ideology into the population, whether or not they are the victims or part of the dominant group.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section highlights the crucial role played by Klemperer as an eyewitness and field researcher – albeit against his will – in understanding Nazi propaganda through his anecdotally-based analysis of the Nazi usage of German. In the second section, after providing an outline of the analytic framework developed by scholars working on dangerous speech, we use it to systematize Klemperer's remarks on the dangerousness of the *Lingua Tertia Imperii*. In particular, we argue that its dangerousness depended on how the network of speech practices it constituted led Germans to frame the social fabric they were part of in a distinctive way which mirrored oppressive Nazi ideology. The section concludes with two examples of how words used at the

time could activate distinctive Nazi speech practices with “poisonous” effects. In the third and final section, we observe that the network of speech practices introduced by the Nazis did indeed “poison” (to use Klemperer’s term) German society to such an extent that it is hard to believe that anyone in the population remained immune, irrespective of an explicit adherence to Nazi ideology.

1. VICTOR KLEMPERER ON THE NAZI LANGUAGE

This section presents Klemperer’s first-hand, anecdotally-based investigation into the Nazi usage of German. Since his investigation is an in-depth reflection of his experience during the Nazi period, it is essential to begin by offering a short account of his life and explaining the genesis of the book containing the results of his investigation (Section 1.1). We then clarify what Klemperer meant by *Lingua Tertii Imperii* when referring to the Nazis’ usage of German to spread their ideology (Section 1.2). Finally, we present the distinguishing features he attributed to the Nazi language (Section 1.3).

1.1. KLEMPERER AS A WITNESS AND FIELD RESEARCHER IN THE NAZI ERA

Born the ninth son of a rabbi, Victor Klemperer (1881-1960) never really identified as a Jew, and even after converting to Christianity and being baptised, his religious affiliation was always a minor issue in his life compared to his sense of being a German citizen. However, despite not belonging to the Jewish community, according to the Racial Laws of 1935, his Jewish origins were enough to lose him his post as a Professor of Romance Languages at the Technical University of Dresden. Because he was married to an “Aryan” German, Klemperer managed to avoid deportation time and time again, but still lost not only his job, but also his home – eventually being made to share a house with other working Jews in Dresden, a so-called *Judenhaus* – and above all, his beloved books. Deprived of the opportunity to keep working and even to read – because owning or borrowing a book was illegal for a Jew – and subjected to daily stress and abuse, Klemperer’s interest gradually turned to trying to understand the Nazi usage of German. This happened despite the fact that at the beginning he had wanted nothing to do with the Nazi language: «[...] I wanted to hear as little as possible of it. [...] If by chance or mistake a Nazi book fell into my hands I would cast it aside after the first paragraph»².

² V. Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii, A Philologist’s Notebook*, translated by M. Brady, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p. 11.

Throughout his lifetime, Klemperer had regularly kept personal journals. During the years of Nazi oppression, writing them became a kind of lifeline for him, or as he wrote, «[...] my diary was my balancing pole, without which I would have fallen down a hundred times»³.

In these journals, Klemperer clearly expresses his wish to preserve some of his lost freedom by observing, studying, and reflecting upon the subject to which he had devoted his life as a philologist: language. Given the circumstances, however, the only language he had access to and could investigate was the one used by the Nazi regime, namely, what he called the *Lingua Tertia Imperii*. Since it was impossible, or almost impossible, for Klemperer to have books from which to gather evidence of this language⁴, his investigation focused primarily on what was most readily available around him, such as posters, radio speeches, propaganda pamphlets, obituaries in newspapers, and conversations overheard in the factory or on the bus.

After the war, in 1947, after rewriting and fine-tuning notes from his diary, Klemperer prepared a manuscript for publication which he called *LTI (Lingua Tertia Imperii) Notizbuch eines Philologen*⁵. The work's wide circulation made Klemperer a household name: in particular, his work has been very influential in subsequent studies on propaganda. However, it must be borne in mind that Klemperer's book has a strong autobiographical element which reflected his own tragic personal experience, and this makes his approach to the Nazi language polemic from the outset. For this reason, it cannot be considered as a scientific work, but rather – as Klemperer himself said – as a book with educational merit that had the aim of cleansing the German language of the poison with which it had been infected⁶. Despite its strong personal and pedagogical elements, the volume has long been considered a cornerstone in our understanding of Nazi ideology.

³ Ivi, p. 10.

⁴ As mentioned above, Jews were not allowed to own or borrow books. The few books that Klemperer could work on were borrowed from his “Aryan” wife, but only sporadically because of the high risk involved for both. Ivi, p. 11.

⁵ Interestingly, when referring to the Nazi language in his personal journals, Klemperer generally used the acronym LTI, and not the complete expression *Lingua Tertia Imperii*. This choice was not accidental, although the motivations behind it changed over time. Initially, he used the acronym as a way of poking fun at the exaggerated use of abbreviations by the Nazi propagandists. In his opinion, the abundant use of abbreviations was intended to bureaucratize, and by so doing, normalize violence. Subsequently, the acronym LTI took on the metaphorical characters of an SOS, thus becoming a request for help to which Klemperer appealed when he felt he was losing himself both thematically in his writing and psychologically in his everyday life.

⁶ Ivi, pp. 14-16.

«Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all»⁷. This striking image sums up very well Klemperer's position on the toxic nature of the *Lingua Tertii Imperii* (henceforth, LTI) – an issue particularly dear to him. In fact, it was this very toxicity that convinced Klemperer of the importance of cleansing the German language of Nazi ideology.

If we are to understand the poisonous effects of LTI, we must first understand what it consists of and the effect it has on the values associated with German words. To begin with, we should point out that according to Klemperer, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* – which he often described as the Bible of LTI – must be seen as the primary source of LTI, while its codification and diffusion in the German population was the work of Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda for the Nazi regime.

Klemperer described LTI as a «fixed» language⁸. By “fixed”, he meant that LTI did not contain or involve linguistic changes, but stayed still, tedious, pertinacious, and constant, and was completely under the sole control of the Minister for Propaganda⁹. As a matter of fact, there was no difference between the written and spoken forms, but the tendency was towards a general impoverishment of its vocabulary – we will return to this issue in Section 1.3.1. Most importantly, Klemperer warned readers that they must be careful not to think of LTI as a brand-new language, completely different from the German of the time¹⁰. As he pointed out, the Nazis did not invent any words. It is no coincidence that all the “Nazi” words he analysed in his diaries pre-existed Nazism, and this is principally why Klemperer was interested in how the Nazis used these words rather than in their origin¹¹. What he was concerned with was how the Nazification of certain German words came about, and the answer he came up with was that it happened because of their being used constantly by the Nazis, and it was this that caused the values associated with these words to be subverted. This is why he saw Nazism as a poison that actually infected words, groups of words, phrases, and acronyms.

Interestingly, although Klemperer was a philologist, he never dealt with the linguistic forms or philological aspects of Nazi language. Instead, as stated above, he was primarily interested in how it was used in context. Central to Klemperer's

⁷ Ivi, pp. 15-16.

⁸ Ivi, p. 20.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Ivi, pp. 43-45, 79, 189-190.

¹¹ Ivi, p. 41.

approach is the idea that language cannot be separated from its context of use: consequently, a word can survive only so long as it is kept alive by its use, and in Section 2, we shall return to this fundamental aspect of Klemperer's investigation of Nazi language. At the same time, he pointed out that the Nazis did not just use words to spread their ideology, but made use of whatever means were available for communicating something. For this reason, he also examined how architecture, forms of greetings, mass graves, music, parades, and even new roads were used to disseminating Nazi ideology. As he remarked, «[a]ll of this is the language of the Third Reich»¹².

1.3. FEATURES OF LTI

Many of the chapters of Klemperer's book are taken up with describing the distinguishing features of LTI. Of all the features he identified, our focus here is upon the three most relevant to our work: lexical poverty, popularisation, and non-neutrality. Klemperer pointed out that these features made LTI the «language of the people»¹³. Indeed, LTI was not used only by a “clique” – the “small” group that Nazis belonged to – but was the language of every German. Through it, all Germans could describe and refer to every aspect of their life, and so LTI was the only language which people living in Germany at the time could use to communicate with others. This was precisely why Klemperer compared LTI to a poison poured into a well from which everyone drank, and it should be stressed that no German, not even Klemperer, was immune to this poison. The fact that it had the features mentioned above was not pure chance, but something already planned in advance in its Bible – which as we have already mentioned, was Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

1.3.1. LEXICAL POVERTY

The first characteristic of LTI is its lexical poverty: in fact, Klemperer noticed that LTI diminished the lexical resources which an individual can draw upon to communicate. For that reason, he described it a “standardized language”, since its vocabulary and syntax lacks variety and nuances, and it consists of repetitive linguistic formulas¹⁴. This standardization gradually reduced variations in how

¹² Ivi, p. 10.

¹³ Ivi, p. 19.

¹⁴ Ivi, pp. 12, 56, and 109.

German was used by members of different social groups to the point that, eventually, these differences completely disappeared. Distinctions became increasingly blurred even when it came to sacred and profane language. As Klemperer explained, the Nazis deprived the language of faith of its specificity. New Testament formulas such as «[...] he has risen» (Matthew 28:6) and biblical terms like «my apostles» (concerning Jesus' disciples) and «eternal» (often related to eternal life/eternal salvation) were taken by the Nazis and absorbed into LTI. Think of Hitler's speeches in which he frequently used expressions such as «you have risen again in the Third Reich», «my apostles» (now describing Nazi devotees), and «eternal Reich»¹⁵. To some extent, then, the language of faith was no longer about religion. Interestingly, as reported by Klemperer¹⁶, Goebbels recounted in one of his diaries that Hitler had once concluded a speech full of rhetorical pathos by saying “Amen” and commented that this Amen «[...] sounded so natural that everybody was deeply shaken and moved by it».

Klemperer also pointed out that the standardization and so the impoverishment of the usage of German involved both written and spoken communication: there was no longer any distinction¹⁷. For example, there was no difference between the language in the newspapers and the one heard on the radio. They were the same language with the same goal: to incite people to action.

1.3.2. POPULARISATION

Let us turn to the second feature of LTI, namely popularisation. Klemperer describes Hitler's speeches as *volkstümlich*¹⁸, literally “of the people” in his diary, and when we think of Hitler's speeches, we imagine him addressing a crowd of people who are cheering him on. For Nazi propaganda, it was essential to put the leader in direct contact with the people, not just with their representatives and so the audience of Hitler's speeches was not made up of a select, elitist public, but included people of every class and gender, and this obliged him to use German in the most accessible way possible. Unfortunately, popularisation took its worst and most degraded form: pure demagoguery. Klemperer found it almost impossible to understand how Hitler managed to keep the attention of the German masses and subjugate them to his will¹⁹, despite his unmelodious raucous voice, his

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 114-115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 20.

¹⁸ Ivi, p. 53.

¹⁹ Ivi, pp. 55-56.

crudely constructed sentences, and his un-German style of rhetoric. His speeches were surprisingly effective, however, perhaps for those very reasons. As a matter of fact, they contained a strong demagogic and fanatical element: he used words to seduce the masses, certainly not to appeal to rationality, with the deliberate aim of shutting off their intellect²⁰.

Klemperer argued that creating this language “of the people” was not just about making lexical shifts to a register considered easier to understand yet unsophisticated, like that of the workers²¹; in this case, it would amount merely to the lexical impoverishment we discussed in Section 1.3.1. Instead, popularization was more about appealing to the specific feelings triggered by particular words. One example is the use of the word *Gefolgschaft*, an old-fashioned term describing the bond of loyalty between a feudal vassal and his lord, used by the Nazis to address blue- and white-collar workers. Harking back to the old Germanic tradition stirred up completely different emotions and awakened the fighting spirit inherent in that relationship of loyalty and service. Just as vassals would die for their lord, so were Germans expected to do the same for their Führer.

As Klemperer realised, it could be said that thanks to its popularization, LTI soon became a language within everyone’s reach and above all, a language that everyone felt was their own.

1.3.3. NON-NEUTRALITY

Klemperer believed that whether it was written or spoken, LTI had never been neutral. In fact, it was divisive, creating hierarchies among groups of individuals and constructing enemies to target. In particular, as he pointed out, “[...] it always has to have an adversary and always has to drag this adversary down”²². These adversaries might be outsiders, an external enemy like the Russians, or insiders, like the Jews in particular (who we will discuss later on). As far as external enemies were concerned, LTI was designed to undermine their credibility. An example of how this worked is the Nazi use of what Klemperer called «ironic inverted commas»²³. While inverted commas are normally used to report a quotation objectively, under the Nazi regime they became a silent tool of propaganda, often being used to cast doubt on the credibility of what

²⁰ Ivi, p. 53.

²¹ Ivi p. 189.

²² Ivi, p. 76.

²³ Ivi, pp. 75-76.

was placed between them. For example, when the Communists' victories were reported, they were referred to as a «red victory» placing the term “victory” in inverted commas, while Russian generals are presented as «red generals» with “general” in inverted commas²⁴. Whereas as far as internal enemies were concerned (the Jews especially), the Nazis made use of words associating Jews with diseases from which the Germans must be cured. For example, Jewish people were presented as a «tumour of cultural life», «worse than the Black Death of old», or the «Black Death»²⁵. Moreover, the very adjective “Jewish” was used as a derogatory expression. In written and spoken discourse, it was usually associated with terms that referred to other potential enemies. As a result, one could find expressions such as, for example, Jewish-Marxist ideology or Jewish-Bolshevik barbarism. By doing this, the Nazis simplified things and tried to create associations between different adversaries. By “bracketing everything together”, as Klemperer said, they created one internal enemy upon whom the German people could focus their hatred²⁶.

2. FROM *LTI* TO DANGEROUS SPEECH STUDIES, AND BACK AGAIN

This section deals with Klemperer's observations about *LTI* in the light of more recent studies on dangerous speech. We start by providing a brief overview of these studies, focusing in particular on the work of Susan Benesch and her colleagues, due to their attention to the relationship – and interaction – between language and ideology (Section 2.1). We go on to consider the context- and content-related variables which, according to them, affect the dangerousness of speech (Section 2.2) and then examine whether and to what extent they can be associated with *LTI* (Section 2.3). Next, relying on Beaver and Stanley's notion of speech practice, we focus on what made *LTI* so dangerous that it led to genocide and argue that its dangerousness primarily resides in the network of speech practices which constituted it. Indeed, due to their apparent harmlessness, Nazi speech practices quickly spread among Germans, shaping their ways of representing the social fabric they belonged to in ways that were in line with oppressive Nazi ideology (Section 2.4). To conclude, we discuss two examples to show how words used at the time could activate distinctive Nazi speech practices with “poisonous” effects (Section 2.5).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ivi, p. 179.

²⁶ Ivi, p. 164.

Klemperer's investigation of LTI has been a milestone in the study of the language of propaganda. The way the Nazis used German, however, was more than just propaganda: they manipulated the national language to disseminate anti-semitism among the population, thereby creating the ideal conditions for their ultimate goal, which was to exterminate the Jews. Unfortunately, the example of the Nazis is only the most extreme and well-known case of genocide planning in the last century: more recent genocides have occurred in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. Also in light of these horrific events, scholars from a variety of disciplines have become increasingly interested in understanding the forms of speech that contribute to violence escalation. In particular, starting in 2010, Susan Benesch developed the *Dangerous Speech Project*²⁷, which has two main goals: (i) to identify recurring forms of speech and more generally, any form of expression (such as images, songs, and films) that encourage people to accept and even take part in acts of violence against the members of a particular group, and (ii) to find effective responses to these forms of speech and expressions in order to counteract them and prevent their dangerous effects²⁸.

In Benesch's view, dangerous speech is to be taken as a subset of the broader "hate speech" category. While hate speech is prevalent in almost all societies, even in those where the risk of mass atrocities occurring is virtually zero, not all of its forms lead to acts of violence against a target group – although it might damage members of the target group emotionally or psychologically²⁹. What Benesch and the scholars involved in her project are concerned with is all those forms of hate speech that have «[...] a reasonable chance of catalyzing or amplifying violence by one group against another, given the circumstances in which [they were] made or disseminated»³⁰. The focus of dangerous speech studies, then, is on the conditions under which hateful speech can lead to an escalation of violence and thus become a case of "dangerous speech". Accordingly, what makes speech dangerous is that it not only persuades its audience of something, but also inspires them to

²⁷ A detailed presentation of the project is available at <www.dangerousspeech.org>; accessed 27 January 2023.

²⁸ See, in particular, J. Maynard, and S. Benesch, *Dangerous speech and dangerous ideology: An integrated model for monitoring and prevention*, in: "Genocide studies and prevention: An international journal", n. 9, 2016, pp. 70-95, and S. Benesch, C. Buerger, T. Glavinic, S. Manion, and D. Bateyko, *Dangerous speech: A practical guide*, The Dangerous Speech Project, 2021, <<https://dangerousspeech.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Dangerous-Speech-A-Practical-Guide.pdf>>; accessed 15 November 2022.

²⁹ S. Benesch, C. Buerger, T. Glavinic, S. Manion, and D. Bateyko, *Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide*, cit., pp. 7-8.

³⁰ S. Benesch, *Dangerous Speech: A Proposal to Prevent Group Violence*, 2012, <<https://dangerousspeech.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Dangerous-Speech-Guidelines-2013.pdf>>; accessed 15 November 2022, p. 1.

commit or condone violent acts. It is one thing to persuade one's audience to adopt certain negative attitudes toward a particular social group, as in the case of hate speech. It is quite another matter if, by adopting such attitudes, people feel entitled to use violence against members of said group. It should be noted that it is not so much the hate speech itself that drives people to take action, but the ideologies that this kind of speech encourages among the population. It is these ideologies that lead people to feel justified in acting violently themselves and also to condone the violent actions of their fellow citizens. As Livingstone Smith has pointed out, «dangerous speech ignites and organizes the violence latent in pre-existing ideologies»³¹.

To understand how speech can become incendiary, Maynard and Benesch analyzed several recent cases of genocide and mass atrocities and found striking similarities in the forms of speech employed by the perpetrators and the ideologies which were spread through their use³². In their view, knowing the patterns of speech used in these cases and the ideologies behind them helps us to foresee the escalation of violence, and develop strategies to anticipate such escalations and counteract the influence of dangerous speech.

In the following sub-section, we shall see what factors influence the dangerousness of speech.

2.2. CONTEXT AND CONTENT

Maynard and Benesch claim that the dangerousness of speech is influenced by both context- and content-related variables³³. Regarding context, they identify four factors that can contribute, individually or in combination, to the escalation of violence: the status and qualities of the speaker, the target audience, the socio-historical context, and the means by which the speech is disseminated.

The status and qualities of the speaker play a key role in increasing the capacity of her speech to influence the audience and make them willing to act³⁴. She may have formal authority or be recognized as a *de facto* leader. In the first case, one can think of a political or religious leader, while in the second case, one can think of public figures who have no formal power but who are recognized as leaders because of their charisma or popularity, such as actors, journalists,

³¹ D.L. Smith, *On inhumanity: Dehumanization and how to resist it*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 120.

³² J. Maynard, and S. Benesch, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³³ Ivi, pp. 77-86.

³⁴ Ivi, pp. 77.

scholars, singers, or athletes. Of course, we can think of many leaders with formal authority who also possess charisma and popularity. As noted by Maynard and Benesch, the speaker's possession of a certain position or qualities must always be accompanied by a persuasive speaking style in order to mobilize the affective inclinations of the audience³⁵. Indeed, recent studies show that appeals to affect and emotion are a key factor in driving the masses to commit violent acts³⁶.

With respect to the audience, Maynard and Benesch point out that the propensity of its members to engage in or condone violence can vary widely³⁷. This propensity is directly proportional to the audience's perception of the distance between themselves (understood as an "us") and the target group (understood as a "them"): the greater the distance, the greater the propensity. This distance is mainly determined by fear, low empathy towards outsiders, and exploitation of in-group norms. All these factors lead to a weakening of ties between the groups within a population. In particular, the fear of being seriously harmed by another group is a key factor in triggering and justifying violence. After all, when faced with an existential threat, any of us would be inclined to justify violence to defend ourselves and our loved ones. As well as fear, low empathy or even a complete lack of empathy for members of an out-group can further reinforce the acceptance of violence against them. Finally, social norms that create cohesion within a group, combined with fear and low empathy toward outsiders, can easily be exploited to reinforce feelings of hatred towards other groups³⁸.

The social and historical aspects of the context constitute the third factor that makes it more likely that a speech, whether false or exaggerated, will become dangerous, thereby increasing the audience's propensity for violence. This is an essential variable because if there are social or cultural reasons which motivate a particular audience to want to harm a particular group or justify violence against it, it is much easier for a speaker to make an inflammatory speech against that group. As Maynard and Benesch point out, intergroup conflict may have deep roots: it may involve past or ongoing diatribes, past episodes of violence, or competition for resources due to difficult living conditions³⁹. In addition, the existing or emerging background of ideological beliefs and attitudes plays an important role. It should also be noted that ideologies can lie dormant for years and be reactivated under the right social and historical conditions. As Jason Stanley has

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ For a review of these studies, see O. Olusanya, *Emotions, decision-making and mass atrocities: Through the lens of the macro-micro Integrated theoretical model*, Farnham (UK), Ashgate, 2014, pp. 67-91.

³⁷ J. Maynard, and S. Benesch, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

observed, the primary function of ideologies is to maintain and reinforce the influence over the population of the dominant group and the political institutions headed by its members⁴⁰.

The final contextual factor to consider is how the speech is disseminated. If a particular community of individuals relies predominantly on one source of information, it is fairly obvious that if the speech comes from that source, it will be more effective in encouraging people to commit and condone acts of violence. In such circumstances, the speech will have a greater impact on the audience than it would in a situation where its members can choose among multiple sources of information. More specifically, if the monopoly of communication is taken over by those who advocate mass atrocities, the communication channels will be saturated with ideas that justify such atrocities by presenting them as things that make sense⁴¹. When speaking of the means by which the message is spread, we must of course mention the role played today by social networking platforms in the dissemination of dangerous speech and ideologies. These platforms are programmed with algorithms which allow users to select the information that best fits their beliefs and ideologies and avoid information that does not. They are also guided towards interacting with like-minded users. In such cases, even the most absurd beliefs gain more and more traction among people as they become increasingly credible within their close communities⁴².

Finally, still on the topic of means of dissemination, Maynard and Benesch point out that the language in which a speech is delivered can play a significant role in increasing the audience's propensity for violence⁴³. If a speech is delivered in the language predominantly used by the in-group, it can lead to a sense of solidarity among its members, thus making group members feel blameless because they assume that only those who speak the same language will understand them.

Regarding the content of dangerous speech, Maynard and Benesch argue that it includes statements and arguments used to justify mass atrocities. In particular, they identify six justification mechanisms that aim to make violence «[...] permissible, desirable, and even necessary before, during, and after mass atrocities»⁴⁴. Since dangerous speech usually involves more than one of these mechanisms simultaneously, their boundaries are often blurred. The six justification mecha-

⁴⁰ J. Stanley, *How propaganda works*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015, pp. 269-291.

⁴¹ J. Maynard, and S. Benesch, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

⁴² See, e.g., C. Thi Nguyen, *Echo chambers and epistemic bubbles*, in: "Episteme", n. 17, 2020, pp 141-161.

⁴³ J. Maynard, and S. Benesch, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ Ivi, p. 80.

nisms are dehumanization, guilt-attribution, threat construction, destruction of alternatives, virtuetalk, and future bias.

Dehumanization serves to make people believe that members of the target group are biologically subhuman, mechanically inhuman, or supernaturally alien⁴⁵. This justification mechanism diminishes any moral responsibility for their future death and more generally, the obligations that every human being is supposed feel towards his or her fellow human beings. If members of the target group are considered to have a less-than-human status, then anyone can consider themselves justified in condoning others for committing acts against them that would be unacceptable in a normal context. As for the guilt-attribution mechanism, it consists of justifying violence against the target group because of past crimes committed by its members against in-group members or the audience of the speaker's speech⁴⁶. Violence is thus justified as just collective punishment (or perhaps even revenge) that falls on the entire group, even if the violence was committed by only some of its members. As Maynard and Benesch note, threat construction is probably the most effective justificatory mechanism⁴⁷. This mechanism requires the construction of a narrative that the target group poses a threat to in-group security because of past crimes or plans to commit crimes against its members. For this reason, any violence against the members of the former is seen as more than justified, as it is necessary to keep the members of the latter safe. In particular, narratives about plans for future violent actions by members of the target group can be highly persuasive for the audience: indeed, as psychological studies have shown, people usually perceive the future as frightening because of the impossibility, or near impossibility, to intervene in what might happen. When people feel threatened, they have no problem justifying the legitimacy of violent defensive action. In such situations, violent action against threatening out-group members will be seen as necessary for one's own survival and that of the other in-group members. Significantly, Maynard and Benesch emphasize that these first three justification mechanisms place «[...] out-group members into a social category in which conventional moral restraints on how people can be treated do not seem to apply»⁴⁸.

The next three justification mechanisms are often related to the previous ones. Those who make dangerous speeches usually present violence against the target group as the only viable alternative. If there are no other viable alternatives, then violence becomes inevitable and its acceptance becomes necessary. There

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 81.

⁴⁷ Ivi, p. 81-83.

⁴⁸ Ivi, p. 80.

are several ways in which alternatives to violence can be destroyed. A speaker can present violence as a historical necessity or represent its possible alternatives as ineffective or impractical, or emphasize their unacceptability given the current situation of emergency or exception⁴⁹. By virtue talk, Maynard and Benesch refer to the justificatory mechanism by which violence is associated with praiseworthy qualities, while non-participation in or resistance to it is portrayed as suggesting lack of virtuous qualities or a deplorable “weakness”⁵⁰. To this end, those who make dangerous speeches often associate violence with verbal expressions, symbols, and images that invoke praiseworthy qualities such as duty, honor, manliness, and so on. Thus, if members of the in-group do not participate in violence, they are qualified as inappropriate or inadequate members of the group and are thus shamed and socially ridiculed. Finally, there is the future bias mechanism. This justification mechanism is based on the idea that if the speaker tells the audience about the future benefits that can be obtained through violence, then the audience will have good reason to consider acquiring these benefits more important than the moral costs of their violent actions. When speaking of future benefits, a speaker may refer to the guarantee that no other outside group will be able to threaten the in-group, that there will be economic and social benefits from atrocities, and many other similar things. If the audience believes that the attainment of these future benefits depends on their actions, then they will agree to perform them and condone the violent actions of others precisely because such actions are necessary to obtain these future benefits⁵¹.

2.3 LTI AND ITS “DANGEROUS” CONTEXT- AND CONTENT-RELATED VARIABLES

Let us now consider whether and to what extent the context- and content-related variables identified by Maynard and Benesch can be related to LTI. Interestingly, Klemperer’s study of the Nazi use of German already provides some excellent clues as to how LTI might be related to them.

Let us focus first on the contextual variables. As reported in Section 1.3.2, despite the serious flaws Klemperer found in the way Hitler addressed the masses, he had to admit that the Führer was a dangerous, manipulative demagogue, surprisingly good at stirring the population’s feelings and emotions. Hitler was therefore endowed not only with formal authority (being the Führer), but also with the manipulative skill enabling him to incite hatred in one group for an-

⁴⁹ Ivi, pp. 83-84.

⁵⁰ Ivi, pp. 84-85.

⁵¹ Ivi, pp. 85-86.

other. To demonstrate the manipulative power of Hitler's speeches, Klemperer recounts a dialogue between himself and an acquaintance. Confronted with the latter's enthusiasm for Hitler's oratorical skills, Klemperer asked him what made Hitler's speeches so irresistible. He replied, "I have no idea, but you simply can't resist him"⁵². This suggests how much of a church-like effect his speeches had, leading the audience to blindly believe what he was telling them. As for the audience, Klemperer argued that the German people possessed certain character traits that created the ideal conditions for the fascist experience to be exported to Germany and taken to the extreme. These traits are: lack of any limits, excessiveness, and hyper-perseverance. "Lack of any limits" translates to the German term *Entgrenzung*, which literally means "the removal of borders". According to Klemperer, this is a characteristic peculiar to Romanticism, the German movement which, in his opinion, already contained those same traits that would later be found in Nazism. As for excessiveness and hyper-perseverance, these were traits which had already been identified previously in Germans by authors who Klemperer quoted, such as Scherer and Tacitus⁵³. In his view, it was this combination of character traits which led to the anti-Semitic nature of Nazism. Although anti-Semitism had existed throughout Europe for centuries, it had never taken on such violent, destructive, and excessive proportions as it did during the Third Reich. Moreover, unlike the anti-Semitism of the past, Nazi anti-Semitism claimed to have a strong "scientific" basis, focusing on blood and thus racial differences between Germans and Jews. For Klemperer, such hatred was a symptom of hyper-persistence because it was «ineradicably tenacious»⁵⁴.

The social and historical context of Germany at the time was also conducive to the spread of Nazi violence without there being any real internal opposition, especially as regards the persecution of the Jews. In fact, Klemperer believed that the anti-Semitic character of Nazism from its inception had contributed in part to its success. He made a brief and fleeting reference to the Zionist movements of the first half of the twentieth century⁵⁵, which, in the name of national and territorial self-determination for the Jewish people, had given anti-Semites even more opportunities to consider Jews as non-Europeans and outsiders. Last but not least, there is no doubt that the Nazi regime had total control over the media through constant supervision of the press, radio, and film industry. Although this control was not monolithic, propaganda was pervasive. By controlling the media,

⁵² V. Klemperer, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁵³ Ivi, pp. 133-144.

⁵⁴ Ivi, p. 137.

⁵⁵ L. Halperin, *Origins and evolution of Zionism*, in: "Foreign Policy Research Institute", 2015. URL: <https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/docs/halperin_-_hi_-_origins_and_evolution_of_zionism.pdf>; accessed 25 January 2023.

the regime created a monopoly for itself as regards public language. With its official clichés and stereotypes, the LTI expressed the only approved way of thinking, and it did so according to certain rules and styles. Anything that deviated from the “official” Nazi speech code could only be expressed privately or clandestinely, otherwise the speaker faced severe punishment.

With regard to the content of Nazi speeches, Klemperer’s remarks make it possible to trace all six justification mechanisms identified by Maynard and Benesch. While the first three (dehumanization, guilt attribution, and threat construction) served to make the Jews a group to which ordinary human categories and rules did not apply, the other three (destruction of alternatives, virtuetalk, and future bias) served to create strong and stable bonds within the German “Aryan” population by assigning them a task and presenting the expected benefits they would receive if this task were successful. At the same time, of course, all of these mechanisms intersected and overlapped so that each one reinforced the other.

Let us begin with the dehumanizing element embodied in LTI. Klemperer describes the LTI as a dehumanizing language. Indeed, it expressed the Nazi will to objectify all (alleged) internal enemies, especially the Jewish people. The devaluation of their value and dignity was accomplished by referring to them not only as “racially inferior” but also as “not-human”, thereby denying their status as humans. Accordingly, in Nazi written and spoken discourses, we can find constant references to the *Untermenschentum* (sub-humanity)⁵⁶ of the members of the victim groups or their association with animals, such as pigs, or parasites. In particular, as Klemperer suggests, the adjective “parasitic” was used to refer to Jews above other target groups⁵⁷.

As for guilt attribution, Klemperer points out that the Nazis blamed the Jews for Germany’s major defeats and problems. Although anti-Semitism has been part of Nazi ideology from the very beginning, the most violent actions taken against Jews were the result of events in which they were accused of crimes against Germany and the German people. As Klemperer suggests, the best-known case is the so-called Night of the Broken Glass (in German *Novemberprogrome 1938* or *Reichskristallnacht*). By 1938, the oppression and brutalization of the Jews was a daily occurrence, but the assassination in Paris of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a Polish Jew was used by Goebbels as a pretext to justify increasingly violent actions against Jews. The result was the pogrom that destroyed Jewish businesses, homes, schools and synagogues, and led to the arrest and deportation of scores of Jews to concentration camps. Klemperer did not speak specifically about this episode; instead, he emphasized the role the Nazis believed the Jews had played in

⁵⁶ V. Klemperer, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁵⁷ Ivi, p. 184.

the outbreak of the war. He reported that during an inspection, one of the Gestapo agents asked him: «At home you're all praying for the Jewish victory, aren't you? [...] We're at war with the Jews, it's the Jewish war»⁵⁸. In fact, the Nazis presented the war as “defensive” and “imposed”. The Jews were considered guilty of a war that was described as a «[...] continuation of the murderous Jewish attacks on Hitler's Germany»⁵⁹. Because the Jews were blamed for the outbreak of the war, the violence used against them was seen as not only justified, but necessary.

Finally, the German people were encouraged not only to seek revenge for what the Jews had “allegedly” done, but also to see the possible future threat posed by the Jews. Klemperer described how Hitler's speeches always adopted one of two attitudes towards the Jews: either mockery or terror. With terms like “black plague”, the LTI created a climate of fear toward the Jews, who were seen as dangerous and deadly, just like the Black Death. To fight this “plague” that threatened the lives of the German people, there was no other option but to eliminate the source of the threat, namely the Jews.

The presence of the other three justification mechanisms in Nazi speeches was mainly aimed at establishing ideological conformity among those who were not part of the target group, thus preventing the rise of dissenting voices. Indeed, the goal was to spread Nazi ideology among the population so that, over and above explicitly adhering to it, people would consider what Nazi propaganda demanded of them as something which was necessary and which had to be done for the good of Germany.

Let us first consider the mechanism of destroying alternatives. As noted above, the primary target of LTI hate was undoubtedly the Jews. The Nazi approach to this group was more violent than to any other “enemy”. Klemperer suggests that behind this insatiable hatred was the Nazis' need for the presence of a deadly enemy to fight and defeat. As Klemperer put it: «without the swarthy Jew there would never have been the radiant figure of the Nordic Teuton»⁶⁰. Accordingly, hatred of the Jews was presented as the only way possible for the German people to realize themselves as “Aryans”. Klemperer even noted ironically that «[h]ad the Führer really achieved his aim of exterminating all the Jews, he would have had to invent new ones»⁶¹.

The reference to the term “Aryan” allows us to introduce the virtuetalk about Germanic “purity” in LTI. Klemperer noted that LTI was, first and foremost, an incitement to action and movement. Initially, this movement was the sports movement of athletes. Both Hitler and Goebbels made great use of the metaphors of sport. Then the active movement became aggressive, and boxing became

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ Ivi, p. 182.

⁶⁰ Ivi, p. 164.

⁶¹ Ivi, p. 181.

the most frequently mentioned sport⁶². As evidence that aggression and combativeness were considered the most important virtues of the Aryan people, Klemperer wondered how the new generation – raised under Nazi Germany – had encountered the adjective heroic and who that generation considered heroes. It is interesting to discuss the word heroism precisely because it carries with it the notion of virtue par excellence. Klemperer recognized three different types of heroes that propaganda presented one after the other: first, the SA guards, Hitler’s initial tool for seizing power, who were called “blood-soaked conquerors”; second, racing drivers, who were willing to die in order to achieve excellence (like Bernd Rosemeyer, who was considered a Nazi “martyr”)⁶³; and third and finally, tank drivers, because during the war, the tank outshone the racing car. Heroism, as understood by LTI, makes heroes out of those who are willing to do anything to succeed: they are eager to die (like the racing drivers) and to kill (like the soldiers).

Finally, behind the incitement to hatred and action were not only fear and revenge, but also promises. These promises concerned the prosperous future that awaited the Germans after they had eliminated the Jews, defeated the Bolsheviks, conquered the necessary living space, and so on. Interestingly, as Klemperer noted, the future to which the Nazi propaganda constantly referred is a past to which one must return⁶⁴. The reference to a Germanic ancestor superior to other “races” justified claims to supremacy and racism. Klemperer cites the emblematic motto *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Earth), engraved under the eagle’s coat of arms⁶⁵. This phrase was inherited from the Roman legal formulas of *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli*, which embodied the desire to belong to a German race claiming a German homeland. Klemperer rightly pointed out that this glorious past had the characteristics of a mythical past which had, of course, never existed.

2.4. LTI AS A NETWORK OF “DANGEROUS” SPEECH PRACTICES

So far, we have seen that the context- and content-related factors contributing to violence escalation were clearly at work in Nazi speech. In a certain sense, LTI made the Jewish genocide permissible and probably unavoidable. But how is it that Germans came to consider violence against Jews and members of other groups targeted by Nazi propaganda to be normal (and even participated in such acts): it would seem to have something to do with the ease with which LTI spread

⁶² Ivi, pp. 237-242.

⁶³ Ivi, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Ivi, pp. 77-78.

⁶⁵ Ivi, p. 246.

through the population. One might have expected German people to challenge and somehow try to combat LTI and its “poisonous” effects. Instead, as reported in Section 1.3.2, Klemperer described how LTI became the language of everyone in Germany, including the members of the victim groups. In his words, the poison was everywhere, and it was «[...] borne by the drinking water of the LTI», with the result that «nobody [was] immune to its effects»⁶⁶. However, the fact that every German used this language does not mean that the oppressive ideology it communicated was clear to them, nor does it mean that they adhered to that ideology. As Klemperer notes when referring to conversations he overheard between ordinary people (his colleagues at the factory where he was forced to work) who used LTI terms, «none of them were nazis, but they were all poisoned»⁶⁷. To fully understand this categorical statement, we should think of LTI not so much as a linguistic system regulated by its own norms, or as a vocabulary made up of a certain number of words with their distinctive meanings, but as a network of speech practices. According to a practice-based view of language, we are constantly engaged in speech practices when we communicate with others^{68, 69}. As Beaver and Stanley suggest, “[a]ll communication takes place with respect to a context of practices, which licenses the communicative acts constitutive of the communicative exchange”⁷⁰. Often the mere utterance of a word is enough to be part of a language practice, even if we are not consciously aware of it. In fact, the use of a word always takes place within a linguistic practice, and Klemperer places great emphasis on this:

For a word, or the particular nuance or connotation of a word, only takes on a linguistic life of its own and becomes truly alive within a language, where it enters into common usage within a particular group, or the public at large, and is able to assert its presence over a period of time⁷¹.

When a speech practice is activated, it can shape our ways of representing the social fabric of which we are a part, for example by assigning different social roles and positions. In this sense, a speech practice is never neutral; it is always a per-

⁶⁶ Ivi, p.97.

⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 100.

⁶⁸ See D. Beaver and J. Stanley, *Toward a non-ideal philosophy of language*, in: “Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal”, n. 39, 2019, pp. 501-545, and D. Beaver and J. Stanley *Neutrality*, in: “Philosophical Topics”, n. 49, 2021, pp. 165-185.

⁶⁹ When, as seen in Section 1.2, Klemperer argued that language could not be separated from its context of use, he was advocating an idea of language not unlike the one we are proposing here.

⁷⁰ D. Beaver and J. Stanley *Neutrality*, cit., 184.

⁷¹ V. Klemperer, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

spective on the social world to which we belong. By framing the world within a situated perspective, speech practices fundamentally contribute to the emergence and spread of ideologies. For example, choosing to use the word *faggot* or *homosexual* to refer to a homosexual makes a socially relevant difference: they shape the relationship between the speaker and the homosexual group differently. Indeed, by choosing one or the other, the speaker locates herself, and invites her interlocutors to do the same, within one speech practice rather than another. Let us now suppose that more and more people begin using the derogatory term “faggot”. In this case, a certain discriminatory way of viewing members of that social group may become the dominant perspective and thereby, the dominant ideology. At the same time, however, not all of the people who use that term will be aware of its discriminatory power, because it is the term that everyone, or almost everyone, in their linguistic community tends to use when referring to homosexuals. That is how a person may engage unintentionally and unconsciously in a speech practice and thus adhere to a particular perspective (even a discriminatory one) without being fully aware of it. The problem is that whenever one enters a well-established and widely employed speech practice, one is socially compelled to conform to the perspective on the social world defined by that practice; if one does not, it is likely that some social sanction will be forthcoming.

Let us now consider the case of the network of Nazi speech practices. Interestingly, as reported in Section 1.2, Klemperer described Nazism as a poison that permeated words, word groups, phrases, and acronyms. Speaking of Nazism as a poison that permeates words, word groups, and other forms of expression seems to be a metaphorical way of suggesting that Nazism embedded them in speech practices that were designed to frame the world within a situated, poisonous perspective. This would seem to be the crucial move the Nazis made, and especially that Goebbels made, and Klemperer puts the emphasis on this aspect when he talks about LTI: since we are constantly engaged in speech practices, to the extent that there is a robust and well-established network of speech practices in a society, its proliferation will allow a dominant “social” perspective to be established in that society without those engaged in such practices being fully aware of it. In the case of the Nazis, this “social” perspective soon became an “oppressive” ideology that established the criteria for inclusion and exclusion in German society. In particular, Nazi ideology promoted one way of looking at Aryans and another way of looking at Jews that was disseminated covertly through everyday speech practices. Consider what was said in the previous section about the portrayal of internal enemies, especially Jews, as inhuman, threatening, and capable of the most nefarious deeds. It is not surprising, then, to find people who accepted the fact that it was necessary to exclude Jews from German society, including their physical presence. At the same time, as was emphasized in the previous section,

LTI was designed to highlight the virtues of the Aryan population. The emphasis on these virtues also had the effect of making the other social groups in Germany feel inferior. Consider again the example of the word “heroic” presented above. When Germans used this word, no one was being explicitly oppressed. At the same time, however, it promoted the idea that only Germans with certain characteristics could be considered heroes, and this had a demeaning effect on members of the population who did not possess these characteristics. More specifically, Nazi ideology was oppressive in two ways. On the one hand, it promoted the strengthening of bonds between the dominant Aryan population while silencing those of groups who did not conform. At the same time, it imposed or reinforced a certain hierarchical perspective on the German social fabric, according to which people must be treated differently according to which socially marked group they belong to. In the next section, we will consider two examples from LTI to show how words used in everyday German life at the time could activate distinctive Nazi speech practices with “poisonous” effects.

2.5. NAZI SPEECH PRACTICES: TWO EXAMPLES

This section discusses two examples of Nazi speech practices, one involving the word *Volk*, whose activation was intended to create ideological conformity among the German population (Section 2.5.1), and another involving the word *Parasiten*, which was aimed at stripping members of the Jewish group of their human dignity (Section 2.5.2).

2.5.1. *DAS VOLK*

The word “Volk” (*das Volk*) is central to a rather complex network of Nazi speech practices. Indeed, its utterance activated, on different occasions, slightly different speech practices that were united by the fact that they were practices of exclusion within the German population. As Klemperer noted, the word was «[...] customary in spoken and written language as salt at table [...]: *Volksfest* {festival of the people}, *Volksgenosse* {comrade of the people}, *Volksgemeinschaft* {community of the people}, *volksnah* {one of the people}, *volksfremd* {alien to the people}, *volksentstammt* {descended from the people} [...]»⁷². In Nazi Germany, everything had become “of the people”: the chancellor was the chancellor of the people (*Volks-kanzler*), the party was the party of the people (*Volks-partei*), even the car

⁷² Ivi, p. 30.

ended up being the car “of the people” (*Volks-wagen*). But although the word *Volk* could easily be translated as “people”, the way the Nazis used it endowed it with an ideologically driven meaning. In their view, being a part of the *Volk* presupposed national, political and racial unity, and it was racial unity, in particular, which was the key element distinguishing members of the *Volk* from outsiders. The German *Volk* was therefore conceived by Nazis as a community of people united by blood. From this bond arose a connection to the so-called “Land of the fathers” (or the ancestors)⁷³, which members of the *Volk* felt a claim to because it had belonged to them in the past. All of this shows that translations such as “of the people” or “national” do not sufficiently clarify the meaning attributed at the time to the word *Volk* (and related adjectives such as *völkstümlich*, which we considered in section 1.3.2 with reference to the distinctive features of the LTI), nor do they explain the constant and almost pathological use of the term. Moreover, there was another interesting aspect connected to the use of this term. Precisely because everything was “of the people” there was a lack of terms available to use when referring to the individual. In Nazi ideology, the individual disappeared to make way for the *Volk*, an indistinct entity of anonymous individuals with a blood bond and a common goal, which was to regain their (imaginary) ancestral land. Whenever something became “of the people”, the private sphere disappeared in favour of the public sphere. The motto quoted by Klemperer, «Du bist nichts, dein Volk ist alles» (*You are nothing, your Volk is everything*)⁷⁴, sums up the poisonous effect spread by Nazi propaganda. With the imposition of a single thought – the “people’s thought” – and a single will – the “people’s will” – from which the individual cannot escape, the only possible effect was the nullification of every individual. Since the value system was defined by a person being part of the *Volk*, and not by their preferences and (free) choices, this obviously involved the imposition of ideological conformity.

2.5.2. *PARASITEN*

The second term we consider is “parasites” (*Parasiten*), which we already mentioned in Section 2.3. There is no doubt that the association of this term with a particular social group is denigrating and has a degrading effect on its members. What we want to emphasize, however, is that the Nazis’ use of *Parasiten* to refer to Jews had an even worse purpose than denigrating and degrading them. In fact,

⁷³ Surprisingly, but not too surprisingly, the Nazis never defined the boundaries and limits of this longed-for land.

⁷⁴ Ivi, p. 23.

the word was used to activate speech practices of total dehumanization that justified violence acts against Jews and contributed to their genocide.

The association between Jews and parasites had been present in Germany since the Middle Ages⁷⁵. The choice of the term “parasites” to refer to them had to do with their “received” representation as “landless wanderers” who settled in someone else’s territory in order to survive. According to this received, biased view, by settling in someone else’s land, the Jews were exploiting the “host-people”. In LTI, comparing the Jew to a parasite was replaced by defining her as one. According to Nazi ideology, the Jew was no longer *like* a parasite: the Jew *was* a parasite. As evidence of this, Nazi biology textbooks defined the “Jewish race” as a “parasitic race” by nature.

The result of the constant use of the term *Parasiten* to refer to Jews in the Nazi propaganda was that Jews were increasingly seen as beings who were unworthy of being treated like human beings. Whenever Hitler or Goebbels used this term in their speeches, the German people were led to think of the Jew as *something*, not someone, the presence of *which* had to be eliminated before it became harmful. Indeed, if parasites (by definition) can only survive at the expense of someone else, and if by their very existence they harm the host to the point of the host’s destruction, there could be no possibility of coexisting with them: disinfection was necessary for the survival of the German people. As proof that the “disinfection” of the Jews went beyond the merely denigrating and degrading effects of the use of the term *Parasiten*, we should recall that their extermination was carried out in the same way as the extermination of germs and bacteria: with poison gas.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we placed Klemperer’s fragmentary observations on the “poisonous” nature of the Nazis’ usage of German (which constitutes what he called LTI) within the general theoretical framework of dangerous speech studies, integrated with a practice-based conception of language. Our aim was twofold: on the one hand, we wanted to show that the contextual and content-related factors contributing to violence escalation which have been identified in dangerous speech studies were clearly and powerfully at work in Nazi speech. At the same time, we wanted to highlight the crucial role played by the network of speech practices introduced by the Nazis in spreading and inculcating their oppressive ideology among the German population. As we have seen, Nazi ideology was all about

⁷⁵ A. Bein, *Der jüdische Parasit. Bemerkungen zur Semantik der Judenfrage*, in: “Vierteljahrshäfte f. Zeitgeschichte”, n. 2, 1965, pp. 121-149.

belonging, and its criteria for inclusion and exclusion in German society were to a large extent modelled, proclaimed, and achieved through language. Indeed, the (not entirely conscious) use by ordinary people of Nazi speech practices (like those discussed in Section 2.5) made possible the rapid, silent spread of an inhumane way of representing the social fabric and some of the people within it. This made the idea acceptable among Germans that some lives could be treated with dignity and others not, on the basis of arbitrary criteria and without any reasonable justification. Should we conclude from this that those who lived within the network of “dangerous” Nazi speech practices must be considered complicit for not questioning the underlying oppressive Nazi ideology, even though many of them never explicitly supported the actions taken by the Nazis? Although it goes beyond the scope of this paper to attempt an answer to this question, we believe that from the perspective of ordinary people, the Nazi experience might be described (to return to Klemperer’s metaphor) almost as an unconscious collective poisoning. In their defence, it can be argued that they lived in a communicative “bubble” from which it was impossible, or nearly impossible, to break free. However, as Klemperer pointed out, it is truly astonishing that so many ordinary people, whether they were among the victims or belonged instead to the “Aryan” group, adapted their own speech to Nazi speech practices and adopted them without much ado. It does not even matter whether they adhered to Nazi ideology, what matters is that their action or inaction enabled these speech practices to spread and prosper, together with the oppressive ideology they represented.

Speckdänischer Positivism. Svend Ranulf on Ethos and Propaganda

PIER FRANCESCO CORVINO

ABSTRACT

In this contribution we deal with the sociological positivism of Danish philosopher and sociologist Svend Ranulf (1894-1953). Next to his major writings, this paper considers some of Ranulf's minor works, in order to shed light on some controversial aspects of his thought. This paper focuses, in particular, on the meaning of the notions of ethos and propaganda in Ranulf's epistemology, in order to re-evaluate his late studies on democracy and political communication, with special attention given to the early post-war continental debate on propaganda.

1. SVEND RANULF: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Danish sociologist Svend Ranulf (1894-1953) is widely known for his treatise on *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology* (1938) where he seeks to prove that a certain «disinterested tendency or disposition to inflict punishment» is characteristic of the Middle Class. However, is quite less known that Ranulf tried to apply this concept to the study of propaganda. In this contribution we intend to consider some of his little-known writings, including his late works on propaganda. The reasons why these writings deserve attention are more than one: first, because Ranulf's works are one of the first attempts to analyze propaganda in Europe, after World War II; second, because Ranulf's works on propaganda and on epistemology of sociology have been heavily criticized, and third, because

a cross-analysis of those writings allows us to shed new light on Ranulf's hard-boiled positivism.

As a seminary graduate, Ranulf first started with Greek philosophy as his specialty. He obtained his doctorate on the dissertation *Der eleatische Satz vom Widerspruch* (1924), where he had taken into consideration certain aporetic aspects of Plato's youth dialogues. His main work in this period, though, which marks his decisive move into the sociology of morals and law, is the three-volume *The jealousy of the Gods and criminal law at Athens. A contribution to the sociology of moral indignation* (1933-34). Here Ranulf would find the first occurrence of what he called a «disinterested» tendency to punishment, since he discovered that, in ancient Greek society, private revenge was gradually and ritually replaced through the public involvement of the community. Against the idea that criminal law emerged to fulfil a purely rational social need, Ranulf calls into question this disinterested tendency, motivated by a widespread feeling of moral indignation, which was based on envy. In particular, this envy was projected into the gods, as if the unjustified punishment (a «misfortune») could be interpreted as divine envy towards human behaviour¹.

Even at this stage, Ranulf made no secret of his adherence to the positivism of Comte and Durkheim, despite some of their alleged methodological shortcomings. In the wake of these authors, he had embarked on the construction of a “scientific” and “quantitative” method. As a positivist, Ranulf was fairly disappointed when the German emigrant Theodor Geiger was preferred to him for a professorship in sociology at Aarhus University in 1938². In Geiger, Ranulf saw a representative of the «sociology of *Wesensschau*», full of “metaphysical” assumptions as introspection, qualitative data or interpretation. Geiger would have been somehow intellectually conniving with the irrational drift that led to Nazism. As can be hinted from the gravity of such an assumption, we will have to return on this.

¹ Another important work of those years, especially with regard to the delineation of Ranulf's own method, is *Moralen og Samfundet* (1927).

² In 1946 Ranulf published a first volume on the methodology of the social sciences (*Socialvidenskabelig Methodelære*), indulging, for the most part, in an unprejudiced and often inaccurate critique of Geiger. This was also followed by a harsh response from Geiger himself, known as *Ranulf contra Geiger: Et angreb og et offensivt forsvar* (1946). A second handbook of methodology for the social sciences (*Methods of Sociology. With an Essay: Remarks on the Epistemology of Sociology*), written in 1939, was published posthumously in 1955. The contents of this volume should then have been expanded and revised for the 1946 work. As regards Geiger, he was indeed unwilling to exclude the possibility of using introspection for certain analytical purposes but demanded that the researcher should keep his data and values separate in his analysis, nevertheless asserting that the selection of a problem for study always included an element of value. On Geiger see, at least, T. Agersnap, *Theodor Geiger: pioneer of sociology in Denmark*, in: «Acta Sociologica», n. 43, 2000, pp. 325-330.

The same year of the Aarhus call for the sociology chair, Ranulf published *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology. A sociological study*³ (1938), which has to be understood as his major accomplishment. Along the lines of *The Jealousy of Gods*, with an eye on German studies on «*ressentiment*»⁴, Ranulf attempts to define the fundamental sentiment of the bourgeois class, through a strictly quantitative method. According to Ranulf the (petty) bourgeoisie is characterised by the social phenomenon of moral indignation, i.e. outrage for the non-observance of moral commands or prohibitions. In other words, the bourgeoisie would be characterised by a moral rigorism, which takes prohibitions seriously and is indignant if commands and prohibitions are not observed. A more rigorous morality would thus take the place of a looser one, without the moral content changing in the process, or at least without a new moral content replacing the old one. The culmination of this moral rigorism is the development of a «disinterested tendency or disposition to inflict punishment».

After World War II, Ranulf turned his attention to the subject of propaganda, on which he wrote extensively, publishing two major studies in the series *Acta Jutlandica*, articles, and reviews. The first we mention is *Hitler's Kampf gegen die Objektivität*⁵. It analyzes Hitler's main writings and speeches, trying to show how he justifies or condemns the same action, depending on who performs it. For example, Hitler complains of terror when used by his enemies, but justifies terror by Nazis and Germans. He condemns disrespect for authority on the part of his opponents, while inciting disregard for certain authorities among his followers. Ranulf ascribes these ambiguities to various forms of fascism, seeking to show how this is far less prominent in Churchill's war speeches. The second work we analyze is *On the survival chances of democracy*⁶. Here Ranulf considers the resistance movement against Nazism as a social phenomenon, concluding that it has appealed to the same moral indignation Nazism used for its horrific aims. The verbal and material violence that the resistance movement opposed to Nazism appears to be both the salvation and the conviction of democracy, since this attitude is constantly at risk of degenerating into a form of authoritarianism. As can be expected, this aspect will also be the subject of our discussion.

³ S. Ranulf, *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology: a sociological study*, København, Levin & Munksgaard 1938.

⁴ On this matter see, at least, F.S. Festa, *Das ressentiment. Da Nietzsche a Scheler: quale edificazione della morale?*, Roma, Castelvecchi, 2014.

⁵ S. Ranulf, *Hitler's Kampf gegen die Objektivität*, Acta Jutlandica, København, Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946.

⁶ S. Ranulf, *On the Survival Chances of Democracy*, Acta Jutlandica, København, Ejnar Munksgaard, 1948.

2. RANULF'S «PURE EMPIRICISM» AND ITS ENEMIES: FIRST PART

In a 1947 review, Harold Laswell described Ranulf's work on Hitler's propaganda as «one of the most suggestive studies of political communication that has been made by a European or American scholar»⁷. Nonetheless, besides the compliments, Laswell noted that Ranulf's classificatory method was not completely satisfying on the grounds of the modes he chose to classify Hitler's speech statements. Together with Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Hitler's statements elsewhere, Ranulf thought that another reliable source could be the «common knowledge of Nazi practices». According to Lasswell, the first two are unobjectionable, but the last is «of dubious value». “Common knowledge” appears indeed to be a vague concept, «open to the free play of the reader/classifier's bias». What appears to be an oversight, probably conditioned by a naive empiricism, conceals a more complex worldview.

It would be therefore worth examining Ranulf's methodological proposal in greater depth. To achieve this end, we have considered appropriate to sound out Ranulf's “minor” production, with explicit reference to a series of reviews and discussions in which Ranulf is either directly called into question or forced to draw distinctions between the position he analyzes and the one he professes. In the first place, it is of exceptional interest the polite *querelle* that took place, in the well-known Swedish journal *Theoria*, between the old Ranulf and the young Swedish sociologist Bertil Pfannenstill (1909-1995). The dispute between the two began with an initial contribution by Pfannenstill, titled *Method and object in Sociology*⁸. In this text the author takes Ranulf as the representative of a positivistic theory of knowledge in the field of sociology. Therefore, Pfannenstill starts criticizing Ranulf's approach as an attempt to conceive sociology from a positivistic point of view. Ranulf is reproached for his use of «protocol statements», since they appear to be based on certain «pure sensations» that would guarantee the objectivity of judgement. Since it is not possible to postulate such immediate or pure elements in sociology, it is equally impossible to refer to protocol statements. However, since Ranulf considers sociology to be as exact a science as physics, he has had to introduce “quantitative” expressions to serve as protocol statements.

The main example comes from *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology*⁹, where Ranulf created a quantitative expression for the Puritan mentality in England during a certain period, with the aim of measure the moral

⁷ H. Laswell, *Svend Ranulf, Hitler's Kampf gegen die Objektivität, Universitetsforlaget, I Aarhus, Ejnar Munksgaard, København, 1946*, in: «Public Opinion Quarterly», Summer 1947, p. 274.

⁸ B. Pfannenstill, *Method and object in Sociology*, in: «Theoria», n. 8 (1), 1942, pp. 23-57.

⁹ S. Ranulf, *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology*, cit.

indignation of this category in a given time. Ranulf counted the number of words which are contained in selected literature, and which are expressions of such feeling and attitudes as characterize the Puritans. The numerical results are then considered to provide the same exact index to the emotional intensity of the Puritan mentality «as thermometer reading to temperature sensations»¹⁰. But Pfannenstill observes that if physics has to be our guiding-subject even in sociology, we must note that physics do not occupy itself with temperature sensations of the individual, and so sociology should not enter upon a treatment of the individual's feelings and attitudes. Pfannenstill concedes that Ranulf's view, like that of many other positivists, can find refuge in behaviourism as far as the explanation of psychological facts is concerned, and consequently moves on.

Pfannenstill now asks: in what relation should a social object, for instance the "Middle Class", be placed to obtain a serviceable concept for sociology? The author clarified that we cannot rest satisfied with merely giving the characteristics of the Middle Class as conceived in everyday thought, as Ranulf seems to do, since any determination of the concept would be ambiguous. Nor a description of the object in question is adequate, since it would mean that we identify sociological and historical concepts. Then Pfannenstill considers the possibility of an "economical" definition of Middle Class, as a certain «income group». Again, though, it is not acceptable to identify sociological concepts with statistical or political-economical concepts, since this kind of concepts aim to classify individuals, not the "Middle Class".

Despite the fact that Ranulf implies both statistical, historical and common-knowledge concepts to define the Middle Class, Pfannenstill declares that the complete definition of Ranulf's Middle Class appears to be sociologically acceptable. To understand why, we have to specify that, according to Pfannenstill, sociology is «*the science of ethos*»¹¹. Ranulf's definition of Middle Class results in a sociological concept because he determines the middle class by its ethos, which is its disposition for moral indignation. Only this ethos-oriented sociology can produce sociologically acceptable concepts, since «a fact is not an object for sociology until it can be put into relation with another social object»¹². Eventually, to escape the accusation of proposing 'metaphysical' concepts, Pfannenstill specifies that the ethos concept must be determined operationally, i.e. it must be determined by way of the corresponding sociological operations, and then especially by way of those employed in the attempt to control a course of social events by

¹⁰ B. Pfannenstill, *Method and object in Sociology*, cit., p. 32.

¹¹ Ivi, p. 37.

¹² *Ibidem*.

the application of this concept. Any control of this kind can only take place within the boundaries of both a given «social field», where the biological, psychological and social forces can be placed in relation to one another without depriving them of their distinctive characters, and of a given «group ethos», where historical facts become an object for sociology, through the value they are related to.

To summarize: trying to view sociology through a physicalist standpoint, Ranulf approaches social objects through a bunch of “common concepts”, on which he built a quantitative method of analysis. Nonetheless, Pfannenstill tried to show that those common concepts are not sociologically functional by themselves, by intervention of other social sciences, such as history or statistics, or by virtue of Ranulf quantitative method. Those concepts are inadvertently placed by Ranulf in a ethos-oriented sociology, which granted him sociological acceptability.

3. RANULF'S «PURE EMPIRICISM» AND ITS ENEMIES: SECOND PART

Ranulf responded with a small contribution, also published in *Theoria*, in which he tried to reduce Pfannenstill's ethos-sociology to a colourful reworking of his sociological physicalism¹³. First, Ranulf approves Pfannenstill criticism of the principle of protocol statements in as much as this principle rests on the assumption of «immediate and pure sensations», but he does not wish to reject protocol statements, since they can be considered as being founded on the same principles as operationally determined concepts and, most importantly, they appear to be «empirical means against the use of intuitions in sociology». Second, there are no essential differences between the definition Pfannenstill approves and the one he disapproves. If the Middle Class is defined as a class of people characterized by a disposition to moral indignation, it necessarily follows that those individuals, who are possessed of these characteristics, belong to the Middle Class, while others do not. In this sense, «every definition on the ground of ethos is necessarily at the same time a classification of individuals»¹⁴. Moreover, Ranulf cannot see any reason for assigning one kind of definition to sociology and another, for instance, to political economy or to statistics, since the demarcation of one scientific discipline from another is to be understood as purely conventional. Along the line of this assumption, he rehabilitates the use of a «ordinarily considered» «psychological understanding» in sociology, and then turns to the concept of ethos. According to Ranulf the concept of ethos cannot be a reliable source of meaning since it is not an end in itself. Nonetheless, its end appears to be identi-

¹³ S. Ranulf, *Positivism and Sociology*, in: «Theoria», n. 8 (3), 1942, pp. 277-280.

¹⁴ Ivi, p. 278.

cal with that of «positivistic sociology» so that he can declare himself in accordance with Pfannenstill.

Pfannenstill's answer will not be long in coming; indeed, we find it already on the next page of the same issue of *Theoria*¹⁵. On protocol statements, Pfannenstill asks how they could be empirical means against intuition, when the protocol statements appear to be founded on intuition, since «simple qualities cannot be argued, they can only be pointed out, and he who does not “understand” them, cannot either have them enter into the communication that is a necessary presupposition for objectivity»¹⁶. Secondly, on the idea that ethos-oriented definitions always call into questions individuals, Pfannenstill replies that Ranulf is here again using the term “classification” in an unscientific and everyday sense. To classify does not mean to range individuals under a scheme of classification; it means to merely determine that a complex of behaviour exists and has certain social results. In this sense, e.g. with regards to moral indignation, the product is what is taken into judgment, not the men themselves. Furthermore, even though Pfannenstill agrees that the demarcation between disciplines is conventional, he points out that other principles of differentiation, for instance statistics ones, do not «furnish any decisive criterion for a class determination from a sociological point of view»¹⁷. Thirdly, on the assumption that ethos is «a means to another end», he specifies that ethos is a means for another ethos, since ethos can be described as a complex of relations, which are not always in harmony with one another. Finally, he concludes that sociology has indeed very much in common with natural sciences, but there is also much that distinguishes them, and, on those differences, we cannot shut our eyes.

We will have to wait a couple of years to know the end of this clash. In the *Discussions* section of *Theoria*¹⁸, Ranulf will return to the issue, looking also at another recent publication by Pfannenstill, *Sociologiens grundförutsättningar* (1943). Although the focus of the question has changed slightly, due to the addition of this new volume, Ranulf seems to make two important concessions¹⁹. First, on protocol statements, Ranulf goes so far as to argue that it is true that

¹⁵ B. Pfannenstill, *Positivism and Sociology. Reply to Svend Ranulf*, in in «Theoria», n. 8 (3), 1942, pp. 280-285.

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 281.

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 282.

¹⁸ S. Ranulf, *A last note on Positivism and Sociology*, in «Theoria», n. 10 (1), 1944, pp. 54-55.

¹⁹ There will also be a final remark by Pfannenstill, which, however, does not add much to the discussion. After establishing that Ranulf's can be seen as a «pure empiricism», while his as a «constructive empiricism», Pfannenstill will politely end the discussion, noting that there is no way to find a real common ground. Cfr. B. Pfannenstill, *Sociology, Positivism and Natural Science. A last reply to Svend Ranulf*, in in «Theoria», n. 10 (1), 1944, pp. 55-56.

they are based on intuition. This, however, is only true in the sense of a «practical intuition» which should convey those statements. The notion of «practical intuition» comes to Ranulf from the famous philosopher and psychologist H. Høffding, who defined «practical intuition» as follows: «this sort of intuition plays an essential role when man forms his own belief and conception of life. It is a spontaneous synthesis of experiences and observations»²⁰. Secondly, Ranulf distances himself from classical positivism. These two specifications, together with Ranulf's desire to accord scientific reliability to common knowledge and introspection, give us a fairly clear picture of his positivism. In other words, it seems that within his quantitative method, precisely by means of the median and polyvocal use of common knowledge, Ranulf also intends to find room for the world of experience, especially for the world of inner experience and the world of cultural assumptions that affect each individual, without thereby placing himself in a value-oriented standpoint. For this reason, although his perspective closely resembles Pfannenstill's Sociology of ethos, the two are not exactly overlapping. According to this framework, Ranulf intends to look at inner experience and cultural inheritance as a psychological whole, cauterized by means of his rigid quantitative scheme, so as to avoid the value problem.

4. RANULF ON GEMEINSCHAFT AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

We have thus understood in what sense Ranulf's sociology can be regarded as a sociology of ethos²¹. Let us now try to return to one of the most controversial points of his thought by means of this acquisition. Ranulf has been heavily criticised, often with reason, for his reception of some important French and German schools

²⁰ H. Høffding, *Modern Philosophers and Lectures on Bergson*, tr. by A.C. Manson, London, MacMillan and Co., 1915, p. 256.

²¹ See, for example, Ranulf's statement in this review of J. Davidsohn's *Økonomisk Historieopfattelse* (1931): «Human consciousness is partly biological and partly social. There are few mental qualities (e.g. «instincts» or emotions) in respect of which it is for the moment impossible to determine whether they are innate or due to the influence of the society in which the individuals concerned live. But there are at any rate a number of emotions which may be seen to vary in degree from one society to another. [...] It seems possible, however, to find in the nature of the «higher culture» produced in a given society useful symptoms for measuring the intensity with which emotions of the kind referred to express themselves, at least in the social milieu which provides the audience for the «higher culture». One thus excludes oneself from a useful source of knowledge of these feelings, the varying intensity of which, however, undoubtedly affects many conditions of social life, if one wishes to study them in principle only in connection with the movements referred to by Dr. Davidsohn (S. Ranulf, *Økonomisk Historieopfattelse*, in «Nationaløkonomisk Tidsskrift», n. 40 (3), 1932, p. 82 (my translation). Moreover, Ranulf seems also to grant some title of veracity to the notion of «national character». See S. Ranulf, *Moral indignation and Middle Class psychology: a sociological study*, cit., p. 55ff.

of sociological thought²². His main argument against many distinguished names in continental sociology concerned the difference between the *Gemeinschaft* (the “face-to-face community”), which is said to be «a type of society characterized by the predominance of tradition, emotion, and instinct», and the *Gesellschaft* (the “market society”), which is said to be characterized «by the predominance of individualism and intellectualism», which means of rationality and science. Many sociologists are portrayed by Ranulf as somehow preferring the *Gemeinschaft* model to the *Gesellschaft*, without necessarily having anything in common other than this. On the basis of this tendency these sociologists are said to have fomented a certain irrationalism typical of the *Gemeinschaft*, on which fascism is said to have fed, since «indulgence in [...] deprecations of the *Gesellschaft* is equivalent to a piece of fascist propaganda unsupported by genuine science²³».

A similar judgement befell the German refugee in Denmark Theodor Geiger. As we said, in 1946 Ranulf published a short polemical work on social scientific methods. About 100 pages of the 260-pages book can be seen as an attack against Geiger, not only criticising his methodological assumptions, but also implying that his approach – however unintentionally – supported Nazism. Ranulf will see nothing strange in associating his harsh accusations towards continental sociology with a Nazi-refugee, one year after the end of World War II. Nonetheless, beyond the reasons for the Ranulf-Geiger *querelle*, our aim would be to return on this dispute in the light of the findings so far. Indeed, bearing in mind the question of ethos in this dispute, we shall see in a new light a recurring accusation by Ranulf against Geiger, but also against Durkheim or Tönnies, who was the first to propose the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, leaning towards the first.

As Ranulf had to say many times, Geiger’s sociology is «based on traditional social-democratic thinking»²⁴. This assumption recurs many times in Ranulf’s criticism of Geiger and other distinguished continental thinkers²⁵. If we try to interpret this argument in the light of the importance that Ranulf seems to give to the question of ethos, we will see that the qualification of «social-democrat» represents a real “black beast”, as a “German-Continental”²⁶ socio-political con-

²² A comprehensive and rather strong criticism of Ranulf’s following arguments can be found in D.N. Smith, *Collectivism and intellectuals. Svend Ranulf, Émile Durkheim, fascism, and resistance*, in «Antisemitism Studies», n. 1 (2), 2017, pp. 305-351.

²³ These accusations are mainly raised in S. Ranulf, *Scholarly forerunners of fascism*, in «Ethics», n. 50 (1), 1939, pp. 16-34 and *Two types of sociology*, in «Theoria», n. 6 (1), 1940, pp. 43-57.

²⁴ S. Ranulf, *Propaganda*, in «Theoria», n. 2 (3), 1936, p. 245.

²⁵ This is also the case, in a broader sense, with E. Durkheim, W. Sombart or K. Mannheim. See, on this, at least S. Ranulf, *Methods of Sociology etc.*, cit., pp. 20-32, 49-54 and 83-85.

²⁶ By Social Democracy Ranulf seems not to mean here Bernstein’s revisionism but the whole social-democratic movement with its currents. On this see, for example, S. Ranulf, *Økonomisk Historieopfattelse*, in «Nationaløkonomisk Tidsskrift», n. 40 (3), 1932, p. 75.

figuration of theoretical errors, which, despite representing a possible danger to democracy and human rationality, were now also extremely widespread on the Scandinavian peninsula.

On the subject, we can turn again on Ranulf's minor writings. In particular, we can refer to a small work by Ranulf in which we are given some important clues about social democracy. The occasion is a review of a volume on the history of social democracy in Sweden²⁷. Incidentally to the above review, however, Ranulf does not fail to note that a similar volume is also needed on the history of Danish social democracy, in order to fully understand its nature and historical changes. From the point of view of his hard-boiled positivism, such a volume would represent a test case for the Swedish social democratic model. At the end of the contribution, Ranulf argues that it is certainly useful to have works on each party, not just on the social democrats, but only a study on the same party, done with «scientific objectivity» can individuate a higher pattern, and there would be «nothing more useful in contemporary Danish society»²⁸. We have now to understand what Ranulf really meant by this.

5. RANULF ON PROPAGANDA AND THE “OTHER” GEMEINSCHAFT

As the above-mentioned contributions suggest, Ranulf gradually began to study the relationship between society and politics. After World War II, his aim was to equip scientific and social debate with intellectual tools against the horrors of war. Already in an early paper in 1936, Ranulf had theorized a new field of study related to propaganda²⁹, stating that the function of propaganda is to foment and increase moral indignation. Ranulf focused his research especially on war propaganda, writing contributions on both National Socialism and the resistance movement. The only thing commonly remember about his studies is the statement that the Nazis and the resistance fighters used the same communicative violence. Clearly, however, Ranulf main goal was not to deny the value of Resistance, but to affirm a scientific methodology for propaganda³⁰, based on the study of moral indignation and on a scientific counterpropaganda, to be taught in schools³¹. Scientific propaganda cannot merely appeal to the same moral in-

²⁷ S. Ranulf, *En bog som burde skrives*, in «Nationaløkonomisk Tidsskrift», n. 80, pp. 50-59, in which the two-volume *Den svenska socialdemokratiens* (1941) by H. Tingsten is reviewed.

²⁸ Ivi, p. 59.

²⁹ S. Ranulf, *Propaganda*, cit., pp. 239-256.

³⁰ On this issue we can rely again on D.N. Smith, *Collectivism and intellectuals ecc.*, cit., p. 317ff.

³¹ See S. Ranulf, *Propaganda*, cit., p. 255 and *Hitlers Kampf gegen die Objektivität*, Acta Jutlandica, København, Ejnar Munksgaard 1946, p. 117.

dignation targeted by common propaganda, because we would never be able to foresee its effects, so to divert its influence with sufficient certainty. Rather, the use of moral indignation should be accompanied by a new subject that would study propaganda, debunking its obvious shortcomings. Although this does not dispel any doubts about the methodology used, Ranulf's objections appear to be epistemological and not ethical, as he himself makes clear³². Now that we have clarified this point, we must return to the question with which we started: how the writings on propaganda can help us understand Ranulf's positivistic and ethos-oriented sociology. In his 1936 paper, Ranulf noted that the Nazi's propaganda-machine was extremely effective in Germany, but it did not have the desired results in Denmark:

Since 1933, there have been, also in Denmark, a number of scattered attempts to carry out horror-propaganda based on the Nazi model. Most of these attempts were abandoned relatively quickly, probably because it turned out that the audience did not respond to the intention. The crisis here has not been serious enough, the insecurity not great enough, the reactivity not high enough for such a propaganda to succeed³³.

In light of what we have observed, the formulation of this paragraph all together and the use of the ambiguous term «reactivity» appears now to hold together Danish contingent situation before World War II and Danish cultural identity. Moreover, if we look at the history of cultural relations between Germany and Denmark, we will find traces of a real cultural clash. A plethora of examples can be offered regarding this question. We might think, for example, at the instructions given to German officers, in a pamphlet dated 9 April 1940, the day of the Nazi occupation of Denmark. In these instructions, the German soldiers are informed of the Danish «distinguishing characteristics» in order to limit confrontations. It is said that Danes think «economically» (*wirtschaftlich*) since their interests revolve mainly around matters of material life, and that they cannot understand the aims of National Socialist Germany³⁴. In general, Nazi tended to consider the Danes as people who are more inclined to take interest in the production and consumption of material goods than in the production and enjoyment of a higher spiritual life, as testified by the recurrent German ethnophaulism “*Speckdänen*”³⁵.

³² See S. Ranulf, *On the Survival Chances of Democracy*, cit., p. 60.

³³ S. Ranulf, *Propaganda*, cit. p. 246 (tr. mine).

³⁴ The *Tysk soldaterinstruks om danskernes mentalitet, 9. april 1940*, can be accessed at the following link: <<https://danmarkshistorien.dk/vis/materiale/tysk-soldaterinstruks-om-danskernes-mentalitet-9-april-1940/>>

³⁵ This derogatory term initially referred to the Danish minority in South Schleswig, the northernmost German region bordering Denmark. The Danish were accused of claiming Scandinavian ancestry purely on the basis of the supplies that Denmark sent as aid during the war, i.e. purely on

To understand, instead, what Danes thought of Germans we can look at the 1935 speech by the philologist and rector of Copenhagen University J. Østrup (1867-1938). Being aware of the Nazi propaganda about the so-called Nordic race, Østrup clearly stated, while receiving the ovation of the almost 1500 students present, that the Nazi did not comprehend Nordic “mentality”:

it is a fact, that the Vikings never felt themselves a will-less mass, but always a commonwealth of free men. That is the Nordic spirit. Russia and Germany are now in absolute opposition to the Nordic ideal of society; for they both have reduced man to a mere cog in the state machinery, suppressing all personal freedom³⁶.

In short, Germans desired to get closer to the Nordic tradition, but they could not grasp the peculiarities of Danish culture. This was certainly due to the Nazi imperialist delirium, but not only. In this cultural disagreement we should spot certain “cultural traits”³⁷, which somehow revive Ranulf’s predilection for the *Gesellschaft* and its distrust for *Gemeinschaft*, while reemerging in the aforementioned “poor” Danish receptivity. In this sense, the moral indignation model remains cogent, but as far as propaganda is concerned, each ethos seems to experience a different level of agitation. That being the case, we should now understand why the old Ranulf seems to change his mind about *Gemeinschaft* while studying propaganda.

We are referring here to a chapter of the text *On the survival chance of democracy*³⁸ (1948). Here Ranulf confronts two works which tried to shed new light on the notion of *Gemeinschaft*³⁹. From these works it was indeed possible to in-

the basis of a material calculation, and for this reason the Danes in this region were called *Speckdänen* or *die dummen Dänen*. Very soon this term was extended to the entire Danish population, becoming organic to the national-socialist lexicon, especially in the conflicts between the German and Danish communities in Schleswig. On this matter see, at least, J.H. Schjørring, *Der nationale Grundtvig und seine Wirkungsgeschichte. Anmerkungen zur Geschichte des Nachbarverhältnisses zwischen Deutschland und Dänemark*, in «Grundtvig studier», n. 50 (1), 1999, p. 173-194; U. Danker and A. Schwabe, *Schleswig-Holstein und der Nationalsozialismus*, Wachholtz, Kiel, 2005 and J. Kühl (ed.) *Ein europäisches Modell? Nationale Minderheiten im deutsch-dänischen Grenzland 1945-2005*, Münster, Vrg, 2005.

³⁶ Cited in J. Joesten, *The Nazis in Scandinavia*, in «Foreign Affairs» 15 (4), 1937, pp. 721-722. On this matter, see, at least, J. Lund, *Collaboration in Print: the 'Aktion Ritterbusch' and the failure of German intellectual propaganda in occupied Denmark, 1940-1942*, in «Scandinavian Journal of History», n. 37 (3), 2012, pp. 329-354.

³⁷ See, at least, L. Yahil, *National pride and defeat: A comparison of Danish and German nationalism*, in «Journal of Contemporary History», n. 26 (4), 1991, pp. 453-478; U. Østergård, *The Danish path to modernity*, in «Thesis Eleven» 77, 2004, pp. 25-43 and *Danish national identity: an historical account*, in *Global Collaboration: Intercultural Experiences and Learning*, ed. by M.C. Gertsen, A-M. Søderberg, M. Zølner, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, pp. 37-58.

³⁸ S. Ranulf, *On the survival chances of democracy*, cit.

³⁹ The works presented are *From Democracy to Nazism*, 1945 by Rudolf Heberle and *The War Against the West* (1938) by Aurel Kolnai.

fer at least three different ideas of *Gemeinschaft*. One author compared a *Gemeinschaft* originated in some pietistic communities of Schleswig Holstein, which portrayed anti-war, anti-imperialistic, humanitarian and solidaristic values, and a local “neo-romantic” *Gemeinschaft*, which yearned for a charismatic leader and a violent redemption. The other author presented a third kind of *Gemeinschaft*, known as *Bund*, in which young people abandoned their homes and built a group of individuals who swore mutual aid, following the example of legendary warriors⁴⁰. Each of these three ideas could be considered somewhat «inspired by Tönnies», but it is easy to see how Ranulf had always reduced *Gemeinschaft* to the “neo-romantic” one. The arguments presented seem now to convince Ranulf, and he is pushed to retreat his opinion on the *Gesellschaft*. According to Ranulf, the rational intransigence of neoliberalism exposes a blowback towards an authoritarian state, when confronted with an unforeseen possibility: a “positive” form of *Gemeinschaft*. In light of this awareness, Ranulf finally exclaims that «the Social Democrats may, after all, have been well advised in [...] adopting the views of Tönnies»⁴¹.

6. CONCLUSION

Such an admission can be seen as the ultimate contradiction of a misplaced free-market liberal⁴². Nevertheless, in our judgment, this change of perspective in the old Ranulf marks an advance. From an epistemological point of view the concept of *Gemeinschaft* remains shady, but it also seems capable of guaranteeing peace and stability, whereas the *Gesellschaft* is epistemologically fallacious, because it is not sensitive to ethos-related differences, thus being unable to recognise the positive aspects of the *Gemeinschaft*. As we have said, Ranulf’s sociology dissolves ethos in an operational sense, through the engagement of common knowledge and (folk)-psychology. Nonetheless this element becomes preponderant in the field of propaganda, where the quantitative methodology must meet the social and political needs of democracy. Ranulf now choose the least dangerous perspective, which is a free secularized *Gemeinschaft*-like society, solidaristic, democratic and distant from ideological perspectives. Not surprisingly, Ranulf had already noticed that Scandinavian social democracies were taking a different path from their Marxist roots, in function of a process of secularization that patently exhibited their ethos⁴³. The Scandinavian social democrats must «clarify to themselves»

⁴⁰ This concept is somehow close to Østrup (classic) definition of «Nordic mentality». See below.

⁴¹ S. Ranulf, *On the survival chances of Democracy*, cit., p. 58.

⁴² D.N. Smith, *Collectivism and intellectuals ecc.*, cit., p. 323.

⁴³ See S. Ranulf, *En bog som burde skrives*, cit., pp. 57-58.

that they have stopped being Marxist, but also that they have stopped being social democrats in the “German way”, becoming self-aware of their Scandinavian way in social democracy. Ranulf final answer breaks out of his prejudicial view of *Gemeinschaft*, finally reaching a secularized model, which is curiously close to - not to say biased by – the Scandinavian “practical” ethos.

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