

Jörn Schütrumpf

# A Few Good Germans

From the "Bund Neues Vaterland"  
to the "Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte"

VSA:



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to the “Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte”

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Jörn Schütrumpf

## **A Few Good Germans**

From the "Bund Neues Vaterland" to the  
"Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte"

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# Contents

Long-term effects .....	7
From the midst of society .....	14
Before the meeting in The Hague on 7 April 1915 .....	24
Before the oppression of the BNV .....	32
The Lichnowsky affair .....	46
From revolution to emigration .....	51
Names and themes .....	57

## Documents

Pamphlets Published by the New Fatherland League .....	75
What Are the Aims of the “New Fatherland” League? .....	76
<i>Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt</i> Remembering Kurt von Tepper-Laski .....	82
<i>Heinrich Stroebel</i> Kurt Eisner .....	87
<i>Hans-Georg von Beerfelde</i> Michel, wake up! .....	97
<i>Lilly Jannasch</i> The “Black Shame” and The Reich’s Disgrace .....	102
<i>Emil Julius Gumbel</i> Four Years of Political Murder .....	111
General Assembly 1929 .....	131
<i>Kurt Großmann</i> For German-Polish Reconciliation .....	142
Statement Submitted by the League to the Russian Ambassador .....	144
<i>Kurt Großmann</i> Lex Besedovsky .....	145
Fact-Finding Commission for the Clarification of the Russian Question .....	148
Declaration by the League on Arrests in Yugoslavia .....	148
Against Terror in Poland. Telegram to Piłsudski .....	149
Torture in Romania .....	149
Findings of the May Inquiry .....	150
<i>Kurt Tucholsky</i> Arthur Holitscher at 60. The Man with the Eyes .....	163
<i>Walter Loeb</i> Obituary of Paul Levi .....	165
Mobilization Against Section 218 .....	166
Appeal from the League Against the Confiscation of Paintings by George Grosz .....	167
Appeal Against Antisemitism .....	167
<i>Emil Julius Gumbel</i> “Let heads roll!” .....	168
A Bust of Rosa Luxemburg .....	176

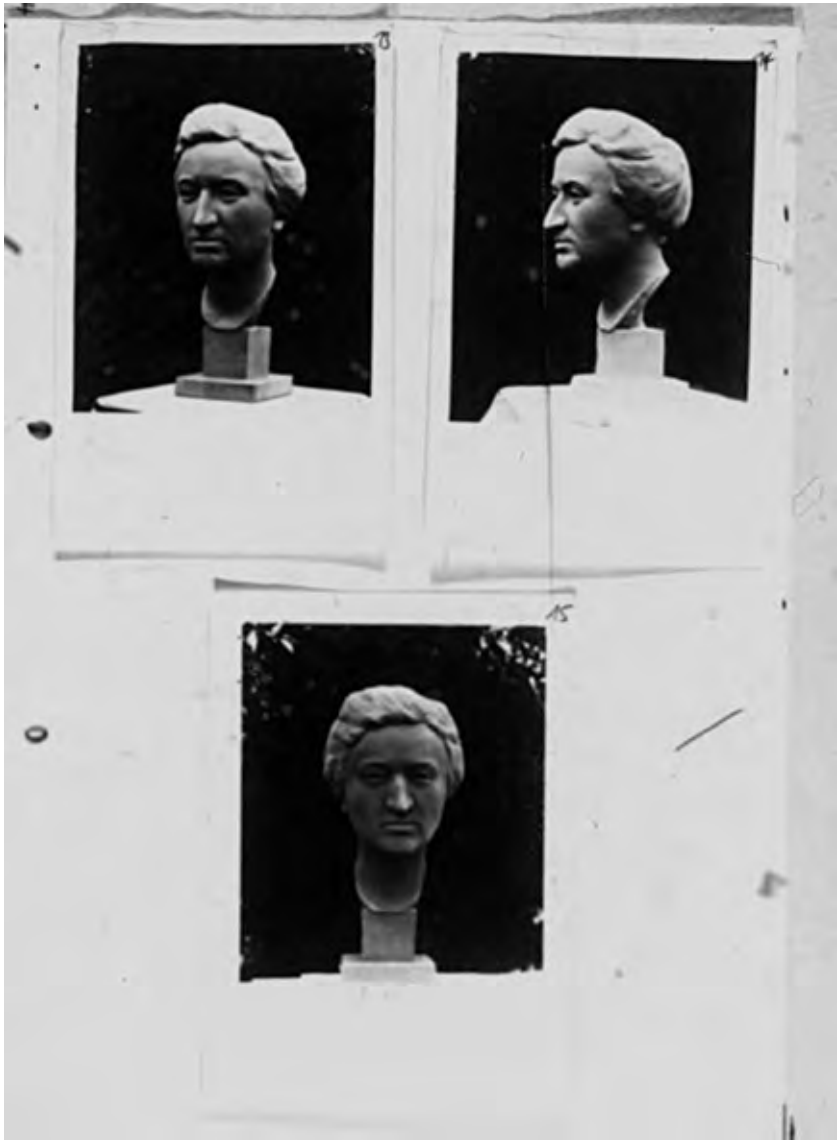


Illustration: Carl Lühnsdorf: Rosa Luxemburg.

This bust of Rosa Luxemburg, which was the very first of its kind, was on display at the offices of the German League for Human Rights. Its current whereabouts are unknown.

## Long-term effects

On 10 December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the successor building of the Palais du Trocadéro, completed in 1937, the United Nations General Assembly resolved the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. The draft of this – non-binding – declaration was written by René Cassin,<sup>1</sup> a representative of the International League for Human Rights and subsequent Nobel Peace Prize laureate. *The Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’Homme* had been founded in 1922 by the French League for Human Rights<sup>2</sup> with the participation of the German League for Human Rights, the latter of which had gone by the name *Bund Neues Vaterland* up until January 1922. Further like-minded organizations from other countries also joined. To this day, each national League affiliated to the federation is committed to the principles, forged in the fire of revolution, that underpin the Declaration(s) of Human Rights of 1789 and 1794 as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The draft version of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” was finalized in 1948 with the collaboration of Joseph Paul-Boncour,<sup>3</sup> president of the International League for Human Rights from 1948 to 1972.

The countries that abstained from the vote on the resolution included racist South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Joseph Stalin’s USSR, and in its wake, of course, Ukraine and Belarus,<sup>4</sup> as well as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia (which remained loyal to Moscow, at least outwardly, until 1948).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> René Cassin (1887–1976) was France’s representative at the League of Nations in 1924 and 1938, and at the United Nations from 1946–1958.

<sup>2</sup> *Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, in short: *Ligue des droits de l’homme*.

<sup>3</sup> The socialist Joseph Paul-Boncour (1873–1972) was France’s prime minister for a brief period in 1922–23; in 1945, he signed the UN Charter on behalf of France.

<sup>4</sup> Both these Soviet republics had been granted their own vote as countries at the UN.

<sup>5</sup> Although the relationship between generalissimo Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) and Marshal Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) had already turned hostile, Tito still sought to keep up appearances in public even after, on 27 June 1948, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPJ) had been excluded from the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers’ Parties (Cominform) established in Warsaw (officially, in Szklarska Poręba) on 30 September 1947. His letter, in which he threatened Stalin with death, was unambiguous: “Stop sending people to liquidate me. We’ve already caught five of them, one with a bomb and another one with a rifle [...] If you don’t start being reasonable, I’ll



The text of the resolution reads as follows:

*Whereas* recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

*Whereas* disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

*Whereas* it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

*Whereas* it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

*Whereas* the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

*Whereas* Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Whereas* a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

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send a very efficient assassin to Moscow, and I won't have to send another." Taken from: <https://yugotour.com/blog/tito/> (quote amended). In Stalin's view, the Cominform was to organize an "exchange of experience" and "to coordinate the activity of the Communist parties, on the basis of mutual agreement", i.e., ultimately, to serve as a subsidiary body of Soviet foreign policy. Given the Yugoslav government's refusal to submit to this Russian claim to hegemony, the Cominform's headquarters was moved from Belgrade to Bucharest after 27 June 1948. I would like to thank Wladislaw Hedeler for pointing this out to me. However, the year 1948 not only marked a turning point in the relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia: in February, the Communists took – exclusive – control of the government in Czechoslovakia through a coup d'état; In South Africa, the National Party established its Apartheid regime. By interrupting the flow of goods between the West German sectors and West Berlin via land – which, in Western propaganda, is portrayed as a "siege" just like that of Leningrad 1941 to 1944 to this day – Stalin fell into the West's trap and served its purpose: he paved the way for West Germany to join NATO. I am grateful to Florian Weis for reminding me of this aspect.

Now, therefore, the General Assembly,  
Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

**Article 1:** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

**Article 2:** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

**Article 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

**Article 4:** No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5:** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 6:** Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

**Article 7:** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

**Article 8:** Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

**Article 9:** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

**Article 10:** Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

**Article 11:** 1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. 2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

**Article 12:** No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 13:** 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

**Article 14:** 1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 15:** 1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

**Article 16:** 1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. 2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. 3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

**Article 17:** 1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

**Article 18:** Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

**Article 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

**Article 20:** 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. 2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

**Article 21:** 1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. 2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. 3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

**Article 22:** Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

**Article 23:** 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. 2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. 3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. 4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

**Article 24:** Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

**Article 25:** 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability,

widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

**Article 26:** 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. 3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

**Article 27:** 1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

**Article 28:** Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

**Article 29:** 1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. 2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society. 3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30:** Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

The more immediate reason for this resolution were, of course, the crimes against humanity committed by Germany and Japan during the Second World War. At the same time, even these crimes did not gloss over the fact that the struggle for human rights dated back far longer. The idea that all human beings (must) possess inalienable rights – including protection from violence and war – had already been espoused by Plato and Aristotle...

## From the midst of society

In twenty-first-century Germany, the *Bund Neues Vaterland* (henceforth BNV) represents a largely forgotten episode. The German League for Human Rights (GLHR) ceased its activities in 2019, while the International League for Human Rights (ILHR) continues its work at its offices in the Haus der Demokratie (“House of Democracy”) in Berlin.<sup>6</sup> The idea of organizing to fight for human rights was born in France. It was here that the very first human rights organization in the world, the *Ligue des droits de l’homme*, was established in 1898. The founding act was prompted by a legal scandal that had been made public by Émile Zola: the French – Jewish – officer Alfred Dreyfus had been sentenced to life in prison and exile in 1894 on charges of treason, albeit based on fabricated evidence and a dubious handwriting analysis.<sup>7</sup> The objective of the *Ligue des droits de l’homme* was to enforce the re-litigation of the trial. However, elements among the military top brass and other influential anti-republican and antisemitic forces managed for years to prevent the restoration of Dreyfus’s civil rights.<sup>8</sup> It was only after fierce disputes, which were carried out in public, that the officer was eventually fully rehabilitated on 12 July 1906 – which marked a severe defeat for the French right.

The scandal that would lead to the formation of a human rights organization in Germany sixteen years later, then, outweighed the affair in France by far. In France, the matter at hand had been the freedom of an individual; in Germany, it was about the lives of millions, who first lost their freedom inside the barracks and then, on the battlefields, their lives, as a result of the rogue politics of those who were (ir-)responsible in Austro-Hungary and Germany.

Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, there were some – albeit few – voices coming from Berlin’s bourgeois circles who thought that this butchery (and they were not even aware of the fact yet that this

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<sup>6</sup> See [ilmr.de](http://ilmr.de)

<sup>7</sup> The successful and influential writer Émile Zola (1840–1902) had subsequently published an open letter to the French president on 13 January 1898, titled “J’accuse...!” (“I accuse...!”). Particularly the socialists around Jean Jaures (1859–1914) henceforth took up the cause of fighting resolutely against antisemitism

<sup>8</sup> The effect of the Dreyfus affair was a strengthening of the Zionist movement, which advocated emigration to Palestine, among French Jewry.

would be a mechanized war) should be ended – once and for all – with as few victims as possible and as quickly as possible.

To raise these objections really should have been the task of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (“German Peace Society”), founded in 1892. However, this organization had declared on 15 August 1914: “Now that the question of peace or war is no longer a matter of choice and Germany is engulfed in a fateful struggle, the peace-loving Germans have the same duty towards their fatherland as all other Germans.”<sup>9</sup>

This was one of the reasons why, on 16 November 1914, two women and nine men established the *Bund Neues Vaterland*. These founding members included Lilli Jannasch and Emma Krapppek as well as – the chairmen – Kurt von Tepper-Laski and Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, plus Albert Einstein, the Nobel Prize for Physics laureate in 1922, as well as Georg Ehlers, the chief editor of the magazine *Deutscher Sport* (“German Sports”), diplomat Hans Schlieben, banker Hugo Simon and lawyer Max Steinschneider.<sup>10</sup>

The only anti-war force to be commemorated in Germany today, though often in a distorted way, is the left wing of the SPD, the so-called Spartacus Group led by Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), Franz Mehring (1846–1919), Leo Jogiches (1867–1919), and Karl Liebknecht (1871–1919). In the eyes of the imperial terror regime, however, the *Bund Neues Vaterland*, whose members temporarily helped fund the activities of the Spartacus Group,<sup>11</sup> was no less dangerous – despite, or precisely because of its roots among middle-class intellectuals.

This place has been visited at least once by just about everyone who had their doubts about the official propaganda even in the midst of the war.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Quidde, Ludwig, *Der deutsche Pazifismus während des Weltkrieges 1914–1918*, ed. by Karl Holl, Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1979, p. 244.

<sup>10</sup> Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt starts off his list with Kurt von Tepper-Laski and himself; see Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte, vormals Bund Neues Vaterland, für den Weltfrieden 1914–1927*, Berlin: Hensel & Co., 1927, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> See Luban, Ottokar, “Julius Gerson und Eduard Fuchs, die Spendensammler für die Flugschriftenagitation der Spartakusgruppe – Verbindungen zwischen Linkssozialisten und bürgerlichen Pazifisten”, in: id., *Rosa Luxemburgs Demokratiekonzept. Ihre Kritik an Lenin und ihr politisches Wirken 1913–1919* (Rosa-Luxemburg-Forschungsberichte Heft 6), Leipzig: GNN Schkeuditz, 2008, pp. 286–305.

<sup>12</sup> Zirker, Milly, “Chronik des Bundes Neues Vaterland”, *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 24, no. 10, 6 March 1928, p. 362.



This small group had set out “to struggle against the Pan-German forces”<sup>13</sup>: after the beginning of the First World War, the Pan-Germans drew considerable support from Germany’s upper middle-class. The *Alldeutscher Verband* (“Pan-German League”), which gained even more influence as a result, pursued a thoroughly chauvinist, militarist, expansionist agenda steeped in racism and antisemitism.<sup>14</sup>

The *Bund Neues Vaterland* proclaimed the goal of providing direct and indirect support for all endeavours capable of filling the politics and diplomacy of the nations of Europe with the idea of peaceful competition and of supra-national union, with the aim of bringing about political and economic understanding between the civilized nations. With a few unambiguous words, it demanded the democratization of Germany: “This can only be achieved if we break with the system that has been in place up to now, whereby the few decide on the weal and woe of hundreds of millions of people.”<sup>15</sup>

Lilli Jannasch and Emma Krappek spent substantial funds on the project. The Franco-German Lilli Jannasch (1872–about 1968)<sup>16</sup>, who is today largely

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<sup>13</sup> Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> For more on this, see Hering, Rainer, *Konstruierte Nation. Der Alldeutsche Verband 1890 bis 1939*, Hamburg: Christians, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> “Satzung des Bundes Neues Vaterland’”, in: Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Lilli Jannasch, also spelled Lilly: Lilli Jannasch was born in 1872, the daughter of a German bank director father and a French mother. She grew up in Silesia, Dresden, and Berlin. At least since 1904, she had become and activist in the women’s movement around Alice Salomon (1872–1948) and the freethinkers movement around Rudolph Penzig (1855–1931) [...] Jannasch was a member of the *Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur* (Society for Ethical Culture), founded by Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, a philosopher and peace campaigner, and of *Deutscher Monistenbund*, a scientific quasi-religion founded by the German zoologist and evolutionary proponent Ernst Haeckel. It was through the Society for Ethical Culture, of which she had been a member since the beginning of the 20th century, that Jannasch became involved with organized pacifism. She had also been a contributor to the Society’s journal, *Ethische Kultur*, and was a founding member of the *Deutscher Bund für weltliche Schule und Moralunterricht* (German League for Secular and Moral Education) in 1906. [...] In 1914, Jannasch, along with Albert Einstein, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, Kurt von Tepper-Laski, and others, founded the *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League). Earlier that year, Jannasch had established the Neues Vaterland publishing house in Berlin, which published Lehmann-Russbüldt’s *Die Schöpfung der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa* (The Creation of the United States of Europe). [...] Jannasch became the BNV’s Secretary and administrative director. She publicly opposed Germany’s annexation policy, advocating instead for peace negotiations and increased democracy. In 1916 [...] Jannasch was arrested and imprisoned,

forgotten, had already, on the request of Tepper-Laski and Lehmann Russbült, set up the publishing house *Neues Vaterland* (“New Fatherland”) by October 1914. She did this to facilitate the distribution of a brochure (with no named author) which advocated for immediate peace and the establishment of the United States of Europe.<sup>17</sup> She also became the director of the BNV. This led to thriving publishing activities, although the government soon started banning certain publications and the BNV was publicly denounced, not only in the Pan-German press. On 7 February 1916, the BNV, which had already been subjected to all kinds of harassment, had to cease all activities for the duration of the war. On 31 March, Lilli Jannasch was arrested and detained without trial; after 14 weeks, her lawyer managed to obtain her release. This lawyer was Hugo Haase (1863–1919), at the time one of two SPD chairmen and later – until his assassination in 1919 – the sole chairman of the Independent SPD (USPD), which, at a conference in Gotha at Easter 1917, had split from the SPD because of its support for the German war effort.

*Emma Krappek*,<sup>18</sup> the partner of Otto Lehmann-Russbült, not only contributed to the funding of the BNV. In September 1915, she also covered the travel costs for the German participants at the Zimmerwald Conference in Switzerland,<sup>19</sup> where the European left, and its male section in particular, de-

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without trial, for four months on charges of treason. Her release was due to the active efforts of family and friends, including Hugo Haase. Though banned from any political activity for the remainder of the war, Jannasch continued her pacifist activism. She was a staunch critic of the Church for its pro-war stance and antipathy to pacifism. [...] In 1919, Lilli Jannasch moved to the Rhineland, which was under postwar occupation, and she became a vocal opponent of the widespread defamation of Black French occupation troops (“*Black Shame*”). [...] Throughout the postwar years, Jannasch worked for Franco-German rapprochement, continuing to decry militarism and nationalist propaganda. In 1923, she established a ‘fund for reconciliation with the French and Belgian people’, in an effort to acknowledge and make reparations for the destructive impact of the German troops in occupied areas of France of Belgium. [...] In the latter years of the 1920s, Jannasch became disillusioned in the face of growing nationalistic feeling in Germany. She withdrew from political activity and worked as a graphologist in Wiesbaden and Frankfurt. Following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, Jannasch’s house was raided and she underwent interrogation by Frankfurt police. She fled to France, settling in Strasbourg, and continuing to work as a graphologist. Details of her later years are unknown. wikipedia.org (taken from the German and English Wikipedia pages)

<sup>17</sup> See Lehmann-Russbült, Otto, *Die Schöpfung der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1914.

<sup>18</sup> There were no reliable biographical data to be found for Emma Krappek.

<sup>19</sup> From 5 to 8 September 1915, the Zimmerwald conference near Bern, Switzerland, brought together (anti-militarist, socialist) organizations and parties from the entire

livered its second display of vitality since the outbreak of the war. The first such sign of life had been sent out by the women of the European left, with Clara Zetkin and Angelica Balabanoff leading the way,<sup>20</sup> from Bern, Switzerland, six months earlier.<sup>21</sup> The reference to the Zimmerwald Conference as a male-only event was made not only in the Communist Party literature.

Up until the beginning of the war, Emma Krappek had provided an office in her Berlin-Wilmersdorf apartment in Regensburger Strasse for the “*Komitee Konfessionslos*” (“Confessionless Committee”), a group that published a “*Kirchen-Austritts-Korrespondenz*” (“Leaving-the-church Correspondence”) twice a week. In 1919, Emma Krappek joined the German Communist Party (KPD). In 1920, her foster daughter became the first wife of Ernst Reuter, who, as a leading German Communist, called himself “Friesland”<sup>22</sup>. Even after her son-in-law Reuter was expelled from the party, Emma Krappek remained a KPD member. A phrase one could often hear within the party at the time was, “the best thing about ‘Friesland’ is his mother-in-law [...]”<sup>23</sup>

*Kurt von Tepper-Laski* (1850–1931) and Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt were the true initiators of the BNV. Lehmann-Russbüldt noted a remark in his diary Tepper-Laski had made on 8 August 1914: “We have to carry out a revolution after the war in order to prevent it from happening again.”<sup>24</sup>

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European left and resolved – in spite of Lenin’s (1870–1924) politics of destruction (he wanted to turn the world war into a civil war, in which he succeeded in Russia in 1918) – a manifesto against the war (*Zimmerwald Manifesto*) drafted by Leon Trotsky (1879–1940). For a more expansive treatment, see Lademacher, Horst (ed.), *Die Zimmerwalder Bewegung. Protokolle und Korrespondenz, 2 Bände*, The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1967.

<sup>20</sup> The leader of the Italian Socialist Party, Angelica Balabanoff (1869–1965), who came from a Ukrainian upper-class background, and who briefly served as the Secretary of the Communist International, and Robert Grimm (1881–1958), the chief editor of the social-democratic publication *Tagwacht* (published in Bern, Switzerland), organized both the Zimmerwald Conference and the anti-war conference in Kienthal (also near Bern) the following year.

<sup>21</sup> The conference had taken place from 26 to 28 March 1915; see “Erklärung der Internationalen Sozialistischen Frauenkonferenz zu Bern”, in: Voigt, Marga (ed.), *Clara Zetkin. Die Kriegsbriefe*, Berlin: Dietz, 2016, pp. 209–212; Balabanoff, Angelica, *LENIN oder: Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel*, ed. by Jörn Schüttrumpf, 2nd revised ed., Berlin: Dietz, 2016, pp. 47 ff.; Martha Arendsee (1885–1953) and Tony Sender (1888–1964) smuggled the paper into Germany, where it was then distributed illegally.

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Reuter came from the town of Apenrade in Frisia (in German: Friesland), which today belongs to Denmark.

<sup>23</sup> Brandt, Willy/Löwenthal, Richard, *Ernst Reuter, Ein Leben für die Freiheit. Eine politische Biographie*, Munich: Kindler, 1957, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> Lehmann-Russbüldt, O., *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 13.

He had in mind the establishment of a social-democratic republic. The equestrian and cavalry captain Tepper-Laski had distinguished himself during the Franco-German War of 1870–71. Yet after he was ordered to make sure the troops he commanded stood to attention in front of a young princess, he bid farewell to the army. Tepper-Laski was an advocate for Franco-German relations and understanding at various levels, and, in 1906, supported the foundation of the *Deutscher Monistenbund* (“German Monist League”), an internationalist and pacifist freethinker organization. Given the growing threat of war, he funded a meeting in Brussels in 1913 at which German and French journalists were to socialize and get to know each other better.

*Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt* (1873–1964), a trained bookseller, was the director of the “Confessionless Committee” and worked in Emma Krappek’s apartment until the outbreak of the war. From 1922 to 1926, he served as the German League for Human Rights’ general secretary; his 1929 work *Die blutige Internationale der Rüstungsindustrie* (“The bloody International of the arms industry”) was translated into eleven languages. On 23 August 1933, the Nazis put Lehmann-Russbüldt’s and 32 others’ names on the very first so-called expatriation list.

At least twelve of the 33 people on the expatriation list were members of the BNV or the German League for Human Rights, which – in terms of membership numbers – was a tiny organization. At the same time, most people on the list were indeed somehow connected to these groups:<sup>25</sup> Alfred Apfel,\* lawyer; Georg Bernhard, journalist; Rudolf Breitscheid,\* Social-Democratic politician; Eugen Eppstein, Communist politician; Alfred Falk,\* pacifist; Lion Feuchtwanger, writer; Ruth Fischer (listed under the name Elfriede Gohlke), Communist politician; Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, philosopher; Hellmut von Gerlach,\* journalist; Kurt Grossmann,\* general secretary of the German League for Human Rights from 1926 to 1933; Albert Grzesinski, Social-Democratic politician, President of the Berlin Police; Emil Julius Gumbel,\* mathematician; Wilhelm Hansmann, Social-Democratic politician; Friedrich Heckert, Communist politician; Max Hoelz, Communist politician; Berthold Jacob,\* journalist; Alfred Kerr, drama critic; Heinrich Mann,\* writer; Peter Maslowski, Communist politician; Willi Münzenberg, Communist politician, publisher; Heinz Neumann, Communist politician; Wilhelm Pieck, Communist politician; Philipp Scheidemann, Social-Democratic

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<sup>25</sup> The names of the members of the League for Human Rights are marked with \*.

politician, proclaimed the German republic in 1918; Leopold Schwarzschild, journalist (*Das Tagebuch*); Max Sievers, chairman of the German Freethinkers Association (*Deutscher Freidenker Verband*); Friedrich Stampfer, chief editor of the SPD's central organ, *Vorwärts*; Ernst Toller,\* writer; Kurt Tucholsky,\* journalist; Robert Weismann, Prussian State Secretary; Bernhard Weiß, Vice President of the Berlin Police; Otto Wels, chairman of the SPD; Johannes Werthauer,\* lawyer and notary public.

After his return to Germany in 1951, Berlin's city government, the Berlin Senate, granted Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt an honorarium.

The only information we have about the journalist *Georg Eblers*, who died before 1927, is that on 24 December 1914 he and Lehmann-Russbüldt had a lengthy conversation with the diplomat Unico von der Groeben (1861–1924) for several hours at the Continental hotel near Berlin's Friedrichstrasse station. This latter carefully explained that “a complete and unconditional understanding between France and Germany [was] by all means possible,” if only the German Kaiser had wanted as much.<sup>26</sup> Groeben was part of a circle of diplomats who supplied the BNV with background information, without themselves being publicly associated with the League – with the exception of Hans Schlieben, who had retired from diplomatic service.

The only consideration regarding *Albert Einstein* (1879–1955) – who had moved from Zurich to Berlin after accepting a call from the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Advancement of Science and the University of Berlin – that shall be mentioned here is that the outbreak of the First World War prompted him to concern himself for the first time with political issues, indeed intensely so. A few days after the war had begun, he wrote to an Austrian colleague who was working at Leiden University in the Netherlands: “At such a time as this, one realizes what a sorry species of animal one belongs to. I doze along quietly with my musings and only experience a mixture of pity and revulsion.” Four months later, he added: “The international catastrophe weighs heavily on me as an internationalist person. It is hard to understand, as one lives through this great epoch, that one belongs to this crazy degenerate species that claims to possess freedom of will. If only somewhere there were an island for the benign and prudent. There I too would be a fervent patriot.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Lehmann-Russbüldt, O. *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Einstein to Paul Ehrenfest, August and December 1914, quoted in: Fölsing, Albrecht, *Albert Einstein. A Biography*, transl. by Ewald Osers, London: Penguin, 1998, p. 343, 347.

*Ernst Reuter* (1889–1953) was the son of a middle-class family from Schleswig-Holstein. He joined the SPD in 1912 and, for a short period in 1914, worked as one of the party’s paid travelling speakers. Before the *Kirchen-Austritts-Korrespondenz* (“Leaving-the-Church Correspondence”) was banned at the beginning of the war, he worked part-time as an editor for this publication in Emma Krappek’s apartment. From November 1914 onward, Reuter co-managed the BNV together with Lilli Jannasch – until he was drafted in the army and, after ending up as a prisoner of war in Russia, subsequently joined the Bolsheviks. In 1918, he worked as a people’s commissar in the settlement area of the Volga Germans in Saratov. On 19 December 1918, Reuter accompanied Karl Radek,<sup>28</sup> who was travelling to Berlin illegally, and would soon move up in the ranks of the KPD. From August to December 1921, he was its first and only general secretary, before breaking with the party,<sup>29</sup> which ultimately led to his expulsion.

The closet republican *Hans Schlieben* (1865–1943) had served as German Consul in the Serbian capital Belgrade; he harboured a particular dislike of his supreme superior, the emperor, and his politics. After his true stance was revealed, he was going to be transferred to a new position in the city of Quito in Ecuador. He opted for retirement instead and, after the beginning of the war, mainly lived in Bern, Switzerland, with his French wife. Funded by the French secret service and US government funds from the “Committee on Public Information”, he anonymously published a paper twice a week that opposed Prussian militarism, called *Die freie Zeitung* (“The free Newspaper”). It was not until 17 September 1919 that Schlieben publicly revealed his role as the mastermind behind the publication.

*Ernst Bloch* (1885–1977), the philosopher of the “not-yet” and of non-simultaneity, and *Hugo Ball* (1886–1927), the founder of the Dadaist move-

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<sup>28</sup> Karl Radek, whose real name was Sobelsohn (1885–1939), had been excluded from Polish and German Social Democracy on the initiative of Rosa Luxemburg and her friends in 1911 due to financial irregularities; Radek subsequently became a leading Bolshevik. Acting as the specialist on German affairs in the Communist International until his fall from power in 1924, Radek was responsible, from 1920 onward, for enforcing the submission of Germany’s KPD to the Bolsheviks and – at the international level – establishing the defamation of opponents, which Lenin had introduced to left-wing politics, as a key method of Communist politics. During the second Moscow show trial (a.k.a. the “Trial of the Seventeen”) in 1937, Radek was sentenced to ten years in a labour camp; on 19 May 1939, he was murdered on the orders of Stalin.

<sup>29</sup> See Friesland, Ernst (Ernst Reuter), *Zur Krise unserer Partei. Als Manuskript gedruckt*, Berlin, 1921.

ment, had both gone into exile in Switzerland and became friends in 1917–18. They lived off the fees Schlieben paid them for their newspaper articles.

At the time, the most well-known author working for him was *Richard Grelling* (1853–1929), who – in contrast to Ernst Bloch and Hugo Ball – is nigh-on completely forgotten today. Grelling was the legal advisor of the *Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller* (“Association for the Protection of German Authors”) and, in 1892, co-founder of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (“German Peace Society”). Due to its elaborate line of evidence proving that the First World War was a conflict systematically plotted by Austro-Hungary and Germany with the aim of territorial conquests, his work, *J'accuse! By A German* (originally published in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1915), became a great success both in Switzerland and, in translated versions, in the countries of the Entente. It was distributed – just like the newspaper *Die Freie Zeitung* – in large quantities among German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war in France and Britain who still believed in the official narrative of Germany fighting off an attack by the Central Powers.

*Hugo Simon* (1880–1950), the only private banker in Germany ever known to be a leftist, was a supervisory board member at the publishing houses S. Fischer Verlag and Ullstein Verlag as well as the banking consultant of gallery owner and publisher Paul Cassirer (1871–1926), the husband of actress Tilla Durieux (1880–1971), a leading actress at the *Berliner Theater* at the time; she supported the imprisoned Rosa Luxemburg financially.<sup>30</sup> In 1918–19, Simon, representing the USPD, briefly served as Prussian Minister of Finance. When, during the rampant inflation of 1923, freelance journalists were unable to earn any income, Simon gave Kurt Tucholsky (who continues to be a widely read writer to this day) a job as his private secretary – until the “man with the five pseudonyms” (*“Mann mit den 5 PS”*)<sup>31</sup> shifted his main place of residence abroad in 1924.

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<sup>30</sup> The pianist Leo Kestenberg “also spoke about Rosa Luxemburg, who was in prison. Shortly before my trip to Switzerland, I had learned of her financial predicament and advised Kestenberg to forward a monthly allowance, which I would transfer to him, to her loved ones. I was happy to be able to provide at least a modicum of support to this extraordinary woman.” Tilla Durieux, *Eine Tür steht offen. Erinnerungen*, Berlin-Grünwald: Non Stop Bücherei, 1958, p. 124.

<sup>31</sup> That is what Tucholsky called himself (the pun being that “5 PS” also means “five horsepower” in German); the pseudonyms he used as a writer were Kaspar Hauser, Peter Panter, Theobald Tiger, and Ignaz Wrobel. His own name, which he used only sporadically in his publicized works, was merely a fifth pseudonym to him.

Tisa von der Schulenburg (1903–2001), the sister of Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg (1902–1944), one of the later co-conspirators of Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg (1907–1944) who carried out the attempted assassination of Hitler, wrote about Hugo Simon, whose bank, Bett, Simon & Co,<sup>32</sup> managed the funds of the League for Human Rights: “Hugo Simon’s residence was where politicians, artists, scientists, scholars congregated once a week: Braun, the Minister President of Prussia, Berlin’s mayor Böss, Scheidemann, Heilmann, Breitscheid, Paul Levi [...] Almost all renowned writers of the time were part of this circle: Brecht, Remarque, both the Zweigs, Döblin, Wassermann, Heinrich Mann, Ringelnatz, Max Herrmann-Neiße, Annette Kolb, Else Lasker-Schüler, Zuckmayer [...]”<sup>33</sup>

After many had been forced to emigrate after 1933, Hugo Simon’s Paris-based bank managed the accounts of numerous émigré organizations. In 1940, he and his wife succeeded in escaping to Brazil using false Czechoslovakian passports. His efforts to re-establish himself as a writer under his own name failed.<sup>34</sup>

Judicial Council *Max Steinschneider* (born 1853, deceased in December 1915) established the villa colony Neu-Döberitz in today’s Dallgow-Döberitz near Berlin and was an active supporter of numerous social projects and cooperatives. In 1915, he donated the bulk of his wealth to the *Verein zur Förderung der Bodenkultur unter den Juden Deutschlands* (“Society for the Promotion of Soil Culture among German Jews”) who wanted to open a gardening school for girls. In 1933, the villa colony was “Aryanized”. One of Steinschneider’s sons who emigrated to France, lawyer Adolf Moritz Steinschneider (born 1894), was tracked down and murdered on 11 June 1944 by members of the SS division *Das Reich*, the same division that had committed the Oradour-sur-Glane massacre<sup>35</sup> the day before.

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<sup>32</sup> Berlin W8, Mauerstrasse 53.

<sup>33</sup> von der Schulenburg, Tisa, *Ich hab’s gewagt. Bildhauerin und Ordensfrau*, Freiburg: Husum, 1987, p. 84.

<sup>34</sup> A grandson of Hugo Simon has adapted his grandfather’s story for a novel; see Cardoso, Rafael, *Das Vermächtnis der Seidenraupen. Geschichte einer Familie*, transl. into German from Brazilian Portuguese by Luis Ruby, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> On 10 June 1944, a German Waffen-SS company belonging to the *Das Reich* division butchered some 643 people, including many women and children, in the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane. Hardly any of the perpetrators were ever held accountable.



## Before the meeting in The Hague on 7 April 1915

The BNV, whose total membership never exceeded 200,<sup>36</sup> brought together conservatives, liberals and socialists. And yet, the “the official party democracy of the semi-democratic and Social Democratic type [...] rarely regarded the Bund Neues Vaterland with a smile, but mostly with tear-filled eyes: it was considered too ‘radical’.”<sup>37</sup>

The names of many of its members – particularly its male members – are still familiar to a limited public today. By March 1915, Elsbeth Bruck, Ilse Müller-Oestreich, Elisabeth Rotten, Helene Stöcker, Georg von Arco, Eduard Bernstein, Kurt Eisner, Rudolf Goldscheid, Walther Schücking, Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze, Hans Wehberg, and Richard Witting had all joined the BNV – while Anna Hamburger-Ludwig and Anna Thiessen, both Berlin residents, will likely remain forgotten forever.

In 1918, the actress *Elsbeth Bruck* (1874–1970), who worked hand-in-hand with Lilli Jannasch, was arrested. Reacting to the false reports that Elsbeth Bruck was dead, Erich Mühsam (1878–1934)<sup>38</sup> wrote in his diary in his prison cell in the Ansbach fortress: “As the ‘Rote Fahne’ reports, Elsbeth Bruck has shot herself in Berlin. She was a fine, intelligent woman full of character and idealism. During the war, she loyally fulfilled her duty and was committed, without shunning risk or imprisonment, to the fight against the butchery and to the promotion of pacifist, socialist ideas. Later, she contributed to revolutionary efforts with her splendid talent for reciting; and, indeed, she also rendered some of my verses of battle in front of workers in Munich and Berlin.”<sup>39</sup>

Elsbeth Bruck survived the Holocaust in her British exile. Allegedly, she – who had worked as an actress with the great innovator of German theatre Max Reinhard (1873–1943) – would later become an advisor for rhetoric and public speaking to East Germany’s head of state Walter Ulbricht

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<sup>36</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Erich Mühsam had been detained since 1919 for his involvement in the Bavarian Soviet Republic; the League for Human Rights eventually successfully obtained his pardon in 1924; see *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>39</sup> Erich Mühsam, *Tagebücher, Volume 11, Book 34*, Entry on 13 September 1922, [muehsam-tagebuch.de](http://muehsam-tagebuch.de)

(1893–1973),<sup>40</sup> who famously spoke with a very strong Saxon accent. She is buried at the “Socialist Cemetery”, or Friedrichsfelde Central Cemetery, in Berlin-Lichtenberg, not too far from Ulbricht’s grave.

Little is known about *Ilse Müller-Oestreich*, an educator who probably died in 1928: she was part of the leadership of the *Deutscher Käuferbund* (“German Consumers’ League”), an “association of men and women of all faiths and tendencies who acknowledge their responsibility as buyers and consumers towards home workers, workshop workers, and trade and retail employees, and pursue the improvement of their working conditions.”<sup>41</sup>

On 6 December 1914, Ilse Müller-Oestreich represented the *Käuferbund* at the inaugural session of the *Kriegsausschuss für Konsumenteninteressen* (“War Committee for Consumer Interests”), an alliance that opposed extortionate rents and prices and united some thirty-five affiliated associations representing around six million members. In 1917, Ilse Müller-Oestreich acted as its reporting secretary.<sup>42</sup> She was married to the chairman of the *Bund Entschiedener Schulreformer* (“Union of Radical School Reformers”) Paul Oestreich (1878–1959),<sup>43</sup> with whom she also co-authored several articles and books.<sup>44</sup>

The progressive educator *Elisabeth Rotten* (1882–1964) had earned her PhD with a thesis on “Goethe’s archetypal phenomenon and the Platonic idea” in 1913 and subsequently taught at Cambridge University. During the war, she worked with Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze at the aid agency *Auskunfts- und Hilfsstelle für Deutsche im Ausland und Ausländer in Deutschland* (“Information and Aid Centre for Germans Abroad and Foreigners in Germany”) which she herself had founded. In 1915, Elisabeth Rotten represented the BNV at the 1st International Women’s Conference in The

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<sup>40</sup> See [bruckfamilyblog.com](http://bruckfamilyblog.com)

<sup>41</sup> *Satzung und Geschäftsbericht des Käuferbundes Deutschland* (“Statute and Annual Report of the German Consumers’ League”) (1907). [www.europa.clio-online.de](http://www.europa.clio-online.de)

<sup>42</sup> See *Bericht über die Sitzung des Gesamtvorstandes des Kriegsausschusses für Konsumenteninteressen unter Hinzuziehung der Bezirks-Ausschüsse am 25. August 1917 im “Rheingold” Berlin*, n.y.

<sup>43</sup> See Homburg, Heidrun, “Das Reichswirtschaftsamt/Reichswirtschaftsministerium in der Formierungsphase 1917–1923. Strukturen und Akteure”, in: Abelshauser, Werner/Fisch, Stefan/Hoffmann, Dierk/Holtfrerich, Carl-Ludwig/Ritschl, Albrecht (eds.), *Wirtschaftspolitik in Deutschland 1917–1990*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016, p. 173.

<sup>44</sup> For example: Oestreich, Paul/Mueller-Oestreich, Ilse, *Die freie studentische Produktionsgemeinschaft als Vorstufe der Einheitschule*, Berlin-Fichtenau: Verlag Gesellschaft und Erziehung, 1920.

Hague and was also a co-founder of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Later, she joined the "Religious Society of Friends" (Quakers). Elisabeth Rotten initiated social aid projects all her life; from 1937 until her death she was vice president of the *Association Montessori Internationale*.

The women's rights activist *Helene Stöcker* (1869–1943), who earned her PhD in Bern, Switzerland, had founded the *Bund für Mutterschutz* ("Maternity Protection League") which lobbied on behalf of unmarried mothers and their children. Furthermore, Helene Stöcker – publicly – demanded that male homosexuality be exempted from criminal punishment. Outraged by the churches' stance in favour of the war, she left the Church in January 1915. As long as she lived, she was always an active member of various anti-war groups; in the League for Human Rights she worked in the leading bodies, including the executive board and the "political advisory council". In 1925, she co-founded the *Ausschuss zur Durchführung des Volksentscheids für entschädigungslose Enteignung der Fürsten* ("Committee for the Implementation of the Referendum on the Uncompensated Expropriation of the Princes") together with René Robert Kuczynski and the later Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ludwig Quidde.<sup>45</sup> On the occasion of Helene Stöcker's 70th birthday on 13 November 1939, the *Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller* ("Association for the Protection of German Authors") organized a celebration in Stockholm. The progressive sex educator died of cancer in New York.

The first technical director of the company *Telefunken*, *Georg von Arco* (1869–1940), who had earned this firm international recognition after developing high-performance radio transmission stations, became the vice chairman of the BNW upon his affiliation. Due to his critical memorandum *Sollen wir Belgien annectieren?* ("Should we annex Belgium?"),<sup>46</sup> the circulation of which was banned immediately, he came into contact with the military for the first time in July 1915. From that point on, the altercations never subsided. The second-in-command of the German military dictatorship, Erich Ludendorff (1865–1937), had admitted – with the con-

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<sup>45</sup> The historian Ludwig Quidde (1858–1941) was the chairman of the German Peace Society (*Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*) from 1924 to 1929. In 1927, he and Ferdinand Buisson (1841–1932), the co-founder and long-standing member of the French League for Human Rights, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

<sup>46</sup> See Schücking, Lothar, "Sollen wir Belgien annectieren?", in: Lehmann-Russbüdt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, pp. 164–167.

sent of his official superior, Paul von Hindenburg – to the imperial Reich leadership in September 1918 that the war was lost. He demanded a parliamentary government that should assume responsibility for the disaster. Arco and other board members of the BNV then demanded the release of all political prisoners in a cable to the new Reich Chancellor Prince Max von Baden (1867–1929) who took office on 3 October. The likewise newly appointed state secretary without a portfolio within the Reich government, Philipp Scheidemann (1865–1939) – previously the SPD’s parliamentary group leader since 1913 – approved of this initiative: Karl Liebknecht and others were freed. However, the other leaders of the left – Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches – would remain in prison until the revolution a few weeks later. In 1923, Arco co-founded the *Gesellschaft der Freunde des neuen Russland* (“Society of the Friends of the New Russia”); he celebrated his 60th birthday in Moscow.

*Eduard Bernstein* (1850–1932) is commonly remembered as the founding father of the theoretical revisionism of Marxian concepts. Yet even Bernstein’s sidelining of these ideas did not please the imperial powers that be who – despite various concessions that had become unavoidable given the overall developments – displayed a political style reminiscent of the eighteenth century. After the suspension of the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1890, Bernstein was the only Social Democrat who would have to remain in exile for many years to come, as his arrest warrant was not repealed until 1901. Bernstein not only joined the BNV in 1915, but also spoke out publicly against the war alongside Hugo Haase and Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) – only a few weeks after Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Franz Mehring, and Karl Liebknecht,<sup>47</sup> none of whom could stand him.<sup>48</sup> The member of parliament Bernstein was, moreover, among the few German politicians who protested – loudly and audibly via the Reichstag – against the Young Turks’ genocide of the Armenians, committed by the Sublime Porte, i.e. the German-allied leadership of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>47</sup> See their contributions in: *Die Internationale. Eine Monatsschrift für Praxis und Theorie des Marxismus*, 14 April 1915. The journal was banned after its first issue by 1919, as the editors, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring, refused to accept a pre-publication censorship. After her arrest in February 1915, Rosa Luxemburg, had been forbidden to publish any written work for the duration of the war and therefore had to publish her texts anonymously.

<sup>48</sup> See Bernstein, Eduard/Haase, Hugo/Kautsky, Karl, “Das Gebot der Stunde”, *Leipziger Volkszeitung. Organ für die Interessen des gesamten werktätigen Volkes*, vol. 22, no. 130, 19 June 1915.

Whether – and if so, in what way – the assassin Anton von Arco auf Valley (known as Anton Arco-Valley) (1897–1945), who murdered Kurt Eisner (1867–1919) with two shots to the back of the head in Munich on 21 February 1919, might have been related to the technical director of the *Telefunken* company Georg von Arco, was never resolved. When the war broke out, Kurt Eisner had initially suspected a Russian aggression, but then quickly realized that the true aggressor was Germany. From the spring of 1915 onward, Eisner became the head of the Bavarian anti-war movement. Together with Sarah Sonja Rabinowitz, married name Lerch (1882–1918, born in Warsaw),<sup>49</sup> he organized the ammunition workers' strike in Munich in January 1918 – which was intended as part of a nationwide strike wave to enforce the democratization of the state and a negotiated peace agreement. Both were arrested, Sarah Sonja Rabinowitz committed suicide while in prison. After being freed from prison following the BNV's demand for an immediate release of political prisoners, on 8 November 1918 the Berlin-born Kurt Eisner proclaimed the "Free State of Bavaria" (*Freistaat Bayern*), which, incidentally, is still today the official title of the modern state of Bavaria.<sup>50</sup>

The enterprising private scholar *Rudolf Goldscheid* (1870–1931) from Vienna is considered one of the pioneers of sociology in the German-speaking world. Together with the leading theoretician of Austro-Marxism Max Adler (1873–1937), he co-founded the "Sociological Society" (*Soziologische Gesellschaft*). In 1909, Goldscheid initiated the "German Sociological Association" (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*), which he co-founded together with Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), Max Weber (1864–1920) and Georg Simmel (1858–1918). During the First World War, he was working on the question of how the war debt could be repaid and, in the process, developed his doctrine of financial sociology, which was widely adopted around the world. In 1926, Goldscheid initiated the foundation of the "Austrian League for Human Rights".<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See Naumann, Cornelia, *"Ich hoffe noch, dass aller Menschen Glück nahe sein muss..." Fragmente eines revolutionären Lebens der Sarah Sonja Rabinowitz*, Lich: Verlag Edition AV, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Since 2016, Kurt Eisner's writings are being published – with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung – by a circle around Frank Jacob at Berlin Metropol Verlag under the title Kurt Eisner Studien ("Kurt Eisner Studies"). Seven volumes have appeared thus far.

<sup>51</sup> From 2018 to 2020, the archive of the Austrian League for Human Rights was reviewed under the auspices of Christopher Treiblmayr; see also, id., "[...] mit dem

The scholar of international law *Walther Schücking* (1875–1935) was a lecturer at the University of Marburg, where he taught constitutional law, international law, Church law and administrative law. When he protested the expropriation of Polish-owned land based on the Prussian settlement law of 20 March 1908, the Prussian ministry of education permanently excluded him from the examination commission for law studies due to his alleged “moral unworthiness”. That same year, his brother Lothar Schücking (1873–1943) – who was the mayor of the northern coastal town of Husum – published the article *Die Reaktion in der inneren Verwaltung Preußens* (“Reactionary Forces within the Domestic Administration of Prussia”), adding, in parentheses: “Mayor X.Y. from Z.”. After his identity was revealed, he lost his pension claims and his title due to an alleged “violation of the duty of loyalty”. Lothar Schücking likewise joined the BNV in 1915. During the world war, the two brothers maintained their allegiance to the cause of international understanding. The general headquarters of the Reichswehr therefore specifically forbade the international law scholar Walther Schücking to correspond with foreign colleagues on these matters, to undertake any travels abroad or to disseminate his ideas through international organizations. From 1921 to 1933, Walther Schücking was commissioned by the German government for two terms as German envoy to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. It was the city where he stayed after 1933 – and where he eventually died, too.

The theologian *Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze* (1885–1969) had a position at the Hofkirche (court chapel) in Potsdam, where he became very aware of the imperial and bourgeois “elites” ignorance regarding the growing despair among large parts of the population. As a result, in 1911, he and his wife founded the *Soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berlin-Ost* (SAG – “Social Working Group Berlin-East”), a project for neighbourly help and settlement assistance; both moved – together with a group of like-minded activists – to one of Berlin’s poorest quarters, around “Schlesischer Bahnhof” station (today Berlin Ostbahnhof station).

“To the SAG founder, being a neighbour meant combatting the existing class hatred through, at times self-sacrificing, relationship building and

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heutigen Begriffe der Menschenrechte unvereinbar”, Zum Engagement der Österreichischen Liga für Menschenrechte für Homosexuelle, in: *Mitteilungen der Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft*, nos. 55/56, December 2016, pp. 50–65. I would like to thank Gabriella Hauch in Vienna for pointing this out to me.

practical altruism, and to create a climate of mutual trust through a policy of gradualism.”<sup>52</sup>

During the war, Siegmund-Schultze worked with Elisabeth Rotten in the latter’s aid organization “*Auskunfts- und Hilfsstelle für Deutsche im Ausland und Ausländer in Deutschland*” (“Information and Aid Centre for Germans Abroad and Foreigners in Germany”). In 1933, he helped Jews escape the country; he was escorted by the Gestapo to the Swiss border, i.e., into exile.

Alongside Walther Schücking, *Hans Wehberg* (1885–1962) was among the intellectual fathers of a pacifist international law theory. When Germany invaded the neutral country of Belgium in 1915, Wehberg, a soldier of the occupying force, protested against this violation of international law, only to be transferred to a penalty unit, subsequently given a dishonourable discharge from the military, and be persecuted for treason. This story did not feature in the German press but was reported on in the paper *L’Humanité* (Paris) on 22 September 1915.<sup>53</sup> From 1924 until his death, Wehberg published the journal *Die Friedens-Warte – Journal of International Peace and Organization*. In 1928, he accepted a chair at the *Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales* in Geneva.

The chairman of the supervisory board of the Darmstädter und Nationalbank, or Danatbank, banker *Richard Witting*, born Witkowski (1856–1923), who, as an advisor to the imperial government, had understood very soon after the war began that the Reich’s leaders had launched a war of conquest, despite all denials. In 1916, a discussion circle formed around Witting, which included the chief editor of the left-liberal paper *Welt am Montag*, Hellmut von Gerlach, Witting’s son-in-law Hans Paasche, Eduard Bernstein, Kurt Eisner, and, occasionally, the subsequent foreign minister Walther Rathenau (born 1867),<sup>54</sup> who was assassinated by right-wing terrorists in 1922. The chief editor of the SPD paper *Vorwärts* referred to Witting’s villa as “the most important of all the ‘places of conspiracy’”.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The information here and in the following is taken from: [stadtteilarbeit.de](http://stadtteilarbeit.de)

<sup>53</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 75.

<sup>54</sup> Previously, Rathenau, as the general manager of the AEG corporation, had advocated annexations by Germany; the proposal to subject 100,000 Belgians – under potentially deadly conditions – to forced labour in Germany was, in fact, his idea.

<sup>55</sup> Stampfer, Friedrich, *Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse. Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben*, Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1957, p. 218, quoted in: [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)

In 1919, Witting collaborated with Hugo Preuß (1860–1925) in drawing up the first drafts of the Weimar constitution.

Richard Witting's younger brother was Maximilian Harden (1861–1927), since 1892 the editor of the journal *Die Zukunft*, which was banned in 1915. Maximilian Harden died from the long-term complications of an attempted assassination by far-right radicals in 1922; his fate is strikingly reminiscent of that of the assassination victim Rudi Dutschke (1940–1979) half a century later.

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In the first months after its inception, the BNV was hoping for a collaboration with the German government and offered the corresponding services to the latter. After all, the ministry of foreign affairs was partly under the influence of the Bethmann Hollweg wing, who were interested in a swift peace agreement and helped fund a conference in spring 1915 that brought together representatives of the BNV and similar groups from the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands. This meeting took place in The Hague from 7 to 10 April 1915 – with the German Foreign Ministry issuing passports for participants. Alongside Tepper-Laski and Lehmann-Russbüldt, the BNV representatives in attendance included Walther Schücking and, from Vienna, Rudolf Goldscheid as well as Ludwig Quidde, the chairman of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (“German Peace Society”).<sup>56</sup>

Given the pressure from the German military, however, the foreign ministry did not reply to an offer from Dutch activists to act as mediators.

Instead, the BNV was increasingly faced with a veritable smear campaign by the military authorities, who made life difficult for the peace activists through mail interception, bans on receiving mail, or the confiscation of documents and office searches.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ludwig Quidde and the Berlin Branch of the Peace Society subsequently joined the League for Human Rights.

<sup>57</sup> See Wieland, Lothar, “Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte”, in: Donat, Helmut/Holl, Karl (eds.), *Die Friedensbewegung. Organisierter Pazifismus in Deutschland, Österreich und in der Schweiz*, with a Foreword by Dieter Lattmann, Düsseldorf: Econ, 1983, p. 78.



## Before the oppression of the BNV

*Anna Siemsen* (1882–1951) is a case apart: not only her brothers August, the educator, politician and journalist (1884–1958), Karl, the lawyer and politician (1887–1968), and Hans, the journalist and writer (1891–1969), are still known in specialist circles today – but their sister’s name has also been commemorated since 1966, for example, by a street in Berlin-Neukölln and schools in Hanover and Herford that are named after her. On 29 December 1932, the educator Anna Siemsen was relieved of her honorary professorship, which she had held at Jena University since 1923, by the Nazi minister for public education in the state of Thuringia. To engage in politics in exile in Switzerland, Anna Siemsen had to attain Swiss citizenship; to this end, in 1934 she contracted a bogus marriage, having hitherto remained unmarried well into her fifties.

On 18 September 1919, she had co-founded the *Bund Entschiedener Schulreformer* (“Union of Radical School Reformers”) along with Paul Oestreich and Elisabeth Rotten. All projects within the SPD that were left-wing and pacifist counted on her as a supporter, including Julius Schaxel’s<sup>58</sup> *Urania*, *Monatshefte für Naturerkenntnis und Gesellschaftslehre*, the journal *Der Klassenkampf – Marxistische Blätter*, the *Jungsozialistische Schriftenreihe*, where she acted as co-publisher, or at the foundation of the Bund sozialdemokratischer Intellektueller in 1926, which the SPD leadership brusquely rejected. Yet by 1931 she had had enough of the SPD. In the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany (SAPD – *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands*), a group that split from the SPD, Anna Siemsen was the leading figure of the party’s left-social-democratic, pacifist, i.e., “right” wing; she had a lasting impact on the party’s publications. The party also included KPD co-founders such as Rosi Wolfstein (1888–1987) and her partner Paul Frölich (1884–1953) and, later, Jacob Walcher, too.<sup>59</sup> They were joined by Otto Brenner (1907–1972) and Max Diamand (1908–1992), who

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<sup>58</sup> Julius Schaxel (1887–1943) had a position as zoologist and evolutionary biologist at Jena University; he helped retrieve the documents belonging to the doctoral dissertation of Karl Marx, who had once earned his PhD in Jena, and was the KPD’s representative at the founding meeting of the *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (“National Committee for a Free Germany”) in Moscow in 1943.

<sup>59</sup> See the monograph by Scheer, Regina, *Bittere Brunnen. Hertha Gordon-Walcher und der Traum von der Revolution*, Munich: Penguin, 2023, which received the Leipzig Book Fair Prize in 2023.

would both rise to the top of IG Metall (a major industrial trade union) after 1945, and, not least, Willy Brandt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) from 1969 to 1974. Furthermore, Anna Siemsen was a board member of the League for Human Rights<sup>60</sup> and member of the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom. Following her return from exile after the Second World War, she took up a position as lecturer at the education department of the University of Hamburg.

*Rudolf Breitscheid* (1874–1944), whose success as chairman of the left-liberal party *Demokratische Vereinigung* (“Democratic Union”) had been rather limited, had joined the SPD in 1912; unlike many of those who had been brought up in the proletarian Social-Democratic stable, he was a thoroughbred politician.

Following the establishment of the BNV, he was among the very first to join this tiny group. He, who was referred to on the quiet – partly in recognition, partly with envy – as the “Social-Democratic lord”, quickly earned himself a reputation, not least because he rallied the Social-Democratic critics of the SPD leadership’s politics of compromise and *Burgfrieden* as the publisher the *Sozialistische Auslandspolitik* (“Socialist Foreign Policy”) from spring 1915 onwards. In 1917, he was one of the key figures behind the founding of the USPD and converted his paper into the new party’s theoretical publication; in 1918–19, he became Minister of the Interior in Prussia on the USPD ticket. In Paris, in 1936, Breitscheid participated in the “Lutetia Circle”, the *Ausschuss zur Vorbereitung einer deutschen Volksfront* (“Committee for the Preparation of a German Popular Front”), a group initiated by the communist publisher Willi Münzenberg (1889–1940). However, given that KPD representatives such as the later Socialist Unity Party (SED) chairman Walter Ulbricht (1893–1973) vehemently defended the first Moscow show trial (19 to 24 August 1936), this episode ended before it even started. Rudolf Breitscheid and his wife Tony<sup>61</sup> were extradited to the Gestapo by the Vichy government in 1941; on 24 August 1944, he was killed during an allied air raid while held at a special camp near Buchenwald concentration camp, while his wife survived heavily injured.

In the case of the multitalented *Eduard Fuchs* (1870–1940) – of whom his friend George Grosz (1893–1959) once said that he had been “one of

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Siemsen, Anna, “Erziehungsfragen”, *Die Menschenrechte. Organ der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, no. 6, 1 June 1929, pp. 1–4.

<sup>61</sup> Tony Breitscheid (1878–1968) was a women’s rights activist and social democratic politician.

the few real originals of our time”<sup>62</sup> – the tax authorities in Berlin-Zehlendorf not only collected the Reich Flight Tax, but also seized the so-called *Judenvermögensabgabe* (“Jewish Capital Levy”) from what was left of his wealth – even though he had no Jewish ancestry.<sup>63</sup> “Manners Fox”<sup>64</sup> (“*Sittenfuchs*”), as he was also commonly referred to – during his youth, first as an anarchist and later as a Social Democrat, he had been imprisoned repeatedly – had acquired a degree of fame after 1900 as the re-discoverer of Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) who had largely been forgotten after his death. Not only did Eduard Fuchs, together with the famous Berlin actress and diva Tilla Durieux, support Rosa Luxemburg while she was being held in “preventive custody”. The Spartacist who remained in the semi-darkness<sup>65</sup> was also one of the most active members of the BNV, travelling across Europe<sup>66</sup> on its behalf, and from 1929 until his death served as the treasurer of the anti-Stalinist KPD Opposition (KPD-O) led by Heinrich Brandler (1881–1967) and August Thalheimer (1884–1948).

In December 1900, a certain “Herr Müller” had approached Fuchs – who had contributed significantly to establishing the Social-Democratic Press in southern Germany following the repeal of the Anti-Socialist Laws in 1890 – and inquired whether he would be able to produce a Russian-language newspaper (*Iskra* – “The Spark”) in Munich. Unable to find any Cyrillic printing letters in Munich, Fuchs had to move the production to Probstheida near Leipzig, the stronghold of Russian expats in Germany at

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<sup>62</sup> *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz*, transl. by Arnold J. Pomerans, London: Allison & Busby, 1982 [1946], p. 152.

<sup>63</sup> The “Decree on an Atonement Tax on the Jews of German Nationality” (“*Verordnung über eine Sühneleistung der Juden deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit*”) had been signed into law by Hermann Göring on 12 November 1938.

<sup>64</sup> His *Illustrated History of Morals* (*Illustrierte Sittengeschichte*) in three volumes, each of which was accompanied by an illustrated book that was only approved for distribution via doorstep sales to academics, had brought Fuchs lasting wealth. In the Reichstag library, these six volumes were among the most-borrowed books at the end of the 1920s. George Grosz writes: “Fuchs was generally known by his nickname of ‘Manners Fox’ in tribute to the unceasing work he did on the updating of his history of manners. It was for that magnum opus that he had collected all those drawings and kept writing a running commentary on them, using quotations from novels, biographies, poems, memoirs and works of philosophy and medicine.” (*The Autobiography of George Grosz*, p. 151)

<sup>65</sup> For more on this, see Weitz, Ulrich, *Der Mann im Schatten. Eduard Fuchs, Sitten-Fuchs – Sozialist – Konspirateur – Sammler – Mäzen*, Berlin: Dietz, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Conscription into the army applied only to the cohorts born in and after 1871, which was Karl Liebknecht’s own year of birth.

the time. From the second issue of *Iskra* onward, the required letters became available in Munich after all, together with a Russian-speaking typesetter. On 20 December 1918, Rosa Luxemburg instructed Fuchs to Moscow in order to meet “Herr Müller” – a.k.a. Lenin – and make it clear to him that he should keep out of German affairs. The day before, Lenin’s emissary Karl Radek had arrived in Berlin together with Ernst Reuter – and a considerable amount of money.

In January 1940, Greta, the second wife of Eduard Fuchs (1885–1953), and a few friends of hers pulled a cart from one cemetery to the next through Paris, until, eventually, at Père Lachaise cemetery – where the graves of the fighters of the Paris Commune and Honoré Daumier are – they found Eduard Fuchs’s frozen body and buried him.

Greta Fuchs’s brother was *Max Alsberg* (1877–1933), a star among Germany’s top defence lawyers. The siblings came from the Alsberg dynasty, whose department store empire, which was based in the western part of the country, had become “Aryanized” after 1933. Usually, Max Alsberg primarily defended conservatives, among them, in 1920, the raving antisemite Karl Hefferich (1872–1920) who had “officiated” as vice Reich chancellor up until 1918. In 1931, however, Alsberg made himself unpopular not only with the Nazis: together with the leftist lawyers Kurt Rosenfeld, Alfred Apfel and Rudolf Olden – all of whom were leading protagonists of the League for Human Rights, the successor organization of the BNV – he defended the editor of the *Weltbühne*, League member Carl von Ossietzky, and the aircraft designer Walter Kreiser (1898–1958), the League’s expert on aeronautical matters, both of whom were charged with treason. Just like his sister – twenty years later in New York – Max Alsberg was unable to cope with a life in exile ...

*Hellmut von Gerlach* (1866–1935) had started out as a conservative and had initially even been drawn to the Christian Social Workers’ Party, an antisemitic group led by the temporary court chaplain in Berlin Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909), but profoundly changed his political views after 1892. In 1894, he wrote a letter to Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) and visited him in London. Having acted as the chief editor of the weekly newspaper *Welt am Montag* from 1898 onward – only interrupted by his term as member of parliament (the *Reichstag*) – he was already among the more active members of the BNV, as various documents bear his signature. As the successor of Rudolf Breitscheid in the role as chairman of the *Demokratische Vereinigung* (“Democratic Union”) from 1912 onward, he would become a prom-

inent hate figure for the far right after the war: at an assembly on 20 February 1920, shortly before the anti-republican *Kapp Putsch* on 13 March 1920, von Gerlach was severely injured by Freikorps members; it was the women present at the meeting who saved his life, among them the journalist Milly Zirker (1888–1971) with whom he would subsequently go into exile in 1933.<sup>67</sup> When a German court sentenced Carl von Ossietzky in 1931, Gerlach, as a matter of course, took over the chief editorship of the *Weltbühne* alongside his own paper for the duration of Ossietzky's prison term.

Leo Jogiches, the main organizer of the Spartacus group and Rosa Luxemburg's closest confidant – within the revolutionary currents of Russian Social Democracy, he and Rosa Luxemburg were the most important opponents of Lenin's course<sup>68</sup> – had maintained himself and his party work with the earnings from his family assets, including rent income from Vilnius. After the beginning of the war, however, Vilnius was now behind the frontline. The printshop owner *Julius Gerson* (1868–about 1942), a German Social Democrat, provided Jogiches with a job and income opportunity in the office of the stone printing company Pittius at Köpenicker Strasse 110, which belonged to him and his brother. Gerson also generously supported the two leading Spartacists Käte (1871–1953) and Hermann Duncker (1874–1960). Their sons Karl (1903–1940) and Wolfgang (1909–1942) temporarily stayed with the Gerson brothers<sup>69</sup> – whose Villas were situated right next to one another in Berlin's Dahlem district. Even when Gerson was taken into custody for a few days in 1918, the authorities were unable to find any evidence whatsoever of his assistance in the printing of Jogiches's illegal journal *Spartacus* and other materials. In 1942, the emigrant Gerson was summoned to the Prefecture of Police in Nice, France – which is where his trail is lost ...

*Kurt Grelling* (born 1886), the son of the author of *J'accuse!* (1915) was a mathematician; both father and son were already members of the BNV

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<sup>67</sup> For a more detailed account, see Quetting, Michael, "Vorkämpferin für Demokratie, Völkerverständigung und Frieden. Milly Zirker an der Seite Hellmut von Gerlach", in: Koch, Christoph (ed.), *Vom Junker zum Bürger. Hellmut von Gerlach – Demokrat und Pazifist in Kaiserreich und Republik*, Munich: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 19–48.

<sup>68</sup> See Schüttrumpf, Jörn, "Mit den Leninisten können wir nicht weiter zusammengehen...? oder: Wie Lenin Rosa Luxemburg 'besiegte'", *rosalux.de*.

<sup>69</sup> See Duncker, Käte and Hermann, *Ein Tagebuch in Briefen (1894–1953)*, ed. by Deutschland, Heinz with the collaboration of Deutschland, Ruth, Berlin: Dietz, 2016, p. 2624.

during the world war.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the Grelling-Nelson paradox, an antinomy that is relevant in entertainment linguistics, is named after Kurt Grelling and the founder of the “International Socialist Combat League” (ISK – *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund*) Leonard Nelson (1882–1927). After being deported from Belgium to France in 1940, he and his non-Jewish wife were among the 65,000 people who were loaded onto trains at the Drancy assembly camp, by both German and French troops working hand in hand, in order to be taken to the death camps. The Grellings were murdered at Auschwitz, probably on 12 September 1942; Kurt Grelling’s Stolperstein (“stumbling stone” – commemoration stone with a plaque bearing the names of Nazi victims) was placed in the pavement outside the house at Königsberger Strasse 13 in Berlin-Lichterfelde in 2008.

When *Freikorps* militias, backed by Gustav Noske’s firing order, raged through Berlin’s Friedrichshain and Lichtenberg districts from 13 March 1919 onward, systematically killing workers,<sup>71</sup> *Emil Julius Gumbel* (1891–1966) was attending a conference in Bern, Switzerland, on behalf of the BNV. He thereby escaped the summary execution that had been ordered against him. With regard to the unceasing right-wing terror ever since the assembly on 20 February 1919 at which Hellmut von Gerlach had almost been trampled to death, Carl Von Ossietzky recounted many years later: “This has been going on for more than ten years, ever since that memorable assembly in the auditorium at Savigny Square, where intruding Baltikumers<sup>72</sup> kicked Hellmut von Gerlach with their army boots. At the time, you stood your ground as chairman, calmly remained at your seat, still brandishing the bell even as the blood from the blows dealt by the young saviours of the fatherland was running down your face.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, Otto, “Der 28. June 1818 und Grelling, Richard”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, no. 1, 16 January 1929, p. 2; *ibid.*, nos. 4/5, 20 April 1929, pp. 6f.

<sup>71</sup> The number of murder victims indicated in the literature varies between 1,200 and 2,000; it is quite likely that the actual number, as in any civil war, is considerably higher; for a more in-depth treatment, see Weipert, Axel: *Die zweite Revolution. Rätebewegung in Berlin 1919/1920*, Berlin: be.bra, 2015.

<sup>72</sup> The Baltikumers (veterans of the Baltic campaign) refers to the terrorist *Freikorps* made up of demobilized Reichswehr soldiers who volunteered to fight in Latvia and Lithuania in 1919 to prevent a Bolshevik advance towards East Prussia; initially, they numbered 40,000.

<sup>73</sup> von Ossietzky, Carl, “Professor Gumbel”, *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 27, no. 4, 27 January 1931, p. 150.

Gumbel had already won the hearts of Germany's right-wing forces with his first political work, *Vier Jahre Lüge* ("Four Years of Lies"), which was published as the BNV's "Leaflet No 5" (*Flugschrift Nr. 5*) in early 1919. And yet, it was probably the least provocative of all his books. His books on the Feme murders (covert right-wing assassination plots) published after 1921,<sup>74</sup> starting with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, made Gumbel the face of both the BNV and, from 1922, the League for Human Rights.

The Feme murderers frequently came from the ranks of the "Black Reichswehr": illegal paramilitary formations which were supported and in part even directly funded by the official German army (*Reichswehr*) from 1919 – in violation of the Treaty of Versailles. The supervisory authority that the Entente Powers operated in Germany tolerated the "Black Reichswehr" in the sense of a unit that could be deployed "in case of emergency" such as in a civil war.

Gumbel repeatedly illuminated this virtually impenetrable web of civil war preparations, secret armaments and terrorism. At the discussion meetings and in the publications of the League for Human Rights, too, the "Black Reichswehr" and other units of the Reichswehr whose existence was consistently denied constituted a permanent theme – which, however, changed nothing about the continuation of secret armament projects, only perhaps that the secrecy precautions were stepped up.

In August 1932, Gumbel, who was incessantly being terrorized not only at Heidelberg University, was divested of his teaching permit by the education minister in charge who came from the Centre Party, a party whose originally democratic and republican orientation had changed beyond recognition since 1928. The mathematician had remarked at an internal gathering that, in reminiscence of the Turnip Winter of 1916–17, the turnip was certainly better suited as a symbol of the world war than the scantily clad goddess Germania. "Gumbel was certainly not the only one to be harassed [...] by the pre-fascist students. Others who suffered the same fate included the scholar of constitutional law, Hans Nawiasky [1880–1961] in Munich,

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<sup>74</sup> Gumbel, *Zwei Jahre Mord*, Berlin: Neues Vaterland, 1921; from the 5th, considerably expanded edition onward, entitled: *Vier Jahre politischer Mord*, Berlin-Fichtenau: Verlag der Neuen Gesellschaft, 1922; many more editions, from 1927 with a Preface by Albert Einstein; id., *Verschwörer. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Soziologie der deutschen nationalistischen Geheimbünde seit 1918*, Vienna: Malik, 1924; id., *Verräter verfallen der Feme*, Berlin: Malik, 1929; id., *"Lasst Köpfe rollen!" Fascistische Morde 1924–1931*, Berlin: Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, 1931 (reprinted 1991).

the theologian Günther Dehn [1882–1970], the philosopher Theodor Lessing [1872–1933], the economist Gerhard Kessler [1883–1963] in Leipzig, the lawyer and legal scholar Ernst Cohn [1904–1976] in Wrocław (Breslau), the veterinarian Kurt Obitz [1907–1945], and the educator Anna Siemsen.<sup>75</sup>

On 30 January 1933, when the German right handed government power to the Nazis, Gumbel had already been teaching at Sorbonne University in Paris for several months, before moving on to New York in 1940, where he became an adviser to the government on matters related to Nazi Germany and was subsequently appointed professor at Columbia University in 1953. In the mathematical community, Gumbel will always be remembered as the co-founder of extreme value theory and for his magnum opus *Statistics of Extremes* (1958). The mathematical “Gumbel distributions” and the “Gumbel Copula” remind us of a man *whom no one in either East or West Germany deemed worthy of commemorating in an obituary upon his death in 1966*.

Thomas Mann (1875–1955) despised him: in the eyes of the later Nobel Literature Prize laureate, *Wilhelm Herzog* (1884–1960) was “a sleazy literary pusher [...], a money-maker and business man in the spirit of the metropolitan shitty elegance of the Jewboy, who only ate lunch at the Odeon Bar but didn’t pay Ceconi’s bills so that he could have his rotten teeth partly repaired instead.”<sup>76</sup>

Herzog the pacifist had harshly criticized Thomas Mann in late 1914 for the latter’s pro-war statements in the article “Gedanken im Kriege”<sup>77</sup> (November 1914); in 1915, Herzog joined the BNV, in September that same year, his publication titled *Forum* was banned “for propagating an unpatriotic aestheticism and Europeanness”.<sup>78</sup> In November 1918, Kurt Eisner entrusted his friend Herzog with heading the “press and propaganda bureau” of the Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council.

In contrast to Thomas Mann, his older brother Heinrich Mann (1870–1950) took Herzog’s side even after he changed camps first to the USPD

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<sup>75</sup> Heither, Dietrich, *Ich wusste, was ich tat. Emil Julius Gumbel und der rechte Terror in der Weimarer Republik*, 2nd edn., Cologne: PapyRossa, 2016, p. 64.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in: Anz, Thomas, “Judenbengel’, ‘Judenmädchen’, ‘Entjudung der Justiz’. Zu einem neuen Antisemitismus-Streit um Thomas Mann”, *literaturkritik.de*.

<sup>77</sup> See Mann, Thomas, “Gedanken im Kriege”, *Die Neue Rundschau*, vol. 25, 1914, pp. 1471–84.

<sup>78</sup> Wieland, Lothar, “Wilhelm Herzog”, in: Holl, Donat (ed.), *Die Friedensbewegung*, p. 183.



and, by 1920, to the KPD. The KPD expelled Herzog in 1928 because he had referred to Willi Münzenberg as a “red Hugenberg”. Yet the real reason was Herzog’s continued adherence to Rosa Luxemburg’s radically democratic positions that had long lost all support within the KPD.<sup>79</sup>

On 10 November 1918, the sexologist *Magnus Hirschfeld* (1868–1935) addressed the crowd on behalf of the BNV in front of the Reichstag building: “From the house at Sommerstrasse, which belonged to the engineers’ association, several shots were fired around quarter past twelve. They were aimed in the direction of the Reichstag building, in front of which an open-air rally of the Bund ‘Neues Vaterland’ was taking place. [...] The military which had been sent for tried to enter the building in order to apprehend the perpetrators. Using machine guns that were placed on the roof of the Reichstag building, the house was then taken under fire. Eventually, one of the shooters was caught [...]”<sup>80</sup>

The leaflet which the BNV had distributed to mobilize people to this rally ended with the slogan: “Long live the democratic socialist republic!”<sup>81</sup> It had been written by the Franco-German writer and member of the BNV *René Schickelé* (1883–1940) on 8 November 1918, at which point Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925), the leader of the majority SPD, was still dreaming of a constitutional monarchy. The signatories on behalf of the BNV also included Magnus Hirschfeld alongside Helene Stöcker and Kurt von Teppe-Laski. Indeed, they had signed the document on that same 8 November 1918, just one day before the widely unexpected Saturday-morning revolution by the Berlin workers on 9 November 1918, which sent the SPD, which was rather oblivious to the republican cause at that point, stumbling unexpectedly into a revolutionary-republican government.

When Hirschfeld, who was openly gay, delivered a lecture on the theory of rejuvenation<sup>82</sup> in Munich in October 1920, “antisemites [...] in the audience [threw] stink bombs and at one point beat Hirschfeld to the ground.

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<sup>79</sup> For a more in-depth analysis, see Brie, Michael/Schütrumpf, Jörn, *Rosa Luxemburg. Eine revolutionäre Marxistin an den Grenzen des Marxismus*, Hamburg: VSA, 2021.

<sup>80</sup> “Sie wollen nicht Ruhe halten”, *Vorwärts. Berliner Volksblatt. Zentralorgan der sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, vol. 35, no. 311, 11 November 1918.

<sup>81</sup> The leaflet concluded with: “Long live the democratic, socialist republic!”; republished in: Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 82.

<sup>82</sup> One source of excitement in the summer of 1920 was the claim by Vienna physiologist Eugen Steinach (1861–1944) that he had achieved the rejuvenation of his patients through by transplanting young testicles and ovaries.

Hirschfeld was rushed to hospital, unconscious and badly injured. None of the violent criminals has been arrested.”<sup>83</sup>

Willi Münzenberg and his partner Babette Gross (1899–1990) lived in a two-room flat in Hirschberg’s *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (“Institute of Sexology”) established in 1919. From 1930 onward, Magnus Hirschfeld was no longer safe in Germany; after completing a lecture tour across the United States, he therefore decided to stay there instead of returning to Germany.

Arthur Holitscher (1869–1941),<sup>84</sup> whose writings have been reissued more recently, and who worked as a copyeditor for Paul Cassirer, also joined the BNV in 1915 and became one of its most active members. He was also a member of the executive board of the League for Human Rights for many years – together with Emil Julius Gumbel, René Robert Kuczynski, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, retired major general Paul von Schoenaich, and Kurt Tucholsky.

On the occasion of Holitscher’s 60th birthday, the barely forty-year-old Tucholsky wrote: “At the time, I was not a Paris greenhorn any more – I was already able to distinguish the left bank of the Seine from the right one ... at least that. That is when he came to Paris. I will never forget this. Because I was actually permitted to walk right next to him, while he gazed – he gazed, seemingly unintentional, he made nothing of it, that he ceaselessly absorbed, observed, registered, laboured, at least he did not speak about it. And then I read his *Narrenbaedeker. Aufzeichnungen aus Paris und London* (1925)<sup>85</sup> – and felt deeply embarrassed. After all, I had seen the exact same things as him when we were in Paris – but I had seen nothing at all.”<sup>86</sup>

Holitscher, who had abandoned the Jewish upper class in Budapest in his youth, died in a shelter of the Salvation Army, impoverished and lonely, in Geneva. The obituary at his funeral was delivered by Robert Musil (1880–1942), the Austrian author of the unfinished novel *The Man Without Qual-*

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<sup>83</sup> “Ein antisemitisches Heldenstück”, *Vorwärts. Berliner Volksblatt. Zentralorgan der sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, vol. 37, no. 493, 5 October 1920.

<sup>84</sup> See Holitscher, Arthur, *Charles Baudelaire. Eine Biografie*, Berlin: Bard, Marquardt & Co., 1904; Holitscher, Arthur, *Reise durch das jüdische Palästina (Mit fünfzehn Bildern und einer Karte)*, Berlin: S. Fischer, 1922.

<sup>85</sup> See Holitscher, Arthur: *Der Narrenbaedeker. Aufzeichnungen aus Paris und London. Mit fünfzehn Holzschnitten von Frans Masereel*, Berlin: S. Fischer, 1925; most recently reissued in 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Tucholsky, Kurt, “Der Mann mit den Augen”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, nos. 9/10, 1 October 1929.

*ities*, which is recognized around the world as a masterpiece of modernist literature.

Beginning in 1907, the concert pianist *Leo Kestenberg* (1882–1962) and Tilla Durieux had hosted worker matinees with free admission on their Sundays without rehearsals, which took place in Berlin’s suburbs, such as in the Hasenheide area in Rixdorf/Neukölln; here, Kestenberg also met Rosa Luxemburg. During the war, Kestenberg was the general manager in Paul Cassirer’s publishing house – where Arthur Holitscher worked as an editor – and was the agent responsible for Rosa Luxemburg who was translating Vladimir Korolenko’s autobiography from Russian to German.<sup>87</sup> The funds supporting the Spartacus leader in “preventive custody” were channelled from Eduard Fuchs and Tilla Durieux<sup>88</sup> via Leo Kestenberg on to Rosa Luxemburg’s confidante Mathilde Jacob (1873–1943). After 1933, Kestenberg helped build the music education system in Palestine; he was elected honorary president of the International Society for Music Education, established in 1953.

In 1927, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt dedicated his book *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte, vormals Bund Neues Vaterland, für den Weltfrieden 1914–1927* (“The Struggle of the German League for Human Rights, formerly Bund Neues Vaterland, for World Peace 1914–1927”) to *Robert René Kuczynski* (1876–1947),<sup>89</sup> a tireless activist of the BNV. Kuczynski is regarded one of the fathers of modern demographic statistics. After he had initiated the campaign for the expropriation of the princes together with Helene Stöcker and Ludwig Quidde, in 1926 he and Ernst Thälmann (KPD, 1886–1944) as well as Otto Wels (SPD, 1873–1939) jointly submitted the proposal for a referendum on the uncompensated expropriation of the princes (*Fürstenenteignung*) to the Reich Minister of the Interior. From a total of 40 million eligible voters, some 12.5 million registered in the lists for the referendum; this was two million more than the total votes the SPD and KPD had garnered in the previous Reichstag election. The participation in the actual referendum itself on 20 June 1926 even rose to 15.5 million voters. Given that the Reich government had declared that

<sup>87</sup> See Korolenko, Vladimir, *Die Geschichte meines Zeitgenossen.*, transl. from Russian into German and introduced by Rosa Luxemburg, Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919.

<sup>88</sup> Tilla Durieux, who would end up living in exile – many years illegally – near and in Zagreb until 1952, contributed to the International Red Aid for Josip Broz Tito’s partisans in 1944.

<sup>89</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 3.

the law would constitute an amendment to the constitution, however, the required approval rate was not a simple majority: more than 50 per cent of the entire electorate would have had to vote in favour. This collaboration between the two largest workers' parties and the republican-oriented bourgeoisie illustrates that the demise of Germany's first-ever democracy, frequently referred to as a "republic without republicans", was anything but inevitable.

At the founding conference of the Austrian League for Human Rights on 10 May 1926, Kuczynski summarized what could be considered the consensual position of the German League for Human Rights regarding the question of violence: "The German League for Human Rights is a fighting organization. It fights for justice and peace, and it fights against all tyranny. For the League, the war is only one of many injustices. The League considers the fight against class justice, the fight against military crimes, such as the violent deposition of the constitutional government of the state of Saxony in 1923, as equally important as the fight against the war, and it will always side with those whose human rights are being violated – regardless of whether the person affected is a warmonger or a pacifist."<sup>90</sup>

Kuczynski never joined a political party, though he consistently voted KPD from 1920 on, remarking once that it was the least unbearable of all parties.<sup>91</sup>

The Shakespeare translator and professed anarchist and adherent of Kropotkin's anarchist communism *Gustav Landauer* (1870–1919) represented the radical left wing of the BNV. After they first met in London in 1899, Landauer and the Russian aristocrat Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) – the "anarchist prince" who propagated a peaceful socialism, free of domination and based on mutual solidarity and support – became close friends. After the deposition of the Bavarian monarchy in November 1918, the new Bavarian Minister President, Independent Social Democrat Kurt Eisner, invited the anarchist to Munich to become more involved: "What I would like for you is to contribute through oratory to the reformation of souls."<sup>92</sup>

As newly appointed Commissioner of Enlightenment and Public Instruction (*Beauftragter für Volksaufklärung*) of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, which was proclaimed on 7 April 1919, Landauer was the first to

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>91</sup> See wikipedia.org

<sup>92</sup> wikipedia.org

abolish corporal punishment in Bavaria's schools. However, after the KPD functionaries had marginalized the anarchists and taken control, Landauer resigned from all political offices on 16 April 1919; on 1 May 1919, he was apprehended by Freikorps militias inside the house of Kurt Eisner, who had been assassinated in broad daylight on 21 February 1919: "The report on the autopsy of Landauer's exhumed body specified shots to the left eye socket, the right temple, and the left chest as cause of death."<sup>93</sup>

*Ernst Meyer* (1887–1930)<sup>94</sup> was fired from his role as political editor of the "Vorwärts" by the SPD leadership due to his evident opposition to the war. As a tuberculosis patient, he could not be sent to die at the frontlines like so many other left-wing activists.<sup>95</sup> Meyer was among those whose participation at the Zimmerwald Conference in 1915 was sponsored by Emma Krappek. As a founding member of the Spartacus League and the KPD, Meyer was consistently – albeit with a few brief interruptions – among the most influential forces. In 1921–22, he was KPD chairman, but really became a true party leader in 1926–27, only to be pushed aside – facilitated not least by his rapidly deteriorating health – by Ernst Thälmann and other Stalinists from 1928 onward. During his last months, which he spent at a sanatorium in Hermannswerder, near Potsdam, none of his fellow communists ever came to visit.

Ernst Meyer died just a week before the first-ever KPD leader Paul Levi (1883–1930). In 1921, Meyer had led the *Fronde* – on the instruction of the emissary of the Communist International Karl Radek – against Levi without really comprehending what was going on: Levi's "crime" consisted of the fact that he had resisted the Bolsheviks' attempts to gain control over the KPD.

Alongside Albert Einstein and Kurt Tscholsky, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate of 1935, *Carl von Ossietzky* (1889–1938), is one of the members of

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> See Wilde, Florian, *Revolution als Realpolitik. Ernst Meyer (1887–1930) – Biographie eines KPD-Vorsitzenden*, with a Foreword by Hermann Weber, Konstanz: UVK, 2018.

<sup>95</sup> Most prominently, this included the head of the Stuttgart left, Friedrich Westmeyer (1873–1917), who died in a field hospital on the Western front. The women, however, had to be locked up by the militarists: alongside Rosa Luxemburg and – in 1915, temporarily – Clara Zetkin and the above-mentioned Lili Jannasch, Elsbeth Bruck, and Sarah Sonja Rabinowitz, the most well-known leftists in prison were Berta (or Bertha) Thalheimer (1883–1959), Rosi Wolfstein, later Frölich, and Hertha Gordon, later Walcher (1894–1990).

the BNV whose name is still widely known across the world today. After the conviction of the editor of the *Weltbühne* on charges of allegedly betraying military secrets in 1931, Kurt von Schleicher (1882–1934), the last chancellor before Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), tried to persuade Ossietzky to go into exile in Switzerland. Ossietzky commented with this following succinct remark: “Now those gentlemen who got me into prison can resolve this mess themselves.”

The *Weltbühne*, whose publication Ossietzky took over after the death of Siegfried Jacobsohn (1881–1926), had close ties to the League for Human Rights. But even at its peak, with a circulation of 15,000 copies, it led a marginal existence in the German political landscape, as did the League itself. And yet, both managed to garner public attention time and again. The stylistic editor of the *Weltbühne*, who had been subjected, just like Erich Mühsam, to horrific torture at various Nazi concentration camps, spent his last two years in a Berlin hospital under constant police supervision. Just like Paul Levi’s grave in Stahnsdorf, Carl von Ossietzky’s grave on the Pankow IV cemetery at Herthaplatz in Berlin-Niederschönhausen is listed as one of Berlin’s graves of honour.

# The Lichnowsky affair

On 26 July 1914, Karl Max Prince Lichnowsky (1860–1928) sent his 161st cable to Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (1856–1921). Lichnowsky had been the German ambassador in London since 1912 and tried everything in his power – albeit against the will of the German emperor and of that of the Austro-Hungarian and German war enthusiasts – to avert a global conflagration: “I have just spoken with Sir A. Nicolson<sup>96</sup> and Sir W. Tyrrell.<sup>97</sup> According to the information available to them, a general mobilization in Russia is not imminent, there is only a partial mobilization far away from any of our borders. Both men look at Sir E. Grey’s<sup>98</sup> proposal to hold a *Conférence des quatre* here as the only possibility of avoiding general war; and they hope it will secure full satisfaction to Austria, since Serbia would be more ready to yield to the Powers and give way to their joint wishes than to the threats of Austria, but the absolute condition for the success of the conference and the maintenance of peace would be that no military movements should take place. Should the Serbian boundary once be crossed, all would be lost, for the Russian Government could not tolerate this and would be forced to attack Austria to prevent losing its role in the Balkans once and for all. Sir W. Tyrrell, who met with Sir E. Grey last night and is accurately informed about his views, pointed out to me, repeatedly and with emphasis, the immense importance of Serbia’s territory remaining unviolated until the question of the conference had been settled, as otherwise every effort would have been in vain and the world war would be inevitable. The localization of the conflict as hoped for in Berlin, they said, was wholly impossible and must be discarded from practical politics. If, however, HM the emperor, or his government and its representatives, should succeed in preserving the peace of Europe in collaboration with Sir E. Grey, the German-English relations would be placed on a firm foundation for time everlasting. If not, everything would be called into question.

I would like to caution, in the strongest terms, against continuing to believe in the possibility of a localization and respectfully make the request

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<sup>96</sup> Arthur Nicolson, 1. Baron Carnock, (1849–1928) was the British Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>97</sup> William George Tyrrell, 1. Baron Tyrrell (1866–1947) was the Principle Private Secretary to the British Foreign Secretary.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Grey, 1. Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1862–1933) had been the British Foreign Secretary since 1905.

that our stance be guided exclusively by the need to spare the German nation a struggle in which it has nothing to gain and everything to lose.”<sup>99</sup>

But this last warning from Lichnowsky, too, fell on deaf ears. Rather than presenting the facts and revealing Germany’s belligerence, the state-controlled propaganda – which underwent rapid professionalization during the First World War, and which Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) skilfully refined a few years later – spread the legend that Germany had been attacked in 1914 and was fighting a war of defence.

In August 1916, at his estate in Chuchelná,<sup>100</sup> Lichnowsky compiled a record of his failed efforts for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>101</sup> Among those who had become his close confidants during the war was the banker Richard Wittig. It was Wittig who passed on Lichnowsky’s paper to Hans-Georg von Beerfelde, a captain in the General Staff, who then had it copied and sent to well-known personalities – without asking Lichnowsky’s permission. Beerfelde presented the account to the global public via the Copenhagen newspaper *Politiken*. According to Hellmut von Gerlach, the pamphlet,<sup>102</sup> which was illegally circulated in Germany, had been jointly produced by the BNV and the Spartacus group;<sup>103</sup> the printing took place at Gerson’s printshop at Köpenicker Strasse 110 during the night.

Spartacus Group leader Leo Jogiches, who was murdered by police while in custody on 10 March 1919, also had this text distributed, including inside the army barracks. As Karl Retzlaw (1896–1979)<sup>104</sup> recounts: “When smuggling our papers inside, we had to go about it like soldiers returning late from leave: climb over the wall. That was my job. I was the best gymnast in our group. We went in groups of three or four, and there were al-

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<sup>99</sup> Lichnowsky to Bethmann, 26 July 1914, 8:25 P.M., taken from: *The Origins of the World War, Volume II*, London/New York: Macmillan, 1928, pp. 343, 406 (transl. mod.).

<sup>100</sup> Today: Czech Republic.

<sup>101</sup> A revised edition was reissued after the war as *Flugschrift des Bundes Neues Vaterland* (pamphlet of the BNV): Lichnowsky, Fürst von, *Meine Londoner Mission. 1912–1914, und Eingabe an das Preussische Herrenhaus*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1919.

<sup>102</sup> Lichnowsky, Fürst von, *Die Schuld der deutschen Regierung am Kriege. Meine Londoner Mission. 1912–1914*, with a Postface by the editors, Görlitz: Bergwald W. Paul, 1919.

<sup>103</sup> See von Gerlach, Hellmut, *Die große Zeit der Lüge*, Charlottenburg: Weltbühne, 1926, p. 102; quoted in Luban, *Julius Gerson und Eduard Fuchs*, p. 289.

<sup>104</sup> Karl Retzlaw, whose real name was Karl Gröhl (1896–1979), was one of the closest confidants of Leo Jogiches. In 1919, after the party was forced underground, he set up the KPD’s intelligence network; in November 1933, he bid farewell to the Communist International.



ways one or two girls with us, too, so that soldiers or passers-by would not become suspicious when they saw us late at night. After I had deposited the pamphlets at the different spots, in the corridors and at the stable doors, it was always far more difficult to climb back out across the wall, but there was usually some sort of equipment standing close to the wall. All these undertakings were successful.<sup>105</sup>

The situation in the banned BNV may have been less spectacular, yet no less dangerous; some of its members were also very active in the dissemination of Lichnowsky's memorandum.<sup>106</sup>

Karl Max Prince Lichnowsky, who was never a member but an outspoken sympathizer of the illegal BNV, was excluded from the Prussian House of Lords on 12 July 1918 because of his memorandum. This spared him the fate of being chased out of this feudal relic during the November Revolution. For the BNV, and from 1922 onward, the League for Human Rights, this was the building of choice for meetings and events up until 1933; today, it houses the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council of Germany).

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*Hans-Georg von Beerfelde* (1877–1960), a front-line officer until 1917, had started gathering evidence for Germany's "war guilt" (*Kriegsschuld*) at least since the period in which he belonged to the general staff. He became a member of the BNV and came into contact with the USPD. During the munitions workers' strike in Berlin in January 1918, Beerfelde tried to prevent the collapse of this industrial action, which aimed to paralyze the Berlin war industry – a key pillar of the German arms industry; in March 1918, he was unmasked and arrested. While in prison, Beerfelde wrote a memorandum that was smuggled out in July 1918 and sent to all members of parliament.<sup>107</sup> On 9 November 1918, revolutionary sailors freed Beerfelde and immediately elected him one of the chairmen of the Executive Coun-

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<sup>105</sup> Retzlaw, Karl, *Spartakus – Aufstieg und Niedergang. Erinnerungen eines Parteiarbeiters*, Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1971, p. 69; on the distribution of the Lichnowsky Memorandum, see p. 70 (transl. added).

<sup>106</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 79.

<sup>107</sup> This memorandum (*Denkschrift*) appeared on 9 November 1918 as no. 1 of the *Flugschriften des Bundes Neues Vaterland* (pamphlets of the BNV); see von Beerfelde, Hans Georg, *Michel, wach auf! Ein Mahnruf an das deutsche Volk*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1918 ("Michel, wake up! An exhortation to the German people", p. 97).

cil of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Greater Berlin (*Vollzugsrat der Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte Groß-Berlins*). But given the dominant majority Social Democrats' policy of preventing any kind of deepening of the revolution, Beerfelde withdrew from the council within a week and dedicated his activities primarily to the BNV thereafter.

*Hans Paasche* (1881–1920) – whose father, a staunch right-liberal,<sup>108</sup> was Vice President of the German Reichstag, his mother authored ultraconservative texts – was also freed from prison by revolutionary sailors on 9 November 1918; they drove him straight to the Reichstag, where he was elected to the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Greater Berlin.

As a naval officer, in 1905, Paasche had been stationed in Dar es Salaam, today the Tanzanian capital, but at the time part of the colonies of German East Africa. Prior to his deployment, he had learned Kiswahili. When the Maji Maji Rebellion against German colonial rule broke out in August that same year, Paasche was made commander of a detachment tasked with crushing the uprising. At this point, Paasche underwent a profound change of perspective, becoming a writer and pacifist. After being remobilized for the war in 1914, the military eventually kicked him out for good in 1916: Paasche had refused, in his role as navy judge, to convict a sailor for “salacious speech”. He was himself imprisoned in autumn 1917 for his pacifist writings.

On 25 January 1919, at the funeral of Karl Liebknecht and the other victims of the January unrest, Hans Paasche sat on the carriage heading the funeral procession.

On 21 May 1920, a whole Reichswehr unit came to kill Paasche at his *Waldfrieden* estate. Wearing only swimming trunks, the son-in-law of Richard Witting was murdered with a shot to the heart in front of his children. The prosecutor in charge described what had happened as a “coincidence of unpredictable, unfortunate circumstances.”<sup>109</sup>

*Harry Graf von Kessler* (1868–1937) was a collector and patron of the arts, writer, journalist, pacifist, and diplomat, who grew up in France and Great Britain and who served as the first German ambassador to Poland in Warsaw in 1918. He was rather perplexed on 16 February 1919, when the

<sup>108</sup> In German, the term is *national-liberal*, the more common term in English “right-liberal” (in the sense of conservative liberalism) is used throughout the text.

<sup>109</sup> Gumbel, Emil Julius, *Vier Jahre Politischer Mord*, Berlin-Fichtenau: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1922, pp. 64 ff.

victorious countries in the First World War announced the coming establishment of a League of Nations.

“A bundle of barren legal paragraphs animated by the old spirit and barely disguising the imperialist intention of a number of states to enslave and pauperize their defeated enemies. That is the first impression it gives: a contract to be imposed on poor relations.”<sup>110</sup>

Ten days later, Kessler had his alternative proposal printed. His “Guidelines for a True League of Nations” (*Richtlinien für einen wahren Völkerbund*)<sup>111</sup> provided the foreign policy principles for the BNV. For Kessler, as Klaus Dicke notes, the solution was “the creation of three autonomous bodies, free from interference by individual nation states: firstly, a world parliament; secondly, an economic “central organ” that is formed by the self-administration of consumers and workers and has the task of coordinating production and needs as well as the interplay between different productive sectors and finance; and, thirdly, a spiritual “world organ”, which may articulate “the greatest spiritual, ethical, religious bodies with this central organ of the League of Nations”. In his [Kessler’s] view, the economic central organ is the most important one.”<sup>112</sup>

Kessler was buried at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris on 4 December 1937, where Eduard Fuchs would also find his final resting place in 1940.

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<sup>110</sup> *Berlin in Lights – The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1868–1937)*, transl. and ed. by Charles Kessler, with an Introduction by Ian Buruma, New York: Grove Press, 1999 [1971], pp. 68–69.

<sup>111</sup> Initially published in Kessler’s private “Cranach Press”, and subsequently reissued multiple times, including: Wiesbaden: Sonderausschuss des IX. deutschen Pazifistentags, 1920.

<sup>112</sup> Dicke, Klaus, *Harry Graf Kessler und sein Verfassungsentwurf für den Völkerbund* (Forum Politicum Jenense, 13), Jena, 2020, pp. 8 ff. (transl. added). [www.db-thueringen.de](http://www.db-thueringen.de).

## From revolution to emigration

The BNV was most influential and relevant between October 1918 – when the first Quartermaster General Erich Ludendorff had no longer been able to conceal his political and military ineptitude – and the entry into force, on 28 June 1919, of the Treaty of Versailles, which humiliated Germany for years to come.<sup>113</sup> French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, who was enforcing the dictated peace of Versailles and the pursuant terms of reparations, became Ludendorff's most effective campaigner. Ludendorff – as military dictator by the grace of Wilhelm II – had led Germany into the greatest debacle since Prussia's defeat against Napoleon's troops at Jena and Auerstedt on 14 October 1806, only to subsequently escape to Sweden under the name of "Ernst Lindström". His emperor preferred to desert to the Netherlands.

Since November 1918, Kurt Eisner, Hans-Georg von Beerfelde, and Prince Lichnowsky in particular had repeatedly pointed out Germany's war guilt<sup>114</sup> – which appeared plausible to many Germans during the first months of the rather erratically emerging new state – no longer a monarchy, but not yet a republic either: the BNV's pamphlets sold like hot cakes.

In the first weeks following the emperor's flight, Hans-Georg von Beerfelde dabbled in everyday politics, too. According to the report on the trial of those who had occupied the Vorwärts building during the January unrest of 1919,<sup>115</sup> he testified with regard to the beginning of the confronta-

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<sup>113</sup> In 1944–45, the US policy was geared towards avoiding a repeat of this mistake. Although France was granted a – small – occupation zone of its own in the southwestern part of Germany as well as a – small – sector in West Berlin, the US made sure that France played no role at the Potsdam Conference that ended the Second World War, in a bid to prevent another Versailles.

<sup>114</sup> Even decades later, this responsibility was still being denied in Germany. It took Fritz Fischer (1908–1999 – id.: *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967 [1961]) and the Fischer Controversy, the offshoots of which would last until 1985, until Germany acknowledged its true role. Although the study by Christopher Clark (*The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London/New York: Penguin, 2013) was fairly successful with the media and in bookshops for a time, it omitted important documents and, due to its resulting weak scientific credibility, resonated rather poorly with the academic debates.

<sup>115</sup> For a more detailed account, see Schütrumpf, Jörn (ed.), "*Spartakusaufstand*". *Der unterschlagene Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 in Berlin*, Berlin: Dietz, 2018.

tion:<sup>116</sup> “On 6 January, he attempted to assert his influence with Ebert and Scheidemann, so as to reach an understanding between the two parties, but he left with the impression – which, indeed, caused him considerable outrage – that the government was not interested in reaching an agreement.”<sup>117</sup>

In Germany, the revenge campaign led by French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau not only increasingly rapidly cast a shadow on the revolution, peace, and the socialist idea as the alleged causes of immiseration affecting more and more Germans since 1919, but it also engulfed the BNV in an existential crisis. For it was Clemenceau that heightened Ludendorff’s popularity once again. Moreover, the latter then went on to fabricate, together with others, the “stab-in-the-back myth” (*Dolchstoßlegende*), which claimed that Germany had been undefeated on the battlefield and ultimately lost the conflict only because of the unpatriotic actions of the “November criminals” (*Novemberverschreiber*). During the final months of 1920, the same year that Ludendorff had – albeit unsuccessfully – masterminded the anti-republican *Kapp Putsch* in March, the BNV had to discontinue its publication *Mitteilungen* – due to a lack of demand.<sup>118</sup>

The KPD, led by Paul Levi and Clara Zetkin – which was banned along with its periodicals in the context of the “state of siege” imposed on Berlin between March and early December 1919 – was not the only target of systematic oppression and ruthless persecution by the Social-Democratic government.

Even prominent members of the BNV, such as Hans-Georg von Beerfelde, who lived in constant danger, faced harassment, unwarranted house searches, and arbitrary arrests.<sup>119</sup>

Admittedly, this was not particularly surprising given the BNV’s support for proposals of socialization, “which amount to the comprehensive socialization (nationalization) of the large corporations that have monopolized

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<sup>116</sup> Siegfried Weinberg (1880–1932), one of the lawyers of the murdered Rosa Luxemburg, had summoned him.

<sup>117</sup> “Die Besetzung des ‘Vorwärts’”, *Freiheit. Berliner Organ der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratie*, vol. 2, no. 100, 25 February 1919 (transl. added).

<sup>118</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 98.

<sup>119</sup> See “Die Verhaftungswut”, *Freiheit. Berliner Organ der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratie*, vol. 2, no. 61, 4 February 1919; “Versammlungen”, *ibid.*, no. 73, 10 February 1919.

the production of iron, coal, and essential resources – while safeguarding individual activity and the validity of creative powers.”<sup>120</sup>

The central organ of the Independent Social Democrats, *Die Freiheit*, summed up the first few months of the majority Social Democrats’ spell in government: “We have reached a point where democrats have to fight against the repression of free speech enacted by “socialists”, or for which they are at least responsible. But it should be kept in mind that those suffering from these policies are the opponents of the government for whom there is less freedom of speech today than under the rule of the Wilhelmine government.”<sup>121</sup>

Likewise, as a result of declining demand, the BNV’s book production saw a sharp drop. It took until 1921 for the first successful publication to be released again: Emil Julius Gumbel’s *Zwei Jahre Mord* (“Two Years of Murder”). This publication marked the transition of the BNV’s focus from the world war period to the interwar years. Gumbel’s work, which was re-issued several times, became *the BNV’s most successful book ever*.

Even though the world war remained present in many Germans’ everyday life given the burden imposed by the victorious Allies, the BNV was concerned with a new issue: the next war. If, during the early days of its activities in 1914, the BNV had sought to mediate between the warring parties – albeit rarely at the government’s solicitation – it began to conduct its own foreign policy at least from 1921 onward.

The BNV and, from 1922, the League for Human Rights approached the governments in Warsaw, Sofia, and Bucharest in order to obtain prisoners’ release from torture chambers and jails. In 1929, the League even dedicated an exhibition to “Bulgaria’s Bloodstream” (*Bulgariens Blutstrom*), which was on show at a venue on the Kurfürstendamm boulevard and became so popular that it was extended by ten days. The most important issue was the relationship with Germany’s two largest neighbours, France and Poland. Various BNV representatives travelled to Paris and argued and pleaded with French politicians to pursue a politics of rapprochement; these latter included members of the French League for Human Rights. The BNV’s emissaries achieved the inconceivable: they managed to rebuild trust.

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<sup>120</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 98; see also Horten, Alfons, *Sozialisierung von Kohle und Stahl*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1921 (transl. added).

<sup>121</sup> “Die Versammlungsverbote gegen Beerfelde”, *Freiheit. Berliner Organ der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratie*, vol. 2, no. 252, 26 May 1919 (transl. added).

In Paris, in January 1922, the New Fatherland League (*Bund Neues Vaterland*) changed its name to German League for Human Rights (*Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte*). In May, the French and German organizations jointly founded the International League for Human Rights (*Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte*). This meant that the attempt to build “a bridge across the abyss” – as *Victor Basch* (1863–1944), one of the co-founders of the French League for Human Rights, said in front of the Reichstag on 12 June 1922 – had actually produced a first practical result. In Potsdam, the stronghold of Prussian reaction, the remaining court camarilla tried, that same month, to prevent – albeit in vain – an appearance of Victor Basch. In 1940, the professor of literature joined the fight of the *Comité d’action socialiste* against the German occupation. On 10 January, Basch, by then more than eighty years old, was murdered with several gun shots by Klaus Barbie (1913–1991), the head of the Gestapo in Lyon – who was considered particularly brutal even by Nazi standards.

German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929) had during the war expressed a profound hatred of the French (this was generally referred to by the term *Franzosenfresser*, literally meaning, “devourer of the French”); he wanted to turn the port of Calais into a “German Gibraltar”.<sup>122</sup> He somewhat eased his country’s relationship with France through the Locarno Treaties of 1925 and the concomitant accession of Germany to the League of Nations (10 September 1926), though this was certainly not his achievement alone. The ground for this to happen had previously been prepared not least by members of the BNV, or the League for Human Rights – as part of a Germany that had hitherto remained out of sight.<sup>123</sup> Even though the League propagated Kessler’s concept of a democratically constituted League of Nations, and despite all its criticisms of the existing League of Nations in Geneva, it launched a comprehensive campaign in favour of Germany’s accession. For its members, even though such a step was ultimately insufficient, it still made the preservation of international peace slightly more probable.

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<sup>122</sup> Gustav Stresemann published a work of his own, arguing for the annexation of the Flemish coast; see id., *Michel horch, der Seewind pfeift...!* Berlin: H. Kalkoff, 1916; see also Barkeley, Richard, *Die deutsche Friedensbewegung 1870–1933*, Hamburg: Hammerich & Lesser, 1948, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> The “secret Germany, which has [...] atmospherically prepared the path to Locarno...”, Zirker, Milly, *Chronik des Bundes Neues Vaterland*, p. 362 (transl. added).

With regard to Poland, however, the bourgeois parties sought no rapprochement or reconciliation whatsoever;<sup>124</sup> the issue of the German-Polish border was omitted entirely from the Locarno Treaties. A war with Poland was simply a matter of time – a view not only widespread among the German military. The BNV represented the opposing position. Hellmut Gerlach in particular was dedicated to achieving an understanding with Poland, which had been re-established as an independent country in 1918. As early as 1919, at a jam-packed assembly in Berlin on 27 March, he demanded a stronger German accommodation of Polish concerns.

On 25 October 1925, the “Polish Peace Society” and the German League for Human Rights convened for a conference in Danzig (Today: Gdańsk, Poland), where they resolved to pursue collaboration.<sup>125</sup> In addition, it was agreed at the 26th World Peace Congress in Warsaw in late July 1928 that a series of joint assemblies should be organized in the border regions where Polish and Germans lived on both sides. These conferences, entitled “Is there a risk of war between Germany and Poland?”, took place in Königsberg (East Prussia) (today: Kaliningrad), Schneidemühl (today: Piła), and Łódź in late April 1929.<sup>126</sup>

Regardless of all these efforts, not least by Catholic organizations active on both sides of the border, the German peace movement was unable – unlike in the case of France – to help advance a new German foreign policy towards Poland. It took until 1970 before this was achieved by Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, himself a former member of the SAPD (*Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* – Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany). The meeting in Rapallo in Italy on Easter Sunday 1922, where Walther Rathenau and Georgy Chicherin (1872–1936), i.e. the foreign secretaries of the two international pariahs Germany and Soviet Russia,<sup>127</sup> caused considerable irritation among the victorious powers of the world war, as it presented a contract in accordance with international law. This agreement was not least made possible by the BNV, renamed the League for Human Rights the following month. On the initiative of Albert Einstein, the BNV had or-

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<sup>124</sup> See Grossmann, Kurt, “Für die deutsch-polnische Verständigung”, in: *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, no. 6, 1 June 1929, pp. 10ff.

<sup>125</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 113.

<sup>126</sup> See “Geschäftsbericht für die Zeit vom 1. Januar 1928 bis zum 31. Dezember 1928”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, no. 1, 16 January 1929, p. 2; *ibid.*, nos. 4/5, 20 April 1929, p. 5.

<sup>127</sup> Renamed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in December 1922.



ganized a protest against the Entente Powers' starvation blockade against Soviet Russia in December 1919. On 10 January 1920, the BNV convinced the foreign ministry to agree to a meeting between German business representatives and the imprisoned Karl Radek, who was deemed an acceptable representative of Soviet Russia. This served as a foundation for re-establishing contact for the first time since the Soviet Russian embassy had been closed in early November 1918. Representatives of the League for Human Rights would subsequently travel eastwards on various occasion and supported the *Gesellschaft der Freunde des neuen Russlands* ("Society of the Friends of the New Russia").

Another important project on the agenda, which featured in the very first publication of the Verlag Neues Vaterland publishing house, i.e., prior to the foundation of the BNV, and which was keenly pursued – was the United States of Europe.<sup>128</sup> At the suggestion of the German League, the International League for Human Rights organized a conference in Brussels on 26–27 June 1926 that was to serve as a platform for debating problems which were generally considered irresolvable at the time, but which have long been overcome in today's European Union, such as tariff, border and currency issues etc.

As we know today, none of these activities ultimately managed to avert the path into the abyss, which for many members of the League led into exile, for some into the death camps. In order to protect the League's members from persecution after the Reichstag fire of 28 February 1933, the General Secretary of the League, *Kurt Grossmann* (1897–1972), burned all the documents he could find.

While in exile, Grossmann worked with refugee aid organizations, providing organizational and material support to emigrants. While his own estate is stored in the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, the extant documents of the German League for Human Rights are kept at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City. Grossmann collected them from his fellow expats living in exile around the world.

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<sup>128</sup> See Lehmann-Russbüdt, Otto, *Die Schöpfung der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Vaterland, 1914.

## Names and themes

In contrast to the BNV, whose name was in fact meant to conceal the true purpose of the association, the name of the League for Human Rights was self-explanatory and attracted intellectuals who were less attached to the “fatherland”. Moreover, the key items on the organization’s agenda left little room for any misunderstanding:

1. Contribution to international reconciliation [...]; banning armed violence as a means of political conflict between peoples and parties.
2. The fight to end all and any tyranny and class rule, the fight for human rights and social justice by influencing press, parties, and governments.
3. Contribution to the realization of socialism [...] in the sense of the London-based Fabian Society [...]
4. The cultivation of the personality by providing and encouraging all spiritual and moral development opportunities for the individual while simultaneously emphasizing the collective interest.

Ultimately, the aim was “a spiritual revolution, in order to preserve and continuously expand the achievements of the political revolution”.<sup>129</sup>

In 1927, the League even established a “political advisory committee”, which was replete with illustrious names. Alongside Toni Sender<sup>130</sup> and Helene Stöcker, its number also included Alfred Apfel and Hermann Brill (1895–1959), among others. On the initiative of Brill – a member of the state constitutional court of Thuringia until 1933 – a meeting was held after the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp on 16 April 1945, where the “Buchenwald Manifesto for Peace, Freedom, and Socialism” was promulgated. After being appointed Minister President (i.e., governor) of the state of Thuringia in 1945, only to be removed from office a month later by the Soviet occupation forces, he fled to the occupation zones in the Western parts of the country, including West Berlin. The advisory committee furthermore included Oscar Cohn, Albert Einstein, Felix Fechenbach, Rudolf Goldscheid and the future advisor to the Mexican government, Alfons Goldschmidt (1879–1940). Also on the committee were the chief economic

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<sup>129</sup> Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, pp. 92 ff.

<sup>130</sup> All individuals that are listed without biographical data are introduced in detail elsewhere in this text.

editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, Richard Lewinsohn (1894–1968), who published under his pseudonym “Morus”, and the secretary of the *Hauptverband der Deutschen Krankenkassen* (“German Association of Statutory Health Insurance Funds”) Karl Litke (1893–1962) – who was fairly influential inside the SED in 1945–46 – as well as the general secretary of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (“German Peace Society”) Gerhard Seger (1896–1967). Further members who deserve mentioning are Hugo Sinzheimer (1875–1945), scholar of labour law and legal advisor to the German Metalworkers’ Union (DMV, *Deutscher Metallarbeiterverband*), the playwright Ernst Toller (1893–1939, a protagonist of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919), and the nonconformist historian Veit Valentin (1885–1947). Valentin, a particularly committed member of the League, came under massive political pressure and in 1917 decided to surrender his teaching permit and thus the option of being appointed full professor. Last but not least were the writer Arnold Zweig (1887–1968) as well as Social-Democratic politician Erich Zeigner (1886–1949). On 10 October 1923, Zeigner had appointed two KPD members to his cabinet while he was Minister President of the state of Saxony, as a result of which Reich President Friedrich Ebert (SPD) intervened with an Imperial Executive Ordinance and deposed him as Minister President on 29 October 1923.

Alongside the activities related to foreign policy, the League’s voluntary “legal team”<sup>131</sup> had been expanded under the auspices of the journalist Grossmann since 1926; each year, the legal team filed hundreds of motions to courts, requesting pardons, mitigations of punishment, and the restoration of civil rights. This amounted to ever more cases: in 1926, there were 765; in 1927: 3,917; in 1928, 2,899; and in 1929, 4,220. “Ever since our legal team took up work, we have managed to spare our fellow countrymen some 300 years of imprisonment.”<sup>132</sup>

Another outcome of the legal team’s work was the memorandum (*Denkschrift*) *Acht Jahre politische Justiz* (“Eight Years of Political Jus-

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<sup>131</sup> See Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte, “Übersicht Nr. 1 über die Tätigkeit und die Erfolge der Rechtsstelle der ‘Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte’ e. V.,” *web.archive.org*.

<sup>132</sup> See *ibid.*

“...”) <sup>133</sup>, which was published in summer 1927 and, at least, helped enforce far-reaching changes in the composition of the criminal chambers.<sup>134</sup>

The following section presents a more detailed introduction of various members who only joined after the organization’s renaming as the League for Human Rights:

*Kurt Tucholsky* (1890–1935), was the co-editor of *Die Weltbühne* together with Carl von Ossietzky from 1927.<sup>135</sup> Although he had lived in Paris since 1924, he was still – at least, for a while – a member of the League’s board and did not consider himself above even editing work.<sup>136</sup> Whenever he got the opportunity, he pointed out the valuable work of the League for Human Rights which, throughout its entire existence, resolutely opposed militarism and secret armaments: “The German League for Human Rights has published a Denkschrift: ‘Germany’s Secret Armaments?’ [Deutschlands geheime Rüstungen?], which merits the greatest attention. [...] The Denkschrift [...] elucidates a Reichswehr budget that was presented to parliament with almost shocking audacity. We can safely say: neither in France nor in England would a budget so opaque, so thoroughly un-thorough, so obscurely and insincerely calculated as this German one ever be approved.”<sup>137</sup>

Regarding another book published by the League, Tucholsky wrote: “The lack of a sense of justice in Germany is almost absolute. Read: Eight Years of Political Justice [Acht Jahre politischer Justiz]!”<sup>138</sup>

In July 1932, Carl von Ossietzky – who was already detained at Berlin-Tegel prison, and who was according to the press law the person responsible for the contents of *Die Weltbühne* – faced trial once again, this time for

<sup>133</sup> See *Acht Jahre politische Justiz. Das Zuchthaus – die politische Waffe*, Eine Denkschrift der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte, Berlin 1927.

<sup>134</sup> See “Ein Erfolg der Liga”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, nos. 9/10, 1 October 1929, p. 23.

<sup>135</sup> The official wording was: “With the collaboration of Kurt Tucholsky, headed by Carl von Ossietzky.”

<sup>136</sup> Tucholsky was responsible for the final editing of the brochure “Kanonen oder Brot. Eine Kritik des Reichswehretats” (“Cannons or bread? A critique of the Reichswehr budget”), arranged by Konrad Widerhold (a.k.a. Walter Kreiser) and Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt; see *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, nos. 4/5, 20 April 1929, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Wrobel, Ignaz (real name: Tucholsky, Kurt), “Die Denkschrift”, *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 21, no. 28, 14 July 1925, p. 68.

<sup>138</sup> Wrobel, Ignaz, “Acht Jahre politischer Justiz”, *ibid.*, vol. 23, no. 40, 4 October 1927, p. 539.

Tucholsky's phrase: "Soldiers are murderers" (*"Soldaten sind Mörder"*).<sup>139</sup> As a foreign resident, Tucholsky himself could not be indicted in Germany; and yet, he contemplated travelling to Germany regardless, despite being warned that the Nazis were after his head. In the end, he had enough sense not to embark on the trip, but he would never forgive himself for making this decision: "But, in the case of Oss[ietzky], for once, I did not show up; I failed back then, it was a blend of laziness, cowardice, disgust, contempt – but I should have gone nevertheless. Of course, I am aware that I would have been of no help, that both of us would have been convicted without a doubt, that I might even have fallen into the claws of these animals – but still, a slight sense of guilt remains."<sup>140</sup>

Major-General *Freiherr Paul von Schoenaich* (1866–1954), who, up until the November Revolution of 1918, was a military man – if not a staunch Prussian militarist – wrote, after coming out as a pacifist: "I hold that those who do not, in times of great transformations, subject their earlier views to scrutiny, are fools, and that those who do and then realize that their former views were a mistake but fail to admit this are cowards."

In 1929, Schoenaich, who was a member of the board of the League for Human Rights – he was often referred to as the "peace general" (*Friedensgeneral*) – succeeded Ludwig Quidde as chairman of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft* (German Peace Society). He then shifted this organization's politics noticeably to the left; but for the SPD leadership, this went too far to the left. In summer 1931, the party declared membership in the German Peace Society to be incompatible with belonging to the SPD itself. It was not until 1961 that the SPD leadership again issued such an anathema, when it put the Socialist German Students' Union (or League) (SDS, *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studierendenbund*) on an index of forbidden organizations; through this move it – totally unnecessarily – limited its own influence on what had up to that point been the most successful movement in modernizing German society (and the left) in postwar German history.

He would again become the German Peace Society's chairman when it was re-founded after 1945. Yet, the 85-year-old Schoenaich found himself

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<sup>139</sup> "For four whole years, there were many square miles of land on which murder was compulsory, whereas it was prohibited just as strictly barely half an hour away. Did I say: murder? Of course, murder. Soldiers are murderers." Wrobel, Ignaz, "Der bewachte Kriegsschauplatz", *ibid.*, vol. 27, no. 31, 4 August 1931, p. 191.

<sup>140</sup> "Kurt Tucholsky an Hedwig Müller, 19. Dezember 1935", *id.*, *Briefe. Auswahl 1913–1935*, Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1983, pp. 325 ff.

deposed by his own associates due to his implacable opposition to the rearmament of West Germany ...

At the suggestion of Phillip Scheidemann, the Soviet embassy was expelled on 5 November 1918, under a pretext fabricated by the German government. Upon his departure the following day, the Soviet ambassador Adolph Joffe (1883–1927) handed Oskar Cohn (1869–1934), half a million marks to support the German Revolution. Cohn had been Joffe's legal adviser: he had established a law firm with the brothers Theodor and Karl Liebknecht in 1899, and Cohn was also a member of parliament. Jacob Walcher (1887–1970), a leading member of the suppressed KPD, claimed at an illegal national conference on 16 August 1919 that “[t]he money never passed into the hands of the KPD und is now in the hands of the Ebert government, who confiscated it with the consent of the Entente Powers; so far, the objections voiced by Soviet Russia have not been successful either.”<sup>141</sup>

Yet, this was a self-serving statement simply to fend off any potential requests for funds. A far more credible account is that given by Ottokar Luban, who points to the report by Wilhelm Pieck on the trajectory of the November Revolution. This document says that the leading Revolutionary Shop Stewards in Berlin wanted to use the money, which had been passed from Joffe to Cohn and on to the Spartacist leadership, to pay and feed the revolutionary soldiers and workers during the January unrest of 1919.<sup>142</sup>

Cohn temporarily belonged to the executive board of the League for Human Rights and immediately left the country after the Reichstag fire in 1933. While still waiting for his visa for Palestine, he died in Geneva during a conference of the World Jewish Congress; he was buried at Lake Tiberias.

On Kurt Hiller (1885–1972), there is the volume *Hillieriana: Studien zum Leben und Werk* (“Hillieriana: studies on his life and work”)<sup>143</sup>, and also conferences devoted to this pugnacious character, ever-involved in argument. Unfortunately, his works have not been reissued – thus far – and

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<sup>141</sup> “Reichskonferenz der KPD, 16. August 1919”, Levi, Paul, *Ohne einen Tropfen Lakaienblut. Schriften, Reden, Briefe*. Band I/2: Spartakus, ed. by Jörn Schütrumpf, Berlin: 2018, p. 1189.

<sup>142</sup> See Luban, Ottokar, “Russische Bolschewiki und deutsche Linkssozialisten am Vorabend der deutschen Novemberrevolution. Beziehungen und Einflussnahme”, *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung*, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2009, p. 297; Pieck, Wilhelm, Erinnerungsmanuskript, in SAPMO, NY 4036, Nr. 384, Bl. 121.

<sup>143</sup> See Beutin, Wolfgang, *Hillieriana. Studien zum Leben und Werk Kurt Hillers (1885–1972)* (Beutin-Texte: Belletristische und Literaturwissenschaftliche Arbeiten von Wolfgang Beutin), n.pl., 2010.

he is read only in specialist circles. Hiller is certainly an author who merits a greater audience.

Kurt-Hiller-Park in Berlin-Schöneberg, which received its name in 2000, commemorates a spearhead of the homosexual civil rights movement.<sup>144</sup> Among other things, Hiller had been a leading member of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (*Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee*) from 1908 onward – a group established by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1897 that fought against the laws criminalizing homosexuality. As a professed gay, Jew, and socialist, Hiller gained additional “popularity” among the Nazis for his analytical articles: “The fact that nationalism, as a sentiment as well as a feeling that intensely pervaded political rationality, became increasingly widespread and also became more conscious and alive than ever even among the poor, is doubtlessly attributable to the vengeful terms of the Treaty of Versailles [...].

The old – and, indeed, in many aspects, outdated – socialist movement lacks persuasive power, advertising appeal, attractiveness; the split, which appears to be irreversible, reduces its appeal even more. The more primitive type of National Socialist [Nazi] will calculate: ‘They have been up there for 13 years, and not a thing has been achieved, things have become even worse.’ We know in which regards this calculus is mistaken. But, in some cases it is accurate; and one needs to understand that millions of people are willing, after so many failures, ‘to give the other side a go’. The colossal success of the Nazis is, among other things, the result of a colossal and legitimate disappointment.”<sup>145</sup>

Before Hiller was able to flee the country in 1934, he was arrested three times and severely abused both at the Columbia House concentration camp in central Berlin and at the Oranienburg concentration camp, where Erich Mühsam was murdered on 10 July 1934.

*Alfred Apfel* (1882–1941), a defence lawyer in many political trials, was also one of Carl von Ossietzky’s lawyers in 1933. By August 1933, he not only topped the Nazis’ expatriation list but was also among the first to be

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<sup>144</sup> The initiative came from the Lesbian and Gay Association Berlin-Brandenburg (Lesben- und Schwulenverband Berlin-Brandenburg) and was supported by the SPD’s local branch in Berlin-Schöneberg, the “Lesbians and Gays in the SPD” and the “Gay Young Socialists” (*Jungsozialisten*, SPD youth organization).

<sup>145</sup> Hiller, Kurt, “Über die Ursachen des nationalsozialistischen Erfolges”, *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 28, no. 34, 23 August 1932, p. 274.

arrested in the night of the Reichstag fire and taken to one of the so-called “early camps”.

Apfel had already been a public figure in his youth: from 1909 to 1922, he was the president of the Association of Jewish Youth Movements in Germany (*Verband jüdischer Jugendvereine Deutschlands*) as well as, temporarily, a member of the executive board of the large Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*), and, from 1930 onward, chairman of the influential Union of Berlin Zionists (*Berliner Zionistische Vereinigung*).

In 1928, he and Felix Halle (born 1884), who was murdered in the USSR in 1937, headed the movement that obtained amnesty for Max Hoelz (1899–1933), the “Robin Hood” of the KPD.<sup>146</sup> On 14 February 1941, Alfred Apfel paid a visit to Varian Fry in Marseille, who, being a US citizen, had established contact with the “Emergency Rescue Committee”, which enabled around two thousand people to flee the Gestapo and make it into exile overseas. During this visit, the 58-year-old suffered a fatal heart attack. One end of Varian-Fry-Strasse in Berlin is barely 150 metres from Tilla-Durieux-Park. More recently, several publications by and on Alfred Apfel have appeared.<sup>147</sup>

Following Trotsky’s banishment from Stalin’s Soviet Union, the League for Human Rights organized a meeting in the building of the former Prussian House of Lords. Besides Paul Levi, *Otto Nuschke* (1883–1957) also issued a biting critique of conditions in the alleged workers’ paradise.<sup>148</sup>

This was not the only nor the last time that the League issued a statement on emergent Stalinism. Previously, during the “Shakhty Trial” (18 May to 7 July 1928), the League had already approached the Russian em-

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<sup>146</sup> See Halle, Felix/Apfel, Alfred, “Eingabe für den zu lebenslänglichem Zuchthaus verurteilten Max Hoelz an den deutschen Reichstag und den preußischen Landtag”, Berlin 1928.

<sup>147</sup> See *Hinter den Kulissen der deutschen Justiz: Erinnerungen eines deutschen Rechtsanwalts 1882–1933*, transl. back into German from the French and English edns. by Jan and Ursula Gehlsen, Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013; Alfred Apfel, “Mein liebes Tierchen ... in inniger Liebe, Dein Alfred.” Briefe & Karten an seine Tochter Hannah Busoni, reviewed and ed. by Heinrich Schwing, 2nd exp. edn., Berlin: cbed, 2014; Apfel, Alfred, *Sein Schriftwerk. Autobiografien, Publikationen*, reviewed and ed. by Heinrich Schwing, Berlin: epubli, 2014.

<sup>148</sup> “Über die Arbeit der ‘Liga für Menschenrechte’” (Fragment), from: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Nachlass Paul Levi, 1/PLAA000055.



bassy: “Without wanting to adopt a position on the Shakhty trial, and indeed, without wanting to engage in sabotage against the workers’ and peasants’ state the German League for Human Rights requests that any death sentences not be carried out. The reason for our request is solely the conviction of the League for Human Rights that there is no place for execution as a means of punishment in a progressive and enlightened judicial system.”<sup>149</sup>

In May 1929, three engineers had been executed without trial by the Soviet Union’s political police (OGPU) in the town of Shakhty; the language which the League used in their request to the ambassador, then, was far less submissive than the previous year.<sup>150</sup>

After the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD, Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland) had removed the freely elected chairman of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) in the Soviet occupation zone (SBZ, *Sowjetische Besatzungszone in Deutschland*), Jakob Kaiser (1888–1961) from his post, and driven him to flee to the West, the only replacement for him they could find, of all people, was the former left-liberal politician for the German Democratic Party (DDP, *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*) Otto Nuschke, a critic of Stalin. The SMAD had no choice but to convince the CDU’s party apparatus to accept this former professed defender of Trotsky as its chairman in the SBZ from 1949 onward and to appoint him one of two Deputy Prime Ministers (officially: First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers) of the German Democratic Republic (DDR, *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*) in 1949. In 1950, Nuschke prevented the banning of the CDU through his agreement to a suspension of democratic elections; three years later, the confrontations associated with the East German Uprising on 17 June 1953 not only averted a ban on the CDU, but saved Nuschke’s neck, too. After 17 June, the CDU – and thus, Nuschke – were needed more urgently than ever, namely as formally independent patsies to back the claim that the overt attempts since summer 1952 to turn the DDR into a totalitarian dictatorship emulating the USSR had been given up once and for all. Some fifteen years later, this was referred to as a “Policy of gradualism” (*Politik der kleinen Schritte*) (Egon

<sup>149</sup> See “Geschäftsbericht für die Zeit vom 1. Januar 1928 bis zum 31. Dezember 1928”, p. 4 (“Annual Report for the period from 1 January 1928 to 31 December 1928”, p. 130).

<sup>150</sup> See “Eingabe der Liga an den russischen Botschafter”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, nos. 7/8, 25 July 1929, p. 31 (“Official Statement Submitted by the League to the Russian Ambassador”, p. 144).

Bahr, Willy Brandt), though Nuschke was not its inventor: Otto von Bismarck had in fact already pursued a “patient, stepwise, cautious policy”.

*Berthold Jacob* (1898–1944), whom the First World War turned into a resolute pacifist, “[...] was a true Sherlock Holmes of journalism and was constantly working on charts and maps, the completion of which revealed all of his enemies’ secrets to him. Using a compass and a map, he calculated the hideouts of the Feme murder conspirators and used little flags to pinpoint the positions of the Black Reichswehr. The army-list of ranks was his bedtime reading, and the personal announcements in the local papers of garrison towns were his most cherished sources of information.”<sup>151</sup>

Because of Berthold Jacob’s article in the weekly journal *Das Tagebuch* in 1928, in which he had accused the Reich prosecutor Paul Jorns (1871–1942) of having covered up the murders of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in 1919,<sup>152</sup> the responsible editor Joseph Bornstein (1899–1952) had engaged Paul Levi as his lawyer. In 1929, Levi managed to win the case: “The horrific deed that was committed at the time benefited no one. The captain Pflugk-Harttung or that brother – I do not know which one – who was torn to pieces by the grenade he had intended for others. Lieutenant Liepmann<sup>153</sup>, an infirm cripple at his young age. Private Runge<sup>154</sup>, a wretched man, avoided and rejected by his work colleagues. Others are on the run, who knows where, all forced to conceal their faces from other people. Only one of them came up in the ranks, the counsel to the court martial Jorns, and I suspect that he has forgotten over those past ten years why the robe he is wearing is in fact red.

Gentlemen, I believe that, at this point, these walls and this ceiling recede, giving way to a day of justice in every sense of the word! The dead letters, used for the purpose of protecting perpetrators, and the rotten bones of the victims: they rise up and accuse the former accuser. (Applause in the audience)”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Kiaulehn, Walther, quoted in Madrasch-Groschopp, Ursula, *Die Weltbühne. Porträt einer Zeitschrift*, Berlin: Athenäum, 1983, p. 198.

<sup>152</sup> See “Kollege Jorns”, *Das Tagebuch*, vol. 9, no. 9, 24 March 1928.

<sup>153</sup> Rudolf Liepmann (born 1894) murdered Karl Liebknecht, but was nonetheless forced to emigrate by the Nazis given his Jewish background. He died in Shanghai in 1940.

<sup>154</sup> Otto Runge had – after being ordered to do so – struck first Karl Liebknecht and then Rosa Luxemburg on the head with the butt of his rifle.

<sup>155</sup> *Der Jorns-Prozeß. Rede des Verteidigers Dr. Paul Levi, Berlin – nebst Einleitung*, Berlin 1929, p. 54; reissued in Levi, Paul, *Ohne einen Tropfen Lakaienblut. Schriften*,

The next day, Albert Einstein wrote to the defence lawyer: “You have been granted the greatest of all privileges: you have managed to enchant even the brash Berliner Tageblatt.”<sup>156</sup>

Berthold Jacob, who had already emigrated to France in 1932, was lured to Switzerland and then abducted by the Gestapo in 1935, though he was released after international protests. Shortly before he could embark on a ship in Lisbon that was heading for the United States in 1941, the Gestapo abducted him once more. Berthold Jacob died from TB and typhus, the after-effects of his imprisonment, at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin. His father had already been murdered at Auschwitz the year before.

*Max Hodann* (1894–1946) appealed to a broad audience with his books. The director of the public health office in Berlin-Reinickendorf was a well-known sex educator and was heavily influenced by Magnus Hirschfeld. His work *Bub und Mädel. Gespräche unter Kameraden über die Geschlechterfrage* (1924) was not the only one to be reissued several times.

In the League for Human Rights, Hodann – who had been excluded from the SPD in 1926 because he had violated the resolution that the SPD membership was incompatible with activities related to the “International Youth Federation” (*Internationaler Jugendbund*) – made his first appearance in October 1929. He did so as one of the four members of the inquiry committee initiated by the League that was to clarify the events of 1 May 1929 – known as “Bloody May” (*Blutmai*). At least thirty people had been killed and hundreds had remained lying wounded in the street. The police leadership, headed by an SPD interior minister and an SPD chief of police, had, moreover, used “young officers from out of town [...] in the “fights”. This fact, and the absolutely unsuitable military education of the officers [...] should be the key focus of the investigation into the general grievances against the police. Only then can an investigations of individual violations of the law begin.”<sup>157</sup>

The committee of inquiry gathered evidence that was on public display at the League’s office at Monbijouplatz. Some 39 of the witnesses agreed to having their names published in the final report. And yet, not a single

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*Reden, Briefe*, Band II/3: Sozialdemokratie, ed. by Jörn Schütrumpf, Berlin: Dietz, 2022, p. 2030.

<sup>156</sup> “Albert Einstein an Paul Levi, 8. August 1929”, *ibid.*, p. 2063.

<sup>157</sup> “Die Ergebnisse der Maiuntersuchung”, *Die Menschenrechte*, vol. 4, nos. 9/10, 1. Oktober 1929, p. 8 (“Findings of the May Inquiry”, p. 150 in this volume).

policeman had been interviewed, as the President of Police had barred all police officers from making any kind of statement.

In 1935, based on the accusation that he was a “herald of false sexual doctrines [...] which pursued the demoralization of the German people and particularly of the German youth”,<sup>158</sup> Hodann was expatriated. Although he suffered severely from asthma, he joined the International Brigades and participated in the Spanish Civil War as military doctor in 1937–38. During his last years in life in Sweden, he met Peter Weiss (1916–1982), who memorialized Hodann in his novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*.

*Toni Sender* (also spelled Tony, whose real name was Sidonie, 1888–1964), was a member of the advisory committee of the League for Human Rights. Before the beginning of the war, she had worked in Paris. She was one of the six German Social-Democratic women who accepted Clara Zetkin’s invitation to the International Socialist Women’s Anti-War Conference in Bern in March 1915. Toni Sender was an anti-war campaigner in southern Germany; during the November Revolution, she was on the front line in Frankfurt; during the Kapp Putsch, workers escorted her out of the city and to safety – as the putschists who were staging the military coup were most keen to execute the woman of only five feet. The divided national leadership of the USPD reached a compromise and nominated Tony Sender as the lead candidate for the Reichstag elections in 1920. In the Reichstag group of the SPD, from 1922, Tony Sender was part of the hard core of the SPD’s left wing together with her husband, the chairman of the Metalworkers’ Union (*Verband der Metallarbeiter*) Robert Dißmann (1878–1926), as well as Anna Siemsen, Paul Levi, Heinrich Ströbel, Max Seydewitz (1892–1987), and the long-standing lawyer of Rosa Luxemburg, Kurt Rosenfeld.<sup>159</sup> In 1931, however, she was the only one of the survivors from this list who did not join the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany (SAP). From her exile, she advocated the popular front – until the Moscow show trials convinced her of the opposite and drove her into the anti-Communist camp. In 1943, she received US citizenship and started work-

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<sup>158</sup> Grau, Günter, “Max Hodann (1894–1946)”, in Sigusch, Volkmar/Grau, Günter (eds.), *Personenlexikon der Sexualforschung*, Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus, 2009, p. 298.

<sup>159</sup> Apart from Kurt Rosenfeld, Paul Levi and Siegfried Weinberg also acted as Rosa Luxemburg’s defence lawyers; see Hillebrand, Reinhard, “Dr. Siegfried Weinberg (1880–1932) – Anwalt und Sozialdemokrat zwischen Reform und Revolution”, *Recht und Politik*, vol. 55 (2019), no. 2, pp. 175–180.

ing for the UNRRA and later for the UN Commission on Human Rights, among others. The Tony Sender Award, endowed with €10,000, in honour of exceptional commitment to the struggle for the equality of women and men has been conferred by the city of Frankfurt am Main biannually since 1992; the party school of the SPD in Southern Hesse in Wiesbaden is called the Toni Sender Academy. On 31 October 2022, a commemorative plaque for Toni Sender on behalf of the Berlin Senate was revealed in front of the house at Wittelsbacherstrasse 34.

*Heinrich Ströbel* (1869–1944), once a close ally of Rosa Luxemburg, chief editor of the *Vorwärts* from 1914 to 1916 – but equally found guilty of opposition to the war by the SPD leadership and forced out, a year after Ernst Meyer – had proposed, together with Hellmut von Gerlach, the creation of an alternative organizational structure after the BNV was banned in February 1916. On 30 July 1916, the Zentralstelle Völkerrecht (ZV, “Central Agency for International Law”) was established as an informal association in Frankfurt am Main. And yet, this move brought only short-lived relief: on 25 January 1917, the group was prohibited from engaging in “any form of public advertising activity”. During the revolution in 1918–19, Ströbel served as Prussian Minister President for a short while, representing the USPD; for a year-and-a-half in 1919–20, he wrote the editorial articles for *Die Weltbühne*, the unofficial mouthpiece of the BNV. In 1924, he was a member of parliament elected on the SPD ticket; in 1931, he temporarily became the co-chair of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany (SAP) together with Kurt Rosenfeld and Max Seydewitz. Heinrich Ströbel died in his exile in Switzerland.

*Felix Fechenbach* (1894–1933) was the former secretary of Bavarian Minister President Kurt Eisner (assassinated in 1919). Fechenbach was accused by his first wife – who was seeking revenge for him divorcing her – of the most absurd subversive crimes, whereupon a Bavarian prosecutor attended to the matter particularly keenly and made sure that Fechenbach was sentenced by a cooperative judge in 1922. He received eleven years in prison on charges of “treason”. Alongside Heinrich Wandt and Walter Bullerjahn, Fechenbach was one of the few victims of the justice system in whose case the fight against that very justice system ultimately yielded success. Following public protests on behalf of this friend of Albert Einstein and Kurt Tucholsky, the authorities were forced in 1924 to release Fechenbach, albeit without revoking his conviction for treason. On 7 August 1933, after severe physical abuse, Felix Fechenbach was “shot while attempting to escape”

during his transferral to the Dachau concentration camp outside Munich. Albert Einstein managed to help Fechenbach's second wife Irma Epstein (1895–1973) and the couple's three children to escape to the United States. Fechenbach's brothers and their families were murdered during the Holocaust. The SPD's subdistrict branch in the Lippe region has set up a Felix Fechenbach Foundation (*Felix-Fechenbach-Stiftung*) based in the town of Detmold which awards the Felix Fechenbach Prize biannually.

*Rudolf Olden* (1885–1940), who was gifted with at least two noteworthy talents – he was successful both as a journalist and as a lawyer – came out of the First World War not only as a first lieutenant but as a pacifist, too. His circle of friends included Egon Erwin Kisch (1885–1948) from Prague, the “roving reporter”, one of the most important individuals in the history of journalism, as well as the *Weltbühne* author Alfred Polgar (1873–1955) from Vienna. Both of these writers' books were burned by the Nazis on Berlin's Bebelplatz square between May and October 1933 along with thousands of other books considered “un-German”.

A member of the board of the League for Human Rights since 1931, Olden was Carl von Ossietzky's defence lawyer when he was indicted in 1932 for “defamation of the Reichswehr” because of Kurt Tucholsky's remark “Soldiers are murderers” in the *Weltbühne* on 4 August 1931. Olden won the case. On 18 September 1940, the German submarine “U-Boot U 48” torpedoed and sank the passenger steamer *City of Benares* in the Atlantic; some 248 people died, among them Rudolf Olden and his wife.

The youngest of the League's activists *Alfred Falk* (1896–1951) had started his political activism in the – today, largely forgotten – *Jugendbund Schwarz-Rot-Gold* (“black-red-gold youth movement”)<sup>160</sup> and proposed to the League's board in October 1924 that the *Republikanische Beschwerdestelle* (“Republican Complaints Office”) of the *Jugendbund* should be complemented by an independent organization supported by the League.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> No information was found on the “*Jugendbund Schwarz-Rot-Gold*” – apart from the fact that it already existed in 1924. It is not to be confused with the “*Jungbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*”, the youth organization of the multiparty organization “*Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*” for the protection of the republic, as it was not established until 1926.

<sup>161</sup> See Jung, Otmar, “Verfassungsschutz privat. Die Republikanische Beschwerdestelle e. V. (1924–1933)”, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 35, no. 1, January 1987, pp. 65–93.

The complaints office had taken action over more than two thousand cases by May 1927 alone:

1. Removal of monarchist symbols;
2. Complaints against vilifiers of the republic;
3. Taking action against warmongering school books and warmongering in the classroom;
4. Removal of, or filing for disciplinary action against anti-republican civil servants;
5. Taking action against monarchist tendencies in official district gazettes;
6. Monitoring of celebrations marking “Constitution Day”<sup>162</sup>

In 1928, Kurt Tucholsky wrote: “The Republican Complaints Office [Republikanische Beschwerdestelle] must be doing a very good job, otherwise the right-wing press would not be so fired up when they refer to it. There are these people who actually know the regulations, and what they do makes absolute sense, and then they actually win their cases! One of them is Alfred Falk, a republican of whose kind we need many more.”<sup>163</sup>

Falk was soon one of the “best-hated people” in Germany.<sup>164</sup> In 1933, he destroyed all the documents at the complaints office. Although the SA still managed to obtain some of these papers, they never managed to analyze the materials, given the sheer mass of files and documents which were confiscated all over Germany in March 1933. Later, as the result of an error made by the authorities, the remaining records were sent to Tegel prison in December 1933, where they were destroyed.<sup>165</sup>

Together with Berthold Jacob, he founded the German League for Human Rights exile branch in Strasbourg, France, and was a leading organizer of the Nobel Prize campaign for Carl von Ossietzky – before he ceased all political activity in 1935.

Originally, East Germany’s president Wilhelm Pieck (1873–1960) had intended for the plaques installed at the “Memorial of the Socialists” at Berlin-Friedrichsfelde cemetery also to display the names of Leo Jogiches,

<sup>162</sup> Lehmann-Russbüldt, *Der Kampf der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, p. 120.

<sup>163</sup> Wrobel, Ignaz, Die Republikanische Beschwerdestelle, *Die Weltbühne*, vol. 24, no. 38, 18 September 1928, p. 459.

<sup>164</sup> “Warum Republikanische Beschwerdestelle?”, *General-Anzeiger für Dortmund*, no. 312, 12 November 1930, wikipedia.org

<sup>165</sup> See Jung, “Verfassungsschutz privat”, p. 93.

*Kurt Rosenfeld* (1877–1943), and Wolfgang Fernbach (born 1889), the member of parliament who had been so ferociously butchered by Reichswehr soldiers at the *Garde-Drägoner-Kaserne* (“Guard Dragoon Barracks”) in Berlin-Kreuzberg on 11 January 1919; Pieck had worked with all three of them in the past. After paying a visit to Friedrichsfelde cemetery, however, he made a note for his secretary: “At the back, there were three sandstone plates, each with a name engraved – Jogiches, Fernbach, and Rosenfeld – need to be removed.”<sup>166</sup>

To Stalin’s occupation-Communists, commemorating Rosa Luxemburg was already hard enough to digest, yet simply could not be avoided.<sup>167</sup> But what about Lenin’s opponent, Luxemburg’s temporary romantic partner and lifelong political ally Leo Jogiches? They had worked together politically from 1892 until their deaths, with him remaining mainly in the background and her taking centre stage. Or, what about, further still, Rosa Luxemburg’s lawyer, the professed opponent of Stalinism Kurt Rosenfeld? That was just too much. Wolfgang Fernbach<sup>168</sup> really only got caught up in the matter because his grave was meant to be placed in between those of Jogiches and Rosenfeld. Over the following years his name was buried in oblivion in the GDR. Even in the standard reference of the SED’s historiography, the name of the executed Spartacist is nowhere to be found.<sup>169</sup> In the *Klarschrift der handschriftlichen Notizen von Wilhelm Pieck* (“Plain text of the handwritten notes of Wilhelm Pieck”), compiled and published by the East German Institute of Marxism-Leninism on 22 February 1967, the “specialists” had actually interpreted “Fernbach” as “Feuerbach”.<sup>170</sup>

Prior to the First World War, Kurt Rosenfeld had taught at the SPD’s party school in Berlin alongside Rosa Luxemburg. After serving as Prussian Minister of Justice on behalf of the USPD for a short period in 1918–19, he managed, during the years leading up to 1933, to obtain the release of Clara Zetkin’s former secretary Heinrich Wandt (1890–1965) as well as

<sup>166</sup> See Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) Berlin, NY/4036/611, Bl. 120.

<sup>167</sup> This was one reason why they instructed their protégé, the SED’s chief ideologist, to get straight to his desk and start writing a text against Rosa Luxemburg without delay, which was to be mass-circulated.; see Oelsner, Fred, *Rosa Luxemburg. Eine kritische biographische Skizze*, Berlin: Dietz, 1951.

<sup>168</sup> See Fernbach, Eugen and David (eds.), *Assimilation – Zionismus – Spartakus. Chronik der Berliner Familie Fernbach (1879–1934)*, Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019.

<sup>169</sup> See *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Biographisches Lexikon*, Berlin: Dietz, 1970.

<sup>170</sup> See Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) Berlin, NY/4036/611, Bl. 119.



the recipient of the Iron Cross award Walter Bullerjahn from prison. In 1923, Wandt – indeed a somewhat dubious figure, oscillating between the left and the right – had been abducted in a cloak-and-dagger operation from the temporarily British-occupied city of Düsseldorf (where German authorities had no official jurisdiction) and taken to Potsdam, before being convicted by the Reich court in Leipzig. This trial, which would become known as the “German Dreyfus trial” was held in secret, and all those present, including Wandt’s lawyer Rosenfeld, were bound by an obligation to confidentiality.<sup>171</sup>

That is why he had to use a stooge: Paul Levi, one of the most active members of the League for Human Rights ever since 1922 and, for a short while, a member of its board. Like Rosenfeld, Levi was a lawyer and member of parliament but had not been involved in the trial, which is why he could not be prosecuted. On 10 March 1925, he made the scandal public in the Reichstag: “I am referring to the Wandt case. One may well object to Wandt’s moral qualifications. But murder, or judicial murder, can also be committed against a lumpen. Think about Wandt what you may – what has happened here cannot be called anything other than judicial murder.”<sup>172</sup>

Incidentally, the case of Walter Bullerjahn was no less scandalous: “On 8 January 1925, the Military Inter-Allied Commission of Control confiscated around 60,000 metal workpieces, which could potentially be used to produce rifle barrels, at the premises of the erstwhile arms producer Berlin-Karlsruher Industrierwerke, where they were stored in a hiding place. Bullerjahn, who was the company’s chief warehouse keeper, came under suspicion of having compromised this secret material depot.”<sup>173</sup>

Bullerjahn was incriminated by a witness that remained unnamed throughout the trial and eventually sentenced to fifteen years in prison by the Reich court without any evidence whatsoever.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> See “Der – aussichtslose – Versuch eines Opfers, zu den Tätern aufzuschließen. Oder: Wie ‘Etappe Gent’ entstand”, in Wandt, Heinrich, *Erotik und Spionage in der Etappe Gent. Deutsche Besatzungsherrschaft in Belgien während des Ersten Weltkrieges*, ed. by Jörn Schürumpf, Berlin: Dietz, 2014, pp. 319–362.

<sup>172</sup> Levi, Paul, “Verletzung des Rechtsgefühls. Rede im Reichstag am 10. März 1925”, in id., *Ohne einen Tropfen Lakaienblut*, Bd. II/3, p. 1580.

<sup>173</sup> Id., “Zwei Fünfzehnjährige”, *ibid.*, p. 1873.

<sup>174</sup> See “Der Fall Bullerjahn. Nach Hörensagen zu 15 Jahren Zuchthaus verurteilt”, *Vorwärts. Berliner Volksblatt. Zentralorgan der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, vol. 45, no. 590, 14 December 1928, evening edn.; reissued in Levi, *Ohne einen Tropfen Lakaienblut*, Bd. II/3, p. 1878.

Bullerjahn's lawyer Paul Levi did not live to see the outcome of the appeal proceedings; he died in an accident in February 1930. As a result, Rosenfeld assumed Bullerjahn's mandate. On 13 December 1932, he wrote to Levi's sister: "Of the many good wishes I received upon Bullerjahn's acquittal, your congratulatory note has been and still is the most important one to me. After all, I thought about your brother unceasingly during the proceedings, missing him, wishing that he was there. Just as in politics, I sorely miss your brother in this trial. Your letter felt to me like a message coming from him."<sup>175</sup>

The League for Human Rights produced a leaflet, which read: "The German League for Human Rights saves Bullerjahn! [...] This acquittal is a victory for the German League for Human Rights."<sup>176</sup>

It would be the last victory for the League. Kurt Rosenfeld, who in 1931 had assumed the leadership of the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAP) together with Heinrich Ströbel and Max Seydewitz, died – as did so many others – in exile. The report in the SED's central organ *Neues Deutschland* on 21 June 1950 about the death of Alice Rosenfeld (1878–1950) – she had returned from exile and lived in the East Berlin district of Treptow – was the last time that Kurt Rosenfeld's name was mentioned in East Germany for many years...

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<sup>175</sup> "Kurt Rosenfeld an Jenny Herz, 13. Dezember 1932", *ibid.*, p. 2309.

<sup>176</sup> *Mitteilungsblatt der Rheinischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte*, [web.archive.org](http://web.archive.org).



# Documents

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## What Are the Aims of the “New Fatherland” League?

*When it comes to Europe,  
the torch of the spirit has never gone out.  
The runners were still on the move,  
carrying the torch with its sacred flame,  
passing it from hand to hand in the darkness.*  
René Schickele in *Die Weißen Blätter*

In their pronouncements at the start of the war, some of Germany’s most influential figures as well as the Emperor himself vehemently insisted that the country had not entered the European war to make conquests, but to maintain the achievements of 1813 and 1870 and secure them in the long term. Kaiser Wilhelm took every opportunity to make known his view that achieving world domination had time and again proven to be impossible in the long run. This was a conviction he expressed most clearly and urgently in his famous address upon the unveiling of the Kaiser Friedrich monument in Bremen. In the speech, he stated: “As the result of my reading of history, I have pledged myself never to strive after an empty world-rule. For what has become of the so-called world-empires? Alexander the Great, Napoleon, all the great heroes of war swam in blood, and left behind them subjugated nations which rose on the first opportunity and brought their empires to ruin. The world-empire that I have dreamed of would consist in this –, that, above all, the newly-created German Empire should on every side enjoy the most absolute confidence as a tranquil, honourable, peaceable neighbour, and that if history should one day tell of a German world-empire, or of a Hohenzollern world-rule, it should not have been based on conquests with the sword, but on the mutual trust of nations striving towards the same goal – in short, as one great poet has expressed it, ‘externally limited, internally unlimited’.”

In order to be practicable, the German policy goals Wilhelm set out in this speech require the unwavering support of German public opinion. And it is in this vein that the “New Fatherland” League (*Der Bund “Neues Vaterland”*) seeks to carry out its work. The League proceeds from the fundamental philosophy that, despite the war, the nations of Europe form a cultural alliance and must continue to do so in the future, if European culture is not to suffer a devastating crisis of the kind that Germany endured during and after the Thirty Years’ War.

As General von Clausewitz famously put it: war is a continuation of state policy by other means. And as such, it must and may only serve the vital interests of states and peoples. All purely emotional voices, which so readily arise among the public amidst the confusion and chaos of war, must be silent in the face of the necessity that warfare serve a clearly acknowledged goal. But politics is the art of the possible. Thus, Germany must conduct this war with the deliberate intention of doing everything within its power to enable future generations to perform their peaceful work in all spheres of culture and, at the same time, to keep the sources of conflict between European states to a minimum.

Accordingly, the idea of conquering foreign lands must be abandoned, since nowadays, the incorporation of an entire people or the dismemberment of a former nation-state, which is a pillar of cultural power, can only be undertaken if there is a firm intention to risk another world war over such a conquest in the near future. Even a man with the mindset of Prussian cavalry general Friedrich von Bernhardt, a militarist whose works almost irreparably damaged Germany's reputation abroad, was fundamentally in agreement. Writing about a German policy of conquest, he stated on page 40 of his book *Unsere Zukunft* ("Our Future"): "It is evident that this involves no thought of a policy of conquest; such a thing would be contrary to the spirit of the time and to our own real advantage, since we could only acquire in Europe territories whose population, held by force, would always be hostile to us."

The independence and freedom of the European nations, the German nation as well as the others, is the indispensable condition without which there can be no peace and no peaceful work. We must, however, also seek to strengthen the cultural, economic, and political ties between the nations of Europe, which is best achieved by converging the customs policies of the European states.

The sudden outbreak of war, in particular, has shown just how far the representation of the European nations' foreign interests is from meeting the demands of the people, especially the German people. The competence of Germany's diplomatic representation has undoubtedly suffered due to our limited choice from a small class of men far-removed from the requirements of a modern world economy. Negotiations between European diplomats have shown the fatal effect of the artificial secrecy surrounding all the agreements reached. It was quite possible, and this is something diplomats have always assured us of, that instead of the catastrophic solution which

we actually had, conflicting interests could eventually have been reconciled. This would undoubtedly have been of greater benefit to the interests of all nations than the current devastation of cultural works. Secret diplomacy made achieving such a solution extremely difficult, at best, and here, as in all other realms of the modern political life, public scrutiny must be used. Individual statesmen must be prevented from reaching binding agreements – even ones that have a non-binding form – behind the backs of their parliaments, just as Sir Edward Grey had done in England, causing Europe to plummet towards self-destruction.

The notion of a consolidated European organization enabling each and every individual nation to flourish, to reach the peak of their capabilities, must permeate all aspects of political life. Foreign policy is no more than a mirror of domestic policy, and vice versa. The organization of the nations must correspond to the organization of the people itself. The experiences of the last few months have clearly shown that Germany's exemplary military organization must go hand-in-hand with a similarly well-thought-out organization of internal German relations.

The not always terribly pleasant flaws in the organization of German social and economic policy are too serious for anyone to ever underestimate the significance of these matters for the nation's future resilience. Every component of social organization created in the future, whether through legal measures implemented by the Reich and the constituent states (*Bundesstaaten*), or through the peaceful work of the associations, trade unions, consumer cooperatives, etc. involved, implies increasing the external and internal strength of the nation.

The path has been cleared for us to work resolutely in this direction, since the war has freed us from the restrictions which prevented a large part of the German people from helping shape our social organization. In the Reichstag session of 2 December, the chancellor paved the way for a new Germany when he explicitly declared:

And, gentlemen, when a glorious and a happy freedom shall have been won, we will hold high this spirit as the most sacred inheritance from this terribly earnest and great period (*hear! hear!*). The barriers which for a dreary and lethargic period separated the people from one another, which we had erected against each other in ignorance, in disfavour, and in distrust, have fallen as if by magic. It is a liberation and a cause for joy that all this rubbish and jumble has now finally been swept away (*hoorah!*), that now it is only the man that counts, one equal to the other, one stretching out

his hand to the other for a single, sacred end. I repeat once more the words of the Emperor at the outbreak of the war: 'I no longer know any parties, I know only Germans.' When the war has passed, the parties will return. For without parties, without political battles, there is no political life, even for the freest and most united of peoples (*quite right!*). But gentlemen, we will battle – and for myself I promise you this – we will battle with the aim that in these battles there may henceforth be only Germans (*boorah!*).

Taking this declaration as a basis, the New Fatherland League seeks to form a volunteer corps of German men and women who are willing and ready to put their all into solving these challenges, in the knowledge that the postwar period will be far more challenging than the battles of the war itself.

New Fatherland League

Geschäftsstelle Berlin W 50 (Berlin Office), Tauentzienstr. 9 Garth. III

## Statutes

### Section 1. Purpose of the League

The League is an alliance of German men and women who have united, irrespective of any other political and religious opinions they may hold, to address the challenges which the German people are facing as a result of the European war.

The League's aims are thus:

1. To provide direct and indirect support for all endeavours capable of filling the politics and diplomacy of the nations of Europe with the idea of peaceful competition and of supranational union, with the aim of bringing about political and economic understanding between the civilized nations. This can only be achieved if we break with the system that has been in place up to now, whereby the few decide on the weal and woe of hundreds of millions of people.
2. As far as, in working towards this goal, there is a connection between the states' domestic and foreign policies, to endeavour to bring both into full agreement – for the good of the German nation and the entire civilized world.

Section 2. The League is represented by the Chair. The Chair can be provided with Deputies, who shall also serve as legal representatives of the League. Any Deputies shall also be elected by the League. To work on particular tasks, the League shall create Special Committees. A dedicated office shall implement the decisions of the League and the Committees.



Section 3. The League has a) ordinary members, b) scientific members, c) extraordinary members.

Ordinary members shall pay an annual membership contribution of at least 50 Reichsmarks. Scientific and extraordinary members are not required to pay membership fees. Extraordinary members have no voting rights.

Ordinary and scientific members may be accepted as members of the League on the condition that they actively commit to its purpose, which shall be aspired to through the friendly cooperation of all members.

Sections 4–8 contain the standard provisions for associations.

### *Note*

Section 3 of the Statutes of the New Fatherland League explicitly states that the League should comprise a true alliance, i.e. people do not become members by paying the specified membership fee; rather, every ordinary member is expected to make a continuous and energetic contribution to the League's aims. Individuals will be admitted to the League on this condition, and the membership fee can be waived as per the Statutes.

The members and friends of the League will regularly be kept informed about the League's activities by means of circulars.

Since its foundation in November 1914, the League has made contact with a whole range of scholars and writers who have expressed opinions that are partially or entirely in keeping with its endeavours. These have included: Luso Brentano; Franz von Liszt; Otfried Rippold; Lammusch, Salzburg; von Scala, Innsbruck; Hans Delbrück, Berlin; Albert Osterrieth, Berlin; Walther Schücking, Marburg\*); Hans Wehberg, Düsseldorf; Ferdinand Tönnies, Kiel; Lic. Siegmund-Schultze\*); Richard Calwer, Berlin; Herbert Eulenberg\*); Alexander Freiherr von Gleichen-Rußwurm\*); Ernst Schultze, Großborstel; Heinrich Roeßler, Frankfurt a. M.\*); Hellmuth von Gerlach\*); former ambassador Graf Anton von Monts; former envoy and privy councillor Graf von Leyden, privy councillor Arnhold, Dresden\*); Ernst Sieper, Munich\*); Leopold von Wiese, Cologne; Carl Lamprecht, Leipzig; Max Dessoir; Albert Einstein, Berlin\*); Paul Deussen, Kiel; Carl Brockhausen, Vienna; Wilhelm Herzog; Walther Federn (*Der österreichische Volkswirt* newspaper); Rudolf Goldscheid, Vienna \*); Romain Rolland, Geneva; Björnson, currently Berlin; Prof. Opet, Kiel\*); Baron von Schneider, Munich\*); Prof. Quidde, Munich\*); Director Archenhold, Treptow\*); former consul Dr Schlieben; privy councillor Adolf Schmidt, Potsdam (professor of astronomy); etc.

*The names marked with an \*) are members of the League.*

*Sister organizations of the New Fatherland League in Europe.*

The Union of Democratic Control, Kings Chambers, Portugal Street, London WC | Prof. Dr R. Broda, Lausanne (Switzerland), Av. De Rumine 60: *Bund für Organisierung menschlichen Fortschritts* (Association for the Organization of Human Advancement) | M. le Dr Nico van Suchtelen, Secretary of the Committee of the "United States of Europe", Blaricum, Holland | Nederlandsche Anti-Oorlog Raad, Theresiastr. 51, Haag, Holland | *Comité des "Amigos de la Unidad Moral de Europa"* (Friends of Moral Unity of Europe), M. En. Duran, Ateneo Barcelonés, Barcelona | The Cobden Club", Broadway Court, Broadway, Westminster, London SW | *Komitee zum Studium der Grundlagen eines dauerhaften Friedensvertrages* (Committee for the Study of the Foundations of a Lasting Peace Treaty), Bern.

**Pamphlets published by the New Fatherland League:**

- No. 1. Was will der "Bund Neues Vaterland"? 10 Pfennigs (What Are the Aims of the "New Fatherland" League?)
- No. 2. Was täte Bismarck? Von \*\*\*. Mit Vorwort vom Kais. Gesandten Grafen von Leyden. 10 Pfennigs (What Would Bismarck Have Done? By \*\*\*. With a Preface by imperial envoy Graf von Leyden).
- No. 3. Kurt von Tepper-Laski, Rennsport und Engländererei. Ein Briefwechsel 10 Pfennigs (Racing and Englishness. A Correspondence).
- No. 4. Kurt Eisner, Treibende Kräfte 10 Pfennigs (Driving Forces).
- No. 5. Walther Schücking, Die deutschen Professoren und der Krieg 10 Pfennigs (German Professors and the War).
- No. 6. Lujo Brentano, England und der Krieg 10 Pfennigs (England and the War).

Die Schöpfung der Vereinigten Staaten von Europa. Eine Phantasie von 1910 und eine Betrachtung von 1914. Von \*\*\* 50 Pfennigs (The Creation of the United States of Europe. A Fantasy from 1910 and an Analysis from 1914. By \*\*\*).

Rudolf Goldscheid, Deutschlands größte Gefahr 50 Pfennigs (Germany's Greatest Threat).

The Chair of the League is former cavalry captain Kurt von Tepper-Laski, the Deputy Chair is engineer Graf Georg von Arco.

Please direct all correspondence to the League office without naming the addressee: Bund “Neues Vaterland“, Berlin W. 50, Tauentzienstr. 9 (office hours: 9 a.m.–1 p.m.).

*Source: Was will der Bund “Neues Vaterland“? (New Fatherland League pamphlet, no. 1), second expanded edition, Berlin, 1915.*

## **Remembering Kurt von Tepper-Laski on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday: 8 August 1930**

By Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt

At the turn of the century, the Giordano Bruno Society was founded in Berlin. Bruno, a true son of the Renaissance who was burned at the stake 300 years ago in Rome, went on to symbolize an association that would later take the form of the German Monist League. At some point, Kurt von Tepper-Laski decided to sign up as a member of the Giordano Bruno Society, too. In those days, everyone in Berlin knew the name Tepper-Laski, even those who did not make a habit of frittering their money away at the races. He was the “uncrowned King of Karlshorst”, “the master of the German steeplechase”.

Tepper-Laski became an active participant in our work. When, for instance, a quarrel broke out within the society, he turned the situation around by ensuring that the member at the receiving end of the attack had a fair hearing.

Gradually we came to the conclusion that the political forces of the reaction rested on three pillars: 1. Military and police, 2. Administration and justice, 3. Church and school. We decided that the general advancement of science had done the most internal damage to the church and now the latter also needed to be deprived of its economic basis. According to German legislation, this was something that could be achieved through mass withdrawal from church membership. Independent of the Monist League, we also founded the “Committee of the Confessionless”, which comprised eight individuals. The “vice-chancellors” of the Committee were the then heads of the freethought movement: Ernst Haeckel, Wilhelm Ostwald, Bruno Wille, and Gustav Tschirn. The key to our success was that we did not proselytize. We encouraged those people to leave the church who had inwardly already broken with the doctrine. On a single

day in Berlin, 12 meetings were held at which 4,200 individuals withdrew from church membership. Not long after this, one Sunday lunchtime, to the peal of the church bells, we managed to organize 17 crowded assemblies. Across the Reich, too, hundreds of thousands deserted the church, though the Prussian House of Representatives only admitted to 38,000. Professor Rade (Marburg), editor of the *Christian World*, wrote that “the church had not faced such violent storms since the time of Reformation”. Imperial court chaplain Dryander publicly conceded that the church was in a very serious predicament. For, it was now not just the Social Democrats, who the church had already given up on anyway, but also 200 state officials, including those at the highest level, who had withdrawn from church membership, some even publicly. The police smuggled a detective by the name of Diener, disguised as a bank official from Hellfeld, into a meeting of the Committee. Three days later, the newspapers printed a public announcement thanking him for his informer’s contribution of 2 marks to collecting the 17 marks required for a family of five shoemakers to leave the church.

Not only did Kurt von Tepper-Laski actively participate in everything, just as with his horses, he was always out in front. While the Kaiser was attending to his horses in Karlshorst, Tepper, along with Adolf Hoffmann and Karl Liebknecht, were signing petitions, calling for people to leave the church. Tepper, the taciturn, reserved, seemingly unpoetic, was perfectly comfortable quoting Heinrich Heine:

*He who tears himself away from his God  
will end by deserting  
his earthly authorities as well.*

When, during such a discussion, we landed on the subject of politics, and I, an avowed supporter of Kropotkin, nevertheless expressed my frustration about being satisfied, at least when considering the German mentality, with the attainment of English constitutional conditions, but far from happy with the current state, he responded curtly: “Nonsense, the House of Hohenzollern must go.”

This was right before the war. The Saverne Affair had stirred everything up. We made extensive preparations with a view to punching another hole in the leaky ship that was the state church.

Then the world war got in the way.

Prior to this, Kurt von Tepper-Laski had been much better at recognizing the danger of the militaristic reaction than I had, although he always objected to my expectation that war would break out, retorting: “That would be lunacy.”

In 1913, it was Tepper-Laski who proposed the initiative to set up another committee for Franco-German understanding – a committee on which members of the so-called bourgeoisie were intended to sit alongside the Social Democrats. In 1913, an appeal was issued, signed by Hermann Sudermann, Dr Graf Arco, and others. But the strident military music of the big defence bill drowned it all out. Tepper-Laski asked me to write an article to redress this. I countered that only his voice would have an impact. He responded: “He doesn’t like to write. So, let’s do an interview.” The interview opposing the defence bill was printed in the League’s journal *Das monistische Jahrhundert* (“The Monist Century”). On 15 April 1913, *Vorwärts* declared it to be the voice of a “rare bird” from court society. I remember how Tepper-Laski, on reviewing the interview before publication specifically wanted me to say something about the *arms industry*, which we then crammed into an explanation of just how important the “gold mine of the arms industry” was. The interview contained nothing other than what the admittedly small number of people who devoted any time at all to reflecting on the character of the future war and how it proved to be true already thought. What made it unique was that at least one person from amongst the gilded clouds of the pseudo-Olympus that was Wilhelminism expressed these thoughts more clearly than almost any Social Democrat.

His prestige and connections had no bearing on this stance. It left him cold. He never grew tired of emphasizing his love of the French people and nation, a love which was consistent with his very essence. He had got to know the French as a young lieutenant in the field in 1870, finding them to be a peace-loving, peasant people. He was a democrat, but not of the type whose heart swells with elation when a “prominent minister” speaks to him, nor one who loses his nerve if a monarch or military general frowns at him. When I encountered him for the first time – in around 1903 on Unter den Linden – and some horsemen trotted by, he said bluntly: “That’s probably another one of those emperors.” As I struggled to recall who, how and where someone had spoken with so little respect, he added: “As a child I played behind that window over there. But I never looked up when someone told me that the King was riding by.”

In May 1914, the Crown Prince wrote a telegram to Frobenius congratulating the latter on his book *The German Empire's Hour of Destiny (Kriegsalarmbroschüre)*. This, in turn, increased to boiling point the effect of an earlier telegram he had sent to Colonel Reuter on the Saverne Affair, in which he allegedly gave the order to “give 'em hell” (“*immer feste dfruff*”). Around this time, Bruno Wille, Tepper-Laski, and I found ourselves on a walk near Friedrichshagen im Walde, during which we spoke of the seriousness of the hour. Tepper-Laski, who walked ahead on the narrow path, turned around and said: “He sent me a telegram too. About my book.” He was referring to a handbook on horse racing. Whereupon both Wille and I nimbly persuaded him that he should make the young Crown Prince aware of the dangers his behaviour would create. After some time, Tepper-Laski turned around again, stating briefly: “I responded to him, just as I should.” We continued our walk. It was not until months later – during the war – that it became clear what his words meant. The notion that one might suppose he attached any kind of particular value to receiving a telegram from a prince was what provoked his response. To him, the request was nothing special and he had politely and entirely matter-of-factly rejected it.

It was because of just such taciturnity that I did not find out until long after the end of the war how, as a young lieutenant in Hanover, Tepper-Laski had refused to make a guard stand at attention in front of a baby prince in swaddling. He would rather be transferred. On the race course, too, he achieved a great deal through gestures alone. There, too, he was the innovator. “Without spurs or whips”, he attained his prestige as “master of the German steeplechase”.

As such, several years before the war, he racked up a number of first prizes at French race courses. The president of the French horseracing club publicly celebrated him as someone who had done more for understanding between nations than the diplomats themselves. But as silent as Tepper-Laski was when it came to himself and his successes, the bourgeois at the time were also deaf to these attempts. Not only did all the major democratic newspapers the world over refuse to print our appeal, signed by 12 of the best-known men, for a Franco-German understanding in order to transform the “military states to social states”, but the main speaker of the Social Democratic Party to whom the appeal was personally handed on the day of the final debate on the defence bill disregarded it, too.

I can never forget the afternoon hour of 4 August 1914 when I sat opposite the then 64-year-old in a quiet club room. It was after the unanimous

acceptance of war credits in the Reichstag and the announcement of the English declaration of war. While outside *everyone* raced around in an intoxicated frenzy, which was to be followed four years later by an equally prodigious universal hangover, he sat in front of me, the Knight of the Iron Cross, the notoriously silent, and talked incessantly. He who at times commented wryly upon my love of debate and my “graphomania”, spoke for an entire hour. He unreservedly expressed the feelings of a broken man. But what had broken him? “All the misery I see ahead. Wouldn’t it, in view of this, be better to take poison?”. I was shocked by his shock, yet not by that which was then referred to as the “greatest event” i.e. the outbreak of the war. For such superlatives only apply until the next “greatest of all events”. But it will only be an event if people quit their mindless chatter for at least an hour a day and practice silence like the English Quakers.

This is the right word for a man like Kurt von Tepper-Laski. When it comes to his disposition, the way he treats people and animals is very much in the spirit of the Quakers, despite the fact that he was, like Giordano Bruno, “the ultimate heretic”.

All of these characteristic traits had already been evident when the “New Fatherland” League was founded: his shrinking violet demeanour, particularly when it came to anything resembling publicity, his energy and decisiveness at critical moments. He perceived the need for a battle-ready organization to wage against the frenzied war mania, but he was genuinely reluctant to take the chair. When, in April 1915 in Holland, there was an encounter with the English and the delegation of the *Bund* “*Neues Deutschland*” (League of the New Germany) attached legitimate hopes to the notion that the Foreign Office would at least hear the Dutch confidant out, the military cabal sabotaged this incitement to peace. As soon as this became apparent, Tepper-Laski wrote a letter addressed to the Reichskanzler denouncing this sabotage. The letter was then published in the *Berliner Tagwacht* newspaper on 20 June 1915, facilitated by Karl Liebknecht, under the headline “A Historical Document”.

Tepper-Laski had great sympathy for Karl Liebknecht and the feeling was mutual.

This method of opposing the military gods, an uncustomary departure from the actions of elected democrats, unleashed their rage.

The “New Fatherland” League was shut down completely. In autumn 1915, Tepper-Laski was accused of treason and arrested for questioning, though he was immediately released.

While the conditions under which he was interrogated, accused of the crime of “peace making”, sound like a dream today, German smuggling of war materiel to the enemy was beginning to flourish. The arms industry, the nature of which Tepper-Laski had already begun to examine in 1913, transported entire freight trains and shipments of German war materiel to the belligerent countries on the opposite side.

Once again, in the summer of 1918, I heard him announce: “The House of Hohenzollern must go.” It was in a café in the west of Berlin. I was an ambulance man in the military and sat there kitted out in my frontline soldier’s uniform. He uttered the words rather loudly. I glowed inwardly with joy, but still looked around me to make sure that no “commanding officers” had overheard.

After the war, his health and personal circumstances forced him into the kind of solitude that he welcomed with his entire being.

Yet, he remains an optimist, once again pinning all hopes on the masses of the working people in the belief that they will end this war the same way the supreme command has put an end to so many lives.

Let us hope that he lives to see a time the creation of which he called for in his concluding remarks and words of thanks to the Dutch Anti-War Council (*Nederlandsche Anti-Oorlog Raad*) on 10 April 1915 in The Hague.

“Let us ensure, in future, the fate of the civilized world no longer depends on the good will and the abilities of a few heads of state, diplomats, and hackneyed political rabble-rousers.”

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, nos. 5/6, 1930, pp. 2–6.*

## Kurt Eisner

Heinrich Stroebel

The curse that has weighed on the German people for four years has still not been lifted. It is the curse of the lie itself and the crime born of this lie. It was the lie of nationalism, drunk with power and megalomaniacal militarism, that plunged the German people into the most heinous and horrible of all wars. For the German people were completely blind. Those people who were once called the people of poets and thinkers utterly blind to the true causes of the war, the feelings and views of the civilized world, their own power, and to the strength of their opponents. For four years,



it senselessly and ignominiously wasted the German people's strength and worked in demonic self-destructive rage toward the inevitable collapse. Yet when this collapse finally came, when dynastic and militarist power, rotten to the core by four years of lies and corruption, crumbled impotently, no new vital or morally robust forces arose. It was not truth that triumphed, but lies, dressed cunningly in the garb of revolution that remained on top! Corruption and all the old lackeys and fence-sitters took over the government of the German Republic. Blinded and conscienceless as ever, they thought they could run politics in the old way. They believed they could achieve a just peace and be accepted into the League of Nations as equals without an apology or confession of guilt and without atonement for the monstrous crimes of the old system. Without an honest commitment to the new, socialist spirit of the times that had been stirred up in the deepest depths, they believed they could tame the chaos. But when the people's forces and all the spirit of the nation revolted against this incompetent and delusional system, our leaders again resorted to the old tactics of lies and slander. The very same tactics that had brought disaster to the German people during the last four years. This time the effect was one and the same: the regime of lies and corruption collapsed for a second time!

Kurt Eisner fell as the victim of this system built on the old nationalist lie – but at the same time, this victim dragged the guilt-ridden system to the edge of the abyss. Not only Bavaria but the whole of central Germany is in flames, and at any moment all the masses of Germany may rise up again: in Berlin, Hamburg and other centres of political strife. Storm-clouds loom over the whole country, and in Weimar a doomsday mood is dawning!

It is a fate of their own making that the looming disaster for the majority socialists is linked to the name of the man who through the most generous acts of his will, tried to save them from ruin. Now, Kurt Eisner has become the spectre of vengeance against the state order which only he knew how to protect more effectively than even Noske's guard! For Kurt Eisner was an honest supporter of democracy and a generous patriot, he was an opponent and enemy of every violent minority regime, even including a proletarian one. It is, therefore, also a great historical tragedy that this deceitful system, in its mad delusion, unleashed all its retaliatory fury on this most outspoken adherent of historical truth and social justice, thus making him the target of an assassination by a reactionary desperado.

If anyone had been qualified to occupy the highest political post in the German Republic – a post which, due to ironic whims of chance and political impotence, has now been held by a dozen unremarkable men, distinguished by neither good nor evil – it would have been Kurt Eisner. For years, Eisner fought the old regime with ardent passion, and contributed to its downfall through bold revolutionary deeds. Meanwhile up to the last possible moment, Ebert had been nothing but a stalwart support of the old regime, which was overthrown against his will. Eisner had had to pay with many months' imprisonment for the displays of rebellion which his inner, moral self demanded, while Ebert, as an old faithful ally of Ludendorff, had already ponderously climbed the stairs to the Reich Chancellery under the old regime. Eisner was the most splendid embodiment of the German genius because as an individual he united the virtues of talent and good character. In an age of mindless materialism and the vain pursuit of success, he preserved the pure spirit of aspiration towards an ideal, and blithely renounced external honours and influence. Just a year ago, with utter contempt in his voice and manner, he told me about an occasion where a former friend crudely misunderstood his intentions, thinking he could appease Eisner's red *hot urge to help set-straight the mad course of events that was playing out in those days* with the assurance that he would be provided an influential post in the official press service. As if Kurt Eisner had been a Friedrich Stampfer or Ulrich Rauscher!<sup>1</sup> He proved how far his motivation was from petty ambition when during the first days of the victorious revolution he proposed Karl Liebknecht for President of the Republic. No one regretted more sincerely than Eisner that Liebknecht's political trajectory was increasingly diverging from his own, that Liebknecht was drifting away from the clear path of democracy. Then once again after several weeks when the Spartacists moved in sharp opposition to the tactics of Haase and Kautsky – tactics which Eisner also considered to be correct in principle – Eisner made an attempt in long, passionate negotiations to persuade Liebknecht to adopt a clearly delineated socialist-democratic course of action to form part of a government of the united socialist Left. The attempt failed, and it was Eisner that felt this failure most pain-

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Stampfer was editor of multiple social-democratic newspapers and publishing efforts including *Vorwärts* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. Ulrich Rauscher was originally a liberal journalist before the first world war, then after the war, Social-Democratic press-chief.

fully of all: that Liebknecht would not and could not assume the leading role for which he had believed him destined.

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As long as Eisner seemed to be nothing but a brilliant stylist and witty writer, he was guaranteed to earn the praise of those who would later disparage him and call him a fantasist and a fool. As long as displays of his imagination and wit served as entertainment, he never lacked recognition and praise. People spoke of his “famous” editorials, raved about his feuilletons sparkling with spirit and whimsy. If Eisner had known no nobler ambition than to shine as a stylistic artist and aesthete among the journalists and literati, he would have retained forever the favour of all the dull and comfortable. But Eisner was no mere prosaic talent, no formalist whose beautiful expressions overshadowed his writing’s content. His was a fiery spirit full of creative yearning. If he were born in a different age, when both his soul and society were less fractured and troubled, he might have become a philosopher or a poet. Even then, of course, he would not have been an artist in love only with form, but a designer of forms and systems in the style of those minds for whom he felt the greatest reverence, a Kant or a Beethoven. Eisner’s hymn to Beethoven in his “Before the Revolution” reveals how he grasped the essence of art: “Only those who have completely lost the common life, it seems, are called upon to create the higher, purer, true life that is reflected in great art. And such a martyr of artistic creation also acquires that secret vision of the world which enables him, in the inspirations of his genius, to shape the visions of humanity, of the destiny of the earth. That is the real miracle of the art of eternity [...] The blood of humanity runs in Beethoven’s art. World history wrestles and burns in his music. All human creatures appear to have been expelled from the lavishly presented earthly happiness of nature, to have been cheated of their bliss. But the artist, as a merciful deity, overcomes this destructive antagonism for humanity and leads it to the bright, free heights of the future”.

Be it because his era was too deeply riven with the struggles of humanity, or just because in the battle among Eisner’s mental forces the prophet and champion of social justice won out over the pure artist and thinker – in any case, he became a publicist, a politician, and a socialist. He saw the highest visions for humanity in great artistic achievement and despised the snobbery of the form of politics which deceives itself into believing that all its mundane routine, conformity, and compromise, is really clever *realpolitik*. Like all bold pioneers in the endeavour for progress, he was an op-

timist. He believed that the eagerness and passionate idealism of his own nature could be shared by broad sections of society. Working toward the goal of their salvation brought him his highest possible earthly happiness. It was this sense of optimism that made him greet the elections of 1903 as a "turning point in the world", and that in 1913 gave him the impetus to enter into an alliance with liberalism in the first rounds of the elections in order to finally shake off the crippling burden of reaction on Prussia. And even if Eisner erred here in his means, we must now do justice to his vision. Yes, we must confess that Eisner's passionate revolt against idle chatter and the materialistic worship of success, and his criticism of this era corrupted by mechanized capitalism and militarism, demonstrated a deeper insight into the fatal afflictions of our age than we ourselves who thought we saw details more sharply could ever see.

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Eisner demonstrated truly prophetic foresight with his assessment of German foreign policy. His short work "The Sultan of the World War", brilliantly exposes the blunders and improvisations characteristic of Germany's Morocco policy. He condemned this policy as the manifestation of an overheated nationalistic megalomania which was playing with the fire of a world war. Unfortunately, at that time all the political parties, including the Social Democrats, had so limited an understanding of foreign policy that Eisner's warning went almost unheeded. Of course, some people shook their heads apprehensively at the unpredictable zigzag course of German diplomacy and the Kaiser's bizarre interventions. Some even mustered themselves for a counter-demonstration at the peak moment of unmistakable danger; but in their credulous delusions, they did not believe that our rulers could have the intention of deliberately provoking an insignificant conflict until it developed into a monstrous world conflagration. Every layman knew that given the constellation of powers and the unprecedented build-up of armaments, any war between two great powers was bound to turn into a world war. Every halfway intelligent layman could also imagine the unspeakable horrors such a war would bring upon Europe. It was therefore considered impossible that a crime so beyond all human comprehension could be concocted in the minds of civilized people. If the German public and German politicians had been more attentive to the systematic warmongering of our Pan-Germans and had been able to interpret the unmistakable symptoms of our times, they would have foreseen the terrible doom, as Kurt Eisner did, and might have been able to avert it.

This is why the monstrous event occurred – because of German militarism’s insane theory that the brutal struggle for existence and the means of subsistence is also an iron and inexorable law of nature governing the life of nations. When the assassination of the Serbian heir to the throne was greedily seized as pretext, Eisner – after a brief initial lapse – was one of the first to recognize the horrific connections of this most abysmal of crimes and to call on the German people to salvage the fate and honour of the nation by ridding themselves of the guilty parties.

Eisner was caught up in these war lies – with all their swiftness, cunning, and shamelessness – for only a matter of weeks. The director of the Ullstein publishing house had, after all, issued the perverse slogan for his editorial staff at the time: “only a scoundrel does not lie now”. But this credulity was due to Eisner’s faith in humanity. His human goodness, his intellect and his imagination, filled with light and creativity, simply could not believe that human minds could be so hopelessly enslaved to the demons of a brutal, mindless, dark delusion of destruction. He was, therefore, all too happy to cling to the myth that the Bavarian government had been spreading for years: that Russia had been lying in wait and had secretly made all the preparations for war, that it had been inexorably determined to strike, and that Germany had thus been forced to reluctantly take up its sword. Thus, for the first few days even Eisner in the idea of the defensive war which, according to the declaration even of a Jean Jaurès, also made it the duty of international socialists to defend the fatherland; thus he approved the granting of war credits at that time. But his incorruptible yearning for truth drove him to a critical analysis of *The German White Book*<sup>2</sup> and the diplomatic papers of his opponents, and to examine and weigh the arguments for and against. It could not remain hidden from him that the story of the defensive war was a brazen forgery, and that it had not even been a preventive war. No, the declaration of war had been made in the spirit of Bernhardi, Keim, Liebert<sup>3</sup>, in the spirit of Pan-German predatory morality, which for years had glorified and longed for war as a Germanic virtue, as a biological necessity, as a bath of national rejuvenation!

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<sup>2</sup> “The German White Book about the outbreak of the German-Russian-French war”, simply known as the “White Book” was a document published by the German war-government in 1914 laying out their official explanation for the causes of the war, though it was widely reported to be based on forgeries.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich von Bernhardi, August Keim and Eduard von Liebert: well known Prussian militarists.

It is also to Eisner's credit that he did not "wisely" conceal his new, improved insight, but soon sincerely admitted to it. Others, too, have "re-learned" and even boasted of their change as a virtue. Well, there was only a slight difference between Eisner's re-learning and that of the German war socialists. The conversion of the red internationalists to the war policy of Falkenhayn and Hindenburg, Bethmann and Hertling brought the praise of the entire German press, friendly handshakes in parliament and in public, the grateful recognition of civil and military authorities, honours, credit and a secure income. Eisner's commitment to truth and justice, on the other hand, brought only persecution and hostility, ostracism and material damage, imprisonment, and ultimately a murderous bullet from the hands of a raving fool.

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As soon as Eisner had recognized the German government's terrible guilt, he also gained a deep understanding of the boundless bitterness against Germany that this war aroused in all the civilized nations of the world. It became frightfully clear to him that this incomprehensible crime against humanity would unite the whole of humanity against the alliance of the peacebreakers. Both German generals' delusions of victory as well as dreams of world conquest harboured by misguided soldiers and deluded philistines (along with many a Social Democrat) seemed unspeakably childish to him. Eisner felt that the great German war machine, which had been worked out down to the last detail, would nevertheless to be crushed by the collective indignation of the entire world.

This war was to become monstrously protracted, monstrously bloody, and was finally to end with the collapse of Germany, and perhaps with the collapse of all European culture. That collapse was not prevented by German Social Democrats showing solidarity with the perpetrators, sacrificing themselves for the crimes of their ruling class out of a misguided love of country. On the contrary, such martyrdom on the part of the masses (not the leaders, who were only political war profiteers) only made it more inescapable. German Social Democracy reduced itself to the role of accomplice to German imperialism. This shameful failure was bound to deprive Germany of every possible sympathy. It drove the socialist parties of the Entente countries into a firm coalition with the bourgeoisie, thus breaking the last ties of proletarian internationalism and turning the war into the most irreconcilable test of strength, into a struggle to the bitter end. The short-sighted and criminal policies of the German Social Democrats thus

helped to bring the eventual collapse of Germany, for which the misguided German proletariat would eventually have to foot the bill.

In opposition to this, Eisner saw the path of an honourable and strong-willed German socialism clearly marked out. The party had to honour the truth, oppose the fury of German militarism and bring down the guilty government. Defeat would then be confined to the perpetrators, and the people, freed from lies and violence, could then again hope to be accepted as atoned for in the eyes of the free and war-renouncing nations.

Eisner and his comrades-in-arms did not succeed in their appeal to the duty, honour and rationality of the party. The socialist majority allied with German militarism at risk of ruin. It excused and glossed over all the misdeeds of the generals, all the speeches and actions of the chancellor. It concealed the truth from the people and fed them every official lie until no further lie or deceit could conceal the reality of the hopeless debacle. Until the front collapsed and the army of millions rolled home, until the revolution raised the red flag over the Hohenzollern castle. Then, at last, with the most amazing sleight-of-hand, the black and white war patriots were transformed once again, this time into revolutionaries, republicans and anti-war internationalists. Suddenly they surprised the world with their abhorrence of all politics of violence, with their enthusiasm for the principle of law, for the League of Nations and national self-determination.

When, however, the governments of Germany's new democratic republic announced that the commitment to these beautiful principles was coming too late, our majority socialist government, through the mouths of Messrs. Erzberger, Solf and Brockdorff-Rantzau, appealed to the "conscience of the world" in fiery protest.

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Also before the International Socialist Congress in Bern, the three representatives of the German majority socialists repeated their indignant denunciations of the brutal ruthlessness of their opponents who, not satisfied with the overthrow of the old German government, now sought to make the innocent German people pay for the sins of the overthrown government. But armed with this natural indignation the majority socialist delegates found among the socialists of the Entente and of neutral foreign countries only scowling faces and closed hearts. They remembered all too well the majority socialists' sins of omission and other misdeeds. Where had they been during the war? Where were they when it was necessary to speak out against the most monstrous barbarities of war: against

the atrocities in Belgium, against the deportation and “enslavement” of the Belgian civilian population, against the aerial bombardment of peaceful cities, against the illegal breach of international law by the ruthless submarine warfare, against the extermination of millions of Armenians, against the holding of Russian prisoners of war? Thus the indignation of the German government socialists seemed like intolerable hypocrisy to the socialists abroad, and they threatened to repel the outstretched hand of Scheidemann’s emissaries when Eisner, in a speech full of courageous truth and at the same time full of generous conciliation, took up the cause of the majority socialist delegation and the German people, the same speech whose most essential content we reproduce on the following pages. And the captivating ethos of this speech made up for what the miserable arrogance of the majority socialists had spoiled: it raised eyebrows among the French and English socialists, it restored their confidence in the German proletariat, and in the German people. It reformed the bonds of international solidarity that the obstinacy of Scheidemann and Ebert’s emissaries threatened to shatter beyond repair.

In order to work this miracle, Eisner certainly had to ruthlessly smash to rubble the wretched edifice of deceit that had been erected by Wels and Hermann Müller in Bern for the purpose of justifying the German majority socialists’ actions in government. He had to relentlessly expose the policy of the leaders in order to successfully plead for leniency and clemency for the misguided mass of the German people. For truly: the German people’s only excuse is that over the years they did not become aware that they were allowing themselves to be abused by their former rulers and by their own self-elected leaders alike. Eisner so convincingly proved the guilt of the seducers, spoke so warmly, so convincingly, so unwaveringly in his faith in humanity and in the inner purity and moral integrity of the German people, that the bitterness of the Entente socialists melted away. They were deeply moved and, with a solemn commitment to a just peace, they renewed their pledge to that brotherhood of people: the socialist International.

And what thanks did Eisner receive from these deluded German patriots for his redemptive gesture? The entirety of the neutral foreign press – first and most notoriously among them the pro-German Swiss papers – testified that this speech did much to allay the resentment of the Entente socialists, even inducing them to stand up for the German prisoners of war. Yet for it he received only a new onslaught of shameless slander and insults which rose to the level of threats! Were the German majority socialists grateful to



him for his all-too forgiving attempt to reduce and explain away their complicity – nearly overstepping the bounds of the permissible – as a result of their own misguidance? Not in the least. *Vorwärts* reissued the same nasty old invectives of the majority press: the blatant slander that Eisner had cavalierly abandoned the cause of the German prisoners of war (when really he had just earned them great credit!), and that he acted in vain self-indulgence and deserved only the indulgent pity due to a poet and dilettante!

And under the influence of this utterly frivolous and idiotic agitation, fanatical lunatics in Munich carried out the reactionary putsch, Eisner received ferocious threatening letters, and the fatal shots were fired at this German socialist who had finally restored honour to Germans and German socialism in the eyes of foreign socialists and the international cultural community!

Should it be of tragic foreshadowing that the very man who, as the best representative of the new cultural humanity, waged the most irreconcilable war against all violence, fell victim to senseless acts of violence? Shall Germany be completely enslaved to the forces of madness and brutality? May the voice of the dead Eisner make itself heard in the chorus of lies and frenzy before it is too late!

Could it be anything but tragic irony that this man who was the best representative of human culture, who waged the most implacable war against violence in all its forms, would fall victim to such a senseless act of violence? Must Germany be forever enslaved to the forces of madness and brutality? May the voice of the butchered Eisner rise and be heard over the chorus of lies and fury, before it is too late!

28 February 1919, Heinrich Ströbel

*Source:* Kurt Eisner: Schuld und Sühne. *Mit einer Einleitung von Heinrich Ströbel* (Flugschriften des Bundes Neues Vaterland [Neue Folge], Nr. 12 [pamphlet from the New Fatherland League {new issue}, no. 12]), Berlin 1919, pp. 3–15.

## Michel, wake up! An exhortation to the German people

By Hans-Georg von Beerfelde

In July of this year, the following memorandum reached the hands of all Reichstag deputies and a series of other politicians. It was written by me in secret while in prison and smuggled out. Despite this, the text is unaltered, only minor changes have been made in the appendix for greater clarity. The work was, amongst many, my last attempt to expose our war criminals and finally have them held to account. Once again, and this time with documentary proof of the infamous falsifications of our government in the *White Book*,<sup>1</sup> I tried to call upon the entire Reichstag to do its duty towards those nameless tormented people, a duty that it had long failed to fulfil. But yet again this time, it found no success in this most miserable and contemptible of all the people's parliaments. The Reichstag remained silent. It was mute to the outside world and did not act. And by staying silent, it brought a death sentence upon itself. My wife was arrested for "aiding and abetting treason" for sending the petition. The presiding judge, the commander of justice for Berlin, was dismissed, despite being personally completely ignorant of the petition, and I was put under a shameful regime of tightened detention and control. Yet the horrible murder continued. – Poor German people, how cruelly you have been sinned against! If you want to have any future prospects, if you want to be able to stand pure and honest before yourself once more, you will soon have to put an end to the impudent lie that Germany fought a defensive war. The lie by which, with the help of your elected representatives – with the sole exception of the Independent Social Democrats, right-minded but fatally indecisive and feeble in acting on their professed beliefs ideals – you have been deceived into the complete breakdown of your forces and deprived of all honour and happiness. A terrible revenge has been taken. In our people and above all in our politics, every trace of higher humanity and energetic commitment has fallen victim to moral indifference and a cowardly lack of political integrity. There are hardly any men and women

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<sup>1</sup> "The German White Book about the outbreak of the German-Russian-French war", simply known as the "White Book" was a document published by the German war-government in 1914 laying out their official explanation for the causes of the war, though it was widely reported to be based on forgeries.

left in Germany who can still really burn for the ideal and commit themselves to it completely. This is perhaps our gravest fate.

In the meantime, the revolution, as the direct consequence of the military-economic collapse, has outwardly drawn the inevitable conclusion from the untenable overall situation. Internally, however, almost nothing has changed. One of the main reasons for this is that our people are still completely in the dark about the actual context of the war. In this situation, it is most urgent to provide full clarity regarding the causes of our misfortune. The Reich leadership, the military dictatorship, the Reichstag and the press are all equally to blame for the unholy misleading of the people and the army during the war. They are to blame because all these desperate consequences are still having an effect. Even today's press, with the exception of the extreme left, continues to peddle lies and distortions of this sort. How long will our people put up with this mental poison which prevents any true peace? In so far as the representatives of the old system are still active in public life today, they too cannot unburden themselves of their past. In order to redeem themselves, they necessarily resort to falsified representations of the conditions of war and their conduct. The people have been told that they were "lied to and deceived" about the probable outcome of the war. Without a doubt. But what about the fact that the vast majority of the people's representatives, in cowardly subservience to the all-powerful general staff, had for years watched and tolerated this insane war policy? That they recognized the peoples' right to self-determination, but did not contradict the brutal and violent peace of Brest, and agreed to that of Bucharest? That they tolerated that we thereby squandered any remaining good-will with the world? That above all, it tried to pass off Germany's invasion of its own people into a defensive war forced upon us? All this goes unsaid. And this must not be forgotten! The truth is marching and will finally prevail, despite all attempts at artful distortions. German people, if you ever want to lay claim to a respected position in the world, today you are faced with the inexorable necessity of breaking with this shameful policy of deception once and for all. Let it also be said to the socialist leaders: "What kind of socialism does not move when millions of brothers were slaughtered for the sake of a criminal mania for power? What kind of socialism could calmly watch as its own people and nearly all of human civilization were sacrificed to it? This socialism is nothing other than cowardly betrayal, and we thank it for raising itself up today as the saviour of the fatherland. You cannot lead a people to freedom with lies and deceit."

An evil can only be cured in its effects if it is seized at its root. The present revolutionary government, weak in character and lethargic as it is, should have long ago lifted the veil with regard to the past, instead of just pacifying the people with slogans. Only in this way can our political life be cleansed by popular judgement of those mercenary minions who seem to lack the awareness that they have made themselves incapable of any fruitful political activity. By clinging to public office, they are destroying the absolutely necessary unity among the people and the working class. Those who deceived the people and with sweeping servility supported the old system have no place in the new world we are building. Do you hear that, you imperial socialists?!

There is no equal to be found in history for these insane demands. That the majority of our Reichstag deputies could follow the spurious “people’s government” of Prince Max in demanding that our people (already bleeding from a thousand cuts) rally to “national defence” and to call for “peace and order” immediately before the armistice which even Ludendorff considered inevitable. How can any foreign countries trust a people whose government still does not show a trace of political empathy and lacks the courage to demand that those who dared to support such servile, deceptive policies from their bullet-proof seats promptly disappear from public life?

Finally, it must not be obscured that we as a people must also atone for in this collapse. What was our previous governing authority but a genuine reflection of the German people in all its pathetic lack of judgement and intellectual laziness, and in its tendency towards soulless bureaucratism and cowardly submission to the naked power of the state? The incomprehensible apathy of the homeland towards the immense events taking place outside its borders inevitably had a deeply shocking effect on those returning from the field. Any intellectually conscious person who had to witness this state of affairs risked despairing for our nation. It is also fair to reproach the German workers, even if not to the extent as their respective leaders, for thinking more of their own well-being and personal security than of their fighting comrades. The miserable January strike<sup>2</sup> – which, if consistently carried out, could have put an end to the war through the will of the people even before the collapse of Germany – is striking proof of this. Was it not

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<sup>2</sup> Strike against the First World War which took place from 28 January to the 1 February 1918; [www.cambridge.org/core/journals/central-european-history/article/abs/berlin-strike-of-january-1918/73695044019EE85D711E22B25A6FCDE7](http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/central-european-history/article/abs/berlin-strike-of-january-1918/73695044019EE85D711E22B25A6FCDE7).

also not very comradely that the workers let Liebknecht sit in prison and Dittmann and others be arrested from among their ranks? There is certainly no reason to be particularly proud of the November Revolution, for without America and Marshal Foch we would not have seen it through. But if it was perhaps the lack of enlightenment by a helpless leadership that was mainly to blame for the incomprehensible attitude of the workers (with the exception of front-line soldiers), then this deficiency should be thoroughly remedied. Finally, we must get out of the political muck and mire, otherwise we will never be able to claim to be a free and great nation. That is an unbreakable law of nature.

Today, the whole world is talking about "freedom". Don't we realize that no nation can be truly free unless it places itself radically on a foundation of truth and humanity, and of unconditional trust between itself and its leadership? For now we lack this trust, and so everything that stands in its way must be eliminated. To hell with that socialism which is not active love; to hell with every rape, no matter who commits it! Criticism of others is easy, but self-criticism and self-denial are the most difficult and necessary tasks facing every individual who really wants to move forward. This includes our people today. The following memorandum is intended as a contribution in this direction. I fully uphold its contents and repeat its still unfulfilled conclusions: there must be an investigation and the guilty must be brought to justice as an example to the public and to posterity. Whoever has the courage to refute me, just try it! But the public must not tolerate further silence. Hand over all the records!

Nor will we tolerate any longer a dichotomy between personal and public morality and justice. Whenever there is a railway accident or the like, the police and the public prosecutor investigate the question of guilt with almost admirable thoroughness, and the public interest in these matters is extensive. Yet in view of the nefarious murder of millions of flourishing human lives, in view of the devastation of entire countries and peoples, should we not also be allowed to speak of guilt? Anyone who could remain indifferent in these matters would be unworthy to call himself a human being. I declare anyone to be a complicit fence-sitter and traitor to the German people who, under the terrible pressure of the misery into which the guilt of our leadership has plunged us, should still dare to obstruct the most rapid and ruthless uncovering of all the events that led to it. If the President of the former Reichstag dares to try to help it once again, even if only for a short time, then this attempt characterizes the dismal level

at which our public opinion still stands today. These gentlemen belong before the State Court, otherwise the public should no longer have to deal with them at all. The old Reichstag has forfeited once and for all the right to speak for the German people.

Immense challenges and hardships await us. It will only be possible to successfully carry the revolution to its completion and to cope with obstacles happily if we share the strongest possible devotion and unanimity. The only feasible basis for this is truth, clarity, and trust. To be one people means to suffer a common hardship and to bear and overcome it with selfless devotion. The devotion of one for all, and of all for one. This is the socialism that we need; it alone will be able to solve all the world's problems, and it alone can truly liberate all the peoples and the disinherited of humanity. If Germany were to make courageous progress in this true cultural endeavour today, it would atone for everything it has done to humanity and fulfil a sacred duty.

We have a goal. Our fate, and the fate of humanity rests on attaining it. The way to fulfil this duty is not through any "Bolshevism" but through the spiritual and social world revolution, and through the reorganization of all things possible through it alone, towards the loving reconciliation and free community of all. German people, will you follow this path of the world-redeeming deed? – Fate puts this most difficult choice before each of us. The decision lies with you and me. It would be pathetic to waver now.

Michel, dear German brother, wake up, wake up at last, at last! Stand up and take the cause of your country, which is your cause, firmly and faithfully in hand, rise up, do not talk, but act! The only salvation is through action! The ultimate aims of humanity are at stake. It would be better never to have been born, than not to do your utmost to achieve them!

The Author,  
Berlin, December 1918.

*Source:* Michel, wach auf! Ein Mahnruf an das deutsche Volk, von Beerfelde, Hauptmann a.D. (*Flugschriften des Bundes Neues Vaterland [Neue Folge], Nr. 1* [pamphlet from the New Fatherland League (new issue), no. 1]), Berlin, 1918, pp. 3–7.

## The “Black Shame”<sup>1</sup> and The Reich’s Disgrace

By Lilly Jannasch

### Preface

Our people are still languishing in the jungle of lies. They are still not aware that only the courage and the will to tell the truth hold the hope of both moral and economic recovery. Especially moral recovery. When it comes to the economy, others can help, too. Morally, however – our nation can only help itself. A change of mentality is the only way forward. Without inner renewal, there will be no economic rise. Let us not deceive ourselves – the whole world is waiting for this moral renaissance. The moment it happens, the door to the future will open for us: membership of the League of Nations. In England, Italy, America, even in France, the voices in our favour are already growing every day. The help that is bestowed on our children, on our mothers, is a sign of good will. Yet, every concession, even those made by the neutral parties, continues to be paralysed by the ill will of the Pan-German movement. Their raging and shouting at every opportunity echoes across the borders, drowning out all the voices of right and reason which are trying to assert themselves here in Germany. This is what every well-meaning foreigner tells us with a look of concern, reaching longingly for any crumbs of reason and understanding they can get their hands on in this country, in order to prove beyond our borders, that Greater Germany is not Germany, that attempts at justice and readiness for peace exist. But these friends of Germany beyond our borders are not believed because Greater Germany’s powerful voice always drowns out everything else.

Thus anyone who, despite everything, still manages to believe in a new Germany, has the holy duty to tell the people the truth, however bitter it is. For it is only truth and self-knowledge that can shake us out of the lethargy of our moral malnourishment, help us to gather the strength to burst free from the iron vice of our seducers. The explanations that follow are dedicated to this very purpose.

The publisher

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: In the original, *die schwarze Schande/die schwarze Schmach*. This is a reference to France’s use of black colonial soldiers to occupy the Rhineland following Germany’s defeat in World War I.

### I. The plight of the occupied territory

The Pan-German leaders were never short of slogans for campaigns of hate and revenge. Before, during, and since the war, they sowed dragons' teeth and reaped a bumper harvest. After all, the people of Germany always gullibly swallowed the poisonous Pan-German concoction, sweetened with the sugar of patriotism, never noticing that it was toxic. Even the military and political collapse, which the wise hoped would result in a thorough enlightenment, did not change this credulity. On the contrary, in fact, since then, the Pan-German poison was administered in ever-larger quantities, because the critically ill body of the people was less able to resist than a healthy body could have done. Here, we only need to think of the lie about the revolution being a stab in the back of our army and thus the cause for the defeat. Or about the commotion surrounding the question of extradition and prisoners of war.<sup>2</sup> Recently it has been the "Black Shame" that has been ostentatiously directed in order to whip up an exhausted nation's thirst for revenge. We do not want to take the side of the French, here. The use of black colonial soldiers as occupation and combat troops is undoubtedly a deeply regrettable fact, both for the blacks them-

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<sup>2</sup> Many moons ago, our government and our people led by the Pan-German movement emphatically called for German war criminals to be allowed to stand trial solely in German courts. The Entente backed down. And what has happened since? Many months have passed with no sign of any serious action being taken to commence proceedings before the Reichsgericht (Reich Imperial Court). What impression must such deceit give abroad? Is it any wonder that the French reject any concession when it comes to Versailles? Indeed, the unrestrained hate propaganda that accompanied the delayed return of the prisoners-of-war was not deployed to resolve the fate of the poor detainees but only to stir up nationalist sentiment. It was, after all, precisely our militarists and nationalists, in other words those who prolonged the war, who year after year, from their bullet-proof hinterland drove hundreds of thousands of fellow countrymen into battles they could not win, without a stirring of human pity for those they were sending to their deaths – it was they who were suddenly standing up for the "poor German prisoners-of-war". These were the very same people who, after the Peace of Brest-Litovsk refused outright to surrender the Russian prisoners-of-war. Just how little these men cared about their interned fellow citizens is also reflected in their behaviour towards the German prisoners-of-war held in England. When, during the war, representatives of the Information and Assistance Office for German Prisoners-of-War repeatedly pointed out that the immediate response to the humane treatment of the English prisoners at Ruhleben internment camp should be greater kindness to our detainees in England, there was an official notice that it was not in the interests of the War Ministry for German prisoners to be treated especially well by our enemies because it could not be in the interests of this department for the prisoners to return home with pro-English feelings.



selves and for the white race. But, should the Pan-German war-mongering politicians be morally indignant about this? They who never accepted a legal standpoint; they who with the radiant confidence of victory pushed through and celebrated peace in Brest and Bucharest. They are truly the last who should be campaigning against violations of the rights of other peoples. Especially as it is their war policy that is forcing the French to deploy more and more new troops to the occupied territory. If you speak to the French, they will tell you quite openly how disagreeable they find it to have to use increasing numbers of black colonial troops. But they are in a predicament. They do not have enough white troops for the occupied territory and, what is more, the ones that they do have are so averse to military service, just as they are to everything else that reminds them of war, a feeling that is on the increase among the French people – unfortunately very much in contrast to Germany – that the French government has to be sparing in its deployment of white soldiers abroad. “Why do the French not leave the Rhineland, there is nothing left for them here, we should force them to go!” How often I’ve heard such an outburst of innocent emotions. Our mistake was always that we made no effort to grasp the motives for the behaviour of other peoples, always considering only our own point of view. Any Frenchman would tell us honestly to our faces, it drips from every pore of the entire French press, that even today the main motive of every political and military measure taken by France against us is fear. Fear of Germany, apprehension about another war. Again these words issue forth from innocent lips: “We only have 100,000 men left, we have no more weapons, we are totally destitute; how can we wage a war?”

A false truth, albeit one that many utter with sincerity.

In reality, according to estimates prepared last spring by various well-informed authorities, including the New Fatherland League, using military exercises, around 500,000 men could be rapidly mobilized from covert military formations such as border protection, crop and countryside protection, assault troops, the “Orgesch” (*Organisation Escherich*, a paramilitary group), the “*Stahlhelm*” (The Steel Helmet, League of Front-Line Soldiers, a veterans’ organization), etc. In Bavaria alone, it is estimated that 200,000 could currently be mobilized in this way. It was hoped that what they lacked in weapons, they would make up for in their fiery vengeful spirit. The country is also teeming with secret weapons stores. And is it not highly suspicious that there are 21,000 officers and sergeants for around 100,000 men, as well as huge numbers of military horses? Should the En-

tente not have guessed that such surpluses might have been held in reserve for clandestine formations? Then, on top of this, there is the enormous amount being spent on political agitation and rabble-rousing. So we have no money, but we have resources; unlimited resources. Where, did we get the millions to finance the supporters of the Pan-German movement for the last 18 months, for instance? Are all the former officers receiving a salary to conduct political awareness-raising work? Heavy industry pays for everything. War propaganda is a productive investment for them. The people might be starving but those who enlist in the army have constantly had more than enough rations since the armistice, are always dressed impeccably, have shoes, live a life of luxury. To this day, the *Sicherheitswehr*, the militarized police force in the Ruhr area, receives twice as much bread as the miners do for their "heavy labour". Let us also consider the overt resistance to disarmament, the Reichstag's publications on the subject, the work of the Pan-German press, to which almost all bourgeois newspapers fell victim. Let us think about the hate campaigns of the *Heimatsdienst* (homeland service),<sup>3</sup> the "Orgesch" and groups such as *Rettet die Ehre* (People's Federation to Save the Honour), the Deutscher Ring insurance company and others, with their hundreds of local organizations across the country, to which teachers, professors and pastors, in other words the vast majority of what was dubbed "intellectual Germany", belonged. If we consider this, then we have to concede that Germany was eagerly doing everything within its power to show the French its war-spirit as thoroughly as possible, with a view to instilling fear and terror in them on a daily basis.

On top of all this there was a constant stream of direct provocations in Berlin (Hotel Adlon, in front of the embassy); in Wrocław, Silesia; at the Party Congress of the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (German National People's Party, *DNVP*) in Hanover; at Hindenburg's birthday celebrations in Hamburg when occasional calls of "down with France" could be heard; at the shooting festival in Munich. The list could go on.

Germany's spirit of war is far more provocative than in 1913 when the *Jungdeutschlandpost*, weekly newspaper, no. 4, printed on 25 January: "[...] this is why war is the noblest and holiest expression of human activity [...] for us, too, the glad, great hour of battle will strike [...] yes, it will be a

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<sup>3</sup> The homeland service was particularly active in the occupied territory, which provoked the French all the more when it became clear to them that the German government had endowed Ludendorff's creation with eight million marks.

glad, great hour, that we can secretly wish for [...] the joy of battle and the longing for it must live deep in the German heart, for only one people will be victorious – the one that goes to war with drums drumming and pipes piping, as to a celebration [...] let us ridicule to the utmost the old women in breeches who fear war and deplore it as cruel and revolting. No; war is beautiful. It is the heaven of Young Germany.”

These ideas are the cause of the constant proliferation of the black colonial troops in the occupied territory, the tightening of all measures, the reintroduction of censorship of correspondence, the imminent occupation of the Ruhr area, the campaign against diesel engines! In a word: the growing fear and bitterness of the French. Their tenacity in demanding complete fulfilment of Versailles. The devastated French provinces were a constant dreadful warning against any form of complacency. When will the German people grasp that it is the revenge-seeking libertines of the Pan-German movement who are the creators of all their woes and shame in the world and that not just France but the whole world will be unable to breathe freely until Germany renounces the idea of Greater Germany and the good will to come to an understanding is clearly expressed through acts of loyalty?

## II. The Black Shame

The attacks carried out by blacks on white women and children were in fact isolated cases and certainly not mass phenomena, as the Pan-German movement would have us believe. I myself lived in the occupied territory for a year, in the Taunus where several hundred black soldiers had been stationed in a military camp for months without, the district administrator responsible assured me, a single attack having taken place. Nor had there been any complaints from the population about the blacks. On the contrary, in fact; their benevolence and harmlessness were highly spoken of, and they were praised for having frequently shared their meals with starving German children. As the aforementioned location in the Taunus is surrounded by forests and fields, and as women and children were often forced to walk long distances alone, there would have been plenty of opportunities for such attacks. I also heard from a factory owner from the Palatinate whose job took him on regular trips throughout the occupied territory that his inquiries had convinced him that the attacks are certainly isolated cases. Various trusted residents of Wiesbaden, who do not see everything through the prism of Greater Germany, told me the same. A lady from Ludwigshafen (Palatinate) summarized her experiences: “When you

see how the women and girls spend time with the blacks, how they accept chocolate and other gifts from them, go on walks with them, it's hardly surprising when something bad happens."

German women behaving in this way is nothing new. Indeed, there are white women from all walks of life who favour blacks. When, during peacetime, Hagenbeck led his black tribes through Germany, the advances of many of these women seemed almost repugnant. In the Luna Park in Berlin it was even worse. Whenever the blacks left, a swarm of white girlfriends followed them longingly to the train station to bid a tender farewell. On the occasion of the Berlin Trade Exhibition in the 1890s, Negroes who were working there repeatedly disappeared for days on end; it was the talk of the town that ladies from "high society" had put these men up. Whether in such cases it would not be more fitting to speak of a "White Shame" is up for debate. *De gustibus non disputandum est*. There is certainly something seriously wrong with the moral indignation about the Black Shame.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the violent sexuality of the blacks, I would ask our militarists and nationalists to consider the following. Did it not, during our colonial glory in Africa, become a "habit" among German men to view Negro women as fair game? Was it not the very same groups of people, now filled with outrage, lamenting about the Black Shame, who coined the term "tropical madness" which required the "sufferers" to let off steam at the expense of Negro women? Was it not true that anyone in the Black Continent who objected to the "Reich's disgrace" was accused of sentimental humanitarianism? We just need to think of the trials against Peters, Leist, and their associates, which started with great fanfare only to end with a damp squib. These cases are the best illustrations of the Reich's morality towards the blacks. Both Peters and Leist repeatedly ordered large numbers of black women to be whipped and then strung up, because they would not do their bidding, or because they had become involved with other blacks. And these white men were representatives of the German government, and some were high-ranking officials. Forced retirement was the only punishment they received. Equally well known is the fact that, right up until the war, on the German military bases in German

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<sup>4</sup> That blacks have many estimable qualities is proven by the fact that many French officers preferred to entrust black boys to look after their children, because the black men were far more reliable and devoted than the white nannies.

South Africa there prevailed the vilest brothel trade, for which forcibly detained black women were sacrificed in their hundreds.

But, it is not only when it comes to the colonies that our war-mongering politicians, who are now puffing themselves up as defenders of German women's honour and protectors of German children, are suspect. Would they not have ample opportunity in Germany to express their moral indignation at the well-organized trade in girls and child prostitution, which due to the overwhelming demand, resulted in thousands of human lives being sacrificed to the Moloch of sexuality every year? Those who orchestrate the Black-Shame propaganda, are the very same who have always demanded the right to "enjoy their lives to the full" at the cost of others and responded to every reform effort in the field of sexual relations with scorn. During "the golden years" the systematic organization of brothels behind the front was one of their biggest concerns. At the German women's congress on morality, which, during the war, had to be convened behind closed doors in Charlottenburg, these circumstances were even bemoaned by the highly conservative noble countrywomen, who indignantly announced that their young sons, still children themselves really, were ordered to visit brothels as soon as they joined the army. In a report she wrote at the time, Dr M. Elisabeth Lüders, who was commissioned by the government to travel to Belgium, stated: "Regrettably it must be noted that these foulest of bars (brothels) had German names, were decorated with German posters, pictures of the Kaiser, and such like, and that they frequently had German proprietors, too. Thousands of men who, returning from the front, made a temporary stop in the big city are misled by the German names and national colours. How could anyone even entertain the idea that a name like 'The German Mother' would conceal the baseness of a notoriously vile bar." And all this went on under the omnipotent German military administration that was in charge of Belgium at the time.

The complete hypocrisy of our nationalists sending their fiery protests about the Black Shame out into the world is illuminated most clearly by the behaviour of our military command regarding the deportation of 10,000 women and girls from Lille in 1916. These deportations were neither exigencies of war nor isolated cases. Without distinction for age and position, the women were subjected to gynaecological examinations conducted with outrageous cruelty by German military physicians, dragged through the Ardennes for days, a journey they partly undertook in cattle trucks and partly on foot, camping on damp hay in half-ruined houses. Later on, housed in

slightly more tolerable accommodation, they had to fend off soldiers and officers who forced their way into their rooms at night, from which they often sought refuge outdoors. When, while investigating the events in Lille by means of a neutral commission with a view to making documentary findings, in spring 1919, German pacifists approached the German authorities with the request that the relevant material be released, the response was that this material would be so damaging for the military administration that they could not possibly let anyone else get their hands on it!

There has never been an official attempt in Germany to educate the population about these crimes committed by its military command. Indeed, it was those who ranted the loudest about the Black Shame that carefully prevented the events in Lille from becoming public knowledge. How much more understanding there would be for the measures France took in Germany if people knew ...! But they don't want people to know! This would undermine the agitation of the Pan-German movement. Has the legal press ever publicized the fact that since as early as 1 August 1920, German press representatives have been allowed to attend secret military court proceedings in cases where black soldiers are accused of assaulting white women? When has a German military court ever demonstrated a similar concession in order to justify itself to the public?

Using neutral pacifists as intermediaries, other countries repeatedly appealed to German pacifists with the urgent request to, in the interests of future understanding, encourage the largest medical and women's organizations to apologize to France for what had happened in Lille and to declare their condemnation of the inhumane methods used by the military administration. For, without such a declaration – which would suggest a change in mentality – future cooperation between the two nations would be impossible. Yet nothing of the sort happened. Instead, at the top of their lungs, German women and men filled the world with cries of protest about all the injustice the poor German people had to endure. The whole world, including the neutral countries, watched these protests in disbelief, as the protests were concerned only with their own selfish viewpoint that is entirely incompatible with any kind of more profound compassion. Would human dignity and with it also German interests not have been far better protected if, on the occasion of the international women's conference in Christiania in October 1920, the Federation of German Women's Associations (*Bund deutscher Frauenvereine*), our largest bourgeois women's organization, had, instead of sulking in its nationalist corner, had its repre-

sentatives express a frank, heartfelt word of regret about Lille towards the French women? Instead, the work of the patriotic Fatherland comprised calling for the local women's organizations to drearily protest against the Black Shame. How much more dignified would an open debate about the problem of the blacks in Christiania have turned out to be had it followed a rally in support of our French sisters?! How much more understanding would, in these circumstances, women from neutral countries and also French women have had for the German women's statements?! Despite its nationalist past, the Federation of German Women's Associations was well received in Christiania, as those in attendance were genuine pacifists, prepared to forget provided there was an unequivocal expression of good will to work together for the future. From both a human and a German point of view, it is irresponsible that the largest bourgeois women's group, for its part, rejected this opportunity to detoxify the international atmosphere. We are constantly asking for all sorts of help from other countries and constantly affronting them. Where is our national dignity, then? Let us finally acknowledge that we have nothing to hide from other countries, that they are already aware of all the sins committed by our military command, and that it is only our own people that are kept in the dark about them, because for the creators of our misery, this ignorance remains their only defence to this day.

All that we think about is that we might have to sacrifice something if we make a concession to other countries. We never seem to recognize what a mountain of violent sins other countries have to forgive us for each of these concessions, which we claim are our "God-given right", concessions we can only be granted if the other countries show great magnanimity.

*Source: Flugschriften des Bundes Neues Vaterland, no. 18/21, Verlag Neues Vaterland, Berlin, 1921.*

## Four Years of Political Murder

By Emil Julius Gumbel

The following is an account of political murders committed in Germany since 9 November 1918. The report offers an even-handed portrayal of murders carried out by both those on the left and on the right. The cases included are premeditated, unlawful killings of Germans known by name, carried out by other Germans with domestic political motives. The murders are not committed by a group of people but are deemed individual acts. I have not included cases where the perpetrator claimed to have been attacked by a crowd, nor have I depicted lynchings by nameless mobs or any other form of mass action, but rather only those cases where there was a specific perpetrator.

In selecting which cases to include, I was much more careful when it came to murders committed by rightists than leftists. As a result, I have reported on several left-wing cases that are more akin to riots than political murders.

Regarding the exactitude of the information, in each individual case, I took the greatest possible care and sought to achieve documentary accuracy throughout. I drew on court records, rulings, decisions to discontinue proceedings, witness statements, communications from lawyers, from the bereaved, and lastly newspaper announcements. I mostly examined the trial reports in the right-wing newspapers. Whenever the material was unclear or inaccurate, I wrote to relatives and correspondents. If the information was still incomplete after this, the cases at hand were excluded. As a result, I can fully substantiate every assertion made in the report. In general, I only included those cases where I knew the name of the victim. The anonymous cases found in the text serve only to illustrate the relevant events. I only deviated from this principle in two instances.

The most difficult to determine was the current status of the proceedings in each case. It is, therefore, possible that in cases where I was not aware of any proceedings, these may in fact be pending or have already been discontinued. That said, I am confident that I have included a complete list of punishments.

This book cannot claim to report all political murders that have been committed in Germany in recent years. I therefore appeal to all readers who know of other cases to contact the *Neue Gesellschaft* publishing house in Berlin-Fichtenau.



The book continues and expands on my brochure *Zwei Jahre Mord* (Two Years of Murder), in which, among other things, I claimed that the German judicial authorities have allowed over three hundred political murders to go unpunished. I expected this to have one of two outcomes. Either the judicial authorities believe that I am telling the truth and the murders will be punished. Or they believe that I am lying, and I will be convicted for slander. In the end, however, a third, completely unexpected scenario materialized:

Although my brochure by no means went unnoticed, the authorities made no attempt whatsoever to dispute the accuracy of my assertions. On the contrary, in fact, on several occasions, the highest competent authority, the *Reichsjustizminister* (Reich Minister of Justice), explicitly confirmed my claims. Yet, not one of the murderers was convicted.

Berlin, 16 October 1922

### The murder of the *Vorwärts* parliamentarians

In January 1919, revolutionary workers occupied the premises of the Social Democratic Party's newspaper *Vorwärts*. In response, the government forces attacked the building. In the early hours of 11 January, the *Vorwärts* rebels sent out the following parliamentarians, representing different political parties, all of whom were wearing badges to indicate their status and were of course unarmed, to negotiate their surrender:

Editors Wolfgang *Fernbach*, Walter *Heise*, Werner *Möller*, Karl *Gru-busch*, Erich *Kluge*, Arthur *Schötler*, and *Wackermann*.

Fernbach was not part of the occupation. He had entered the building in the afternoon of 10 January to visit someone but was unable to leave because of the barricade. The seven members of parliament were detained, taken to the Garde-Dräger barracks at Belle-Alliance-Straße 6, and, at ten in the morning, shot dead. According to the report which Fernbach's father received from Senior Lieutenant von Carnap, the men were lynched by the assault soldiers, despite the fact that they were unarmed, something which both von Carnap and Major Franz von Stephani, who was also present, were powerless to stop. In a letter to Fernbach's wife, however, Major von Stephani wrote: "Fernbach was found among the Spartacists who were dragged out of the *Vorwärts* building with weapons in their hands and in possession of 'dum-dum bullets' [soft-nosed bullets which had a more destructive impact on the body than regular ammunition]. They had forfeited their lives during the fighting and their death was by firing squad."

Yet, these claims did not correspond to the facts either. During the Ledebour trial, Graf Westarp, who had led the attack, was called as a witness on 23 May 1919 and in his testimony, he explicitly stated that it was clear that the seven men were parliamentarians, they were unarmed when captured, and were of course not in possession of any such “dum-dum bullets”. Indeed, Major von Stephani, too, later withdrew his claims before the Court of the First Guard Division. According to consistent statements, found in the court records, made by soldiers Wilhelm Helms and Georg Schickram, who had witnessed the entire shooting, medical orderly Hans Stettin and soldier Willi Köhn, as well as, ultimately, the statement von Stephani himself made to the inquiry committee of the Representative Assembly of the State Parliament of Prussia of 3 June 1919, it was actually von Stephani who gave the order to shoot. In his statement, von Stephani referred to an alleged government order, which, however, the government denies ever having given (statement by Judge Advocate Hierholzer before the Court of the First Guard Division, Reichswehr Brigade 3, Potsdam). Even the names of the two of the soldiers who carried out the execution, Officer Otto *Weber*, Field Convoy 40, Divisional Train Command 10, Hanover, and Private Erich *Selzer*, Infantry Regiment 21, Rudolstadt, are known. The hats and shoes of the seven executed men had been stolen. There were two stab wounds from a bayonet on Möller’s body. The left side of his face had also been smashed in. In response to an inquiry from Fernbach Sr on 29 January 1919 the Public Prosecutor’s Office stated that the matter had been settled. On 26 March 1919, Fernbach’s father instituted legal proceedings against von Stephani for the murder of his son. It was not until 31 January 1920 that the Court of the Guard Cavalry Division in Potsdam notified him that the trial against von Stephani for exceeding his authority would soon take place. But the case never came to court. As a result of the repeal of the court-martial jurisdiction, on 10 October 1920, the court files were transferred to the Public Prosecutor in Berlin. The prosecutor’s counsel of District Court II, Dr Ortmann, refused to issue an arrest warrant against von Stephani, who subsequently continued to serve and even participated in the battle for Munich. On 14 July 1921, Hartmann, Siemens, and Dr Fränkel of District Court II signed a court order which “discontinued the proceedings against” the accused von Stephani, Weber, and Seltzer “due to lack of evidence”. Fernbach’s civil action against von Stephani was thrown out on 20 December 1920. In March 1922, his claim for damages against the War Minister of District

Court I was recognized as legitimate. In the cases of the lawsuits filed by five other bereaved families, the fiscal authorities require proof of identity.

### The Lichtenberg "atrocities" and the March murders

In March 1919, fighting ensued between the Republican forces which had been set up during the revolution and were to be disbanded and the government troops and *Freikorps* (volunteer corps) under the command of Reinhard. The Republican troops were also joined by members of the working class.

In an official report written on 9 March 1919, the Guard Cavalry Rifle Division informed the Berlin press: "The Spartacists are currently in the process of carrying out their intention to prepare for increased resistance in Lichtenberg. They stormed the Police Headquarters, and all those working there, with the exception of the son of the Chief Constable, were slaughtered like animals."

Similarly, on 10 March 1919, privy councillor Doyé from the Prussian Ministry of the Interior notified the *Berliner Tagesblatt* newspaper of the shooting of 57 policemen.

According to a report in the *B. Z. am Mittag* (*Berliner Zeitung am Mittag* tabloid) on 9 March, 60 police detectives and a large number of other prisoners were executed. To be precise, "prisoners who tried to defend themselves were, in some cases, held down by four or five Spartacists, while the sixth shot them between the eyes with a pistol". The *B.Z.* report was based on "a sworn statement made by five soldiers and relayed by a military command post".

This news was printed by the entire German press and strongly influenced public opinion against the Spartacists. For days the press was full of bloodthirsty accounts. On 10 March, for example, the *Vossische Zeitung*, along with the right-wing press of course, reported as many as a 150 deaths.

All these reports were fabricated. It was not until 13 March that the *B.Z.* finally announced that the police officers had in fact been released. On the very same day, the *Vossische* and *Vorwärts* explained that, based on statements made by the Mayor of Ziethen, "all reports about the mass execution of police officers and detectives during the assault on the Lichtenberg Police Headquarters had proven to be false." Eventually, according to a report in the *B.Z.* on 14 March and obituaries for those who had died, it emerged that just two officers had been killed. Indeed, of these two, one had fallen in battle and the cause of death for the other could not be determined.

Due to the alleged murder of the Lichtenberg officers, as commander-in-chief of the Margraviate of Brandenburg, Noske declared martial law in Berlin and issued the following order: "The brutality and bestiality of the Spartacists battling against us force me to give the following order: Any person with a weapon in their hand found fighting against government troops is to be shot on sight."

At the same time, the Guard Cavalry Rifle Division issued its own order that anyone with weapons discovered in their home were to be shot, too. Evidence of this individual participating in the fighting was not required. The order stated:

"Guard Cavalry Division. Dept I a. No. 20 950.

Order for the afternoon of the 10.3 and the 11.3.

Division Headquarters, 10.3.1919.

Guiding principle: Anyone who uses weapons to resist or loot will be up against the wall. Every leader shall bear some of the responsibility to ensure this is carried out.

Moreover, all occupants of buildings from which shots have been fired at troops, irrespective of whether or not such persons profess their innocence, shall be taken out onto the street and their houses searched for weapons in their absence; suspects in whose residences weapons are actually found shall be shot.

Point 2: Every occupant of a house or passerby found in unlawful possession of a weapon, is to be detained and, with a short report, taken to the nearest prison. Anyone who defends themselves weapon in hand is to be shot down immediately."

### **Lynchings in Lehrter Street Prison**

Eyewitnesses to the incident gave the following report: "On 9 March, 30 men were detained in the Waldschenke restaurant at the *Zoologischer Garten*. The notion that any of us were in possession of weapons was out of the question, as all the prisoners had been searched earlier. In the late afternoon, around ten men were loaded into a car. Two prisoners, one of whom was a member of the Sailors' Division and the other a Russian, were thrown down the stairs by Lüttwitz's troops, led to the vehicle under a rain of blows from rifle butts, thrown into the truck like a piece of luggage, and once onboard, handled in the most indescribably brutal manner. As they lay on the ground bleeding, they were ordered to stand to attention. Once the two men lay bleeding on the floor, the car

began to drive off. We had not experienced anything as terrible as this in the entire military campaign. When one of the soldiers went to attack the prisoners with a knife, the driver, a young man who had previously attended our interrogation at Jörn's court martial, stopped him. Yet, the same driver tacitly allowed the other abuses to continue. The sailor told us that he had been detained because he rode his bike into a barbed-wire barrier. The Russian's crime was to publicly state that Germany was not ready for Bolshevism.

Having arrived at the prison, the two men were pulled out of the vehicle first, despite the fact that they had both been lying right at the back. In other words, their imminent arrival had probably been announced. They were dragged into the prison; we had the impression they were trying to keep any witnesses out of the way. The soldiers, members of Reinhard's troops, were all pretty drunk and bellowed like animals when the two men arrived. We saw how the prisoners were thrown through the prison wing into the yard. One of the soldiers returned and, showing us his broken rifle, said: 'And now it's the other half's turn.' As we came to the administration office, we heard shots being fired in the yard."

Former Reichswehr soldiers (pioneers), locksmith Adalbert *Arndt*, and engineering student Arthur *Schneider* appeared before the jury of District Court I (presided over by District Court Director Dr Weigert) on 20 March 1922. Witnesses testified that the two soldiers had beaten the unarmed prisoners with rifle butts, and others confirmed that they had shot the prisoners. The three bodies were initially thrown onto a rubbish heap and then transported by truck, driven by Schneider, to the zoo. Arndt and Schneider were each sentenced to one year and six months in jail for attempted murder and aggravated assault.

### **The shooting of three young men**

On 10 March, two friends of Kurt *Friedrich* (aged 16), Hans Galuska (aged 16) and Otto *Werner* (aged 18) paid him a visit at his mother's flat on Schlesischer Bahnhof 3. The three young men had never been involved in politics. No sooner had they come together when eight government soldiers arrived, as someone had informed on the men. The soldiers searched the flat but failed to find a single piece of incriminating evidence. They then advised the young men that they were being arrested and removed them from the building. The last words that Kurt Friedrich was able to say were: "Mother, all my papers are in order, I have nothing on my conscience."

Friedrich's mother went to the school on Andreasstraße where Reinhard's troops were encamped, and watched as the three young men were taken away, sobbing uncontrollably. The commanding officer did not allow the woman to speak. On 12 March, after two terrible days of waiting, Mrs Friedrich received the news from an acquaintance that Hans Galuska was in the morgue. There she found the three young friends, deceased. The bodies had been delivered on 11 March as "unidentified". Kurt Friedrich had been shot in the head and the hip. They had stolen his new boots. Hans Galuska also had two bullet wounds, including one to the forehead, as well as multiple injuries from being beaten. He was missing his hat, collar, tie, overcoat, jacket, and boots. Otto Werner's face was almost unrecognizable, and one of his arms was completely shot to pieces, such that it can be assumed that he had held it up in an attempt to protect his face. The matter was reported to the public prosecutor. Yet, neither the troops involved nor the officers responsible were tried.

#### **Hand-grenade pins as grounds for shooting**

On 11 March, a search was carried out on a flat belonging to carpenter Richard *Borchard*, who was alleged to have fired a weapon. All that was found was an empty Russian cartridge frame without ammunition, sent to him by a relative in 1914 as a souvenir from the field. Thereafter he was arrested and taken to the police station. On Tuesday, 18 March, Borchard's wife located the body of her husband in the morgue. He had been shot through the head. The dead man's socks and shoes had been removed.

Borchard had never been politically active, he opposed the uprising and supported the government troops.

On 12 March, during a search for weapons at Andreasstraße 62, the residence of a worker by the name of Paul *Dänschel*, soldiers from the Lüttwitz corps found two hand-grenade pins and an old bayonet. The pins were from the factory where the family's 19-year-old son, Alfred, worked. He had taken the pins home in order to fashion a writing utensil from them. On that day, father and son were dragged out of bed, arrested, and, for no reason whatsoever, taken to the trades school on Andreasstraße 1/2 and shot dead. The interrogation was led by Lieutenant Siegfried *Winter* of Bismarckstr. 25, Adlershof. Winter also gave the order to collect the bodies. When the fire brigade did this, the men's valuables and papers had been taken from them and their shoes had been stolen, too. Winter emigrated to Argentina. On 11 December 1920, the chief prosecutor from District Court I, Berlin, discontinued proceedings.

### The 29 sailors

The official statement was as follows: “Yesterday, at Französische Straße 32, the Treasury of the People’s Navy Division was occupied by government troops. Former members of the now dissolved People’s Navy Division who had gone to the treasury to collect the money still owed to them were arrested. Some of the prisoners were armed. Consequently, some of them physically resisted arrest. The rank-and-file of the government troops could barely be restrained from attacking the prisoners as the animosity had clearly been exacerbated by the events of recent days. Ammunition, including dum-dum bullets, was seized. Of the approximately 250 prisoners, 24 had to be shot on the spot. The remaining prisoners were transported to Moabit Prison under heavy protection where they awaited an extraordinary court martial.”

The actual sequence of events was that on 11 March 1919, payday had been scheduled for the People’s Navy Division. General Lüttwitz ordered Lieutenant Marloh to arrest as many members as possible. The 250 sailors, who were entirely orderly elements – some of them had even guarded the Reichsbank during the unrest – arrived on their own, almost all of them unarmed, to collect the money to which they were entitled. Each of them was individually overpowered and captured.

Marloh felt threatened by all the prisoners and telephoned Colonel Reinhard to request reinforcements. Colonel Reinhard told Lieutenant Schröter: “Go to Marloh and tell him he has to crack down. Remember Lichtenberg, where 60 policemen were shot dead.” Schröter passed the message on to Marloh that he must deal with the situation firmly. Marloh immediately telephoned for help again. Thereafter, Senior Lieutenant von Kessel passed a message to Marloh via Lieutenant Wehmeyer: “Inform Senior Lieutenant Marloh that Colonel Reinhard is furious because he is being too lenient on the 300 sailors. He should make extensive use of his weapon, even if he were to shoot 150 men. Everything that can be shot, should be. Reinforcements would take another one to one-and-a-half hours. Colonel Reinhard would not know where to put 300 people.”

Marloh obeyed, identifying the men who seemed particularly intelligent, had good suits or jewellery, separating them from the others. Then he instructed Officer Deputy *Penther* to shoot 29 of the prisoners with a machine gun. “The effect of the shooting was terrible. Many people’s skulls were entirely ripped off. Brain matter sprayed everywhere, dead and wounded bodies fell on top of each other.” According to the *Zukunft*

weekly newspaper (29 November 1919), the deceased were: Jakob *Bonczyk*, Paul *Brandt*, Theodor *Biertümpel*, Ernst *Bursian*, Kurt *Dehn*, Otto *Deubert*, Willy *Ferbitz*, Robert *Göppe*, Baruch *Handwohl*, Walter *Harder*, Alfred *Hintze*, Anton *Hintze*, Hermann *Hinze*, Walter *Jacobowsky*, Otto *Kanneberg*, Willy *Kuble*, Max *Kutzner*, Martin *Lewitz*, Herbert *Lietzau*, Max *Maszterlerz*, Ernst *Mörbe*, Karl *Pobantz*, Paul *Rösner*, Siegfried *Schulz*, Paul *Ulbrich*, Werner *Weber*, Karl *Zieske*, and Gustav *Zühlsdorf*. The other sailors were sent to prison and soon afterwards declared innocent and released.

Marloh provided Senior Lieutenant von Kessel with a truthful account of events. On Kessel's advice, in mid-May, Marloh then submitted a new report, according to which he decided to carry out the shooting himself, based on Noske's order. In the end, a third report was written in the presence of Colonel Reinhard. For months, Marloh was left alone. It was not until a warrant was issued for his arrest on 2 June that Kessel advised him to flee, issuing him with false papers for this purpose, which Lieutenant Wehmeyer then handed over to Marloh. Lieutenant Hoffmann brought him money. On 9 December, Marloh was acquitted of manslaughter and abuse of force, sentenced to three months in prison for being absent without leave, and fined 30 Reichsmarks for using forged documents. The verdict stated, "that the shootings were objectively unwarranted, that the sailors who were armed had valid licenses for carrying their weapons, that Marloh's situation was not that threatening, that he was entitled to use weapons but that he believed he had been given an order" (presided over by Judge Advocate Welt).

Committee II for Determining Compensation to Redress Riot Damage denied the rights of the surviving dependents to a pension, stating that the shootings had occurred in the exercise of state power with the purpose of executing a sentence.

### **Staff Sergeant Marcus**

On 12 March, Staff Sergeant Marcus from the Lützow *Freikorps* was given the order to cordon off Langestraße. He blocked the street off, deploying 25 soldiers to do so, calling out loudly, "Clear the street! Close your windows!" Allegedly this order was not heeded. For instance, Marcus saw a female figure looking down at the street from the window of a building. Reportedly, he shot at a bricked-up window located next to the open one, but hit the open window instead. The shot he fired killed a 12-year-



old school child by the name of *Slovek*. Another girl, Erwine *Dable* received a bullet to the heart as she left a butcher's shop. A 73-year-old tiler, Karl *Becker*, was killed by a shot through the head. Three other individuals were killed in the same way, people who had absolutely nothing to do with the unrest at the time.

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On 12 March 1919, after a fruitless house search conducted by soldiers from the Lüttwitz *Freikorps*, railway worker Alfred *Musick* was arrested in his flat and transported to the Andreas School. Senior Lieutenant *Wecke* had him taken away together with four other individuals. The five detainees were shot when crossing the Schilling Bridge and thrown into the water. (According to a statement by the soldiers escorting them: "The five of them are already swimming.") *Musick* was seriously injured but managed to swim to safety, only to be discovered and taken back to the Andreas School. Staff Sergeant *Marcus* then transported him to the barracks, recounting on his return: "Once we got up there, I stood him against the wall and told him to go in; he answered that there was no door, and that's when I shot him through the head." The body was stripped of valuables and delivered as "unidentified" to the collection site on Distelmeyerstraße.

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On 13 March, Paul *Biedermann* and Hans *Gottschalk* were arrested on Friedrich-Karl-Straße on their way to work, as someone had informed on them. They were locked in a bar and shot dead through the window by the soldier standing guard outside.

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On 13 March 1919 at 9.30 in the morning, in his flat on Tilsiter Straße 49, Berthold *Peters* (born 28 March 1888), a plumber and since the outbreak of the war a sailor, was arrested by a troop of soldiers under the command of an officer and then taken to Captain *Poll* in the Patzenhofer brewery and from there to the Bötzwow brewery where he was shot before 1 p.m. The body was looted: *Peters*'s watch, chain, ring, briefcase, wallet, and boots were all stolen. One of his neighbours had denounced him as a Spartacist. There were no criminal proceedings. There were civil proceedings against the fiscal authorities which granted his surviving dependents 500 marks per month.

### Two shootings by Lieutenant Baum

On a night-time patrol conducted by the von Grothe detachment, an unknown man approached Lieutenant *Baum* presenting identity documents showing him to be a member of the Ministry of the Reichswehr with the words: "Lieutenant, is the cigar merchant by the name of *Müller* still alive? If you catch him, shoot him dead, I've seen him behind the barricades twice now!".

On 12 March, Baum set off with ten men to Johann Müller's cigar shop on Memeler Straße 19. Johann Müller was shaving at the time and emerged from the backroom with his face lathered up. Baum searched the flat, finding neither weapons nor ammunition.

The lieutenant said to Müller: "You agitate for the Independents; you have eight city maps with suspicious locations marked. Other people have informed me that you shot at us. Say goodbye to your wife. It is now my duty to shoot you!" Müller's wife and daughter cried out. Müller remained silent and Lieutenant Baum deemed this an admission of guilt. Müller said a prayer, was stood against the wall, and shot by six men, upon which he collapsed. A medical orderly was instructed to confirm that the death sentence had been executed and remove the body. The orderly found Müller still alive. On the order of the accused, the Russian schoolboy Alexander *Köhler*, a member of the patrol, gave Müller the coup de grâce.

### Jogiches and Dorrenbach

"On 10 March, on Noske's order, the editor of the *Rote Fabne* newspaper, Leo *Jogiches*, was arrested by members of the Cavalry Guard Rifle Division. A soldier was to bring Jogiches before the investigating magistrate. In the criminal court building, Jogiches attacked the soldier" (Detective Constable Ernst *Tamschik*) "and was shot on the spot. A similar incident had already occurred in the criminal court building the day before."

A former officer by the name of *Dorrenbach* had joined the revolution and become the head of the People's Navy Division. Because of the Spartacist unrest in Berlin, a warrant had been issued for Dorrenbach's arrest. He was arrested in Eisenach on 12 May 1919, and on 17 May he was interrogated by the public prosecutor. It is reported that as he was being transported back to prison, he attempted to escape and was shot down by the soldiers escorting him. Seriously injured, he was taken to the Charité Hospital where he subsequently died. Before his death, he expressly told his law-

yer that he had not attempted to escape. In this case, too, the deadly shot was delivered by Detective Sergeant Ernst *Tamschik*. Tamschik was subsequently appointed lieutenant for the Charlottenburg *Sicherheitswehr* (militarized police force). Thereafter, he was transferred to the *Sicherheitspolizei* (security police, *SiPo*) in East Prussia.

### Two shootings on the run

On 13 March 1919, after a fruitless search of their flats at Kastanienallee 29–30, and with no warrant having been issued for their arrest, machinist Georg *Fillbrandt* and worker Paul *Szillinski* were arrested by four officers or cadet sergeants. They were taken to the headquarters of the First Reinhard Penal Battalion on Griebenowstraße, and, after a brief interrogation, taken to the drill ground on Schönhauser Allee where they were shot by the soldiers escorting them. Their bodies were looted and left where they fell. When Szillinski's wife and Fillbrandt's daughter made inquiries at the headquarters, they were read a report stating that both men were shot as they were attempting to escape. Based on eyewitness reports from Wilh. Domke, Herm. Kastner, Martha Pertz, and Erich Abraham, who had seen the shooting, it was, however, established that the prisoners had walked calmly beside the soldiers and when the soldiers ordered them to "stop", they had begged them to spare their lives.

### The capture of Munich

On 1 May, the troops of the Hoffmann government entered Munich. In its official communiqué, the government wrote: "We now have the results of the investigations conducted by the police into the number of victims claimed by the fighting in Munich from 30 April to 8 May. A lot of work went into compiling this information. The wives of those who were killed were instructed to report the names of those they had buried. Based on this material, the detective inspectors then collected more detailed information from the relatives of the deceased. Although this method provided no guarantee for complete accuracy, it was the only way to produce a somewhat reliable compilation.

According to this compilation, the death toll from the fighting was 557. Of these, 38 men from the government troops fell in combat, along with 93 members of the Red Army, seven Russians, and seven civilians. Forty-two members of the Red Army and 144 civilians were summarily executed. Forty-two of the deceased were unidentified and there was no informa-

tion about the cause of death. It is probable that of these 42 unidentified individuals, 18 were Russians. [...].”

### “We hit the jackpot”

In the night of 30 April, Karl *Huber* of Landsberger Straße 153, 27 years of age, member of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany, KPD) was hauled out of his bed and, the next morning after a short interrogation, shot dead. Witnesses confirm that Huber was not involved in combat in any way. When he was arrested, Huber had around 30 marks in cash, a gold watch, a watch with a steel case, gaiters, and a briefcase on his person. All of these items were missing. When on 23 May, Huber’s sister made inquiries regarding the shooting of her brother, she overheard two military guards talking in front of the building where the Second Company of the Württemberg Dragoon Regiment was quartered (Harlaching, Über der Klause). The guards said: “With this heavy briefcase and the gaiters, we really hit the jackpot.

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On 2 May, *Faust*, a carpenter, was providing voluntary medical services for the von Oven army. He was wearing a Red Cross armband. The soldiers took this as proof that he was a member of the Red Army and shot him on the spot. Without trial.

### Gustav Landauer

The following account published in the Munich *Neue Zeitung* newspaper on 3 June 1919 also reported on the type of “misfortunes” that occurred during this time: “On 2 May, I was on guard in front of the big gate to Stadelheimer Prison. At around 1.15, a troop of Bavarian and Württembergian soldiers arrived with Gustav *Landauer*. In the yard, the group was met by a major in civilian clothes (identified during the trial as manor owner *Freiherr von Gagern*), who struck Landauer with a flail-like club. Subjected to blows from rifle butts and beatings from the major, Landauer collapsed. But he got back up onto his feet and attempted to say something. At that point, a staff sergeant shouted: “Go away!” To the laughter and delighted approval of the accompanying troops, the staff sergeant fired two shots, one of which hit Landauer in the head. Landauer was still breathing. Shouting: “Get back, we’ll land him with another one!”, the staff sergeant shot Landauer in the back, tearing through his heart and lifting him clean off the ground. Seeing that Landauer was still twitching, the staff sergeant kicked

him to death. He was then stripped of everything on his person and his body was thrown into the wash house where it remained for two days.”

On 13 September 1919, Freiherr von Gagern was ordered by the Munich District Court to pay a penalty of 300 marks. The charges against the others involved were dropped.

Apart from Landauer, in the first days of May, over 30 other unarmed prisoners were killed by soldiers in Stadelheim without further proceedings. On this subject, Mr Weigel informed me: “On the wall of an inner prison yard, the gate to which leads out to the cemetery, I saw between 50 and 60 bullet holes, all at chest height. It had been acknowledged that 30 to 40 people had been killed. These bodies, according to the prison administration, had been retrieved from the mass grave where they all lay, without coffins, to be placed in coffins. I was not given permission to see the mass grave. Very few of the coffins had names on them, one of them bore a woman’s name.”

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On 3 May, allegedly due to a letter found on his person, Josef *Bauer*, a fitter of Schönstraße 60, 20 years of age, no party affiliation, was arrested and soon after this shot dead, and his body looted.

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On 3 May, Josef *Nagl*, head mason, 31 years of age, resident in Sauerlach, was arrested in his flat on Starnberger Bahnhof and shot. It was believed that Nagl was the owner of a weapon that had been found in his flat. The weapon was, however, proven to belong to Alois Stöttel, who lived with Nagl. After being shot dead, Nagl was completely stripped of all his valuables. One hundred marks in cash were missing. Nagl is survived by his wife.

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Josef *Stettner*, xylographer, Baaderstraße 65, was shot on 3 May while helping a wounded person on Gärtnerplatz. He leaves a wife and six children.

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On 3 May, Johann *Tischer*, painter, 37 years old, Zeppelinstraße 23, was taken from his flat, then, after around half an hour, returned home, only to be arrested again having made a comment to one of the soldiers. Soon after this, he was taken to the teacher training college on Frühlingstraße and shot.

Josef *Zull*, coachman, 20 years old, Winterstraße 4, was arrested in his flat on 3 May, severely mistreated, beaten half to death, and then shot dead on Kandidplatz. He had been a member of the Republican defence.

### The 21 Catholic journeymen

On 6 May, a meeting of the St. Joseph's Catholic Journeymen Association was held at the social club on Augustenstraße 71 to discuss matters related to the theatre. The meeting was denounced as "Spartacist". On the order of Captain von Alt-Stutterheim, the journeymen were arrested by a patrol led by Deputy Officer Priebe as there was a ban on assembly at the time. Captain *von Alt-Stutterheim* inspected the detainees on the street. People shouted that they were innocent. Alt-Stutterheim responded that it had nothing to do with him and he permitted them to be terribly maltreated. Seven of the prisoners were shot dead in the courtyard of the residential building at Karolinenplatz 5. The others were taken to the cellar. The soldiers, some of whom were drunk, trampled on the prisoners, indiscriminately thrust them down with their bayonets and flailed around so much that one of their bayonets bent and brain matter sprayed out of the prisoners' skulls. In this manner they killed another 14 people and looted their bodies. Five of the prisoners were seriously injured. "The bodies of the people who had been shot looked awful. One of the prisoners had had his nose kicked into his face, another had half of the back of his skull missing [...] If one of the wounded showed any sign of life, he would be beaten and stabbed. Two of the soldiers took each other by the arm and did a real Native American dance around the bodies, shrieking and whooping."

### Police Agent Blau

*Blau* was an agent and "stool pigeon" of the political police force. During the January 1919 uprising, he was part of the occupation of the Büxenstein publishing house and also appropriated a car. Following the fall of the Soviet Republic, he worked in Munich where he posed as a fugitive communist in need of assistance. After being recognized, he was lured to Berlin. There, on 1 August 1919, at a meeting of communists, he was identified as an informer but wished to provide evidence to the contrary. Together with Hoppe, he spent the night at the residence of a man named Pohl. Here, according to Hoppe, an unidentified police agent appeared and offered Hoppe poison with which to kill Blau. The next day, Blau and Hoppe stayed overnight in *Winkler's* flat. Here, according to Hoppe, three people showed up, one of whom is assumed to have been Police Agent Schreiber, offering him the same bottle of morphine and ordering him to finish Blau off. Thereafter, Hoppe left the flat but returned later to find Blau had already been

murdered. The body was then thrown into the canal where it was found, shackled, on 7 August.

### The crimes of the Demmin Uhlans

On 18 March 1920, the Demmin Uhlans under Cavalry Captain *Obernitz* entered Gnoien because the workers there refused to recognize Wolfgang's Kapp's government. Early one morning, a mason by the name of *Gräbler*, chair of the local *Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany, USPD), was hauled out of his bed and, despite the pleas of his wife and six children, was, at the command of an officer, taken out onto the street and, without questioning, shot dead 100 metres from his own front door. The troops then arrested 96 workers and brought them to Demmin. During this process, 63-year-old *Puffpoff* was so badly mistreated that he collapsed and died soon afterwards. Shortly before reaching Demmin, soldiers stationed there shot at the group of prisoners, killing four and wounding a great many more. On 19 March 1920, the Demmin Reichswehr under the command of Lieutenant *Meinecke* of the Jarmen Battalion entered Stavenhagen, where all was calm. The soldiers gave the order: "Clear the streets!" and when this did not happen immediately, they shot into the crowd. To negotiate with the troops, a 60-year-old alderman named *Seidel* walked out into the street with his hands in the air and, after uttering no more than a couple of words, was immediately shot dead. Proceedings against *Meinecke* were discontinued "because he was said to have been acting in self-defence".

### The 14 workers from Bad Thal

During the Kapp Putsch, the commander-in-chief of the Fifteenth Reichswehr Brigade, Major General Hagenberg, declared his support for Kapp. However, the Gotha government adhered to the constitution, was declared deposed, and some of its members were arrested on behalf of *Reichskanzler* Kapp. On 14 March, Freiherr von Schenk, Marburg district commander, refused to state whether he was loyal to Ebert or Kapp, explaining that he only obeyed orders that came from Kassel. In Kassel, however, General von Schöler announced that he was a Lüttwitz supporter. On 19 March, von Schenk called for the creation of a student army. On 20 March 1920, under the command of Frigate Captain von Selchow, the temporary volunteer battalion, predominantly made up of fraternity students, moved from Marburg to Thuringia to restore "law and order". The

students moved out of Marburg to the accompaniment of music, draped in flags and ribbons. The vice-chancellor evoked the spirit of 1914. There were all manner of horror stories from the military formations about “Thuringia being in complete turmoil”, about the “centres of power of the insurrectionary movement” in the peaceful town of Ruhla, about the “fierce battles for Gotha, Erfurt, and Eisenach”, about “artillery, mortars, and countless machine guns” (brochure written by Sergeant Schaumlöffel: “The Marburg student corps in Thuringia”). Nevertheless, Schaumlöffel had to admit that on the next day, the battalion “entered Eisenach unchallenged by the enemy”, and four days later, entered Gotha similarly “unchallenged”, without seeing any action at all, and, of course, without a single man dead, wounded, or missing.

In Bad Thal, too, all was calm. Using a list put together on the basis of entirely unproven denunciations, 15 workers were arrested. Five of them were members of the German Democratic Party. At 7 a.m. on 25 March, the battalion began the advance on Gotha. The detained “Spartacists” (all unarmed, of course), guarded by a number of students, marched 500 metres away from the troops. Before eight in the morning, all 15 of them were shot dead just outside Mechterstedts, some on the street, some right on the edge of the road. The bodies were just left there, and the students marched on, singing as they went.

The students were acquitted of the charges of manslaughter and misuse of a weapon.

### **Leftist murders during the Kapp Putsch**

In the municipality of Kleinkugel near Halle, there was a civic defence force in possession of 14 rifles and a machine gun. During the Kapp Putsch, the workers demanded that the manor owners surrender their weapons. On the advice of the Reichswehr, a manor owner by the name of *Walter* hid the weapon locks. On 18 March, the Reichswehr collected *Walter*’s weapons. On 19 March, his son biked to Halle to deliver some money, taking the locks with him. In Kanena, he was stopped by the workers, who discovered the locks. *Walter* was taken as a prisoner to the Alwiner mining association pit. There he was accused of having advised the Reichswehr to shoot people. The workers then decided to kill him and informed him of their intention. Two of the workers led him to a drying shed where at 9.45 a.m. he was killed by a shot to the head. At the trial, a worker by the name of *Rasch* was acquitted of the crime as witnesses swore that he was not the murderer.



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On 21 March 1920, several potash workers arrived in Trebitz from Staßfurt where they visited a manor owner by the name of *Henze* and demanded that he give them a car so that they could travel to Halle, as the train only went as far as Wallwitz. Henze initially refused. Before long, another 40 workers arrived armed with hand grenades, their guns cocked. Henze and his sister were surrounded. There was a heated exchange of words accompanied by violence. Henze was shot in the lung and dealt a blow to the head with a rifle butt, while his sister was shot in the heart. Worker Karl *Felix* of Hechlingen, who had dealt the fatal blow, was sentenced to five years in prison, with mitigating circumstances, for the murder of the Henze, and the boilermaker Erich *Rolle* of Hechlingen was given 12 years for the murder of Miss Henze, as was worker Karl *Steinbach* of Wallwitz

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On 28 March 1920, Reichswehr soldier *Sametz* was arrested by the Red Army near Dorsten. He was presented to machine operator Gottfried *Karuseit* of Gelsenkirchen, who was the section commander and led the fighting in Dorsten. The latter arranged for a military court to be formed, made up of the company commanders who were initially available. The company commanders sentenced Sametz (a former *Baltikumer* or member of the Baltic troops) to death for espionage. Karuseit, who later turned out to be a military informer himself, selected the men who were to carry out the sentence and arranged for Sametz to be executed that very night.

### **"Traitors fall to the Feme"**

Hans *Hartung* was an informant for the communists in both Halle and Munich. He was alleged to have betrayed a secret weapons cache belonging to the Bavarian civic defence force to the Allies. The weapons of the defence force had been hidden in Zusmarshausen by Captain Gustav *Beurer* with the help of Senior Lieutenant Dr Josef *Berger*, a district judge called *Wanderer*, and bank clerk by the name of Lorenz. They feared that Hartung would betray them. In early March 1921, his body was found in a stream in Zusmarshausen. It had been taken there by car. It is likely that Beurer had lured him into the car and shot him with Berger's help. The body had been weighted down with stones and thrown into a deeper part of the stream that Berger and Wanderer had picked out in advance. Berger, who had given himself away when drunk, and Beurer were arrested on 22 March but had already been released in June due to "lack of evidence".

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A housemaid by the name of Maria *Sandmeier* of Tegernseerlandstraße 20, Munich, was found strangled in the Forstenrieder Park on 6 October 1920. The body had been taken to the park by car. Sandmeier had threatened to give the Reich Disarmament Commissioner information about a weapons cache. Lieutenant Hans *Schweighart* from the Oberland *Freikorps* in Innsbruck was arrested as a suspect in December 1921 and sent to Bavaria. There has still been no trial.

### **Wilhelm Sült**

*Sült*, who was the head of the works' council and led the electricity workers in several strikes, was taken into protective custody on 30 March 1921 by the political police (Dept. 1 A). According to the official report, when he was brought into the police headquarters for questioning on 1 April, he shoved the officer and ran up the stairs, upon which officer *Janike*, shot him twice, with the bullets entering his liver and kidneys. On his deathbed, Sült told his lawyer Dr Weinberg that he had neither pushed the police officer, nor had he fled. As Sült lay on the floor, the officer-in-charge had kicked him shouting, "Die, you filth!". At first, he was just left on a bed. At 4.30 a.m., Dr Eylenburg arrived but was not allowed in, on the grounds that Sült had already been taken to the Charité Hospital. In fact, Sült was not taken to the hospital until seven that evening. "Before being operated on, he had already lost one and a half litres of blood" (Prof. Lubarsch). On 2 April, at four in the morning, he passed away. Against all the rules, an autopsy was already carried out on the body that morning. Dr Klauber, who it had been agreed would perform the postmortem, found the body already autopsied. "All the innards were missing such that nothing at all could be established about the nature of the injury. To my great surprise, the bullet wound had been cut out."

### **Central Germany's protection police**

Due to the March Uprising in 1921, a department of the Düsseldorf *Schutzpolizei* (protection police, *Schupo*) approached Klostermansfeld, as they did so, the Deputy Community Leader Paul *Müller* (communist) went to meet the men, telling them that everything in the village was calm. Müller then returned, followed by the police and the commander who was in charge of the squad, to the village. Although he had explicitly warned the workers against it, shots were fired from the village, which obviously also placed Müller in

danger. That afternoon, Müller was ordered to report to the commander of the *Schupo*, which he did. At nine in the evening, he was placed in solitary confinement. In the morning of 27 March, he was found, shot dead, on the road to Leinbach, around 150 metres from the village. The prison he was supposed to have been taken to was located in the completely opposite direction. There were indications that Müller had been beaten about the head.

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On 28 March, which was Easter Monday, in Querfurt, after horrendous mistreatment, a prisoner by the name of *Peter*, the stockkeeper of the consumer association *Straube* (communist), and a third individual were shot dead.

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Medical orderly Kurt *Herzau* and a worker by the name of Gustav *Thieleke* were shot in Besenstedt, then on Easter Sunday, eight prisoners, including a farmhand named *Pawlack* from Helbra and a miner named *Weiner* as well as a man by the name of *Dietrich* were shot by Düsseldorf police officers in Bischofsrode, finally, on Easter Monday in Schraplau, six prisoners, including Martin *Deutsch*, *Müller*, *Poblentz*, and *Trautmann*, were all shot in a lime kiln.

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As they seized the Leuna works, the officers watched on as Chief Constable Heim and other SiPo men mistreated prisoners, one of whom, who had been found in possession of a pistol, was beaten so badly about the head that brain matter sprayed onto the wall. Another was forced to shoot himself. In total, nine people were killed, including *Lederer*, *Isecke*, and *Zillmann*. Martial law was not imposed in Central Germany. There has been no punishment for the crimes.

### Karl Gareis

Karl *Gareis* was a member of the Bavarian state parliament for the USPD. He had become a hated figure due to his battle against the civic defence forces and because he had uncovered an informer scandal in which a man by the name of Dobner was almost killed by students for having allegedly betraying the location of a weapons cache to the Allies. On 10 June 1921 he was shot on his way home.

*Source:* Emil Julius Gumbel: Vier Jahre politischer Mord, *Berlin-Fichtenau*, 1922 (excerpts).

## General Assembly 1929

Pursuant to Section 9 of the Statutes of the German League for Human Rights (*Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte e. V.*), all members are invited to our Annual General Assembly, which will take place on Sunday, 17 February 1929, at the Hotel Sachsenhof, Johannisplatz 1 in Leipzig.

The Annual General Assembly will be followed by a public meeting to which all friends of our cause are cordially invited.

Theme: "Human Rights and Human Economy".

Main speaker: Rudolf Goldscheid, Vienna.

Second speaker: Dr Robert Kuczynski.

## Annual Report

FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY 1928 TO 31 DECEMBER 1928

In 1928, our movement focused in particular on the struggle a) to bring peace to the world, b) against the death penalty, c) for a generous amnesty, and d) against German procedural law.

The following report presents detailed information on the activities of the German League for Human Rights. It is intended to give an account of how the League's work has pursued the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly. At this juncture, we would like to express our thanks for the camaraderie shown by all those who have worked with us. Our gratitude must also be extended to everyone who has supported the League, some by providing resources and others by providing their own labour (we now have nine volunteers working in our head office every day). The fact that this has happened on such a large scale has given us great satisfaction, though we are still a long way from reaching the limits of the financial resources our movement requires.

### I. Political section

#### A. GERMAN-POLISH UNDERSTANDING

At the 26th World Peace Congress, held in late July 1928 in Warsaw (delegates: Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, Gen. von Schoenaich, K. Großmann), a discussion took place with our Polish friends about the intensive efforts required to reach a German-Polish understanding. It was decided that, at a given moment to be determined by both sides, a series of assemblies would be held in the border regions between the two countries. The organization of the "tour" was addressed in collaboration with our Pol-

ish friends (Minister Thugut) at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in September last year. Mr Lehmann-Russbüldt and Mr Gerhart Seeger are tasked with developing a programme which shall be prepared in cooperation with our Polish friends.

The existing German-Polish Committee (chaired by Prof. Julius Wolf) provided the public with extensive information regarding the German-Polish economic negotiations. Thanks to F. W. von Oertzen, editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, in the spirit of German-Polish rapprochement, the Committee managed to get its position on the ongoing negotiations printed in major newspapers. We must continue to inform the public's understanding of the German-Polish customs war in this way.

In the border area of West Prussia, books were in circulation some parts of which mocked the Polish minority. We successfully arranged for these books to be withdrawn from circulation.

#### B. LEAGUE OF NATIONS, DISARMAMENT, ETHNIC CONFLICTS, KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT, AND THE DEMILITARIZATION OF THE RHINELAND

1. When it comes to the question of disarmament, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt has written a book on the international entanglement of the arms industry, due to be published in the near future. Russia's disarmament proposals (Volumes 1 and 2 of which were published by the *Osteuropa-Verlag* publishers) were commended at a meeting of the German Peace Cartel that we organized. The League representative emphasized, in particular, that if nations wanted to ascertain whether Russia's disarmament proposals were in fact duplicitous, they could put them to the test by accepting the proposals as the basis for a genuine process of disarmament. The speeches given by our representatives at the 26th World Peace Congress in Warsaw were in a similar vein. We would like to draw your attention to the resolutions that were adopted there. These were reprinted in nos. 6–7 of our human rights journal *Menschenrechte* on 15 September 1928. Two of the resolutions – 4: To raise awareness about the international entanglement of the arms industry and 5: To provide material support for peace societies – were tabled by the League.
2. We appealed to the signatories of the Kellogg-Briand Pact to urge the Soviet Union also to sign the Pact in Paris.
3. We appealed to the French League for Human Rights with the request that they seriously scrutinize events in China, which have the potential to significantly undermine world peace.

4. The executive board of the League addressed the issue of the demilitarization of the Rhineland at several assemblies. Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt devoted an article to the subject in *Menschenrechte*, nos. 6–7, on 15 September 1928. Professor Victor Basch also spoke on the problem at the renowned assembly of 11 May 1928, whose reverberations are well-known. We subsequently also had a very satisfactory meeting on this matter with the Prussian Minister of the Interior on 7 December 1928 (see *Menschenrechte*, no. 5, p. 15.)
5. We attempted to solve the problem of Soviet Russia in the form of a contentious evening of debate where, for the first time in years, a Menshevik and Bolshevik both spoke.

C. THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM AND TERRORISM IN OTHER COUNTRIES  
AND AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

1. With regard to events in Poland (what was dubbed “election terror”), we approached the Polish government with a petition, to which they provided a detailed response.
2. After close examination of the relevant material by an expert in Warsaw, we intervened in the Hromoda trial by submitting the material to the International League for Human Rights.
3. Regarding the question of terrorism in the Balkans, we have made proposals to the International League for Human Rights and also tabled motions at the 26th World Peace Congress in Warsaw to call for an international body to address these issues. Unfortunately, Henry Guernut and Victor Basch were unable to attend as representatives of the International League for Human Rights, due to Guernut’s ill health and Basch’s other professional commitments. In the renowned trial of Boris Stefanov, we sent a telegram to the new prime minister of Romania, Iuliu Maniu, to the Romanian League for Human Rights, and to the Regency Council.
4. We also intervened regarding the arrest of a *Vossische Zeitung* correspondent in Romania.
5. In the resolution below, the German League for Human Rights opposes the death penalty in the famous Shakhty trial in the USSR.  
“Without wanting to adopt a position on the Shakhty trial, and indeed, without wanting to engage in sabotage against the state of the workers and peasants, the German League for Human Rights requests that any death sentences not be carried out. The reason for our request is solely the conviction of the League for Human Rights that there is no place

for execution as a means of punishment in a progressive and enlightened judicial system.”

6. We have been asked on several occasions to adopt a position on the persecution of Catholics in Mexico. Although we attempted to obtain adequate material, our endeavours were unsuccessful and such material was not forthcoming, even from the bishop in Osnabrück who is leading the protest movement in Germany.
7. The cemetery desecrations gave us cause to contact leading church figures who themselves were protesting, both verbally and in writing, against this cultural disgrace. Our members also exposed the barbaric mistreatment of a Jewish trainee pilot in Staaken and made the public aware of the case.

#### D. SECRET REARMAMENT PROGRAMMES, THE REICHSWEHR, AND BATTLECRUISERS

1. We have been following the secret rearmament programmes that Germany has maintained and – as the example in Kirchhain near Kassel has proven – continues to maintain.
2. In this year, too, we have been critical of the Reich military budget.
3. We opposed the construction of the battlecruiser:
  - a) by sending a circular to all members of the Reichstag in which we drew the attention of the opposition parties to the possibility of holding a referendum on this issue in as early as March;
  - b) by, after the unfortunate government decision became public, convening a packed assembly on 24 August in Berlin’s chamber music halls, at which we adopted the resolution opposing the battlecruiser which had been printed in *Menschenrechte*, nos. 6–7 on 15 September 1928;
  - c) by supporting the referendum against the battlecruiser, without complying with the Communist parliamentary group’s request to join the organizing committee.
4. We declared our opposition stance on the Phoebus scandal by means of various publications, in particular through an inquiry from the German Peace Cartel to the parties and the Reich Chancellery regarding the clandestine rearmament programmes which had been exposed by the Phoebus affair. The Reich Chancellery recently responded that the issue of secret rearmament programmes had the full attention of the Reich government.

## E. RAISING AWARENESS ON THE THREAT OF CHEMICAL WARFARE

In response to the poisonous gas explosion in Hamburg, together with Gertrud Woker, General von Schoenaich, Heinrich Vierbücher, Otto Benthin, and Arthur Holitscher, we convened an assembly under the title "Poisonous gas alarm", which had echoes around the world, and was all the more pertinent due to the announcement that there had been an agreement between the Stolzenberg company and Gefu (a company founded by the Reichswehr). The speech given by Gertrud Woker was published in a well-known weekly.

## F. GERMAN-FRENCH SCHOOL EXCHANGE

A separate activity report was compiled on the school exchange between Germany and France conducted in 1928 (16 pages with additional photo supplement). This report can be purchased by our members for the small price of 30 pfennigs. This year, 265 school pupils from each country participated in the exchange. The German National Railway (*Reichsbahn*) granted a 50-percent discount on group travel. As in previous years, visa costs were waived. The press showed extraordinary interest in this practical endeavour toward rapprochement. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference sent two representatives to the Berlin reception.

## G. FIGHT AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY AND MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

1. At home, the fight against the death penalty has been our main focus this year. At the centre of this campaign was the exposure of the judicial murder of Polish citizen Jakubowski. Here, we succeeded in getting the case reopened. Although the retrial has not yet taken place, it is already clear that the verdict against Jakubowski will completely collapse. If his complicity can still be proven today, it will only be by chance. The verdict against Jakubowski was reached on the basis of perjurious and other statements made by a 15-year-old witness who has since died in a mental institution.

The exposure of the judicial murders and the extensive discussion in the press and in a brochure entitled "The Judicial Murder of Jakubowski", written by Rudolf Olden and Josef Bornstein and published on behalf of the German League for Human Rights by publishers Tagebuch-Verlag GmbH., resulted in the successful outcome that there is no longer a majority in favour of the death penalty in the Reichstag. We also managed to secure the continuation of Jakubowski's case in the state of Mecklenburg-Strelitz with the aim of clarifying the situation.



2. The cases of Röttcher, Küster, and Jacob also attracted our attention. As you will probably recall from the 1927 Annual Report, Röttcher was arrested for publishing an article in the *Menschheit* journal on 30 July 1927. In January/February 1928, as a result of a petition, the impact of the large-scale assembly we held in Leipzig, the protests we organized, and by making contact with individual personalities, we achieved the release of Fritz Röttcher. We were also in the fortunate position that two close friends of the League could afford to pay the 10,000 mark bail set for Röttcher by the Imperial Court of Justice. The proceedings have since been settled, as Röttcher was granted an amnesty. But the Leipzig assembly of the German League for Human Rights on 7 December 1927 had another outcome. Fritz Küster had, at this assembly, been so bold as to declare that “treason” was not a disgrace. During the course of the trial, Federal Prosecutor Jorns clearly alluded to this statement. On 21 February 1928, a long-dormant case which sought to charge Küster and the journalist Berthold Jacob with treason for publishing an article revealing illegalities in relation to the catastrophic collapse of a pontoon bridge over the River Weser during military exercises was reopened, and each man was sentenced to nine months in prison. We advocated morally and materially for both convicted men
- a) through a resolution proposed before the trial (see *Menschenrechte*, no. 3). This resolution was, at our suggestion, also adopted by the German Peace Cartel;
  - b) through a resolution proposed after the trial, which was adopted at a rally on the theme of “Political Criminals? – Political Justice!”;
  - c) through various petitions to the Foreign Office, to the Chief Prosecutor, and to the Reich Minister of Justice. As a result, Küster did not have to serve any time at all, while Berthold Jacob only had to spend a month in prison.
3. With equal determination, we adopted a position on the Becher trial and the Hoelz proceedings and, after the new Reichstag and Landtag elections, we approached the parliamentarians once again, appealing to them to put an end to all these proceedings with a new amnesty, referring, for the first time to “wartime criminals” who are still imprisoned to this day and whose amnesty we strongly advised.
4. Through these political processes, the question of the removability of German judges was raised and an issue of our *Menschenrechte* journal was dedicated to the subject. The *Deutsche Richterzeitung* magazine paid

- particular attention to this survey, while at the same time determining that the objectivity of the German League for Human Rights was irrefutable.
5. We also thoroughly examined the issue of the treason trials. In this regard, we refer to the example of the study by E. J. Gumbel *Landesverrats-Statistik* (statistics on crimes of treason) published in no. 4 of *Menschenrechte*. We also placed various articles on the subject in the daily press.
  6. Not only did we discuss the draft criminal law at a club evening on 18 December 1928, we also participated in all the reform efforts that inspired the current bill. The most recent issue of *Menschenrechte* published a fundamental critique of the current draft. Furthermore, at the beginning of next year, we plan to publish a counterproposal in the form of a brochure.
  7. We also commented on the subject of “wartime criminals” and all those who were not covered by the amnesty of 14 July 1928 – with a particular focus on the Bullerjahn case.

Indeed, on the 13 December 1928, we held an extended press conference on the Bullerjahn case, during which Dr Paul Levi addressed the case in detail.

To discuss this entire set of issues, a meeting was held with Reich Minister of Justice Dr Koch-Weser on which the following communiqué was issued: “On 18 December, Reich Minister of Justice Dr Koch-Weser received two gentlemen from the German League for Human Rights, board member Dr Oskar Cohn and the General Secretary Großmann, for a longer meeting. The two men were accompanied by member of the Reichstag Ernst Lemmer. The conversation addressed how the Reich’s power to pardon was being handled in general as well as several groups of convicted individuals who had recently been drawn to the attention of the German League for Human Rights. This group included firstly a larger number of ex-servicemen who were still in prison, because the military amnesty issued by the People’s Deputies in December 1918 had not been applied to them. Several of these convicted men had gone back to prison to continue serving their sentence after having initially been released as a result of a broader interpretation of the amnesty. Unfortunately, what came out of this conversation with the Reich Minister of Justice was the fact that the Reich Ministry of Defence held the power of pardon for these convicted men. The Reich Minister of Justice agreed with the thinking that, in some of these cases, the continuation of imprisonment may represent particu-

lar hardship. This applied, in particular, to those convicted of desertion, who had committed crimes such as theft, breaking and entering, etc. in order to survive on the run.

At the meeting, cases of treason were also referred to, which the amnesty issued in summer 1928 did not apply to either. The case of Bullerjahn, which had been widely discussed in the press in recent months, was addressed in particular detail. The representatives of the League submitted a request to the minister calling for the execution of Bullerjahn's sentence to be suspended to allow his trial to be reviewed, as the Prussian Minister of Justice had done in the case of assistant military policeman Dujardin. Another issue discussed was when the appeal for reconsideration of Bullerjahn's sentence should be submitted. In a number of other cases that were presented to the minister during the meeting, a favourable review was already in process.

Lastly, there was an exchange regarding the proposal – prompted by the Jakubowski case – to make it mandatory for any retrial of a case in favour of an already deceased convict to be held in a public main trial. The minister endorsed these ideas and promised to have the Code of Criminal Procedure amended accordingly.

Fortunately, the minister agreed to hold another meeting with representatives of the German League of Human Rights whenever further activities of the League concerning criminal matters meant there was a need for such a meeting.”

## **II. Activities of our legal team**

We reported on the activities of our legal team up until 15 April 1928 in a document entitled Overview No. 1. Along with our Annual Report, we now present all our members with Overview No. 2, which covers the ever-expanding activities of our legal team. Here we will quote some figures. Overall, in 1928, we received 2,899 requests for assistance. Of these, 1,632 were pursued. In 204 cases, advice was given, while 1,053 were rejected as unsuitable. In reporting year 1928, we achieved verifiable successes in 211 cases. By case subject areas, we processed: 1,331 clemency cases, 368 criminal matters, 139 penal matters, 40 cases of convictions being expunged, and 1,021 other cases (matters related to foreigners or the foreign legion, civil, disciplinary, or welfare matters).

In terms of welfare matters, we have recently been able to do more than usual, as a special volunteer offered their services as a researcher.

The problem of the system for criminal records and individuals with previous convictions is an area to which we devoted particular attention. At an assembly that we convened on “German prisons”, which triggered especially lively public discussion, we advocated a genuine and decisive reform of the German prison system. By means of various publications by our friends and colleagues, we repeatedly drew the public’s attention to the practical side of the problem of individuals with previous convictions. Through continuous contact with the prison service and through articles in the press, we were very active in both of these areas. We also visited several prisons. Thus, in keeping with the resolution adopted at the General Assembly on 15 June 1928, as in all areas of political life, here too, we exercised democratic control.

When it came to the problem of the stateless, we achieved understanding both among the general public, by means of radio, for example, and within the Berlin Police Headquarters and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but were also able to provide relief to many individual stateless people.

Overview No. 2 on the activities of our legal team is appended to this Annual Report.

### III. General

Membership growth since 1 January 1928: 206 members.

Public meetings: seven, with five in Berlin, one in Leipzig and one in Hamburg.

*Themes:* 28 February: The Krantz trial and lessons learned from the process | 11, 12, 13 May 1928: Elections in Europe and the peace | 9 June 1928: Poisonous gas alarm | 24 August 1928: Battlecruisers, the people’s will, and the Reich government | 4 December 1928: German prisons | In addition, we organized an armistice commemoration on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the armistice; premiere of the film *The Enemy* with Lillian Gish.

*Conferences:* Press conference on the Röttcher case | Press conference on the Jakubowski case | Press conference on the Bullerjahn case

Thirteen *club evenings*, total of 24 events in 1928. Topics: | Political theatre | My treason trial (Röttcher) | The road to fascism | Professor Friedrich Wilhelm Förster and the real world | Peace through education | An evening of political satire | The prison system and prison reform | How did German soldiers become revolutionaries? | Human rights and Soviet

Russia | Walter Rathenau and his works | Quo vadis, Europa? | The socialist defence problem | Draft criminal law and human rights

The following friends were actively involved in these assemblies as chairs, speakers, and by contributing in a variety of other ways:

R. Abramowitsch, Professor Victor Basch, Alfred Beierle, Otto Benthin, Dr Arthur Brandt, Dr Oscar Cohn, Carl Emonts, Felix Fechenbach, Dr Manfred Georg, Helmuth von Gerlach, Professor Guerlain de Guer, Henry Guilbeaux, E. I. Gumbel, Professor Martin Hobohm, Arthur Holitscher, senior civil servant Richard Joachim, Harry Graf Kessler, Dr Robert Kuczynski, Resi Langer, Leo Lania, Otto Lehmann-Russbüldt, Dr Paul Levi, Dr Walter Levinthal, Dr Theodor Liebknecht, Erich Mühsam, Pastor Alfred Dedo Müller, Willy Münzenberg, Rudolf Olden, Professor Oestreich, Karl Plättner, Fritz Röttcher, retired Major-General, honorary Dr Freiherr von Schoenaich, Police Colonel Dr Schützinger, Max Seidewitz, Ernst Toller, Irene Triesch, Heinrich Vierbücher, Professor Vulleod (Nancy), Superintendent of Schools Dr Wegscheider, Erich Weinert, Counsellor of Justice Dr Werthauer, Professor Dr Gertrud Woker, Dr Erich Zeigner, Arnold Zweig.

Further, it should be pointed out here that we assumed the patronage over the film *Sex in Chains* (see *Menschenrechte*, no. 8, 11 November 1928).

Board meetings: 23.

Letters sent: 14,138.

Total copies: 36,161.

Visits received: 1,500 (legal team only).

We published ten issues of *Menschenrechte*, of which three were special issues:

- a) The removability of judges
- b) On 11 November 1928
- c) On the draft criminal law.

We published the aforementioned brochure “The judicial murder of Jakubowski” as well as the activity report on the German-French school exchange and Overviews 1 and 2 of the activities of the legal team.

*Press:* Our cooperation with the press deserves special mention. In recent years, we worked particularly hard on increasing this cooperation. It would be true to say that the left-wing press supported our activities. Many of the individual cases taken on by the legal team were published in various newspapers. In several cases, including Jakubowski’s and Bullerjahn’s, the direct press campaigns which we conducted stirred public opinion. The

attacks from the right-wing press were particularly fierce in this reporting year. The Basch rally and the Jakubowski affair generated the biggest press response. Not only did the entire German press tackle the issue, but the international press, too, printed exhaustive coverage.

*Radio* was another channel which we used to disseminate our thinking.

*Library, archive:* Today, the collection in our political library amounts to around 4,000 volumes. We are particularly grateful that the library of our late friend Fritz Danziger has, thanks to the generosity of one of our friends, become the property of the German League for Human Rights. Today, our archive, which contains continuously updated material on 45 different current issues, is almost complete.

The activities of our working groups: As far as we have reports from our different working groups, we can report on the activities of the Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt a. M., Zwickau, and Liegnitz working groups, which, partly with the support of our legal team, partly through organizing assemblies and conferences, and, as in the case of Wiesbaden, by developing their own legal protection project, have promoted the cause of the League for Human Rights. In future, substantial attention will need to be paid to the development of the working groups. In keeping with the endeavours of the head office, the working groups, too, must step up their efforts.

In conclusion, we believe that it is fair to say that, this year once again, the activities of the German League for Human Rights has won the sympathy of the wider public and the respect of its opponents. We can state that our organization is strong and well established and that today, be it on the issue of opposing war or defending the human rights of those suffering abuse, it plays an important role in international cultural life. We appeal to our friends to support us, morally and materially, in expanding our organization to bring us closer to achieving our ultimate goal of implementing human rights!

German League for Human Rights e. V.

(previously New Fatherland League)

Head office represented by: General Secretary Kurt Großmann.

**Financial report**

for the period from 1 January 1928 to 31 December 1928

*Income*

a) Membership fees	9,880.50
b) Donations	25,895.06
c) Meetings	26.56
	35,802.12

*Expenses*

a) Carried over from 1927	76.54
b) Rent, heating, lighting	1,727.56
c) Salaries	16,054.51
d) Overheads	9,317.28
e) Propaganda	2,043.90
f) Journal	4,240.55
g) Carried over to 1929 (balance)	2,341.78
	35,802.12

The above financial statements have been audited. By means of random samples, it was established that the books were kept properly. The head of office shall be discharged from liability for the financial year.

Auditors: Ernst Naumann – Martin Faerber

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 1, 16 January 1929, pp. 1–9.*

**For German-Polish Reconciliation**

By Kurt Großmann

The Locarno Treaty which was concluded in October 1925 is not a one-sided Western-oriented agreement. Indeed, the leaders of both the German and the Polish Republics have praised the peace in the East.

We know that in Germany, progress has been made when it comes to the willingness to negotiate a German-French rapprochement, even among the right-leaning groups. For German-Polish reconciliation, however, which has stalled as a result of a five-year customs war, there has not been much good-will left. In Germany – and this truism must be expressed – there is strong sentiment against the current Polish Republic. This atmosphere has

been created by the situation in the eastern regions of Germany. Although, in accordance with Article 98 of the Versailles Treaty, the Corridor is free of any passport or visa barrier, and in no way hinders movement between East Prussia and the rest of the Republic of Germany, it does count among the imponderables that make it difficult to solve the problem.

Travel to Gdańsk, which thanks to Poland's understanding is much easier today but is nevertheless still very difficult, with movement from the border to Poland, especially in the direct of Poznań, being extraordinarily complex. The big railway lines run from the east to the west. There is no connection from the north to the south. These transport conditions certainly do not improve understanding between the two countries.

Yet such reconciliation will never be forthcoming if the German and the Polish people themselves do not demand it. Of the utmost importance, therefore, are the total of eight rallies held in the final weeks of April by the German and Polish Leagues for Human Rights advocating for German-Polish reconciliation by posing the very specific question: "Is there a threat of war between Germany and Poland?"

In Germany, with the exception of Berlin, the rallies were held in cities where nationalism still prevails today. Nationalists from the cities of Königsberg and Schneidemühl had to grudgingly accept their desperado policy being denounced in front of audiences of thousands. The German and Polish speakers underscored that there could be no German-French reconciliation, absolutely no reconciliation with the West, if this reconciliation were not to be complemented by German-Polish reconciliation.

All speakers emphasized the senselessness of the German-Polish customs war. This customs war was only being waged because small interest groups in both countries wanted it. In Poland these groups were from industry, and in Germany from agriculture. The fact that this customs war was utter nonsense is proven by the statistics. Today Poland is already meeting 43 percent of its requirements with imports from Germany again – before the customs war the corresponding figure was 48 percent. This clearly shows that trade relations are geared towards the needs of the whole.

The Polish side highlighted the minority issue as requiring a solution. Socialist parliamentarian Professor Pragler called attention to the two draft laws proposed by the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) to address this very issue which demand territorial and/or cultural autonomy for the minorities; territorial for those minorities forming one cohesive unit in Poland, and cultural autonomy for those scattered across the whole country.



It is to the credit of General von Schoenaich that he referred to the issue of the Corridor at every single meeting. The Corridor is an antinomy (an irreconcilable contradiction). The problem of the Corridor had to be solved but only by peaceful means. Besides the issue of the customs war, Ministerial Junior Assistant Secretary (*Ministerialrat*) Falkenberg in particular put the selection of government officials in the border regions forward for discussion. Anyone who did not recognize the new era could not work in the spirit of peace.

This much was made evident by the nationalists in Wrocław who tried all available means to blow up the crowded rally. It was the Prussian police force who maintained order in the end. In the Polish cities of Łódź and Kraków, workers flocked to the rallies in their thousands. And in Warsaw, for the first time, it was possible to hold a political rally in the university's auditorium before a select group.

Events in Opole were testimony to the fact that these rallies were urgently needed in order to make German-Polish relations less toxic. Polish friends who had spoken at the rallies in Germany announced to the press that the majority of the German people disapproved of the nationalists' actions. This is clear evidence of how essential the type of rally held by the League for Human Rights has proven to be.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 6, 1929, pp. 10 ff.*

### **Official Statement Submitted by the League to the Russian Ambassador**

The execution of three engineers Velichko, von Meck, and Palchinsky without judicial process by the State Political Directorate (GPU) justifiably caused quite a stir and much excitement in Germany, too. Apart from some general allegations, the motives for the step, according to an article in the Russian railway workers' newspaper *Gudok* on 25 May 1929, comprises just two substantial disclosures, which German newspapers also published. A project involving the introduction of Series A, an excessively powerful design of locomotive, and the invention of specially designed carriages in which travellers become seasick.

We cannot believe that these two charges were the true basis for this execution without judicial process. The Soviet Union is connected with the other states through a series of treaties. It is establishing cultural relations

with these countries. It is endeavouring to acquire recognition and understanding for its unique nature. It must therefore be clear to everyone why there was a different process in the case of these three men executed without trial than there was in the Shakhty Trial.

We are therefore submitting an urgent inquiry, in the name of the German League for Human Rights, to the venerable Ambassador of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics asking whether he is prepared to provide us with the true reasons for the draconian punishment of three experts of the Soviet economy and disclose the evidence of their guilt.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, nos. 7/8, 1929, p. 31.*

## Lex Besedovsky

By Kurt Großmann

In the collections of Russian documents, edicts, and laws, we came across the following decree issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Republic on 21 November 1929:

- “1. The refusal of a citizen of the USSR – an official of a state authority working abroad or a state-owned enterprise of the USSR – to return to the territory of the USSR at the behest of the state authorities, shall be seen as desertion to the camp of the enemies of the working class and the peasantry and qualified as treason.
2. Persons who refuse to return to the USSR shall be declared outside the law.
3. The declaring of an individual to be outside the law entails:
  - a) confiscation of all property of the convicted person;
  - b) execution by firing squad of the accused within 24 hours of their identification.
4. The Supreme Court of the USSR shall be responsible for all cases of this type.
5. The name of those declared outside the law shall be conveyed to all executive committees of the Soviets and the bodies of the State Political Directorate (GPU).
6. The law has retroactive effect.”

What effect must such a decree have in the European cultural world that so ruthlessly shakes the principles of humanity! But we must not forget that this is not the first time Russia has violated the principles of humanity.

The Lex Besedovsky is also shaking up the old principles of the right to asylum. And yet, on this issue, the following statement was made at an international conference of lawyers: "As evidence that the change in direction of the political struggle was in fact the reason for renouncing the ancient right to asylum, it suffices to point out that, while the politically persecuted among the working masses are chased from country to country, political emigrants from Soviet Russia get a warm reception in all bourgeois states that goes over and above existing asylum and extradition rights."

This is how the Communists talk and they are prepared to execute, on orders from above, the admittedly not terribly likable Besedovsky – yesterday's committed Communist who launches an attack on his government in *Le Matin* today – because a decree issued by Stalin suddenly declares him to be a class enemy.

The Communist Executive has thus terminated the ancient right to asylum for political refugees in an entirely one-sided manner. The Lex Besedovsky threatens political refugees who want to exercise their right to claim asylum, especially if they are desperate enough to do this in an inhospitable country, with "excommunication" and, should they be detained, execution by firing squad within 24 hours.

Thus the recently promulgated Lex Besedovsky has already caused quite some tragedy. An older Russian official who, for example, had worked for the trade mission for some time recently received the order, for unknown reasons, to return to Russia. However, the official lives in Germany with his mentally ill daughter whose condition is only tolerable when she is with her father and who he can now not take with him back to Russia.

This man, both a father and a civil servant, now wrestles with the obligations he has on the one hand towards his own daughter and on the other towards the state. Yet, the state threatens him with the most severe punishment if he does not obey!

The right to asylum is a vital matter! We would like to see it expanded so that political refugees are able to find a new home anywhere. It should be an honour for every state to throw their doors wide open to the hounded political refugee and provide them with the greatest possible degree of hospitality.

We will, however, be unable to keep any state from opposing the political activity of their guest.

We must demand that the disgraceful spectacle of Trotsky's application for political asylum never be repeated.

To claim asylum in Germany, the draft law proposed last year by the Social

Democratic Reich Minister of Justice Koch-Weser envisages certain guidelines along the lines of the laws that had already been passed in Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Switzerland, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

The law in question aims to set out the conditions under which other states can be granted legal assistance in criminal cases, and regulates proceedings as well. This will also provide uniform guidelines for the conclusion of agreements between states.

Section 3 of this law (which only applies if a so-called reciprocal agreement has been concluded with the state in question) best explains how the right to political asylum which was so bitterly opposed a century ago but ultimately recognized and upheld by all civilized countries is to be dealt with in the German view: "Extradition is not permissible if the deed that is the reason for the extradition is political or was committed in connection to a political crime by preparing, guaranteeing, covering, or defending it against said political crime.

Political crimes are punishable attacks which are directed against the existence or the security of the state, the head of the state, or a member of the government of the state, against a constitutional body, against civic rights during elections or referendums, or against good relations with foreign countries.

Extradition is permissible if, taking all circumstances into account, the crime appears particularly reprehensible."

This final clause is ambiguous and as such is highly questionable. One cannot simply extradite and hand over political refugees to hostile governments on the basis of some unverifiable claims.

Moreover, safeguards must be called for so that political refugees cannot be extradited on the pretence of criminal proceedings.

Despite all its shortcomings, this draft law cannot be compared with the Lex Besedovsky, which is quite simply a barbaric document.

It is inexplicable that Soviet Russia, which courts the sympathies of the European public and harps on about adhering to democratic principles when it comes to asylum rights, should issue such a law.

At the aforementioned conference of lawyers, complaint upon complaint – many of which were undoubtedly legitimate – was heard that the right to asylum was being disregarded in capitalist countries. Russia, however, does not allow its citizens to exercise their right of asylum even if they have fallen out with their rulers!

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 3, 1930, pp. 9ff.*

## Fact-Finding Commission for the Clarification of the Russian Question

In accordance with the resolution passed at its general assembly, the executive board of the German League for Human Rights has appointed a commission tasked with closely observing events in Russia and issuing recommendations for appropriate measures to educate the German public on the repression of human rights in that country. The commission includes Mr Paul Kelberin, Dr Paul Olberg and Dr I. Steinberg.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 4, 1930, p. 6.*

## Declaration by the League on Arrests in Yugoslavia

According to reports from Zagreb to the “German League for Human Rights”, arrests of respected intellectual figures have recently been carried out in Yugoslavia.

Among them is the well-known South Slav theatre director Dr Branko Gavella who was arrested for giving lectures at the University in Belgrade on theatre and art in Russia. He has simultaneously been removed from his post as director of the Belgrade Theatre. The editor and publisher of the only oppositional cultural-political newspaper, *Nova Literatura*, Paul Bihaly, and his wife have also been arrested. Bihaly published works by Remarque, Jack London, and Upton Sinclair. A number of editors of major Yugoslav newspapers were also arrested. These arrests are rightfully seen as a decisive attack on independent journalists who do not intend to submit to the fascist dictatorship. Consequently, today the “German League for Human Rights” sent the following telegram to the Yugoslav Prime Minister Petar Živković: “European public alarmed by arrest of Gavella, Bihaly, Prodanović and leading intellectuals of Yugoslavia. This obviously political action is incomprehensible. Request that intervention be made.”

We are told that the Association for the Protection of German Authors (*Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller*) also launched a protest action against these arrests.

These interventions led to quick success, as those arrested were released a few days after the telegrams arrived.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 7, 1930, p. 14.*

## Against Terror in Poland. Telegram to Piłsudski

The German League for Human Rights, which has been working on reconciliation between the German and Polish peoples for a decade, is extremely concerned about the actions taken against supporters of détente such as Liebermann, Pragler, and Domski. We hope that, in the interests of German-Polish rapprochement and in the spirit of the liberal history of their peoples, they will rethink their actions.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 7, 1930, p. 14.*

## Torture in Romania

This brochure, which reveals only a small proportion of the most outrageous crimes, atrocities, and iniquities committed by a state institution of the Kingdom of Romania, namely its political secret police—the “Siguranza”—against citizens that disagree with the political views of the current government, in a few instances refers to the medieval torture methods used by the Siguranza.

We ought to clarify right from the outset, however, that the Siguranza’s methods of torturing people are anything but medieval. They are modern in every respect, and, hence, are applied correspondingly systematically. A disciple of modern knowledge – a doctor – meticulously ensures that the torture is conducted in a systematic manner; the devices of torture being used are designed to leave no lasting visible marks or injuries; detailed calculations are made to determine the exact amount of time it takes before a human body can no longer endure the thousand-fold torments of being flogged with a rubber whip, or the pain of having their hair torn out, the squeezing of the fingers and hands in thumbscrews etc. without compromising, by “premature departure through death”, this civilized institution, as its supreme chief Romulus Voinescu has described it in Romania’s yellow press.

In the Middle Ages, the name for torturers was torturers, and henchmen were called henchmen. In Romania, they are called “vice consuls”.

*Source: Aus den Folterkammern Rumäniens. Dokumente und Enthüllungen über die Verbrechen der rumänischen »Siguranza«. Einleitung und zusammenfassendes Schlusswort von C. G. Costa-Foru, Generalsekretär der rumänischen Liga für Menschenrechte, Vienna: Kulturpolitischer Verlag, 1925, pp. iii ff.*

## Findings of the May Inquiry

*“The committee of inquiry set up by the ‘German League for Human Rights’ to investigate the May events, consisting of Dr Hans W. Fischer, Dr Max Hodann, retired police colonel Hans Lange, Professor Veit Valentin and, as rapporteur, Dr Heinz Kahn, presented the following final report and associated appendices to the executive committee of the ‘German League for Human Rights’”.*

### I. General

The “German League for Human Rights” expressed its belief in the necessity of a thorough investigation of the bloody events that took place in Berlin during the first few days of May 1929, through the establishment of a committee of inquiry. Already during the first few days of May, the League appealed in the press for witnesses and those affected by the May Day incidents to report their experiences to us. This request was successful because, in addition to the statements already published in the press, we now have written and face-to-face testimonials from all layers of the population. These testimonials provide an extensive body of material on the behaviour of both the police and the general public. The exact names and addresses of the people whose statements form the basis of the following report can be found in the appendix. The recorded statements and the written testimonies of the individuals concerned are available for review at the offices of the “German League for Human Rights” at any time. Copies of individual statements can be obtained from the League upon request.

The police chief (Privy councillor Mosle) thought it was necessary to issue a circular prohibiting all officers from providing any information to the inquiry committee set up by the League for Human Rights - an organization committed to upholding the constitution.

Based on the results of its investigation, the Committee is convinced that the outrage and indignation that gripped the people of Berlin in May must not be allowed to subside without those responsible being held to account. As is always the case regarding events of political, historical or social significance, the issue of assigning responsibility and guilt is especially delicate and difficult because it is seldom the case that blame can be placed on a single individual culprit. Faced with the challenge before us we must not be tempted to cut the Gordian knot in such a way that one side is absolved

of guilt leaving the whole burden of guilt on another, nor must it prevent us from discussing the question of guilt altogether.

There is no need to justify our initiative, which aims to clarify the scandal. The justification for our inquiry is self-evident when the responsible official authorities do not consider it necessary to initiate such an investigation after thirty people are killed and hundreds injured in the streets of the German capital and the government, parliament, and police offer only a few regretful phrases in response. No further justification is needed for an initiative that aims to emphatically remind parliament of its duty to the public and to awaken the public conscience, which is beginning to drift off to sleep again. Even under the imperial regime, far lesser, let us say for the moment, “failings” of the police – since equally great ones have never actually occurred, were not forgotten as quickly as the events of May 1929. Where today is the judge who could find the courage to say – like the district court director Unger in 1911, presiding over the trial for the Moabit riot: “When police officers [...] knock down a man who is calmly crossing the street with the sabre so that he could not rise again, that is not a legitimate exercise of the office. And anyone who had defended himself against this brutality, if you like with a well-aimed revolver shot, would not have acted unlawfully.”

Where today is the Berlin City Council like the progressive Social Democratic one in 1911 that at least made a sharply worded declaration in opposition to the chief of police? Today in Prussia we have a Social Democratic Minister of the Interior who is responsible for the state police.

This minister has in no way shied away from discussing responsibility for the May Day events, but has rather taken it on, with an astonishing degree of willingness in view of the accusations made against the police authorities. He introduced his speech to the State Parliament in the session called to discuss this subject with the words: “Ladies and gentlemen, the remarks we have just heard from the speaker of the Communist faction (expressing outrage at the May Day events and placing the responsibility for them on the police. Addition by the Committee), reflects a mentality which is absolutely incomprehensible and inexplicable to me.” Perhaps this mentality will become more understandable to the Minister and those who applauded him when he is presented with documentary material which, on the whole, supports the accusations of the Communist faction against the police, but which comes from a source which even the Minister cannot blame for the May Day catastrophe, and whose impartiality towards him and his party he must surely recognize.



The committee set up by the “German League for Human Rights” has come to the conclusion, on the basis of the material available to it, that the catastrophe of the first days of May 1929 was brought about by the fact that:

1. The Chief of Police of Berlin did not lift the ban on demonstrations in the city of Berlin before 1 May 1929.
2. The Communist press and the Communist Party organs had nevertheless openly and earnestly called for unarmed demonstrators to violate the existing ban on demonstrations
3. The Berlin police were unable to cope with the resulting situation and overstepped their powers, both in their management and in regard to organizations under their jurisdiction which not only in isolated cases, but almost everywhere where they were active, behaved in a thoroughly unlawful manner.

Points one and two are of a purely political nature, and it is not the intention of the Committee to enter into a discussion of the political expediency of the measures taken by both sides. It can only be pointed out here that the continuation of the ban on demonstrations was not necessary for the protection of public order. This is evidenced by the fact that the ban on demonstrations did not exist anywhere else in Germany, and nowhere, except in Berlin, did serious bloody clashes or other considerable disturbances of public order occur. Moreover, the ban was lifted by the Berlin Police President shortly after the May events, at a time when explosives were much more dangerously amassed in the population than before 1 May 1929. Yet, the ban on demonstrations was actually in place, and it was not in itself illegal, and so from a legal point of view – the political point of view will not be discussed here – it is in no way defensible that calls were made for unarmed disobedience to the ban on demonstrations.

## **II. Purpose of this memorandum**

The purpose of this memorandum is to examine whether the police have fulfilled their duty, whether their actions have been lawful and whether they have overstepped their powers. The duty of the police is to protect the people and public order. It has to maintain public peace, security and order, avert any dangers threatening the public, and make the “necessary arrangements” to this end. (§ 10 II 17 of the Prussian General Land Law.) “Necessary arrangements” refers to the principle that to combat administrative offences the police may only use those means which are strictly necessary and which are also in reasonable proportion to the evil to be

averted. In the well-known administrative law textbook by Hatscheck, the following is written as an example of this legal principle: "A lion tamer who has not installed the necessary safety equipment on the lion's cage may not be ordered by the police to cease the performances altogether, but may only be ordered to take the necessary safety measures." A parallel to the ban on the May Day demonstrations comes to mind here, but we do not want to dwell on this, since even under the conditions of the ban, the police violated the cited legal principles everywhere.

It is readily apparent that public peace, security and order were not maintained despite the fact that the police deployed extraordinary resources for this purpose. If, despite (or because of!) the deployment of the full power of the police, 33 people were killed and many hundreds more were injured in the streets of the capital, then this fact alone is proof positive that the police have not fulfilled their assigned task, and those responsible for them should be removed from their posts without any further investigation. When the response to the Vienna riots of July 1927 claimed a large number of victims, there was universal indignation towards the incompetence and abuse of power displayed by the Viennese police. The best men of Vienna stringently demanded the resignation of the police president, and it was precisely the present commander of the Berlin protection police, police colonel Heimannsberg, who drew attention in the press to the complete failure of the Viennese police with his declaration that such a thing could never happen in Berlin. It must be remembered that at that time in Vienna, given the burning of the Palace of Justice there was a most serious reason for the police to intervene.

Even without further evidence this is a clear failure of the police and grounds to demand an official investigation. Yet this demand is made absolutely indispensable by the fact that the most diverse testimonies and documents prove that the police not only failed, but also that evidence of illegal behaviour by the police is evident everywhere. This unlawful behaviour is not only evident in the misconduct of individual police officers, but also in the decrees and orders issued by the leadership.

As is well known, on 3 May a decree was issued by the police chief, which placed the city districts in which riots had taken place in the previous days under a so-called "minor state of siege". This decree alone does not in any way constitute an "arrangement" which is suitable and necessary to avert a threat of danger to the public. Among other things, the decree stipulates that no lights could be lit from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. in the rooms

facing the street. Then it literally says: “Offending apartment dwellers expose themselves to the danger that their windows will be fired upon from the street by the police.” If it seems highly dubious whether this order was appropriate at all, there is no doubt that the penalty must be described as downright homicidal.

Whether the danger to police of being shot at from unlit or lit windows was greater is a matter for a panel of street fighting experts to decide. In any case, this police order was anything but enlightened. That the mere fact of a light in a window would be just cause for any subaltern policeman to open fire is not justified by even the most expansive interpretation of police authority. This element of the police order is a blatant abuse of power and would be an injustice and an excess even in the case of *franc-tireur* war in enemy territory. But it is this idea of a *franc-tireur* war in the streets, which in some places has started to develop in to a psychosis. This hysteria has not only inspired the drafters of the order, but was apparently also present in the minds of the lower ranking officers who carried it out word for word. For example, the SPD members Bock and Wolff report to the “League for Human Rights” that open windows were blindly shot at despite the fact that no one was in the room. A Mr Laube recounts that he was sitting peacefully with his family at dinner but then as soon as he lit a paraffin lamp, his closed window was shot at.

With the degree of negligence displayed by these orders from their leadership, it can hardly be expected that the subordinate police forces deployed would display more prudence than their bosses. The myriad of eyewitness testimonies reporting excesses by police officers – which have already been published in all possible venues along with the names and addresses of the witnesses – will be supplemented in the remainder of this report by a few statements from completely impartial individuals who have offered their accounts directly to the “League for Human Rights”.

To begin, we should briefly bring to attention the generally accessible witness statements, some of which are certainly also suitable for serving as the basis for an official investigation. Such statements were, for example, read out in large numbers by the deputy Kasper in the plenary session of the State Parliament on 13 May 1929, and there is no reason to doubt the credibility of these testimonies out of hand simply because they were read out by a Communist, especially since the witnesses for the most part describe themselves as without party affiliation. Further material can be found in the pamphlet *Verdict Against the May Murderers*, published by

Red Aid Germany. The official report of a bourgeois journalist who witnessed a large part of the May “battles” can be found in issue no. 19, 1929, of the journal *Das Tagebuch*, and other eye-witness accounts by non-Communists can be found in issue no. 19, 1929, of the *Weltbühne*.

In none of the reports received by the League is there any mention of fighting by non-police officers beyond isolated stone-throwing, and the committee has not succeeded in finding any reasonably conclusive report of such fighting anywhere.

According to the expert report of the retired police colonel Lange (see appendix), which is illuminating in itself, it is inconceivable that if street fighting really had taken place, that the losses would have been exclusively on the part of the insurgents and only one police officer would have received a gunshot wound – and it is not even certain that this officer did not inflict this wound on himself in the process of removing the safety from his gun.

Even the Minister of Police did not dare to support the fairy tale spread by the press of the fourteen carabiner rifles that had supposedly shot through the hands of police officers who nevertheless remained miraculously unharmed. Yet on 6 July 1929 the *Reichsbannerzeitung* was able to run an article titled “The Bolshevik Putsch Attempts” with a report from the commander of the Berlin police, Heimannsberg, that some of those killed had faced off with the police in open combat, without citing a shred of evidence. It is still an open question, whether this kind of open fight, if such a thing really had taken place, could be considered justified self-defence in accordance with the cited statement of district court director Unger.

In the aforementioned article, Colonel Heimannsberg also claims (once again without evidence) that “quite a considerable number” of weapons of all kinds had been found in the besieged districts, a claim that is all the more dubious because the colonel refused to offer any information about the number and quality of the weapons found. This somewhat crude defence of police action is contradicted by an enormous amount of generally verifiable material, most of which has already been published, and which will only be expanded to include a number of particularly revealing examples below.

### III. Reports from eyewitnesses

Dr Richard Winners, the Berlin correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*, has given the League for Human Rights eleven typewritten pages reporting his personal observations on 1, 2 and 4 May, the details of which have all been verified by other reports received by the League. An excerpt from the report reads as follows: "12 o'clock Hermannplatz [...] The police began to attack the gatherings on a case-by-case basis as follows: A lieutenant gave orders to his men to clear the square in a certain direction. The officers rushed at those standing there and started to beat them. Those who could not run fast enough were beaten. Some people ran into the building entrances, where the officers followed them. In one case I saw a boy of about 18 get caught between four or five protection police who stood all around him and started beating him. The attacks gave the impression of being nervous, tense and not very sensible. The rubber truncheon was used without prior warning."

Dr Winners' entire report as well as all other documents and the addresses of the witnesses are available from the League.

Each of these sentences is corroborated by a whole series of other eyewitnesses. Witness Sump reported, for example, that at 1 a.m. a man was arrested at the Hermannplatz underground station and that on the way to the transport car the protection police continuously beat the man with rubber truncheons without him having given any reason to do so. The witness Hartung observed how four police officers suddenly rushed out of a car, targeting two men standing at the bus stop Große Frankfurter Strasse as well as a woman carrying a shopping bag, and beat them without further provocation. In a similar manner, Mr Cznotka saw calm passers-by beaten senseless by the police, such as a young man who was bludgeoned and then given a kick onto the police transport car. The same thing was observed by a Mr Brück at the Mosse-Ecke, i.e. not in the actual "trouble areas". The 60-year-old Mr Marx, who suffers from rheumatism, was treated particularly badly. He was waiting on a tram car to go home; suddenly 5 to 6 police officers wanted him to come down, and since he could not come down so quickly because of his condition, these five or six officers beat him, then arrested him, and he was only released after 22 hours. Now this hitherto completely unpunished man has been sentenced to a fine of 100 marks for resisting state authority, a sentence which could hardly have been avoided according to the procedural situation and according to the usual jurisprudence of the courts. After a petition for clemency was filed by the defence

lawyer assigned to Mr Marx by the “League for Human Rights”, lawyer Dr H. Kahn, which was conceivably gravely justified, the convicted man, at the instigation of another organization, appealed against the first court’s verdict, and it remains to be seen how the second court will rule.

The report by witness Winners goes on to say: “Around 4.30 pm at Landsberger Platz. Huge police presence, mounted police, large crowds of mainly curious people in the adjoining streets. [...] from time to time the police attacked with rubber truncheons [...] The crowd responds to the attacks each time with jeering and whistling. I did not observe any resistance against the police officers. The police officer who led the attacks struck me as particularly nervous.”

And again: “Friday, 3 May, [...] in the buildings of Hermann-, Prinz-Handjery-, Steinmetz- and perhaps other streets, house searches were held by police detectives accompanied by uniformed protection police. According to officers interviewed, the weapons found were, with a single exception (a modern magazine pistol), old-fashioned pistols, sidearms, etc., the number of weapons found was ridiculously small!”

Perhaps these are Colonel Heimannsberg’s so called “considerable weapons finds”.

The rest of Winner’s report is particularly revealing about the behaviour of the police: “The police were there in considerable numbers; they were divided into smaller groups in the corridors. A police captain I spoke to could not tell me of any particular finding; he just pointed out the ‘barricades’, which he told me to look at. On the corner of Prinz-Handjery-Strasse and Hermannstrasse, a ‘barricade’ had been built the previous night from an underground railway girder that had been pulled across the street. By this time, the girder had long since been moved to the side again. On the corner of Prinz-Handjery-Strasse and Falkstrasse was the other ‘barricade’, the image of which was reproduced on various occasions, made of a knocked-down advertising pillar, cobblestones and boards. This was the only traffic obstruction I saw during those days that looked remotely ‘constructed’. It was only about one meter high, so it is impossible that this ‘barricade’ could be ‘defended’.

I was just in Ziethenstrasse, almost at the corner of Hermannstrasse, and wanted to get back to Hermannstrasse, when suddenly there was shooting. There was a rush of people, the police rushed out of building entrances and immediately opened fire, but I was unable to tell where they were shooting. I was crowded into a pub on the corner of Ziethenstrasse and Hermann-

strasse. In front of the pub, on Hermannstrasse, there was an armoured car firing repeated bursts from its machine gun in the direction of Hermannplatz. The angle of inclination of the machine gun was at most 20 degrees above horizontal. The first shots I heard during those events were the shots of the machine gun. I was locked in the pub because the officers would not allow the door to be opened. However, I was able to make the following observations: An officer shoots from the corner of the street at a window on the third floor of the building at Hermannstrasse 53 and hits the window pane. Although I could not see anything either in the window or in the room, a second officer fires another shot which goes into the parapet of the window. Two more shots were fired at the same window; the impacts must still be visible today. Still there was nothing visible at the window.”

It goes on to say: “The following statement is indicative of the mood of the officials: ‘We would like to smoke out the whole nest.’ We would prefer to take a completely different approach, but we are not allowed.”

This sentiment of the police officers, which after these observations must almost be described as a civil war psychosis, is confirmed from the widest variety of sources. Another quite interesting presentation of the attitude of the police officers was offered by the Minister of the Interior himself in his speech in the State Parliament. There he said: “In any case, we can draw the satisfying conclusion from these May Days that the police have dedicated their whole being, their blood, and their lives to the present state, and have done so gladly. It has in fact gone so far that those officers who were ill in the last few days and could have quietly continue to call in sick because of the imminent heavy demands of the May Days, which of course was anticipated, not only did not continue to call in sick, but even promptly reported back in good health.”

Apart from his great devotion to duty this statement by the Minister also reveals the boundless joy of fighting—hence “gladly!” Fortunately, the officers have returned with their lives and blood quite untouched. The impression of the police’s particular enthusiasm for fighting, which can be inferred from the quoted words of the minister, was in any case shared by a large number of eyewitnesses, who later expressed the conviction that this eagerness for fighting went far beyond the necessary fulfilment of duty.

Mr Bethge reported to the League that he had the impression of a real “bloodlust” among many Schupos, an observation that should not be dismissed as a subjective value judgement, as it is confirmed by many sources. According to the observations of many witnesses, for example Mr Lewin

and the right-wing architect, Weise: the fighting zeal of the Schupo manifested itself in particularly crude and savage insults with which the officials, perhaps in order to boost their own courage, tormented the public. The fact that the police shot blindly and without any prior warning into the spectators, which has already been proven extensively with testimonies, will not be corroborated further here by more individual testimonies, as enough reports have already been published. Indeed the League already has about twenty addresses of eyewitnesses on this subject. This is the police action that has probably claimed the most lives. The case of Bruno Seidler should be described as particularly tragic, since – as in almost all other cases – an innocent person was killed:

Mr Hans Domnick provided the following testimony regarding the Bruno Seidler case: “On 1 May, at about 7.30 p.m., I exited the restaurant located at Pflugstrasse 9b. I was accompanied by Karl Bayer. In front of the front door, we met our friend Bruno Seidler, who was talking to his mother, and the forester Paul Münster from Plötzensee was also standing in front of the door. We greeted the group and then walked in the direction of Chausseestrasse. Our friend Bruno Seidler joined us immediately. In Chausseestrasse (near the burnt-down Tietz department stores) we met our friend Günther Podbielski, resident at Schwartzkopffstrasse 1. We intended to organize a gentlemen’s party on 9 May, and this meeting on 1 May was necessary because we still had some appointments to make. Since Günter P. wanted to go to see his bride, in the Triftstrasse, and invited us to walk with him, we accepted this invitation. We walked together to Triftstrasse. On the corner of Müllerstrasse we said goodbye to Günther P. and wanted to return to Pflugstrasse. On Gerichtstrasse as well as on Nettelbeckplatz, nothing was out of the ordinary, there was no barrier to be seen. We walked across Nettelbeckplatz and then continued along Gerichtstrasse. Before we crossed Pankstrasse, we heard shooting. At the sound of shooting, we quickened our pace and crossed Pankstrasse. After we had walked about thirty steps further along Gerichtstrasse, people came running up behind us. Prompted by this group of running and apparently fleeing people, we also ran with the flow in the direction of the street running underneath the railway bridge. Suddenly shots rang out behind us. Two to three steps in front of me a gentleman fell and was hit in the back of the head. Startled by this, we ran even faster, I jumped over the gentleman in desperation. A man running in front of me shouted: “Ow, ow, ow”, because he had been shot in the thigh. I then fled into a front door



in the Gerichtstrasse, about five houses away from the railway underpass. There I found that my two friends were missing. I wanted to wait for them here because I hoped they would come this way. It wasn't long before my friend Karl Bayer arrived, then my first question was: "Where is Bruno?" His counter question, "Don't you know where he is, he's not here?" In the meantime, silence had fallen, and my friend Karl Bayer ran back to the building where he had last found shelter. I waited until he came back and told me that he had not found Bruno. We then went to the restaurant Pflugstrasse 9b and assumed that Bruno was waiting for us there. We then made our way back to Gerichtstrasse after trying to get through Reinickendorfer Strasse, which was now blocked off. We got to Gerichtstrasse through a side street to search for our friend.

It was only the next day that I learned from Mrs Martha Spiesecke, my friend's aunt, that he had been killed."

The Seidler case had an almost infernal aftermath in the form of a decision issued by the pension office Versorgungsamt V, Berlin, to the representative of the surviving relatives, Mr Kahn, a lawyer, on his application for compensation. This decision states, among other things: "Your son was 24 years old and thus knew, like all adults in Berlin, as a result of the public warning issued by the police chief before 1 May 1929, that 1 May was not suitable for walking. Since it was precisely Nettelbeckplatz that was chosen by her deceased son as the destination of the walk, it must be assumed that he visited this place out of curiosity. It cannot have been unknown to him that there were crowds of people there. He had no business in the area of unrest and went there unnecessarily from his residence at Pflugstrasse 9. Your son's death was his own fault."

This decision, which is of course being appealed, is all the more astonishing as the police chief himself had written to the surviving relatives on 16 May. "I hereby confirm to you, on the basis of the investigations carried out, that your brother, the mechanic Bruno Seidler, born on 1 July 1905 in Berlin, was not killed as a participant in the barricade fights. According to the investigations, he was fatally shot when he was on his way home and got caught in a crowd of fleeing people."

Two incidents should be mentioned that show most clearly that the actions of the police often had no connection at all with police duties. According to the testimony of the law student Leschnitzer, a man riding past Alexanderplatz on a bus on 1 May shouted down: "Down with Zörgiebel!" A number of passing police officers then swung themselves onto the bus,

beat the man until he lay as if lifeless, and then left the bus without paying any further attention to the man. If the police officers had promptly arrested this man, their conduct could hardly have been criticized.

But their actual actions prove that they had completely forgone the real demands of law enforcement and were merely acting out of a desire for violence or out of pathological fear. The Meinert case is almost more extreme. This witness tried to take photographs of the riots in the street from the stairs of a shop in the basement of Linienstrasse. When police noticed this, an officer and some other policemen rushed into the shop and tried to seize the photographic equipment. When on this occasion they did not succeed, they mistreated Meinert severely and even took the opportunity to beat a small child.

Such blatant excesses were probably only perpetrated by younger, inexperienced men. But why were such officers used for this challenging task in the first place? This question is worthy of a thorough investigation by an appointed official authority. For our part, we can only point to the testimony of the newspaper editor, Karl Vetter, who received a reliable confirmation from regular policemen and even from police officials that young officers from out of town were used in the "fights". This fact, and the absolutely unsuitable, military education of the officers – to which Police Colonel (ret.) Lange referred in issue No. 438 of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (see Annex I) – should be the key focus of the investigation into the general grievances against the police. Only then can an investigations of individual violations of the law begin.

#### IV. The Committee's Demand

From all the available accounts provided by witnesses of the catastrophic events of the first days of May, it is clear that the police have miserably failed to carry out their duty. This was by no means an easy assignment. But in fact, they not only failed, but in addition, they combatted the petty unlawfulness of the public with means grossly disproportionate to their objective. By doing so they have wholly abandoned the basic legal principles governing the role of the police within the state.

Finally, not just in a few isolated cases, but in all places where police actions have taken place, the police force indulged in attacks which meet the legal criteria for abuse of official authority and other official offences. The police administration itself took measures which cannot be reconciled from any angle with the objective of a police force which is integrated into the state as a whole, and which were indeed in part illegal.

This catastrophe of police violence, all too quickly forgotten by those whose lives and property have not been affected, must not be allowed to fade from public memory until a serious investigation has been opened by an official body which has the power to atone and to make amends. Such a body is not the police commissioner, since he is the accused; such a body is not the Minister of the Interior, since he has declared his solidarity with the police in his speech to parliament. The Parliament itself must conduct an investigation, and it has the power to do so by establishing a parliamentary committee of inquiry. We would like to refer to the article on the May unrest by Professor Dr Hugo Sinzheimer in Frankfurt am Main in issue 5 of *Justiz* ("Justice"), in which the author, himself a Social Democrat and former chief of police, expresses his astonishment that the police have not yet conducted a thorough investigation into the accusations made against the police authorities, and in which he also expresses the expectation that the State Parliament will set the facts straight by setting up a committee of inquiry. Professor Sinzheimer believes that this is the only way we can establish the objective truth. A parliament which would refuse for party-political reasons to investigate who was responsible for the death of 33 peaceful citizens and the injury of over one hundred more, would utterly undermine the people's trust in that government. Just as the trust in the police has been thoroughly lost as a result of their actions in May 1929, and in the minister by his reckless cover-up of these acts.

*List of names and addresses of the witnesses*

Arndt, Hermann, Berlin N 54, Lothringer Strasse 75 | Bayer, Berlin N 4, Schwartzkopffstrasse 20 | Beimowitz, Sarah, Berlin C 54, Grenadierstrasse 2 | Berger, Erich, Treptow, Bochéstrasse 37 | Bethge, E. H., Berlin NO 43, Jostystrasse 10 | Bock, Helmuth, Neukölln, Weichselstrasse 11 | Brauer, Fritz, Berlin-Buckow, Chausseestrasse 36 | Cznottka, Paul, Berlin-Mahlsdorf, Wachholderheide 10 | Domnik, Hans, Berlin, Pflugstrasse 17 | Dumann, August, Berlin, Gerichtstrasse 32 | Engel, August, Berlin N 31, Ackerstrasse 45 | Fürstenberg, Erich, Reichswehrmann, Berlin N 65, Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 7 | Gutzmer, Karl, Berlin-Neukölln, Schillerpromenade 8 | Hartung, Alfred, Berlin O 27, Paul-Singer-Strasse 11 | Hausmann, Arno, Potsdam, Kietzstrasse 27 | Hedrich, Hans, Neukölln, Kopfstrasse 56 | Hufenreuther, Berlin C 54, Grenadierstrasse 2 | Janik, A., Berlin O, Zorndorfer Strasse 34, Schlossaufseher | Kasimir, Klara, Neukölln, Einhornstrasse 25 | Kasper, Hans, Berlin N 4, Chausseestrasse 48 | Kowalewski, Elisabeth, Berlin N 54, Ackerstrasse 35 | Küsell, Werner, stud. rer. pol., Berlin N 20, Drontheimer Strasse 40 | Laube, Bruno, Berlin N 65, Kösliner Strasse 6 | Lewin, August, Schlossermeister, Berlin N 37, Christinenstrasse 10 | Loibersbeck, Samuel und Erich, Berlin-Neukölln, Wipperstrasse 7 |

Marx, Johann, Berlin-Neukölln, Siegfriedstrasse 30 | Meinert, Arthur, Berlin NO 27, Holzmarktstrasse 8 | Meisel, Richard, Berlin C 54, Grenadierstrasse 2 | Niegemann, Henk, Berlin-Lichterfelde-West, Tulpenstrasse 36 | Rau, Käthe, Berlin N 65, Reinickendorfer Strasse 26 | Rauer, Fritz, Berlin-Neukölln, Donaustrasse 12 | Röthel, Hans, Berlin, Wißmannstrasse 17 | Scherwat, Berlin-Neukölln, Einhornstrasse 7 | Seidler, Paul, Berlin-Weißensee, Amalienstrasse 25a | Sump, Richard, Berlin SW 29, Solmsstrasse 40 | Teuber, Franz und Kurt, Berlin-Neukölln, Nogatstrasse 1 | Weise, Kurt, Regierungsbaumeister a. D., Berlin NW 21, Bochumer Strasse 12 | Wiencke, Hans, Berlin-Schöneberg, Hauptstrasse 101 | Wolff, Margot, Berlin S 59, Schinkelstrasse 12.

Source: Die Menschenrechte, nos. 9/10, 1929, pp. 1–9.

## Arthur Holitscher at 60. The Man with the Eyes

By Kurt Tucholsky

At the time, I was not a Paris greenhorn any more – I was already able to distinguish the left bank of the Seine from the right one... I could do that, at least. That is when he came to Paris. I will never forget this. Because I was actually permitted to walk right next to him, while he gazed – he gazed, seemingly unintentionally, he made nothing of it, and at least did not speak of the fact that he was ceaselessly absorbing, observing, registering, labouring. And then I read his *Narrenbaedeker. Aufzeichnungen aus Paris und London* (1925) – and felt deeply embarrassed. After all, I had seen the exact same things as him when we were in Paris – but I had seen nothing at all. He had seen – indeed, virtually soaked up – everything there was.

Much could be said about Holitscher the artist; but we are not an aesthetic society. Something astonishing can be said about Holitscher the fighter:

That this man is experiencing a remarkable sophistication in old age, a second youth – similar to, say, Fontane, only completely different. In the case of the latter, the artistic branch kept sprouting new shoots, and he gifted us with golden fruits. Holitscher, who (seemingly) lived only for the unbiased arts, now, as a seasoned man, is beginning to do what others retire from when they reach his age: to fight.

I believe that we can all learn something from him.

I consider his journalistic skills to be extraordinary. His technical work is admirable, the way that he approaches the unknown life, how he hunts it down and brings it home: namely, he brings it home alive, which, as is

widely known, is extremely difficult. Most of us who are lucky enough to make any catch at all usually cannot keep it alive on our way home. His books and his reports seem as if they have come to life.

He harbours a peculiar, almost bitter sentiment towards the world's injustice. At times, one might think that he takes pleasure in detecting it, he has anticipated it, he is about to launch onto the attack – and yes, indeed! There it is. Grimily smiling, he holds it up against the light. Just what he expected.

This active pessimism has produced a great deal of good – based, as it is, on “the ardour of justice that flows through his heart”.

He knows where in the world it moves – and that is where he goes, that is where he can always be found. What is so striking and impressive about Holitscher's unabating anticipation of injustice is his defiant optimism: things can get better, things must get better, things ought to get better. If only we do our work! – he does.

His autobiographical volumes contain invaluable passages on how to make sense of these times; what he recounts as personal experience is ensanguined – the past years are so full of pain... And yet, it is a pain well-spent, a pain that has today become activated.

The German League for Human Rights is indebted to the 60-years-old Arthur Holitscher for so much good he has done – for that, we thank him. He has lived through so many hypocritical birthday parties, flag consecrations, mass inebriations and brouhaha – that is not how we want to celebrate him. We would like to do something else.

We want to promise him that we will continue to honour him through our work.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, nos. 9/10, 1929, pp. 22 ff.*

## Obituary of Paul Levi

By Walter Loeb

*Paul Levi was a member of the "German League for Human Rights" beginning in 1922 and also served as a member of its board for some time. He represented the League in numerous court cases in which its members were involved. Levi was always there for us and frequently supported our cause in words and in deeds. Most recently, he led the "Bullerjahn" trial together with Dr Oskar Cohn.<sup>1</sup>*

*The editors*

Whom should we commemorate? The man, politician, writer, lawyer, artist or friend? This question itself speaks to the versatility of this rare individual, whose whole being was rooted in a faith in the masses and their sound instincts. What was most peculiar about him was that despite being a true maverick, who claimed for himself all the liberties of the individualist, he nevertheless lived among the masses in such a way that he was able to fully grasp the natures of the rugged people of mountainous Saxony just as well as those of turbulent Central Germany.

He rejoiced in the masses and he lived through them. They were the basis of his very existence; and the necessity of organizing this basis was his reason for always remaining in the party, even when he thought that he could no longer bear it.

Certainly, he was a sharp critic – by analogy with doctors, more of an analyst and diagnostician than a surgeon and specialist. Yet the weaknesses which clung to him were aggravated many times over by the fact that the administrative authorities recognized only his faults and denounced him, rather than seeing the overall value of this man for political life.

The very fact of his successes in the struggle for legal justice should have placed him in a different category.

Here was a defence lawyer of a special calibre. There is no other word than "noble" to describe him – noble in the broadest sense of the word, completely imbued with the high moral standing that law demands. If the judges were petty and contemptible, prejudiced and ill-disposed, he usually made them rise to a higher level. If that did not succeed, he used his sharpest

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: the case of Walter Bullerjahn, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison for treason on the basis of dubious hearsay-evidence. [www.naumburg-geschichte.de/dokumente/derfallbullerjahn.htm](http://www.naumburg-geschichte.de/dokumente/derfallbullerjahn.htm).

weapon: he no longer participated in the trial. Instead, he affirmed his distrust of the court, he stepped down or simply did not speak another word. – This high moral standard, which was inherent in his actions, was also recognized by judges who, although striving for justice, nevertheless have a sense of dignity. Such was his sense of justice– he did not defend anyone whose innocence he was not convinced of or whose deed did not appear to him to be worth defending. He did not take on any case that he considered hopeless; indeed, he defended even those cases where he could help someone who seemed to him personally unsympathetic but whose rights had been violated. He was always personally afflicted, because his inner life was built on integrity and justice. He was truly “the lawyer of Justice”.

That is how we knew him, that is how we loved him, that is how his friends and companions had to be – and that is how he suddenly left us alone. Truly, he had provided for everything, he had thought of everyone, but he did not believe that he would die, and this is why it had suddenly become so empty, so terribly empty in this world that Sunday morning.

One of his constituents asked me: “Where are we going to go now? Until now, we always knew that someone was there.” I could not answer. I did not know myself, and I still do not know today, almost five weeks after his death.

That is the horrible thing. Here is a gap that no one else can fill, here is a wound that time cannot heal. Nevertheless, we must go on. To go on in his spirit means to give the humblest thanks that we can give: gratitude that we were allowed to call this man our friend and our comrade in spirit.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 3, 1930, pp. 10 ff.*

### **Mobilization Against Section 218**

On the initiative of the German League for Human Rights, representatives of well-known denominational, trade union, and humanitarian organizations recently assembled to discuss a joint approach to the abolition of Section 218 of the Criminal Code that was in force. During the discussion, there was a clear consensus among those present regarding the necessity of such a struggle. In order to perform this task, those gathered elected a committee comprising Dr Créde, Grete Eichel, Marie Juchacz, Dr Leo Klauber, Dr Helene Stöcker, and privy councillor Julius Wolf.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 3, 1930.*

## Appeal from the League Against the Confiscation of Paintings by George Grosz

Recently, at the behest of the Berlin courts, artworks by George Grosz have been confiscated from an exhibition by the Berlin chief of police. Some of these works were the subject of a recent blasphemy trial. The presiding court justified its acquittal in the case with the following sentences: "Art is free! In the interest of culture, no straitjacket should be put upon it. Art is a higher cultural good than the sensibilities of those who misconstrue it."

Of course, the German League for Human Rights does not condone merely any kind of violation of religious sentiment. Rather, we point out that the exhibition, through a clear statement of its artistic intentions, is consciously aimed at an ideologically insular group and is, therefore, not capable of offending the sentiments of those outsiders who think differently.

If, by the same token, the people who are behind this exhibition demanded the same degree of protection for their feelings in the case of opposing forms of representations, the spread of the practices adopted here would lead to an intolerable infringement of the right to freedom of expression guaranteed in Article 118 of the Reich Constitution. Hence, the German League for Human Rights strongly protests against the confiscation of these works!

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 3, 1930, pp. 20ff.*

## Appeal Against Antisemitism

The current difficult economic situation is being exploited by irresponsible elements in order to unleash a wave of shameless antisemitic agitation. This onslaught has recently developed to such an extent that open pogroms are being threatened. All decent people must reject in the strongest possible terms any attempt to blame a particular stratum of the German people for the economic depression. Every citizen is at liberty to express his views freely and openly, but the demagoguery with which, to take an example, the National Socialist press operates day after day is a cultural disgrace of the first order. The undersigned are speaking out against this cultural disgrace because they do not wish to become complicit in this infamous denigration of the Jews. They draw attention to the rights guaranteed to every



citizen under the Reich Constitution and call upon the government to protect the attacked people in accordance with the Reich Constitution. They also appeal to the entire German people to turn away from this anti-cultural, antisemitic agitation.

Germany today is the only major country where this kind of antisemitism still finds any footing at all. Both in Bolshevik Russia and in Fascist Italy, not to mention France, England or America, all violence against Jews is most resolutely rejected. Only recently the Italian Prime Minister Mussolini declared that he rejected antisemitism within the Fascist movement and affirmed that he did not identify himself in any way with the National Socialist movement in Germany. A minority working with the worst methods of terror must not be allowed to degrade the German people below the level of the other great peoples. The undersigned men and women who do themselves not belong to the Jewish religious community, therefore wish to appeal against this cultural disgrace of antisemitism.

Source: *Die Menschenrechte*, no. 7, 1930, p. 8.

### **"Let heads roll!"**

By Emil Julius Gumbel

In memory of Karl Gareis, member of the Bavarian Diet under the aegis of Kahr, *Pöbner*, and Frick, murdered by the Feme in Munich on 9 June 1921. On 25 September 1930, Hitler appeared as a witness in a trial, at the [...] *Reichsgericht* (Reich Imperial Court), against two officers charged with conspiracy to commit treason. In his statement, he swore under oath that the military training of the *Sturmabteilungen* (Storm Divisions, SA) carried out in 1923 was done upon official instruction; he carried out his putsch under duress; the National Socialist movement was now entirely legal; once the movement triumphs, he will establish a new state court and "heads will roll" perfectly legally.

In a similar vein, six months later, on 8 May 1931, Hitler was called as a witness again, this time in the Edenpalast trial for breach of the peace, which sought to bring several Hitler supporters to justice for the attack on the popular Eden Dance Hall. In his statement, he melodramatically declared: "We must be judged according to the basic principles that we are 'firmly within the bounds of legality'." However, with regards to the arming of

the *Sturmabteilungen*, which he referred to as "Gymnastic and Sports Divisions", his statements were ambiguous this time, too. On the one hand, "the organization is actually unarmed. If I were ever to get wind of there being weapons anywhere, I would turn them over to the authorities". On the other hand, if the question of carrying weapons were to be raised here, Hitler would only be able to testify *in camera*, as this would touch on the issue of national defence.

Hitler's repeated insinuation that it was not him that was responsible for the arming and military training of the SA, but rather other bodies, by which he could only mean the Reichswehr, is credible. But this is the only credible statement in his entire testimony. As early as 1922, indeed even on the eve of his putsch on 9 November 1923, he continued to make these very same assertions of legality.

This particular "workers' movement" is in fact an excellent guard for the protection of capital. There is no chance of the utopian economy of the Third Reich breaking the "*Zinsknechtschaft*" ("interest slavery") any time soon. Indeed, the only tangible thing – and this is already clear today – is the terror that the bearers of this heresy perpetrate.

This terror is by no means new. Political murders were already rife during the years of inflation from 1919 to 1923. It suffices to highlight the most recognizable names of Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Eisner, Gareis, Erzberger, and Rathenau.

There is no stronger criterion for the legality of a movement than its relationship with the law. And since the sanctity of human life is the supreme law of every society, at least in times of peace, a movement's attitude to human life is the clearest criterion of its legality.

We have therefore compiled a list, presented below, of individuals who have been killed by right-wing extremists in recent years. Of the many injured and wounded, we have only listed those that so suffered in connection to murders. These deeds range from the fixed legal concept of murder to the less clearly defined crimes of manslaughter, brawling, and negligent and premeditated bodily harm with a fatal outcome, from a provoked attack to the subjective belief in self-defence.

Clashes between Communists and their opponents also resulted in serious injury and death. The National Socialists are well armed, uniformed, disciplined, and have organized themselves into military units. The Communists, on the other hand, are poorly armed and their military association has been disbanded. National Socialists, much like Communists, act when

agitated. But, in addition to this, the National Socialists also adhere to a well-considered slogan: "Let heads roll!" This results in well-prepared assassination attempts, while the acts of the Communists often take the form of tumultuous defensive reactions to the fascist terror, with no evidence at all of murders in the legal sense of the word.

The actions of the National Socialists are in line with the goals and theories of the movement, a movement which, in part due to its lack of political programme, deems itself superior, denying not only that its opponents are members of this nation, but even that they are members of the human race. Given that the Marxists were described as no more than "subhuman" in the National "Socialist" propaganda, snuffing out such a worthless life is not an ethical flaw, but quite the contrary: a national achievement. For all these reasons, the actions of the National Socialists are typical of the movement and systematic in character, and those of the Communists are untypical and sporadic. And this is exactly why we must also mention the latter and condemn them as harmful to the socialist movement.

The courts treated the National Socialists with leniency, while the Communists were punished with the full weight of the law. This is already reflected in the indictment. If cases against the National Socialists even get as far as prosecution, the indictment reads criminally negligent manslaughter or premeditated bodily harm with a fatal outcome, while for the Communists, it reads manslaughter or murder. Of the many murders committed by the National Socialists, the following depicts but a fragment. We have only included properly authenticated cases with the aim of juxtaposing, especially for those on the outside, the official orders of the party leadership with the actions of those who see Hitler as the second coming of Christ.

1 April 1924: In Grasdorf near Hanover, the inaugural meeting of the *Stahlhelm* (lit. "Steel Helmet")<sup>1</sup> was held. The area's *Stahlhelm* members marched to the meeting in military formation, armed with rubber truncheons, revolvers, knives, and rapiers. At the entrance of the venue, fights with workers broke out, resulting in 17-year-old Willi Schulze being stabbed in the throat with a knife by one of the *Stahlhelm* members. Schulze died the next day.

On 30 April 1926: In the night from *Fastnacht* (carnival) Saturday to Sunday a group of National Socialists attacked and manhandled a worker

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's Note: A right-wing organization of German veterans of the First World War.

by the name of Philipp Käufer from Weingarten, near Kaiserslautern. They were fined 100 Reichsmarks. The appeal was due to be heard before the criminal court in Lermersheim on 4 May. Witnesses for the prosecution were to be 19-year-old mason Karl Ludwig Bauder from Oberlustadt, and his friend of the same age, Becker. To ward off such terror, the plan was to establish a local group of the *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold*<sup>2</sup> on 2 May. In the night from 30 April to 1 May, at around half past midnight, 20 National Socialists under the command of assistant teacher J. Schmidt met Bauder and Korpet as they were cycling home from Freimersheim to Freisbach. The cry rang out: “Now we’ve got you!” Schmidt fired three shots at Bauder from an army revolver. The bullets passed through the wall of Bauder’s stomach and embedded themselves in his spine. Alerted by the commotion, two other cyclists, including Becker, cycled to Freisbach to try and get help. Becker returned with a stretcher and some pillows. The National Socialists closed off the road, beat Becker with a cudgel, and prevented help from reaching Bauder, with the words: “The enemy should rather die in a ditch.” By the time help arrived, Bauder had bled to death. The day after the murder, a teacher by the name of Schmidt asked the children in his class to don black, white, and red ribbons.

28 June 1926: Having attended a district SPD meeting, three workers – Adolf Wilke, Wenzig, and Reichsbanner member Felix Doktor – arrived in Breslau at a late hour. On the corner of Augustastraße and Yorkstraße, the group encountered two Stahlhelm members, Schön and Paul Magiera. The latter was wearing his Stahlhelm uniform. Wilke said: “This is Germany’s future!” Magiera, a frail, anxious man who was injured in the war, called out to them; the workers turned round, and Magiera fired on the group from 15 metres’ distance. Doktor was shot in the chest and collapsed, dead. Magiera, charged with manslaughter, claimed only to have fired as a deterrent. The extended criminal court (District Court, presided over by: Sperlich, Chief Public Prosecutor: Schäfer) declared that the victim was largely to blame for the incident, threw out the incriminating statements of the two witnesses, granted the accused’s putative self-defence, and acquitted him on 4 December 1928.

The main regional daily *Schlesische Volkszeitung* called this acquittal a *carte blanche* for the *Stahlhelm* members. The Reichsgericht upheld the acquittal on 24 June 1927.

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<sup>2</sup> Translator’s Note: Multiparty organization formed to defend parliamentary democracy from extremism.

### Justice to the right and the left

28 July 1926: At a *Stahlhelm* meeting in Düsseldorf, those in attendance agreed to go on an “unofficial expedition to the workers’ district” where the cooperative society is located. Fifty *Stahlhelm* men, armed with sticks, screwdrivers, knives, pistols, and rubber hoses, among them Christian Vobis, who had already been convicted of theft eight times, and his brother Joseph, who had been in care and had been convicted of involuntary manslaughter, established “order” by attacking working-class passers-by. Peter Erdmann, an employee of the cooperative society and member of the *Reichsbanner*, was knocked to the ground with a gnarled stick wielded by a *Stahlhelm* member by the name of Bieber, and was stabbed from behind by Joseph Vobis, receiving three knife wounds which proved fatal. Two workers by the names of Ling and Blatt were seriously injured by Christian Vobis, and a visiting nurse called Pfannkuch was beaten.

7 March 1928: In a public house in Prenzlau, a fight broke out between a dentist called Müller and two Communists named Ziebell and Gielow. Müller pulled a revolver and fired four shots. Ziebell received a shot to the heart and dropped dead, Gielow received three shots and died in hospital.

### Heil Hitler!

17 November 1929: On the corner of Gollnowstraße and Georgenkirchstraße in Berlin, a group of National Socialists attacked a young Communist worker by the name of Böhm. Stabbed in the head and the heart area, Böhm dropped dead.

29 December 1929: In the night from 29 to 30 December, National Socialists Born, Rieck, Senkbeil, Kobierowski, Löwe, Döring, and Vernicke raided a Communist haunt called the Hellmuth tavern on Berlin’s Görlicher Straße. Worker Walter Neumann was shot in the lung, and four others were seriously wounded. Neumann died four days later in the city’s Urban Hospital.

On 3 June 1930, the assize court sentenced Born, Rieck, and Senkbeil each to three years, six months, and one day imprisonment for a serious breach of the peace attended with bodily harm with a fatal outcome and for unauthorized possession of a weapon. Kobierowski, Löwe, and Döring each received a four-month suspended sentence, whereas Vernicke was acquitted.

After the verdict was passed, there were loud protests in the court room. The defendants and the National Socialists in the court audience demonstrated with chants of “Heil Hitler!”

16 May 1930: At least 30 members of the National Socialist *Sturmabteilungen* (divisions IV and IX) gathered in the *zur Ameise* bar on Schöneberg Hauptstraße. Some of the group spilled out onto the street. Five people walked past the group, without moving aside, among them a newsagent by the name of Heimbürger, who is a man of Jewish appearance. "To us they're Communists, go on, let him have it!" Heimbürger ran across the street, stumbled and fell, the 21-year-old postal assistant Egon Westenberger stabbed him with a dagger, 4 cm wide and 15 cm long. By the time Heimbürger was up on his feet again, a postal clerk called Ilgner, a former uniformed policeman (member of the *Schutzpolizei*) by the name of Timpe, and several other National Socialists, Niese, Dietrich, Burchardt, and Winkler, all young men, had followed him, caught up with him, and beaten him with rubber batons. Heimbürger fled to the Rathauseck bar, but was subsequently dragged out and flogged and kicked to death.

Westenberger boasted to his girlfriend: "I thrust a dagger into the body of a Communist. But it serves them right, they annoyed me for long enough." In court, Timpe stated: "I definitely also hit the man in the head."

### "Dum-dum bullets"

16 May 1930: At Naugarder Straße 20, Berlin, a group of National Socialists were escorting their *Gruppenführer* (lit. group leader) home. On the corner of Zelterstraße, at around 1 in the morning, they came across 18 members of a workers' sports club returning from an evening playing cards. A brawl broke out. A National Socialist by the name of Domke, a 19-year-old apprentice tailor Edgar Meier, and a decorator of the same age, Heinz Prüfke fired shots. Communists Erich Schumann and Albert Selenowski dropped dead. The hidden ammunition and pistols used by the two murderers were discovered during a house search. A cross had been sawn into the tip of the bullet's steel casing.

6 January 1931: In Buerdissen near Braunschweig, a worker by the name of Reinicke was on his way home when he was attacked and shot dead by three National Socialists.

18 January 1931: At a party celebrating German Empire Day in Rewahl (Margraviate of Brandenburg), serious clashes broke out between workers and National Socialists. A farmer by the name of G. Schwarz stabbed a worker called Willi Laabs, whose brother was also seriously wounded after being stabbed in the back.

21 January 1931: In Pallanzerstraße in the Cologne suburb of Sülz, Communists were jostled into the street by a group of National Socialists passing by. The Communists fought back. The leader of the National Socialist group gave the order to open fire. Mechanic Wilhelm Höschel was killed by a shot to the heart.

24 January 1931: A group of National Socialists forced their way into a Communist bar in Stralsund. During the scuffle that subsequently broke out, a Communist worker by the name of Demblow was injured by multiple stab wounds, and later died in hospital.

25 January 1931: In Grebenstein near Kassel, a ruckus ensued between groups of National Socialists and Communists. A young Communist called Mohnsam was thrown through a window onto the street. On 17 March, he, too, died from the injuries he sustained. Mohnsam was originally supposed to serve as a defendant in the trial of those involved in the riot.

#### **The unarmed *Sturmabteilungen*: Snowballs and bullets**

23 February 1931: The National Socialists held a torchlit procession in Zittau. The leadership of the protection cartel, the *Reichsbanner*, and the SPD sent word round that their members should gather to protect the workers' institutions but should stay away from the rally. The Communists staged a counter-demonstration resulting in clashes with the police.

As 200 National Socialists marched past the *Volksbuchhandlung* book shop, the Communists pelted them with snowballs and the National Socialists hit back with burning torches. Reichsbanner member Emil Kalbaß, who had not participated in the snowball throwing, was first hit by a burning torch. At the same time, two shots were fired from among the marching lines of National Socialists. Emil Kalbaß then received a fatal shot to the chest and a young man by the name of Walter Scholze was shot in the back. The daily National Socialist newspaper *Freiheitskampf* reported the incident under the headline "Red Murder in Zittau".

26 June 1931: *Reichsbanner* member Reinhold Pammler of Hanover had long received threats from the National Socialists. On this occasion, while walking home he was attacked by a group of 30 National Socialists who beat him about the head with a mason's hammer and kicked him in the stomach, causing damage to the abdomen. After three weeks in hospital, he succumbed to his injuries.

The political murders we have described above represent just a small part of the far more extensive number committed. Even the frequency of

the murders is far higher than depicted. On top of this are the hundreds of people who receive injuries, both minor and severe, the destruction of meeting places, the daily brawls and beatings, the threats that we all suffer from.

The following is a chronological summary of these criminal acts:

1924	3
1925	3
1926	4
1927	5
1928	6
1929	4
1930	20
First half 1931	18
TOTAL	63

The development of these numbers runs more or less parallel with the rise of the National Socialist movement, very slowly from 1924 to 1929, then by leaps and bounds. It is in these bloody acts that fascism reveals its true colours. It shows the German people the methods it would use should it come to power.

Republicans! Compare Hitler’s pledges with the works of his followers!

Down with the fascists, with their outspoken supporters, and with their hidden friends!

If you want to prevent fascism, then join the German League for Human Rights in our fight against this system of murder.

The German League for Human Rights fights: against war – for reconciliation between all nations – against the bloody international armaments industry – for general and complete disarmament – against incitement of racial hatred – for equality of all people – against judicial murder and miscarriages of justice – for justice and humanity and for a minimum level of economic subsistence for all.

Printed matter and literature available from our office at:

Berlin N 24, Monbijouplatz 10, Eing. I/3 Tr.

*Source:* “Laßt Köpfe rollen”. Faschistische Morde 1924–1931. Im Auftrage der Deutschen Liga für Menschenrechte e. V. dargestellt von E. J. Gumbel. *Commissioned by the German League for Human Rights. Account written by E. J. Gumbel.*



## A Bust of Rosa Luxemburg

15 January 1931 marks the twelfth anniversary of the death of Rosa Luxemburg, a woman whose scholarly and political greatness as well as historical significance are today increasingly widely recognized, and whose kind personality lives on in the love and veneration from her friends. On 5 March 1931, we will commemorate her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

So far, no three-dimensionally accurate and life-size bust portrait exists of Rosa Luxemburg. To anyone who loves and admires Rosa Luxemburg both as the fighter and the human being that she was, it should thus be great news to learn that the sculptor Karl Lühnsdorf in Brandenburg-on-Havel, a longstanding member of ours, has crafted precisely such a bust portrait.

The original has been put on display in the offices of the GLHR (at Monbijouplatz) and can be viewed there.

*Source: Die Menschenrechte, no. 9, 1929, p. 25.*