

SOME REFLECTIONS ON SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE MANIFESTED THROUGH TOTALITARIAN LANGUAGE IN NAZI GERMANY

Vlad GAFIȚA 

Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania)

E-mail: vladgafita@usm.ro

Abstract: *Symbolic violence was used during the Third Reich to instil the new political religion and intellectually strengthen the National Community (Volksgemeinschaft), as well as to purify and alter the German character from a national-socialist perspective. States that are authoritarian or totalitarian prevent the usual emergence of political language or mass media, changing communication – which requires dialogue – into a monologue-type approach (one person speaks and the others must listen). Political language takes on a discursive-aesthetic shape; it ceases to reveal meanings for society and instead obscures and conceals them, serving only as a tool for deceit, coercion, terror, and propaganda. Language exhibits the following key characteristics when used in authoritarian discourse: oratorical and declamatory style, campaigning tone, triumphalism, ideologization and assigning symbolic meanings to political concepts, creation of ideologemes – the significance of which is different from the usual meaning of the words –, scientism and exaggerated abstraction to the detriment of logic, uplifted criticism and, often false, fervour, heavy use of slogans or mantras, and the claim of absolute truth are all examples of these tactics.*

Keywords: *symbolic violence, coercion, totalitarianism, political language, Nazi, Germany, political religion, propaganda, terror.*

Rezumat: *Câteva reflecții asupra violenței simbolice manifestate prin limbajul totalitar în Germania nazistă. Violența simbolică a fost folosită în timpul celui de-al Treilea Reich pentru a insufla noua religie politică și pentru a întări în plan intelectual Comunitatea Națională (Volksgemeinschaft), precum și pentru a purifica și modifica caracterul german*

dintr-o perspectivă național-socialistă. Statele care sunt autoritare sau totalitare împiedică apariția limbajului politic normal sau a mass-media, schimbând comunicarea – care prin definiție necesită dialog – într-o abordare de tip monolog (unul vorbește, iar ceilalți trebuie să asculte). Limbajul politic capătă o formă discursiv-estetică; încetează să dezvăluie semnificații pentru societate și, în schimb, le ascunde servind doar ca un instrument pentru înșelăciune, constrângere, teroare și propagandă. Limbajul prezintă următoarele caracteristici cheie atunci când este folosit în discursul autoritar: stilul oratoric și declamator, tonul de campanie, triumfalismul, ideologizarea și atribuirea de semnificații simbolice conceptelor politice, crearea de ideologeme – diferite ca semnificație, în comparație cu sensul obișnuit al cuvintelor, scientismul și abstractizarea exagerată, în detrimentul logicii, critica înălțată și fervoarea, adesea falsă, folosirea intensă a lozincilor sau a mantrelor, și pretenția adevărului absolut sunt toate exemple ale acestor tactici.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is a core component of totalitarian regimes. This can take many subtle forms, ranging from symbolic violence¹ to radical violence² or genocide.³ During the Third Reich, the realization of a utopian vision of the world necessitated the creation of a specific language, which Viktor Klemperer, a German philologist of Jewish ancestry, named the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*. We believe that, along with ideology, propaganda, and terror, the totalitarian language of Nazi Germany served as one of the means to the transmission of the national-socialist political religion's belief system. Hitler's dictatorship grew elitist after the conclusion of the revolutionary phase⁴ (1934–1935), therefore it was necessary that every stratum of society, as well as public and private life, should be under the control of the government. Nazism manifested itself as a 'form of a secret society that acted in plain sight', therefore the modification of the social, political, and economic language had to be produced by obscuring, perverting the meanings, ideologizing, etc.

¹ See Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books, and Levelling Libraries. Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction*, Westport – London, Praeger Publishing House, 2006.

² Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, New York, New Press, 2003.

³ Armin Nolzen, *The Nazi Party and its Violence Against the Jews, 1933-1939: Violence as a Historiographical Concept*, "Yad Vashem Studies", Vol. XXXI, 2003, pp. 235-285.

⁴ See Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, London – New York, Verso, 1995, pp. 160-163; Antoniu Alexandru Flandorfer, *Critica fundamentelor etico-filosofice ale național-socialismului* [Critique of the Ethical-Philosophical Basis of National Socialism], Bucharest, Eikon Publishing House, 2016.

The national-socialist ideological lexicon, as highlighted by Klemperer, is examined, with its connotations, euphemisms, phrases 'in the spirit of the times', scholarly terminology, institutional jargon, and neologisms. Furthermore, the rhetorical aspects of this propaganda language are described from the standpoints of linguistic pragmatics and argumentation theory. Klemperer appears in his *Journal* as a person who is sensitive to the power of words in ordinary language and who 'acts in resistance' by demonstrating the uniformity of the *LTI*, a 'linguistic jail' that locks up both 'victors and victims'. Victor Klemperer's study of the language in use identified a populist background in German Romanticism and culture. This was later expanded upon by Dolf Sternberger, Gerhard Storz, and Wilhelm Emanuel Süskind, leading to the 1957 *Wörterbuch des Unmenschen* (*Dictionary of Inhumanity*). The Third Reich's language was a propaganda tool, characterized by neologisms, hyperbole, euphemism, religious rhetoric, and semantic displacement. It was adopted by a small group led by Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, as well as the government and general society, and excluded victims and oppressed individuals. The Nazi totalitarian language is typically seen as propaganda⁵ in historiography, with little emphasis placed on how it contributed to the development of either symbolic or actual violence. Of course, this subject has been covered in key works of philology, semiotics, and semantics during the past three decades, as well as in fundamental synthesis works on the history of the Third Reich⁶ or Adolf Hitler.⁷

In our opinion, such a topic can only be studied in an interdisciplinary manner, utilizing a diverse range of sciences such as history, cultural anthropology, and philological sciences from the linguistic area (psycholinguistics,

⁵ About Nazi propaganda, see David Welch (Ed.), *Nazi Propaganda. The Power and the Limitations*, London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1983; David Welch, *The Third Reich. Politics and Propaganda*, 2nd edition, London – New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2002; Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish enemy. Nazi propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*, Cambridge – London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

⁶ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich. A History*, New York, Penguin Books, 2004; Idem, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*, New York, Penguin Press, 2005; Idem, *The Third Reich at War. How the Nazis Led Germany from Conquest to Disaster*, New York, Penguin Books Limited, 2012.

⁷ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936. Hubris*, London-New York, Penguin Books, 1999; Idem, *Hitler, 1936-1945. Nemesis*, New York-London, W. W. Norton & Company, 2000; Idem, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, New Haven-Jerusalem, Yale University Press – International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem, 2008.

sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, stylistics, grammar, phonetics), cultural studies, political philosophy, geopolitics, and so on. In our research, we have employed a variety of methodologies, including analysis, synthesis, comparison, and comparative translation, to attempt to understand the various linkages between symbolic violence and language violence, both of which served as implements of the Third Reich's political religion. In our study, we try to show the importance of the viral-metamorphic factor of the quasi-total ideologization of language, impregnated with symbolic violence, in the modification of German society, in the sense of 'monolithization' and the creation of a new type of 'Nazified national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). The *LTI* played a significant part in the institutionalization and bureaucratization of crime both before and during WWII, and the obscuration of language permitted the concealing of the Holocaust's unprecedented level of horrors.⁸

THE ORGANIC CONNECTION BETWEEN SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE AND LINGUA TERTII IMPERII

When used in authoritarian discourse, language exhibits the following key characteristics: oratorical and declamatory style, campaigning tone, triumphalism, ideologization and assigning symbolic meanings to political concepts, creation of ideologemes – the significance of which is different from the usual meaning of the words –, scientism and exaggerated abstraction to the detriment of logic, uplifted criticism and, often false, fervour, heavy use of slogans or mantras, and the claim of absolute truth are all examples of these tactics. In his work, *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, Victor Klemperer reveals that the Nazi language is addressed directly to some feelings such as hatred and love, as well as mechanical forms of thought. The speakers gradually adjust to the transformations, Nazism insinuates itself into the flesh and blood of a large number of people through single idioms, turns of phrase, and syntactic structures that imposed themselves on millions of copies and were accepted automatically and unconsciously. According

⁸ Karin Doerr, *Nazi-Deutsch: An Ideological Language of Exclusion, Domination, and Annihilation*, in Robert Michael, Karin Doerr (Eds.), *Nazi-Deutsch/Nazi German. An English Lexicon of the Language of the Third Reich*, Westport – London, 2002; Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of the Nazi Genocide. Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of German of Jewish Ancestry*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009; Andreas Mussolff, *Language under totalitarian regimes: the example of political discourse in Nazi Germany*, in Ruth Wodak, Bernhard Forchtner (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 660-672.

to Klemperer in *LTI*, Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: you take them without realizing, they seem to have no impact, and then eventually the toxic consequence kicks in. The philologist stresses the new language's indigence: it distinguishes itself not by inventing words, but by recycling and bludgeoning those that already exist. The Nazi administration was able to legitimize the debasement of specific terminology and the enhancement of lexical fields, particularly that of war, by repeating the warped meaning of a word. Thus, *Aktion* refers to 'massacre operations' during the Third Reich; *Sturm*, 'storm,' is identical to 'assault'; and *Figuren* ('the puppets') refers to the corpses exhumed to disguise the extermination for the Nazis.⁹

The songs, the words, and the lack of measures are all intended to 'anesthetize' the intellect's faculties. Totalitarian discourses are built on slogans, fanaticism, and blind obedience. The idea's universality is reduced to an empirical figure ('Arian humanity' of Europe, Germany, equality in a classless society, unlimited domination, etc.). Totalitarian discourse favours the following forms: saving the community, eliminating enemies, overcoming negativism, or adopting it. Manichaeism eliminates the concept of difference or otherness, allowing the other to always be a suspect, an enemy, or a scapegoat. Authoritarian/totalitarian regimes' rhetoric is consistently superior on topics such as proletarian heroism, the eternity of the new society, mass enthusiasm, and so on. It calls for the transfiguration of existence, rejecting relativism and hermeneutics in favour of a new soteriology, a phantasmagorical image of the social unit, and, finally, the spectre of extermination and death. Totalitarian speech imitates democratic speech by replacing reality with a meta-reality that embodies the abolition of the separation between power and society.

The declared intention was the announcement of Austria's annexation to the Third Reich. The unspoken intention – the obligation to abandon the old Austrian national identity in favour of the new German and Nazi identities. We notice the meticulous staging, but also his speech's accessibility and simplicity. The oratory is located on a balcony above the audience, with these elements contributing to the semiotics of totalitarian discourse orientation (from above to down). Hitler began his speech by addressing the mostly Austrian audience with the phrase 'Germans!', implying that Austria had lost its independence as a state and had been absorbed into the great German nation. The obligation to change one's identity

⁹ Virginie Bloch-Lainé, *Enquête. Victor Klemperer, décrypteur de la langue totalitaire* in https://www.liberation.fr/chroniques/2019/10/08/victor-klemperer-decrypteur-de-la-langue-totalitaire_1756289/ (Accessed on 15.03.23).

became more than clear. Then, triumphantly, the Führer of the Third Reich announced the demise of the old Austrian state model – predominantly Catholic, class-structured, created and consolidated by Austrian chancellors Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt Schuschnigg – and its replacement with the Nazi model. Hitler continued his speech with abstract, generalizing formulas, addressing the public with the formula Men and women! to shift attention from the individual to the masses. The combination of NSDAP ideology, The Nazi Weltanschauung, superimposed on the Hitler-type authoritarian/totalitarian personality, has determined the metamorphosis of political language in the so-called *Lingua Tertii Imperii* / *LTI* (the viral-metamorphic theory). The German philologist Victor Klemperer (1881–1961) developed this theory to describe a particular type of nazi political language that was characterized by the dissipation of meaning in words and the crushing of personality in the nazi utopian project.¹⁰

In his Vienna speech, Hitler shifted from a generalizing model to a concrete/historical one, employing phrases like ‘the unity of the German people’ (*Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft*). Austria’s new mission as a member of the Third Reich, in his opinion, was to protect the German nation from ‘storms from the East.’ Austria was relegated to a medieval identity in the Nazi leader’s mindset, becoming an east mark of the Reich (*Oste mark*) or a *Gaue* (territory, province). Hitler ended his speech on a personal note, expressing his delight at Austria’s ‘return’ to the German world.

Nazi Germany used language as a tool of coercion and brainwashing. Towards specific racial and territorial objectives. Even when these aims were intended to be hidden, the Third Reich language exposes them to us. Ironically, following World War I, the right-wing National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) began its ascension under Hitler in democratic Weimar Germany. From the moment he took power in 1933, the regime started an intricate campaign to bring all levels of government, institutions, and companies in line with Nazi philosophy. For this purpose, they adopted an electrotechnology term: *Gleichschaltung* (coordination). Denying personal freedom of choice, everyone was forced to conform to the state’s political framework. To promote their views and gain public support for their long-term ambitions, the Nazi leadership used effective propaganda techniques on radio, in the press, and at official occasions. What was heard, read, and eventually used in

¹⁰ *Hitler’s speech – Heroes Square in Vienna, March 15, 1938*. Cf. Max Domarus, *The Essential Hitler: Speeches and Commentary*, Wauconda, Illinois (USA), Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2007, p. 1056-1057.

all aspects of German life was a language shaped by and saturated with Nazi *Weltanschauung*. It has come to be known as *Nazi-Deutsch* (Nazi German), and it is a true reflection of its time, revealing all the nuances of German National Socialist ideology and behaviour, as well as the impact on all levels of speech. This comprised dictionaries, grammar books, and popular literature.¹¹

The roots of the Nazi language go far back in history, long before the birth of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the NSDAP. And even well before the first political steps of former first-class Adolf Hitler and his little clique. It is rooted in a very broad movement to which we gave the untranslatable name of *völkisch*, a mixture of ethnic nationalism, return to the land, esotericism, anti-Semitism, paganism, and a few other ingredients. The indigestible literature of this shapeless movement sowed a few seeds that germinated through continuation: a certain taste for emphasis, patriotic vibration, the apology of violence, and the obscurity of language. All these elements were subsequently taken up by the authors of the 'conservative revolution.' Ernst Niekisch, Hans Freyer, Oswald Spengler, or Arthur Moeller van den Bruck made abundant use of it, as did a certain Ernst Jünger, who gives, for example, in a bloated text from 1930, the full measure of its anti-Semitism. Throughout the history of Nazism, we will find this singular mixture of esoteric vagueness, pagan delusions, brutal reasoning, not to say brutalists, carried by an exalted tone and martial impulses. This is expressed, well heard most clearly in *Mein Kampf*, a work that Hitler wrote in the mid-1920s in the Landsberg fortress, where an attempted putsch, in 1923, gave him a (fairly brief and very comfortable) stay. Hitler's language is like the movement of a swastika: it hypnotizes and crushes. It hypnotizes because its circular functioning somehow drowns the brain, making it wrap around itself like the 'thought' that he has in front of him until it reminds him to deliver the final ideological blow in two or three short, punchy sentences. *Mein Kampf* respects the codes of the *völkisch* style, obscure and bombastic, and puts them in the service of demonstrations as soporific as they are effective.

Aware of the abominable and unprecedented nature of the genocide that they were committing, the National Socialists have from the start multiplied the measures of precaution to conceal first their intentions, then their actions. Terms intended to hide the reality of the massacre were numerous and were rehearsed from the beginning of the regime, for which the eviction, at the very least, of the Jews from Germany, was from the outset a goal and an obsession. But we search in vain in the official texts or propaganda of words like 'deportation' or

¹¹ Karin Doerr, *Nazi-Deutsch...* p. 27–28.

'extermination'. The euphemism 'Final Solution' (*Endlösung*) used after the Wannsee conference was one of the last links in a long chain of linguistic dissimulations that played on the ambivalence of vocabulary. *Vernichtung* was used alternatively to designate the economic 'annihilation' of Germany (notably in *Mein Kampf*), the 'destruction' of enemy troops, then 'extermination.' *Entfernen* ('to move away,' as one moves an object away on a table), *ausräumen* ('evacuate') and *Lager* ('camp') were all terms intended to mask the reality of the genocide and deportations under voluntary ambiguity.

However, confusion and opacity are neither the only features nor the important qualities of the Nazi language. It became accustomed to the four main roles it had to play: seduction, terrorization, reality modification, and reality concealment. However, linguistic manipulation did not simply have hideous characteristics. The basic ideas of Nazism spread like oil on absorbent paper. *Volk*, which in German means both 'people' in the social sense and 'ethnicity' in the racial sense, was therefore used in all sauces: *Volksgemeinschaft* ('community of the people'), *Volksgenosse* ('comrade of the people'). However, if these terms were intended to create an exclusive community that did not include members of 'inferior races' or people who did not share Nazism's love, others were present to ground this community in the daily life and spirit of the Germans: the *Volkswagen* was thus the 'people's car' and the *Volksempfänger* the 'people's radio receiver.' Victor Klemperer created a precise inventory of this linguistic contamination in *LTI*, some of the pathogens of which are once again rampant throughout Europe today. But this operation of seduction and language impregnation was not the only one: Nazism intended to frighten its opponents from the start. The classic moment from *The Great Dictator* in which Chaplin is actually blown away by Hitler's comments, shouted out in the street through a megaphone, is well known. This comedy was not on Chaplin's part, who undoubtedly put out the finest investigations on the profound nature of Nazism at the time. Along with seduction and contamination, the other side of the Nazi language was the utilization of the terrible dimension that we may give to the German language. All you have to do is be tough, pounding, and nasty. It is, or nearly was, what the Nazi 'movement' strove toward from its inception. The *Sturmabteilung*, the 'SA,' which meant 'assault section,' but could also be read 'storm section' and cracked like a whip anyway, like the *Schutzstaffel*, the SS ('protection squadron'), whose ranks were a grotesque festival of hissing and alliterations as high-sounding as they are untranslatable (*SS-Obersturmbannführer*, 'senior assault section leader,' *SS-Rottenführer*, literally leader of a hoard). All the movement's propaganda statements contained this almost *beautiful violence*, to use the phrase loosely. Both scaring the rival or enemy

and assembling its own 'fanatics' around a ruthless, destructive energy were primary goals. Recognizing the heinous and unparalleled nature of the genocide they were committing, the National Socialists multiplied precautionary actions from the start in order to conceal first their objectives, then their actions. The terms used to conceal the truth of the murder were various and were practiced from the commencement of the government, for which the deportation, at the very least, of Jews from Germany was a goal and obsession from the start. But we look in vain for words like 'deportation' or 'extermination' in official writings or propaganda. The euphemism 'Final Solution' (*Endlösung*) used after the Wannsee conference was one of the final links in a long chain of linguistic deceptions that exploited word ambiguity. *Vernichtung* was employed to denote the economic 'annihilation' of Germany (particularly in *Mein Kampf*), the 'destruction' of enemy forces, and finally 'extermination.' *Entfernen* ('to move away,' as though moving an article on a table), *ausräumen* ('evacuate'), transport, and *Lager* ('camp') were all phrases used to conceal the truth of the Holocaust and deportations.¹²

Euphemisms, neologisms, names, codes, and Third Reich jargon in general provide the door to a world of ideas, complex organizations, and distinctive positions inside German military and civilian life. Their titles and roles serve as a reminder of the state's influence on the learning, employment, and leisure pursuits of German children and adults. There was the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend* or *HJ*), which had a system of youth leaders (*Jugendführer*), youth camps (*Jugendlager*), and planned events like club night (*Heimabend*), which featured required Wednesday night classes for both boys and girls. The titles of these organizations highlight how the regime affected German women's lives by upholding traditional gender roles. In the name of the state and its citizens (*Volksganze*), mother schooling (*Mütterschulung*), an ideological and practical education, prepared them for marriage and motherhood. The influential *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* was entirely in charge of assigning official responsibilities and programs that involved all German women beginning in

¹² See: Kate Burridge, *Euphemism with Attitude: Politically Charged Language Change*, in Monika S. Schmid, Jennifer R. Austin, Dieter Stein (Eds.), *Historical linguistics 1997*, Amsterdam – Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1998, pp. 57–76; Dirk Deissler, "The Nazis may almost be said to have 'invented' a new German language". *Der anglo-amerikanische Diskurs über nationalsozialistischen Sprachgebrauch im Zweiten Weltkrieg und in der Besatzungszeit*, in "Germanistische Linguistik", Vol. 169-170, 2003, pp. 319-337; Olivier Mannoni, *Les pièges du langage totalitaire : traduire le nazisme. Petit manuel de survie*, in "Traduire. Revue française de la traduction", 2019, No. 240. <https://doi.org/10.4000/traduire.1614> (Accessed on 14.03.23).

1936, though not without the cooperation of some women. The association for young girls (*Jungmädelsbund*) was where it all began. The women of the League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädchen*) were required to provide *Kriegshilfsdienst* (state duty) throughout the war. The family had lost its basic meaning and had changed to an ideological interpretation of the blood relationships that the Germans had established using the medieval name *Sippe* (clan). As Germans were compelled to present the *Ariernachweis* (evidence of Aryan heritage), which was necessary after the racist 1935 Nuremberg Laws were implemented, the state even decided whom they could marry. The SS elite required an ancestral pass (*Ahnenpaß*) and government clearance before getting married.¹³ In one way or another, almost every German was required to swear allegiance to Hitler. This was expressed in the many loyalty oaths (*Treueide*), which were taken by everyone from the youngest members of the Hitler Youth to the highest SS ranks. Personal ties were based on the idea of a shared destiny, much like the SS motto, "My honour is loyalty" (*Meine Ehre heißt Treue*).¹⁴ Slogans like "Wake up, Germany!" and "You, Führer, command, and we will follow and obey!" were directed at the German people in an effort to create an obedient national collective. The Third Reich rhetoric was permeated with an ancient Germanic mythology that was brought back to life and promoted heroism (*Heldentum*), self-sacrifice (*Opferwilligkeit*), and the sacrifice of the person (*Opfertod*). The expression of such ideas was meant to arouse feelings of mystical blood links and emotions to convince Germans of the transcendental nature of the German nation (*Volk*). A stronger sense of belonging by virtue of birth to this privileged group highlighted the exclusion of others from this racially defined community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). These few language examples of life in Nazi Germany also speak to the tight grip the state had over every facet of an individual's existence, as well as the link and ongoing interaction between the leader, the party, and society.¹⁵ The National Socialists hoped to influence collective thought with their magnificent Aryan oratory in public. *Volk*, *Blut*, and *Rasse*, the fundamental nationalistic principles, outlined a system intended to exclude anything non-German as foreign (*artfremd*), as a 'counter race' (*Gegenrasse*), and as harmful (*Volksschädlinge*) to the entire German people. The belief in the superiority of the German race was part of the ideological discourse, which was based on Social Darwinist theory (*Herrenrasse*).

¹³ Karin Doerr, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29.

¹⁴ See Adrian Gilbert, *Waffen SS: Hitler's Army War*, New York, Da Capo Press, 2019.

¹⁵ Karin Doerr, *op. cit.*, p. 29-30.

THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST THE JEWS

This racial nationalism was combined with a particularly vicious antisemitism, which seeped into both public and private discourse. The Nazis promoted anti-Jewish ideas that were already present in the cultures and languages of European Christendom in addition to their pro-German agenda. Many Christians had been adverse towards Jews for a long time due to hostile stories and strong negative images about them, which frequently lead to alienation, exclusion, and death. The Nazis linked these historical threads of religious antisemitism (*Judenhaß*) with new, racial forms of antisemitism as a result of this stereotyping and prejudice that rejected the humanitarianism that emerged from the European Enlightenment and the French Revolution. They also perpetuated the concept of a Jewish world conspiracy (*Weltjudentum*), which was at the heart of the nineteenth-century fabrication Protocols of the Elders of Zion. There seemed to be no trouble characterizing Jews as both Judeo-Bolsheviks (Communists) and global capitalists.¹⁶ Therefore, in addition to Darwinian phraseology, the Nazi language also contained an amalgam of medical and religious terminology. The Jews were viewed as a plague (*Seuche*) or bacteria (*Volksbazillen*) that needed to be removed from the body of the German nation (*Volkskörper*) based on pseudo-medical science. The broad German population was helped in their acceptance of the need for a strong and pure German race, *judenrein* (literally, 'clean' or 'cleansed' of Jews), and ultimately a new supplantation by these useful parallels. The *Rassenhygiene* (race hygiene) program, a general term that emphasized the preservation and purification (*Säuberung*) of German society and blood, served as the government's means of achieving this goal. When Nazi doctors began killing thousands of German patients in institutions as part of the euthanasia program, code-named 'T-4,' in the later 1930s, ideas of purification had already taken concrete form. By referring to the lives of the terminally ill as 'life unworthy of life' (*lebensunwertes Leben*), they justified murder. The ensuing stage of preparing for the murder of the Jews was expressed using already-used phrases whose meanings were altered or that received new metaphorical and confusing connotations. The phrase *Endziel* (ultimate objective), which served as a prelude to the infamous euphemism *Endlösung* (final solution) der *Judenfrage*

¹⁶ See Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*, Chicago – London, University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 81-102; Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin–New York, De Gruyter, 1998.

(Jewish trouble), is one painful example. This Jewish ‘world parasite’ (*Weltparasit*) had to be eliminated or exterminated (*Ausrottung or Ausmerze*) as the answer.¹⁷

The term *parasite* has multiple connotations: it can be literal, biological, or metaphorical, and it can also be used as a figure of speech. When this concept was applied to humans, a new ‘entity’ was created: *homo parasitus*, which was inferior to man and hence had fewer rights and freedoms. The word ‘parasite’ in relation to Jews was used to ‘justify’ the Final Solution. For example, according to a Wehrmacht document from 1944, “the Jews want to turn the Germans into slaves in order to insert themselves more easily among them, to suck their blood, i. e. their vitality, and parasitize them.” Because Jews cannot be rehabilitated, there is only one ‘choice’ in the Nazi vision: either be devoured by the parasite or be exterminated. Thus, the eradication of the Jew is viewed as a duty necessary to create a healthy existence and maintain life, rather than a crime against life. The origins of the German collective mind’s warped image of the Jew can be traced back to his demonization in the Middle Ages. German Romantic nationalism took on an organic character in the nineteenth century, combining aspects of Darwinism, biological racism, and political racism. In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, nationalists, conservatives, and especially the Nazis saw the German nation as a racial body (*Volkskörper*), with proper biological meaning. The Jew was associated with the insulting and degrading appellation of the parasite in this context. Johann Gottfried Herder compared Jews to parasitic weeds in 1784. Through the assistance of strong National Socialist propaganda, the image of the parasitic Jew, as less human than the German, began to permeate extensively. It was merely a few steps from here to the genocide (Holocaust). Considered and catalogued as a leech sucking the blood of Christians in the Middle Ages, the Jew was then associated in the modern era with other distorted features – the quality of foreigner, scapegoat, racial inferiority, or lack of productivity or loyalty to the host nation (in our case, against the German national community).¹⁸

¹⁷ Wolfgang Mieder, *Language and Folklore of the Holocaust*, in David Scrase, Wolfgang Mieder (Eds.), *The Holocaust. Introductory Essays*, Burlington, Vermont, The Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont, 1996, pp. 235-252; Saul Friedländer, *Extermination of European Jews in Historiography: Fifty Years Later*, in Omer Bartov (Ed.), *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, London – New York, Routledge, 2000; Cristopher M. Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich. Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language*, London-New York, Routledge, 1999, pp. 154-158.

¹⁸ Anders M. Gullestad, *Parasite*, in “Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon”, 2012, No. 1, in <http://www.politicalconcepts.org/anders-m-gullestad-parasite/> (Accessed on

There had been authors before the Nazis who were concerned with the problem of parasitism and degeneration. One of them was Max Simon Nordau, a major Zionist Movement leader who released a treatise on the deterioration of man in modern civilization in 1892. The way the Nazis eliminated degenerate parasites is a significant distinction between Nordau's conception and the Nazis' ludicrous and destructive view of degenerate parasites. Nordau longed for the recovery of individuals 'infected' by the age's degraded spirit. Those who are unable to heal should not be eliminated since nature will take care of them. According to him, what distinguishes phylogeny (the development of new species) from degenerate morbid variation is that the latter will die out on its own in a few generations due to becoming sterile.¹⁹

The chance of treating or improving *homo parasitus* (the degenerate parasite) was null in the national-socialist ideal. The Nazis considered it their job to remove these degenerates, first by symbolic violence, then through institutional and administrative violence, physical violence, and last through industrialized crime (genocide, Holocaust). The image of the Jew also influenced the tactics of annihilation used. If Jews were slaughtered in the Middle Ages because they were frequently considered hypostases of the Antichrist and Satan, they were killed in lodging rooms during the Third Reich as a result of their identification with the concept of the parasite.²⁰

Thus, in order to safeguard the purity of the National Community or the Aryan 'racial body,' the Nazis mixed various forms of violence (from symbolic to murder and extermination) with propaganda, exclusion, and generalized theory. They attempted to impose the antinomy between Superman (*Übermensch*) and *Homo parasitus* (*Untermensch*) on an ideational level, but also on the individual psyche or the collective consciousness. In this sense, the image of the Jew played a vital role in Hitler's skewed mental universe. Since his boyhood in Vienna, his mind had become obsessed with Jews. He believed that they were the source of all ills, tragedies, and disasters, as well as the Germans' tough economic circumstances following World War I. The perplexity of war and starvation, financial and economic crises, unexpected death, failures, and sinfulness could all

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¹⁹ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, Translated from the second edition of the German work, Introduction by George L. Mosse, Lincoln - London, University of Nebraska Press, 1993, p. 550-551.

²⁰ See Alex Bein, *The Jewish Parasite. Notes on the Semantics of the Jewish Problem with Special Reference to Germany*, in "The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook", Vol. 9, 1964, pp. 3-40.

be explained by the presence of a single component in the cosmos, that horror that disrupts humanity's march toward well-being, abundance, success, and victory. A hero who dared to kill the hideous beast was required. In Hitler's preoccupied mind, as in the delusory fantasies of ancient millenarians, the Jews were demonic hordes delivered to him as a holy mission.²¹ *Mein Kampf* depicted the fight between Aryans and Jews as apocalyptic. This fight was a dualistic interpretation of the eternal conflict between good and evil, God and Satan, and Christ and Antichrist. Hitler declared in front of intimate associates such as Rauchning that the Germans were the people of God, and the Jews were the people of Satan (we can see the viral-metamorphic perversion of the biblical concept of the chosen people). As a result, the Jewish race became an anti-race, serving as the primary impediment to Hitler's and Nazi ideologues like Alfred Rosenberg's millenarian and racist ideal of Aryan dominance.²² Thus, the Jew was viewed as the ultimate evil in a variety of guises: outsider, other, a man outside society, parasite, carrier, and emblem of bodily and moral sorrow. The harmfulness of the Jew, according to Hitler's distorted perspective, consists of components such as the race's blood and physical, intellectual, and cultural conformation. "The portrayal of Jews as filth and disease carriers, and thus of death and destruction, dates back to the history of anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages, when Jews were accused of spreading the plague and poisoning wells. A plague pandemic in Vienna was explained as early as the 17th century: «It is known that such plague epidemics are caused by evil spirits, Jews, gravediggers, and witches». Hitler accused Jews in particular of sexual immorality and blamed them for the postwar survival of syphilis. He also did not ignore the issue of cultural pollution: «Is there any dirt and degradation, especially in cultural life, that does not involve at least one Jew? The poison of the press, controlled by the faces of Jews, was able to infiltrate our people's bloodstream»".²³ It was only a short step from the image of the Jew as a parasite, vampire, leech, and contaminator of the Aryan race to the accreditation of the image of the Jew sucking the blood of the German economy and finance. The latter stems from the left-wing anti-Semitic caricature of the second part of the nineteenth century.²⁴

²¹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *Războiul împotriva evreilor (1933-1945)* [The War Against the Jews (1933-1945)], Translation by Carmen Pațac, Bucharest, Hasefer Publishing House, 1999, p. 45.

²² See Alfred Rosenberg, *Le Mythe du XXe siècle. Bilan des combats culturels et spirituels de notre temps*, translation from German to French by Adler von Scholle, Paris, Avalon Publishing House, 1986.

²³ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

One of the most common clichés associated with Nazi Germany's anti-Semitic imagology is the Jew as a *racial alien*. The exclusion policy was most brutally and extensively applied against Jews, that is, to all persons defined as 'Jews' by German authorities. This policy touched all Jews, regardless of age or gender, in every part of their lives, with various measures aimed at social segregation and discrimination, economic isolation, expropriation, and imprisonment. These tactics were increasingly becoming part of what proved to be the goal of Nazi racial policy in the pre-war years: the expulsion of all Jews from Germany. However, this policy did not take a straight course. It evolved in numerous ways, driven by the dynamics of activity at the central and local levels, bureaucratic measures, and outright terror. These dynamics caused various shifts and twists in conditions in the years leading up to the war. Following the draconian measures of exclusion and isolation imposed in the spring of 1933, there were two further stages in the Nazis' war against German Jews. The first of these occurred in the spring and summer of 1935, culminating in the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, which classified Jews as second-class citizens and served as the basis for their racial classification.²⁵ This second stage began with waves of attacks focused on Jewish stores and Jewish-Aryan interactions, led by local Nazi activists. These attacks, in part, served as an outlet for the resentment of *disgruntled Nazis*. However, these individuals acted in accordance with Hitler's anti-Semitic worldview, and they were not alone. For example, the Nazi party press, as well as some judges and the central government, pushed for the prohibition of marriages and sexual connections between Jews and non-Jews. The Nuremberg Laws, enacted in September 1935 as a result of a combination of local fear and central planning, outlawed future marriages and extramarital encounters between Jews and non-Jews: men found guilty of 'defilement of the race' were to be imprisoned. Women were not penalized under the law, but they could be punished in other ways by the courts or the police. German judges quickly extended this statute to the point that even kissing between Jews and non-Jews was punishable. However, sending Jews to prisons or camps was a very uncommon action at the time: only a few hundred Jewish men were convicted of 'defilement of the race' each year. The anti-Jewish program did not include camps or prisons in the early phase.

²⁵ Nikolaus Waschmann, *Politica excluderii: represiunea în statul nazist, 1933-1939* [The Politics of Exclusion: Repression in the Nazi State, 1933–1939], in Jane Caplan (Coord.), *Istoria Germaniei Naziste* [History of Nazi Germany]. Translation by Liviu Mateescu, Bucharest, Orizonturi Publishing House, 2020, p. 194.

In comparison to the anti-Semitic rise of 1935, most of the early Nazi period may appear quiet. In fact, life was far from peaceful for German Jews. There were so many activities at so many different levels that the cumulative impact was enormous. The Jews were gradually forced into poverty and seclusion. Economic discrimination advanced in multiple directions at the same time. More and more Jews were fired, special levies were imposed, and discrimination in commercial and civil courts increased, affecting everything from service conflicts to tenancy cases. On a local level, Jews started to experience constant discrimination. Municipal officials denied them access to parks, swimming pools, and other public areas, and this was a major factor in the mid-1930s abandonment of any contact between Jews and Aryans, of which there was still a relatively small number. This was in addition to ongoing anti-Semitic propaganda.²⁶

After 1933, the NSDAP's anti-Jewish violence took four forms or categories of action: direct physical assault of Jews and non-Aryans; damage to Jewish property; boycott of Jewish enterprises; and takeover of Jewish wealth and assets. The four forms of anti-Jewish violence served four purposes: 1) Jews and non-Aryans had to be physically hurt (intentional injury); by this deliberate use of violence, Jews and non-Aryans had to be segregated and expelled from German society while seeking to ruin these people's personalities. 2) Propaganda attempted to incite public rage against Jews. The symbolic brutality of propaganda was used to gain the agreement of the German people. Initially, the Nazi regime's calls for violence were either ignored or dismissed. 3) The NSDAP and so-called *popular anger's pressure* on the ministerial bureaucracy and state administration. 4) The transformation of Nazi party members into a 'community of jurors' (the practice of collective violence by inactive or indifferent party members, via the state apparatus's so-called *coordination/synchronization (Gleichschaltung)*).²⁷

"Perhaps more than any other idea in the history of human culture, race is imbued with a great deal of responsibility. It is not just another abstract concept with little social and political impact outside academia or the university. During the time of its ascendancy as an organizational principle of society, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the idea of race has fundamentally changed the history of many countries, individuals, and communities across the world. It was a source of both national self-esteem and a national disgrace, particularly during the Second World War. Many people have been oppressed, marginalized,

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

²⁷ Armin Nolzen, *The Nazi Party and its Violence Against the Jews, 1933-1939: Violence as a Historiographical Concept*, "Yad Vashem Studies", Vol. XXXI, 2003, pp. 235-285.

and killed for not belonging to the 'right' race. Notwithstanding this painful history, racial stereotypes continue to exist in contemporary society and various representations of race still inhabit and invade our lives in disturbing ways. It is as if race, though now viewed as an obsolete and anachronistic concept, has become ossified in the very foundation of our culture and public consciousness, serving as a permanent source of indurated ideas, influencing thought and behaviour, both personal and public".²⁸

The language was not apathetic to barbarism; rather, it actively joined in the war against individual liberties. It configured the 'enemy,' giving him a body and a form in order to better dispose of him. It was necessary to make language a collaborator of barbarism within its own trenches, just as it was necessary to abolish the names of camp prisoners and substitute numbers for them, to annul every vestige of human dignity in the victims destined for gas and cremation. For Nazi ideology, it was important to eliminate any indication of individuality in experience as well as language; it was also important to reduce the individual to a simple component of an organism that does not think but instead effectively performs its function. That is the core of totalitarian systems: reducing people to components of a massive machine, in the case that concerns us, designed to eliminate numerous 'races' off the map of Europe, 'inferiors' that hindered and jeopardized the Aryan race's advancement. The standardization of language and, consequently, its weakening and impoverishment, have not been achieved independently: they have always been accompanied by the standardization of experience and a loss of the sense of individuality. So, if it remains true that language is found everywhere and that it crosses all modalities of our experience, it would be necessary to say that language and the experience of Nazism have always been intimately linked: always alongside one another and accompanying each other in a mutual negation of personal brands. The word 'Jew' is more essential than the word 'fanatic' in Hitler's propaganda. This is not by chance, because the majority of his ethnic cleansing campaign is aimed at him. Thus, the adjective 'Jew' appears to emerge more frequently than the noun, because it is primarily the adjective that allows all foes to be united under the picture of a single enemy whose goal is the destruction of Germany. As a result, much of the fight against the 'enemy' is combined into the adjective Jewish, and the opponent is asphyxiated by the Nazi word. The Third Reich had to impoverish and standardize language to a degree that would allow it to transform men into mechanical figures

²⁸ Marius Turda, Maria Sophia Quine, *Historicizing Race*, London – Oxford – New York – New Delhi – Sidney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, p. 1-2.

responding simply to the stimuli of the system, of the Führer, the SS, or anyone capable of imposing this impoverished, but deadly rigid, language.²⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Totalitarian discourse is described as euphemistic, manipulative, or othering its victims, but these are understatement because they gloss over the qualitative difference to the biased and polemical nature of all political language use. Polemical debates in open societies that allow for public debate without imposing violent consequences can be antagonizing, divisive, and manipulative, but they are nonetheless predicated on the premise that counter-discourses are theoretically viable. The deceptive language of a totalitarian dictatorship, in contrast, occurs against a backdrop of covert state terrorism, which includes the threat and implementation of denunciation and harsh punishment of any oppositional discourse. The traditional meanings of words or statements are unaffected by this unique communicative context, but it distorts their socio-pragmatic value and significance by treating them as matters of life and death. Nazi Germany used language as a tool of coercion and brainwashing. Even when these aims were intended to be hidden, the Third Reich language exposes them to us. Ironically, following World War I, the right-wing National Socialist German Workers' Party began its ascension under Hitler in democratic Weimar Germany. For this purpose, they adopted an electrotechnology term: *Gleichschaltung*. To promote their views and gain public support for their long-term ambitions, the Nazi leadership used effective propaganda techniques on the radio, in the press, and on official occasions. What was heard, read, and eventually used in all aspects of German life was a language shaped by and saturated with Nazi *Weltanschauung*. This comprised dictionaries, grammar books, and popular literature.

The roots of the Nazi language go far back in history, long before the birth of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the NSDAP. And even well before the first political steps of former first-class Adolf Hitler and his little clique. It is rooted in a very broad movement to which we gave the untranslatable name of *völkisch*, a mixture of ethnic nationalism, return to the land, esotericism, anti-Semitism, paganism, and a few other ingredients. The indigestible literature of this shapeless movement sowed a few seeds that germinated through continuation: a certain taste for emphasis, for patriotic vibration, the apology of violence, and obscurity

²⁹ Ester Cohen, *Les narrateurs d'Auschwitz*, Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2010, pp. 103-107.

of language. Throughout the history of Nazism, we will find this singular mixture of esoteric vagueness, pagan delusions, brutal reasoning, not to say brutalists, carried by an exalted tone and martial impulses. This is expressed, well heard most clearly in *Mein Kampf*, a work that Hitler wrote in the mid-1920s in the Landsberg fortress, where an attempted putsch, in 1923, gave him a stay.

Aware of the abominable and unprecedented nature of the genocide that they were committing, the National Socialists have from the start multiplied the measures of precaution to conceal first their intentions, then their actions. Terms intended to hide the reality of the massacre were numerous and were rehearsed from the beginning of the regime, for which the eviction, at the very least, of the Jews from Germany, was from the outset a goal and an obsession. We search in vain in the official texts or propaganda of words like 'Deportation' or 'Extermination.' The euphemism 'Final Solution' used after the Wannsee conference was one of the last links in a long chain of linguistic dissimulations that played on the ambivalence of vocabulary. *Vernichtung* was used alternatively to designate the economic 'Annihilation' of Germany, the 'Destruction' of enemy troops, then 'Extermination.' *Entfernen*, *ausräumen*, and *Lager* were all terms intended to mask the reality of the genocide and deportations under voluntary ambiguity.

Confusion and opacity are neither the only features nor the important qualities of the Nazi language. Linguistic manipulation did not simply have hideous characteristics. The basic ideas of Nazism spread like oil on absorbent paper. *Volk*, which in German means both 'People' in the social sense and 'Ethnicity' in the racial sense, was therefore used in all sauces: *Volksgemeinschaft*, *Volksgenosse*. If these terms were intended to create an exclusive community that did not include members of 'inferior races' or people who did not share Nazism's love, others were present to ground this community in the daily life and spirit of the Germans: the *Volkswagen* was thus the 'People's car' and the *Volksempfänger*, the 'People's radio receiver.' Victor Klemperer created a precise inventory of this linguistic contamination in *LTI*, some of the pathogens of which are once again rampant throughout Europe today. This operation of seduction and language impregnation was not the only one: Nazism intended to frighten its opponents from the start. Along with seduction and contamination, the other side of the Nazi language was the utilization of the terrible dimension that we may give to the German language.

Euphemisms, neologisms, names, codes, and Third Reich jargon in general provide the door to a world of ideas, complex organizations, and distinctive positions inside German military and civilian life. The titles of these organizations

highlight how the regime affected German women's lives by upholding traditional gender roles. The influential *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* was entirely in charge of assigning official responsibilities and programs that involved all German women beginning in 1936, though not without the cooperation of some women. The women of the League of German Girls were required to provide *Kriegshilfsdienst* throughout the war. The family had lost its basic meaning and had changed to an ideological interpretation of the blood relationships that the Germans had established using the medieval name *Sippe*. In one way or another, almost every German was required to swear allegiance to Hitler. The expression of such ideas was meant to arouse feelings of mystical blood links and emotions to convince Germans of the transcendental nature of the German nation.

Volk, Blut, and Rasse, the fundamental nationalistic principles, outlined a system intended to exclude anything non-German as foreign, as a 'Counter race,' and as harmful to the entire German people. The belief in the superiority of the German race was part of the ideological discourse, which was based on Social Darwinist theory. In addition to Darwinian phraseology, the Nazi language also contained an amalgam of medical and religious terminology. The Jews were viewed as a plague or bacteria that needed to be removed from the body of the German nation based on pseudo-medical science. The broad German population were helped in their acceptance of the need for a strong and pure German race, *judenrein*, and ultimately a new supuration by these useful parallels. The *Rassenhygiene* program, a general term that emphasized the preservation and purification of German society and blood, served as the government's means of achieving this goal. When Nazi doctors began killing thousands of German patients in institutions as part of the euthanasia program, code-named 'T-4,' in the later 1930s, ideas of purification had already taken concrete form.

Language was not apathetic to barbarism; rather, it actively joined in the war against individual liberties. It was necessary to make language a collaborator of barbarism within its own trenches, just as it was necessary to abolish the names of camp prisoners and substitute numbers for them, to annul every vestige of human dignity in the victims destined for gas and cremation. For Nazi ideology, it was important to eliminate any indication of individuality in experience as well as language; it was also important to reduce the individual to a simple component of an organism that does not think but instead effectively performs its function. The standardization of language and its weakening and impoverishment have not been achieved independently: they have always been accompanied by the standardization of experience and a loss of the sense of individuality. If it remains true that language is found everywhere and that it crosses all modalities of our

experience, it would be necessary to say that language and the experience of Nazism have always been intimately linked: always alongside one another and accompanying each other in a mutual negation of personal brands. The word 'Jew' is more essential than the word 'Fanatic' in Hitler's propaganda.

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