

Jaap van Ginneken

## Kurt Baschwitz

A Pioneer of  
Communication  
Studies and Social  
Psychology

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Press

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*Jaap van Ginneken*

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'We want to hope, that practical politics will also acknowledge [...] the rediscovery of the overwhelmingly large majority of *decent* people'.

(Final sentence of Kurt Baschwitz's key work *Du und die Masse*,  
published in the fateful year 1938)



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Most personal pictures have apparently been taken by Baschwitz and his immediate relatives. They were loaned or given to the author and the Baschwitz archives at the Special Collections Department of the Amsterdam University Library to further his legacy through publications such as these. A few more general pictures and other illustrations on topical affairs have been selected due to being free of copyright, and in the public domain.



## Preface

Kurt Baschwitz was one of the founders of the social science disciplines of mass communication and mass psychology – not only in The Netherlands, but also on the European continent as a whole. He had been a prominent journalist under the Weimar Republic. Then the Nazis stamped him an ethnic Jew and forced him to flee to Amsterdam in The Netherlands, where he became an early ‘private lecturer’ in newspaper studies. He narrowly escaped deportation to the east under the occupation, and then survived the war in hiding.

Immediately after Liberation, he helped found a new political and social science faculty and a multi-faceted Press Institute within it, which introduced journalist education and media research to the country. But he also reached out to colleagues (first to Germanophones and then others) to build a first international society for (what they initially called) ‘publicistics’ – with near-annual international conferences during the early fifties.

When similar Francophone networks and UNESCO in Paris were considering founding the International Association for Mass Communication Research IAMCR, he (and his immediate successor) offered the Amsterdam Press Institute as its secretariat, his trilingual/English-language *Gazette* as its scholarly journal, and to add the bulletin of the new association as its supplement. This made Amsterdam university one of the strongest clusters for the new discipline of Communication and Media anywhere. (Today No. 2 in the latest QS world university rankings by subject).

From the late 1970s onwards, it received a further boost from the appointment of British Denis McQuail as the main professor. McQuail further reinforced the links with the Anglo-American worlds, and co-founded the *European Journal of Communication*. His handbook *Mass Communication Theories* became a global standard, and sold more than 80,000 copies.

So there is every reason to try and find out how all this came about.

This study takes me half a century back, to my roots as a graduate student of social psychology, with press studies as a collateral subject. I then became a young assistant at its small twin institute for ‘Mass psychology, public opinion and propaganda’ – later temporarily renamed ‘The Baschwitz Institute’ after its original founder.

His mass psychology successor there challenged me to do archival research and my Ph.D. on the intellectual and social origins of the main theories that Baschwitz had so harshly criticized, and which dated from late 19th century Italy and France. This led to my Ph.D. dissertation on *Crowds, psychology*

*and politics*; and later to a belated sequel on *Mass movements* concerning its further British and Germanophone roots. I also wrote a chapter on the emergence of public opinion and attitude research in the U.S., and a third book, *De uitvinding van het publiek*, on ‘The invention of the public’ in The Netherlands. So, in a sense, this is the fourth book in a longer series.

This study on Kurt Baschwitz was officially realized in slightly over one and a half man-years, with financial support from the University of Amsterdam historiography fund, the ‘Stichting Democratie en Media’ fund (originally created by the former resistance paper *Het Parool*), and a small fund for research and documentation about pioneers of the behavioural sciences. But the study could not have been realized within this limited amount of time if the ground had not been prepared before me.

First there was the Dutch graduate thesis by Vera Ebels-Dolanová in Amsterdam, who also did the first sorting of many of Baschwitz’s left papers and interviewed his family and colleagues some thirty-five years ago. Second, there was the subsequent German graduate thesis by Dieter Anschlag in Münster, who also delved further into some specifically German parts of his early and late career. And third, Joan Hemels, a professor of communication science and especially communication history at the University of Amsterdam, did detailed research about the origins of the field in both the Germanic world and the Netherlands.

Fortunately, I was able to discover large amounts of new information, and to fill in many of the blanks on his personal and intellectual history. But I had to limit my ambitions. This is surely not the final word on Baschwitz’s life, works, and thought: there is ample room left for a four-year project by a Ph.D. student. Especially as more material gradually becomes more easily accessible through an ever-rising number of digital scans, data banks, and Internet links – including even pre-war materials.

My main goal is to stir further interest in his significance among the new generations, and among an international audience – in a readable, narrative form. Because his was a life of struggle and drama. Which resulted in half a dozen books, with original approaches to some of the most eternally fascinating social phenomena. As well as in a number of major institutions that survive today – even on an international scale.

*Jaap van Ginneken  
Nice, late 2017*

# 1 Introduction

Kurt Baschwitz (1886-1968) had a lifelong fascination for ‘the riddle of the mass’ in both its visible and invisible forms. He was a major pioneer of *communication and media studies* on the European continent, an early student of the *social, political, and mass psychology* of crowds, publics, audiences, and public opinion, as well as a versatile *social historian*. Half a century after his death, however, he risks being forgotten and misunderstood, falling through the cracks of history.

## Baschwitz’s significance

Baschwitz was one of the many founders of the social sciences who came from a Jewish background, and who were forced to flee the Hitler regime. Fate dictated that he made it no further than The Netherlands: then still neutral, later occupied anyway. He did not reach the Anglo-American world, which came to dominate the global linguistic, cultural, intellectual, and scientific spheres after the war.

After Baschwitz’s death, one commemorative article noted: ‘Unlike colleagues like Karl Mannheim, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Paul Lazarsfeld and Kurt Lewin, he did not end up in [the United Kingdom or] the United States’. This contributed to his unique contributions being overlooked. In 1986, upon the centenary of his birth, his successors from both press history and mass psychology joined together to claim that ‘Baschwitz’ work deserves a good English translation, or at least a summary’.<sup>2</sup>

Upon a later jubilee, one of those successors repeated: ‘Had he fled to the U.S. [from Nazi Germany in 1933], he would have been world famous today’. So ‘His publications deserve to be reprinted and translated’.<sup>3</sup> This present book is an attempt to fulfil part of that wish by providing an outline of Baschwitz’s life and times, as well as summaries and brief excerpts from his half-dozen books, for English-language and international readers.

1 Wieten, p. 523.

2 Marten Brouwer & Joan Hemels upon his centenary, in the daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 4 February 1986.

3 Brouwer upon the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Press institute in Amsterdam, in the daily *Het Parool*, 19 April 1988.

**Figure 1**

In the 1950s, Baschwitz lived alone. But his children got children, and occasionally visited. This picture shows him happy and contented, with a grandchild.

Baschwitz was a liberal. Unlike in North America, in Western Europe political liberalism is usually represented by secular parties that emphasize individual responsibility in moral matters and gradual social reform, but largely free markets. They may join different coalitions: some parties are more progressive or centre-left, others more conservative or centre-right, at least in economic matters.

Throughout his life, Baschwitz was a defender of constitutional rule and law and order against authoritarianism, intimidation, and civil violence. This was especially true during the two World Wars and the Inter-War years, when those values were alternately assaulted by both the radical socialist or communist left, and by the radical nationalist or fascist right.

Three of his major dictums illustrate his stance. One: Mass delusions are best stopped by preserving freedom of expression (meaning critical discussion) at all times. Two: The most important part of a newspaper is formed by the mass of its readers (meaning a group of citizens), not by the institution itself. Three: Practical politics needs to rediscover (i.e., put trust in) the large mass of *decent* people if they are to stand up to tyrants. He wrote this in the 1920s and 1930s, when Europe and the rest of the world began to slide toward another major conflagration.

What kind of man was he? I shall later return to characterizations of him during the Weimar years, when he was a young journalist. Up to those years, he had been relatively adamant and self-assured, as such young professionals often are. But the sudden coming to power of Hitler and the Nazis, his being forced to quit and flee, probably profoundly sobered him, made him a ‘sadder and a wiser man’ during the rest of his life. Someone who knew him well during the most difficult years of his Amsterdam exile, just before he was forced into hiding, said he remained a man ‘with a natural nobility, simplicity, modesty and great personal force. With very outspoken opinions; taking much clearer stands than for instance [German writer and Nobel prize winner] Thomas Mann’.<sup>4</sup> Mann had a similar background to Baschwitz, and also fled the Nazis into exile.

One of Baschwitz’s close assistants later recounted that he was ‘a human scholar. His erudition rested on a certain wisdom, deriving from his mild persona. Many before him had dealt with mass psychology. But for him the mass was not a dehumanized horde, but [simply] a group composed of individuals’.<sup>5</sup> In this, he went against the elites of his day, who tended to simply blame all that went wrong in society on ‘The revolt of the masses’, the semi-literates, and the occasional derailments of the ordinary folk.

## A very European intellectual

In a sense, Kurt Baschwitz remained an arch-European intellectual throughout his life. He was born into the very heart of its modern history, and his life was torn between its contradictions. He was a German patriot, of Jewish extraction. A resolute defender of democracy born in the liberal state of Baden, which was absorbed into the Empire led by the semi-authoritarian Prussia.

He was born opposite Strasbourg, on the other side of the Rhine – after Mainz also one of the cities where printing with movable type had been invented and developed, where modern book and later newspaper culture had originated, to which Baschwitz was to attach such vital importance. The two earliest printed bestsellers had a huge historic impact: Gutenberg’s Bible (printed in Mainz 1455) followed by the notorious *Malleus*

<sup>4</sup> Anton Bueno de Mesquita, who knew him from their common activities at the cultural centre for Jewish refugees at Oosteinde 16 in Amsterdam. Interviewed after Baschwitz’s death, by Vera Ebels-Dolanová for her 1983 master’s thesis (p. 169, 202).

<sup>5</sup> Dick H. Couvée, opening sentences of his obituary, in the daily *de Volkskrant*, 8 January 1968.

*Maleficarum* (1487) manual for witch hunts. Both were printed first in Latin, then translated into vernacular languages (i.e., Martin Luther's version in 1522 and 1534) – triggering the Reformation, but also a horrible series of religious wars.

Strasbourg was the capital of the Alsace region: together with the adjacent Lorraine region, it was fiercely contested during most of Baschwitz's lifetime by the two dominant continental powers, France and Germany. This made it the bleeding heart of Western Europe during two World Wars: but after the return to peace, it was also the seat of the hopeful new European parliament.

Baschwitz was also born in the (almost) tipping point year 1886 – toward the end of the era of 'Iron Chancellor' Otto von Bismarck, who had united the country and favoured Jewish emancipation. But it was also on the eve of the ascent of emperor Wilhelm II, who demanded that Germany be accepted as an equal by the other great powers, leading to the competition and struggle that resulted in two devastating World Wars. Meanwhile, the Imperial court preacher Adolf Stoecker founded the Christian Social Party that promoted Anti-Semitism; later, merging with national conservatism it ultimately resulted in the Nazi Party, discrimination, pogroms, and the Holocaust.

In 1933, this threat made Baschwitz flee to the neighbouring Netherlands, which was desperately trying to remain neutral. When the invasion and occupation nevertheless came during the Second World War, he miraculously survived arrest in a raid and a transit camp before going into hiding. After Liberation, during the last decade of his career, he helped found a wide range of institutions, both national and international, and thereby helped create a whole new, large and influential field of study: the science of media and communication. But his half dozen books mostly focused on audiences and public opinion, on social and mass psychology.

## Causes of neglect

There seem to be several reasons for the neglect of Baschwitz in the dominant literature on the history of the social sciences. He was an exile and an outlier in more than just one sense: not only politically, but also culturally, intellectually, scientifically. He did not really fit into the prevailing mould of his place and time, or even thereafter.

Baschwitz's native language was German, and he wrote all of his books in German. But after the first book he no longer lived in Germany, and his second and most important book published in German was banned there. Thus he was cut off from his roots and natural environment. That book

was initially published by Dutch publishers in German, but with limited distribution and impact in his country of origin and linguistic region. Several other books were translated and appeared in Dutch – but that is a limited linguistic area, with little dissemination elsewhere.

Baschwitz did not speak English until late in his life, let alone write in it. And, despite various attempts, none of his books were ever translated into English – which became the prime international scientific language after the war. Only his last work was belatedly translated into French. Individual books were also translated into Serbo-Croatian, Swedish, Japanese, and one small one into Malay, but these exerted only a marginal influence. So today he remains largely invisible in global social science and the humanities.

There is a further mismatch between the discipline in which he conducted his institutional activities during his lifetime (first journalism and then newspaper or press studies, which was later called communication and media science) and most of his major books. His six major books cover four main themes, most straddling ill-defined, intermediary disciplines of that time, rather than fitting easily into one. I group them together as the 4P's: press, propaganda, politics, and persecution.

The sciences of man and society had largely remained an interconnected whole during the Inter-War years; it was only thereafter that they separated into clearly isolated disciplines and sub-disciplines. The field of mass psychology (and its sister discipline, collective behaviour sociology), in which much of Baschwitz's published work resides, always remained a rather exceptional and strange field anyway, and had difficulty finding a permanent place anywhere. Because, for instance, preoccupation with the dramatic phenomena that these fields study often flared up only temporarily before quickly waning again.

Furthermore, Baschwitz was a journalist by training and tried to write books for a wider educated audience, rather than studies targeted toward a small circle of university colleagues and meant to circulate only within the 'ivory tower' itself. Most of the time, he did not even give his writings a very elaborate scholarly apparatus. They initially had few strict definitions and few footnotes. They had limited bibliographies, few references to recent learned articles from purely academic journals, no or only a rather modest register or index. This often led them to be neglected by specialist colleagues, even today.

During his later days, a major empirical, quantitative, methodological, and statistical revolution took place in the social sciences: economics, sociology, psychology. He understood and appreciated this transformation, which quickly took hold throughout post-war Europe. But in his books, he had always argued as a comparative social historian. First focusing on a phenomenon and then distilling the psycho-social processes apparent in it,

but primarily through comparative descriptions and analyses of different instances, ages, and places.

Nor did he belong to a well-defined paradigmatic school, as part of which he could later be quoted and discussed within its wider framework – and thus survive by at least being mentioned in the context of that movement in overviews and handbooks, however briefly. He did not organically evolve within a network of sociologists or psychologists, either conceptual theorists or practical researchers. And yet his intuitions and proposals often preceded those of a new generation of wartime scholars of opinions, attitudes, and persuasion in America – who were also often of Jewish and/ or Germanic descent (i.e. Festinger, Katz, Lazarsfeld, and others).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, there is the question of the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the times. He started out as a German patriot, but as a Weimar liberal he was soon banned by the Nazis. After the war, he only gradually attained a solid university position in social science in Amsterdam, but at a time when it was shedding continental critical traditions and almost exclusively turning to ‘positivist’ Anglo-American examples.

He died in the key year of 1968. Perhaps he could belatedly have been re-discovered by a new generation of students, as many authors of the Frankfurt School were, for instance. But although he agreed with some of Freud’s ideas, he was not a Freudian. The neo-Marxism of the baby boomers was completely alien to him. So he remained somewhat of an outlier, difficult to classify and assign a lasting place.

## Approach of this study

The life and work of someone like Baschwitz cannot be understood in isolation. His life spanned two countries and half a dozen places of residence, several political regimes and dramatic crises, even exile and ultimately going into hiding – in the end intentionally disappearing from the face of the organized and official earth. So he needs to be put back into a wider framework to be fully understood.

In my previous works on social science history, I have always chosen to explore the ‘minimal meaningful context’ of such authors, their books, and their theories. That is to say, both the wider intellectual context within the scientific disciplines of their day and the paradigm shifts that were

6 As repeated by his successor Brouwer. Also see Ebels-Dolanová, p. 186-9. (Leon Festinger 1919-1989; Elihu Katz 1926-; Paul Lazarsfeld 1901-1976).

underway, as well as the wider social context in terms of contemporary trends and political events. In the case of this monograph on Baschwitz, I have sometimes chosen to draw even wider circles – as facts about relevant developments in contemporary Imperial Germany and then the Weimar Republic, of the adjacent neutral and then occupied Netherlands, will mostly be unfamiliar to foreign readers and the new generations.

I have found that there are ample reasons to go out of our way to try and put things in the right perspective. On the one hand, authors of other ages often do not mention certain aspects of their immediate context, since they are overtly present and self-evident to contemporaries (i.e., the regular resurgence of widespread Anti-Semitism). There is therefore a risk that we will miss implicit references to them today.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, we tend to apply our own present-day hindsight in judging people and their choices in other times and days. In Baschwitz's case, this holds for his original attitudes concerning the First World War, for instance, and its atrocities and propaganda. As a young journalist and foreign correspondent, he strongly identified with the newly emerging Germany, and long stuck to Berlin's version of events. He railed against enemy images held in the allied capitals, including in his first book on 'Mass delusions'. In retrospect, he was partly right and partly wrong, and he later regretted some of the one-sidedness of his earlier positions.

But we should also beware of the naïvely 'perspectivistic' slant, of viewing the First World War through the lens of what we now know about the Second World War. Sure the former contained some of the seeds of the latter, but often in rather indirect and complicated ways (e.g., through the disastrous Versailles treaty). It is too simplistic to depict all German patriots of WWI as the 'bad guys', and all of their enemies as the 'good guys'.

So in this book I devote ample attention to at least three levels of context that are relevant for understanding Baschwitz's life. The first is the macro-level: the major international and national developments during his day. The first section of most odd-numbered chapters is entirely devoted to this level. The second is the meso-level: the organizations with which he worked, such as the institutions where he studied or worked, or that subsidized him. Third is the micro-level of his private life: his parents, his romantic relationships, his children, his friends and acquaintances. They were also on his mind.

<sup>7</sup> I have earlier demonstrated this for Tarde (see my *Crowds*, p. 219 a.f. and for Freud (see my *Mass movements*, p. 85 a.f.).

## Outline

In planning this book, my central question was how to organize the material about his multi-faceted life and many-sided work into a relatively simple grid that remains transparent to the reader.

With regard to Baschwitz's work, I have chosen to focus on the four incarnations of the 'masses' that he discussed in his six substantial books aimed at a wider audience. In chronological order, these incarnations can be labelled as Mass Propaganda, the Mass Press, Mass Politics, and Mass Persecution. In each case, he explored the interconnections between collective representations and social dynamics: enemy images and nations, news and media audiences, revolutionary attempts, supposed witches and witch-hunts. Some of his minor articles and essays can also be attached to these four major themes.

Closer inspection reveals that all four of these themes were suggested to him by *his own direct experience* of the events of the day, or from the preceding period. Though there was often a lag of a few years: it took some time for the events to sink in, for the first tentative smaller articles and/or speeches to be written about them, for his larger reflections to take form. After that they often coalesced into an overall theme and book, which might go through further editions and revisions, or produce spin-offs. In this way, the four grand themes of his books can be directly connected to four distinct periods of his life.

The present study therefore consists of four pairs of chapters, plus one extra. His experiences with the First World War led to his first book on 'Mass delusions', about mass propaganda and enemy images. His experiences as a journalist under the Weimar Republic led to his second book, 'The newspaper through the ages', which covered the mass press and its audiences. His experiences as a citizen in exile led to his third book, 'You and the mass', which discussed politics and social movements. Finally, his experiences as a Jew in hiding led to his fourth and later books on 'Witches and witch trials', i.e., mass persecution.

I have mostly stuck to a kind of 'sandwich formula', alternating four times between later odd chapters that talk about the relevant periods of his life and times and even chapters covering the books themselves: their inception and production, their publication and reception. Each of these later even chapters contain a brief summary and discussion of the contents of the book, followed by a brief excerpt that provides a flavour of his argument.

In contrast, the eleventh chapter – corresponding to the culmination of his career – does not so concern his theoretical, but rather his practical

work. Namely, his work as a founding father of major institutions that put political science, mass communication, public opinion, and mass psychology on the map. Most of these institutions survive and continue to flourish today.

So these four blocks of altogether eight chapters form the bulk of this study. They are preceded by an opening chapter about Baschwitz's youth and his days as a doctoral student and young professional under the newly unified and rapidly growing Imperial Germany. After a discussion of his international role, they are followed by a final chapter about his retirement activities, and some conclusions about his legacy. An epilogue discusses the further fate of his department and wider field.

The appendix provides a translation of a complete but short Post-War article, which succinctly sums up some of his key ideas in his own words. This serves to illustrate that Baschwitz was indeed an original thinker who deserves to be remembered and reread today.

## A note on documentation

*Notes.* Notes refer to sources for: precise numbers, literal quotes or controversial statements. If such elements are not immediately followed by a note number, then the next number usually applies. Sometimes, notes do also contain a sideline extension of the main argument.

*Books.* A selection of the books to which I refer more than incidentally is listed in the Bibliography. They are usually just indicated by the (first) author's or (first) editor's name. If there is more than one book under that name, the reference is further specified by a key term from the title, or an original publication year.

*Central reference.* I have emphatically chosen a combination of reference works on the Empire and Weimar from different national perspectives, to keep an overview and not to fall into the trap of stereotypes. German: Stürmer. British: Kitchen. French: Guillen. Dutch: Boterman.

*Journal of record.* There are occasional references to current affairs. My main journal of record through the years had always been the *International Herald Tribune*, abbreviated as *IHT*. At one point, it was published by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* in tandem. Today, the latter has turned it into the *International New York Times*, abbreviated here as *INYT* (and more recently even into *The New York Times/ International Edition*).

*Website.* I plan to somehow reserve part of one related website (under 'history' at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research ASCoR) to Kurt Baschwitz, his life, times and work. I will also 'park' additional materials there. Such as work files I produced during an intermediary phase, in preparation of the ultimate book.

## 2 1886-1914: Youth and First Journalism

What were the deeper cultural backgrounds of Baschwitz and his work? What was the general atmosphere in the emerging German empire of his youth? What were the distant origins of his family and his family name? How about his social class and upbringing as a typical German *Bildungsbürger*? What was the precise nature of his Ph.D. dissertation in the early social sciences? Did he have a knack for writing, and why did he choose to become a journalist? How was he affected by the run-up to the First World War?

### Wider historical background: ‘German exceptionalism’?

Baschwitz identified closely with Germany, at least until the eve of his flight to the neighbouring Netherlands at the age of 47. He considered himself a patriot throughout those decades, and he was. His liberalism evolved from progressive to more conservative (and then back again). He was a democrat who defended the constitution and the rule of law and was fiercely opposed to civil violence. These values are reflected in all of his books. His final breaking point, when he no longer could identify with Germany, was the coming to power of Hitler and the Nazis.

Ever since those days, historians have discussed the nature of German exceptionalism. How did the country differ from other major European nations? One of the many different proposals was that of *Die verspätete Nation*, the belated nation, originally put forth by Helmuth Plessner. Like Baschwitz, Plessner also came from the liberal southwest of the country and his father was of Jewish stock, but adhered to the Evangelical-Lutheran church and faith. Young Plessner had also been turned down by the army at the outset of the war for medical reasons, and had later opposed both the radical left and the radical right under the Weimar Republic. After Hitler came to power, Plessner also fled to The Netherlands, only slightly later than Baschwitz. First becoming a ‘private lecturer’ and then a professor, he went on to found the sociology department at Groningen university.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (b. Wiesbaden 1892- d. Göttingen 1985). Plessner was a pupil of the German sociologist Max Weber and later led the famous ‘Frankfurt School’ for a while. But originally he was a biologist and anthropologist. Dutch phenomenologist Frederik Buytendijk had a similar background, and helped him settle in The Netherlands. Another of Plessner’s classic works was a study on the polar opposite expressions of *Lachen und Weinen* (Laughing and crying, 1941), which was recommended reading when I started my psychology studies in Nijmegen in 1962.

Upon coming to The Netherlands, Plessner immediately wrote a study about the particularities of German development, which was published in Switzerland in 1935. While its thesis was that Germany was ‘a belated nation’, this only became its title for the Post-War edition – attracting further attention, reprints, and translations only at that point. Critics pointed out that Germany was not so much a belated and incomplete nation or linguistic and cultural community as it was a belated and incomplete state, a belated and incomplete democracy. Let us briefly look at these two statements.<sup>2</sup>

How did Germany differ from the rest of Europe? The states along the Atlantic coast of Europe had all been united, centralized, and relatively strong for a long time, which also allowed them to accumulate additional wealth through colonial trade. This was true of both larger powers like Spain, France, and Britain, and smaller powers like Portugal, Belgium, and The Netherlands. Germany was lagging far behind in this respect.

Central Europe had instead been marked by *Kleinstaaterei* or ‘small statism’. It is true that Germany’s three ‘free’ Hanseatic cities (Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck) had profited from long distance trade – albeit initially mostly in the Baltic and the north. But apart from this, the fragmented country had long consisted of four separate kingdoms, five duchies, six grand duchies, and seven principalities.

It took the entire first half of the nineteenth century to gradually unite these fragments, first into a *Zollverein* or ‘customs union’. Then into a loose ‘North German’ confederation under Prussian hegemony, leaving out ‘South German’ Bavaria, the southwest, and Austria. Three brief, successive wars with neighbouring Austria, Denmark, and France later consolidated the borders of the united, modern *Reich* or ‘empire’, which was founded as late as 1871.<sup>3</sup>

At that point, Germany also became a belated and incomplete democracy. The Napoleonic occupation had helped distort and derail the German Enlightenment – the bourgeois social and political revolutions – and replaced them by a romanticised national ideal that was bound to conflict with those of France and Britain, the Atlantic world, or even ‘the West’ in general.

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary discussions of the entire notion by Arno Widman in the *Berliner Zeitung*, 25 March 2000; and by Heinrich-August Winkler on the website of *Zeitzeichen: Evangelische Kommentare zur Religion und Gesellschaft*.

<sup>3</sup> From then on, the Prussian king became *Kaiser*, the Prussian chancellor *Reichskanzler*. Prussian ministers, top bureaucrats, and army officers played a privileged role within the Empire until the end of the First World War. Meanwhile, the ‘three class’ voting system for its own state parliament tilted toward the wealthy, the conservatives, and the nationalists.

Both factors were reflected in the policies of Bismarck, the ‘architect’ of the empire, about whom both Baschwitz and Plessner had ambivalent feelings.

Bismarck was a Prussian *Junker*, or semi-aristocratic landowner, who became the *Kanzler* or prime minister of both his own state and the empire. He was a national conservative. Both Plessner and Baschwitz admired him as strong leader, *Realpolitiker* and smart operator, who had succeeded in welding the nation together – giving it a single time zone, unified measures and weights, legislation and oversight, its own central bank and currency, and a coherent transport and postal system.

On the other hand, they also regretted Bismarck’s occasional disdain for the national parliament and civil rights. Such as in his campaigns against political networks that he thought were becoming too strong and too independent, particularly those with significant connections across the border. They were deemed potential *Reichsfeinde* or enemies of the state. This resulted in a ‘cultural struggle’ against the Roman Catholics, and ‘socialist laws’ against the emerging (international) labour movement. Baschwitz expressed these ambivalent feelings about Bismarck throughout his life’s work.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Germany got caught by a *Nachholbedarf* or ‘urge to catch up’, first with France, and then in many respects with Britain and only in some aspects with the much larger United States on the other side of the ocean. Through an agricultural revolution and a building boom, huge investment in railways and roads, tunnels and bridges, rivers and canals, that connected Germany’s rapidly growing cities and towns, industrial and mining centres. In the course of the 19th century, the new capital of Berlin grew twenty-fold: from only 200,000 to 4 million inhabitants, and was a magnet for migrants from less-developed Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

In the process, Germans proved disciplined, well organized, and efficient. The new country soon became the front runner of Europe’s ‘second’ industrial revolution centred on optics, chemistry, electricity and more. Germany forged large industrial groups with household names: AEG, BASF, Bayer, Bosch, Hoechst, IG-Farben, Krupp, Siemens, Zeiss. This also translated into an upsurge of trade.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For instance, in his 1920s articles for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*; see the inventory in the unpublished appendix to the masters’ thesis of Ebels-Dolanová, available at the archives with the Baschwitz papers. Or in books like *Der Massenwahn* (1923) or *Du und die Masse* (1938); see the very elaborate name and subject registers I have created for them, to be placed on a related website.

<sup>5</sup> Stürmer, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> The ‘catch up’ movement has been outlined in early overview studies of modernization, such as American economic historian Walt Rostow’s famous 1960 *The Stages of Economic Growth: A*

So on the eve of the First World War, Germany's merchant navy had already expanded to become the third in the world: still far behind Great Britain, but almost equal to the U.S. Its main harbour Hamburg was home to the world's largest shipping company, the HAPAG. Its Jewish general director, Albert Ballin, built Emigration Halls on the harbour island of Veddel to accommodate the thousands of passengers streaming through every week – including many Jews from Eastern Europe.

Three million Germans had already left before the empire was founded, and another three million had left since, via Hamburg, Bremen, and other major seaports (like Rotterdam and Antwerp). But with the industrial take-off, these numbers were gradually coming down. Ironically, on the eve of the First World War, Germans had come to form the largest immigrant group in the U.S., most settling in the Midwest.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Germany had become highly regarded by leading scholars in philosophy and mathematics, physics and chemistry, and biology and medicine throughout the world. Germans received a large number of the prestigious new Nobel Prizes. Scientists from France, Britain, and the United States flocked to its laboratories and universities – not only in the grand national metropolises of Berlin and Munich, but even in smaller provincial towns like Freiburg, Halle, Heidelberg, Jena, Tübingen.

Youngsters like Kurt Baschwitz thus had every reason to be very proud of their resurgent country.

## The liberal southwest

How did Kurt himself fit into this larger picture? His birthplace of Offenburg (literally ‘open borough’) was a small town along a river that flowed from the Black Forest into the Rhine opposite Strasbourg (which was German at the time).<sup>8</sup> The place had been settled since Roman times. During the Middle Ages, it had been a ‘free city’, but in Napoleon’s day it was absorbed into the Grand Duchy of Baden.

*Non-Communist Manifesto*. Details in Stürmer, p. 70–73. Tables and figures in Rioux, p. 100–101, a.o. Guillen in turn recognizes that by the first decade of the twentieth century, Germany had thus become the second industrial power in the world (after the U.S., but before the U.K., p. 82), the second trading power (after Britain, p. 89), and the third financial power (after Britain and France, p. 91).

7 Fleet: Guillen, p. 78.

8 Both Baschwitz himself (!), his secretaries, and others often garbled Offenburg to Ofenbrück, Offenbach, etc.

It was at the small town's Salmen Inn that the *Offenburger Programm* with thirteen demands for human rights and basic freedoms had been announced in 1847. It was the first democratic proclamation in Germany, later reconfirmed by a People's Assembly of some 20,000 individuals. These events were closely linked to the epochal Europe-wide wave of revolutions of the next year.

Offenburg had traditionally had some leather and textile workshops, then becoming an early railway junction. The population thus doubled during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, from 6,600 to 13,670 inhabitants. During Baschwitz's youth, the wells, early swimming pools, and the rivers with their large rafts, formed favourite playgrounds for the town's children.

It already had one primary school for boys and one for girls. The latter is today named after Anne Frank, in the publication of whose famous diary Baschwitz later played a key role. Offenburg also had a Pro-gymnasium (the first classes of a grammar school), which was later extended to a full curriculum. But Kurt Baschwitz went to Frankfurt am Main to complete his grammar school, and then for a final year to Bruchsal near Karlsruhe.

### The Baschwitz family name and roots

In later life, after he had finally become a university professor, Kurt Baschwitz once had a coffee break conversation with his all-new team in Amsterdam. He tried to explain the probable origins of his strange-sounding patronym by saying that all around Berlin, there were localities with names ending in -witz, which was said to be related to the Latin *-vicus*, for 'village' or town.

Whereupon one of his female assistants blurted out: 'Oh yes, professor, you are also a – *witz*!' (German for 'joke'). She was probably not aware that he had been taunted as 'a joke' in school, but had later also occasionally adopted the proud nickname 'Basch-Witze' (Basch-joke).<sup>9</sup>

Upon closer inspection, Baschwitz's casual reference to the origins of his surname may be psychologically interesting – and may even be read as a Freudian lapse. Family roots around the capital would make them Prussian natives: citizens of the elite state that had led Germany's unification. But in fact localities close to Berlin were not the only places with names ending in -witz. Most are much further to the East. People originating there were

<sup>9</sup> Related by his assistant and later 'mass psychology' successor Marten Brouwer, in a collection of vignettes for the 50th anniversary of the faculty. In Goudsblom et al., p. 31. Compare the nickname signature of a 1921 poem, reproduced in Ebels-Dolanová, opposite p. 50.

mostly immigrants belonging to the Jewish minority, and were disparagingly labelled *Ostjuden* during Baschwitz's own younger days. After the war and his integration into The Netherlands, this link had apparently slipped his mind.<sup>10</sup>

A few years after this coffee conversation, a relation apparently sent him a few pages with an article from a German magazine for book traders. It said the Baschwitz name (which other branches had also spelled Baswitz) probably derived from the village of Baszowicze, which today lists 400 inhabitants. It lies in a county named after the larger town of Kielce, which today lists almost 200,000 inhabitants. That county in turn belongs to the *Voivodeship* (formerly a governorate, today a province) named after the Swietokrzyskie, or Holy Cross Mountains – the northern part of the southern 'lesser Poland'. The major city of Krakow is located at a hundred kilometres or so.<sup>11</sup>

This information does not point to just a trivial, distant geographic origin, however, but rather to a highly salient cultural background. As this is largely unfamiliar to present-day western readers, it merits some extra elaboration. Swietokrzyskie province belonged to a large area stretching from today's southeastern Poland to the west of today's Belarus and Ukraine (long Russian). Over the centuries, this had gradually become the 'Jewish heartland' par excellence.<sup>12</sup>

In the year of Columbus's discovery of America, Spain's Catholic monarchs threw the Jews out of the former *Al Andalus*, or Arab Spain. Many Jews migrated to Constantinople (earlier Byzantium, later Istanbul), and from there to the Black Sea and Odessa, or further up the rivers. But while persecutions persisted – also in Germanic lands, most ended up much further to the Northwest – in a large area in the centre of Europe, which even came to be described by some as a *Paradisus Iudaecorum* (Jewish paradise). For a long time this area had a relatively tolerant regime, with only occasional eruptions of violence.

When the Baschwitz family name probably came into being, the larger part of this area belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which lasted for more than two centuries. Toward its end in 1764, it harboured 750,000 Jews: a clear majority of the estimated worldwide population of 1.2 million at the time. Jews made up between a quarter and a third of some of

<sup>10</sup> Ebels-Dolanová (p. 93) found several passages where Baschwitz himself seemed to slight *Ostjuden*, in the context of the mid-1920s corruption affairs surrounding Jewish businessmen. For more about such ambivalences, see the web-exhibit on 'East-European Jews in the German-Jewish imagination' from the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica, University of Chicago.

<sup>11</sup> Brilling.

<sup>12</sup> See the map on Jewish population densities in the area around 1764, reproduced with the English Wikipedia article below.

the larger towns and cities, although others were relegated to small villages or *shtetls* (remember the related story, film and musical *Fiddler on the roof*).<sup>13</sup>

Many Jews were artisans. One prominent trade was engraving. Some of the very earliest printing houses were Jewish. Science and philosophy flourished among them. One study by Gershon Hundert spoke of the appearance of 'a virtual galaxy of sparkling intellectual figures'. On the one hand, they participated in secular universities and various precursors of the Enlightenment. On the other, there was a major religious revival concerning orthodox Hasidism: around piety, mysticism, and the *Kabbala*.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, however, Catherine the Great started meddling in this area. Thereafter the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was overrun by invasions from its more powerful neighbours of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, leading to three successive partitions. A large part of the Jewish heartland was brought under the control of the *czars*, leading to new experiences with the anti-Semitism and pogroms that were common throughout Russia.

Many of the best Jewish craftsmen had meanwhile begun to move abroad. Among them was a noteworthy printing dynasty by the name of Baschwitz – which proved to be Kurt's immediate forefathers. For risk of persecution, they often had mobile presses, which they successively took to major capitals elsewhere, like Berlin and Prague.

### A book-printer dynasty

One of the earliest notable family members was Zwi Hirsch ben Meier Baschwitz, abbreviated as Hirschel Meier, who was born in the early 1700s in Lithuanian Brzecz. He later migrated to Germany. With his son Meir, he formed one of four prominent Jewish book-printer families in Frankfurt an der Oder in the state of Brandenburg – which was, indeed, next to Prussia. They benefited from special protection because of the university there.

Another clipping from a Jewish newspaper refers to a much older obituary of one the best known of the Baschwitz book-printers: Baruch Meyer.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'History of the Jews in Poland', Wikipedia. 'Paradise': The article tries to rehabilitate the attitude of Poland with regard to the Jews. It even claims that some broke down the label Polonia into three Hebrew words: Po-lan-ya for Here-dwells-God. Or Polin into two: Po-lin for 'Here' and 'you should dwell'.

<sup>14</sup> *Jüdische Zeitung für Mittelsachsen Chemnitz u.a.*, Jhrg. 6, Nr. 6, p. 1, 20 March 1936. It referred back to an elaborate obituary of a century earlier in *Didaskalia – Blätter für Geist, Gemüth und Publizität*, Nr. 289, 18 Oct. 1836, p. 2. In view of his experiences with Anti-Semitism, Baschwitz

**Figure 2**

Kurt's father Joseph was often ill, changed professions, and was not very successful. As soon as he came of age, son Kurt apparently succeeded him as the de facto head of the family.

At the time of the French revolution, 'he travelled to Holland where he had many relatives', it said, and married there. But thereafter, he fled the French invasion and transferred to the Jewish community of Rödelheim in the state of Hessen, next to Frankfurt am Main. During the Middle Ages, the Habsburg king had granted the Viscount of Rödelheim the privilege of letting half a dozen Jews settle there for trade. In the course of the 18th century, this community quickly grew from some 40 to 240 people. It had a synagogue, with its own rabbi and lead singer, as well as a school.<sup>15</sup>

Just before 1800, the famous scholar Wolf Heidenheim began an 'oriental and occidental' book-printing business there, for prayer books and more, and accepted Baruch Baschwitz as his associate. Their business flourished, and was favoured by the local nobleman. After this business split up, Baruch also printed financial papers and even lottery tickets. Today, Rödelheim has

discreetly kept the clippings and copies on these Jewish roots in a special separate file, apart from his other personal papers, which was recently added to the archives.

<sup>15</sup> See the website [http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/roedelheim\\_synagoge.htm](http://www.alemannia-judaica.de/roedelheim_synagoge.htm).

become part of the *Mitte West* area of Frankfurt am Main, which even has a square named after Baruch Baschwitz in front of the suburban train station.

So, by that time, Baschwitz had already become a well-known Jewish name. Just before the founding of the empire, a Baschwitz was even president of the Jewish congregation in the Prussian capital of Berlin. Baruch and his wife Clara had many children. The third of those was Samuel (1813-1884), who also followed him into the book-printing and book-selling business.

Samuel and his wife Hannicke (1813-1872) again had many children, the second of which was Joseph (1847-1918), Kurt's father.<sup>16</sup> He was apparently sickly and not very successful; he is variously listed as a book printer, a beer brewer, and later as an insurance salesman. Kurt mentioned his father less often and more vaguely than his much younger mother and sister, and apparently took over as head of the family early on.

After the first of two bankruptcies, Joseph was reportedly saved by the family of his wife Hedwig Bikard (1866-1943), who came from an originally Jewish family of beer brewers. They married in Offenburg, in 1885, and their eldest son Kurt was born the next year.

### Jewish assimilation and resurgent anti-Semitism

Joseph was reportedly not really a practicing Jew. His wife and her family had already converted earlier to Evangelical Lutheranism. Young Kurt was educated in the Christian faith – although at the appropriate point in his life, his father reportedly took him through the moves of a Jewish *Bar Mitzwah*, in a playful way.

But when he came of age, Kurt also had himself officially baptized as Evangelical Lutheran. His children apparently were *never even aware* that he was considered ethnically Jewish until he felt forced to flee Hitler and the Nazis in 1933. So the Baschwitzes were fully assimilated, and saw themselves as mainstream Germans, although one of his reviewers later hinted at his probable roots as an *Ostjude* or 'Eastern Jew'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Details from the Geni.com genealogical database, which has many Jewish family names.

<sup>17</sup> So Kurt's daughters told Ebels-Dolanová (p. 21-26) and Anschlag (p. 38-39), during interviews for their masters' theses. More details in English on this entire book-printer dynasty are in the *Jewish encyclopaedia*, ed. 1902, p. 566-567.

There were of course plenty of paradoxes in the assimilation of so many Jews. Martin Luther himself had gradually become a notorious anti-Semite. Jews were prominent in small trades and money lending of his day, and were sometimes stereotyped as profiteers and usurers. Think of Shakespeare's notorious Shylock figure in *The merchant of Venice*.

A later associate of Baschwitz told a favoured Yiddish joke about such assimilations. 'Before he began his service, a preacher in Germany said: "*Wer hier Jude ist, bitte ich das Haus zu verlassen.*" [I beg whoever is a Jew, to leave this House of God]. He repeated this twice, but no one moved. Then, upon the third time, Christ descended from the cross and left the Church'.<sup>18</sup>

After the disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a large part of the Jewish heartland fell to Russia, which thereby had the largest Judaic population of any country at that point in time. Anti-Semitism, however, was also virulent among Russian Orthodox Christians. As emancipation took hold in Western countries like Britain, France, and The Netherlands, there was a slow but persistent trickle of Jews westwards.

Since Medieval times, dominant Christians had often excluded the Jewish minority from the possession of agricultural land and farming, from guilds and traditional crafts. Many therefore chose new and more 'modern' professions, among them book-printing and book-selling. Constant migration led to networks that facilitated trade and banking. On top of that, Judaism had always favoured learning. Discrimination now led to a further emphasis on intellectual and artistic skills, which could not be destroyed or taken away if one were forced to flee again. All of this contributed to an occupational 'footprint' that differed somewhat from the mainstream.

Estimates are that after Napoleonic times there were slightly over a quarter million Jews in the territory that was to become Germany; on the eve of the First World War a century later, that number had reached 600,000. It remained more or less 1 percent of the population as the relatively low Jewish birth rate was compensated by a steady influx from elsewhere. (For comparison, at that time Russia had an estimated 5.2 million Jews, Austria-Hungary had 2.2 million, and the U.S. had 1.8 million, while Britain only had 0.2 million and France had 0.1 million).<sup>19</sup> Many German Jews flocked to the bigger trading centres in Germany such as Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main.

Under the Empire, the Jewish population of the new national capital Berlin grew from 40,000 to 140,000. A relatively large number of Jewish

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, p. 429.

children (including girls) went to grammar school, university, and even entered into the teaching staff there – particularly within the medical faculty. One overview says: ‘In 1907, 6 percent of doctors, 15 percent of lawyers, and 8 percent of journalists [in Berlin] were Jewish’.<sup>20</sup>

Most Jews assimilated, and many became prominent in new approaches to the sciences, the arts and entertainment, in secular thought in general, and in political life – mostly on the left or ‘progressive’ side of the spectrum. Jewish visibility in certain positions, and not in others, meant that, in turn, they were painted as vehicles of not only modernity but also decadence by self-styled defenders of the supposedly ‘organic’ native society.

Bismarck was associated with a Jewish banker and favoured equal rights. But at the same time, the imperial court had Adolf Stoecker as a preacher, whose highly vocal anti-Semitism found an outlet in the Christian Social Party, which later came to blend with national conservatism.

Baschwitz’s grammar school and student years also coincided with widely publicized outpourings of anti-Semitism in all of the surrounding major countries. Between 1894 and 1906, France was transfixed by the Dreyfus affair. Between 1897 and 1910, Karl Lueger, the leader of the anti-Semitic Christian Social party in Austria, was the mayor of its capital Vienna. The 1903 publication in Russia of the falsified *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (about a Jewish plot to conquer the world) accompanied a new wave of pogroms, which killed thousands of Jews. This hoax book was subsequently widely translated, and continues to exert influence to this very day. Umberto Eco discusses it in his 2010 bestselling novel *The Prague Cemetery*.<sup>21</sup>

## German education

The Baschwitzes belonged to the 2 or 3 percent of the educated middle classes, which included many professionals who often had liberal leanings. Benedict Anderson’s famous study has explained that nations are in fact *Imagined Communities*. German children were taught that theirs was a land of *Dichter und Denker*, poets and thinkers: of writers like Goethe, Lessing, and Schiller; philosophers like Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.

<sup>20</sup> Kitchen, *Modern Germany*, p. 43-44, 117-123. The prominence of Jews in Germany and elsewhere is documented in great detail by Keller; opposition to them in Poliakov.

<sup>21</sup> My earlier studies *Crowds, psychology and politics* and *Mass movements* provide detailed analyses of the French and Austrian politics of those days.

Kurt Baschwitz was familiar with many of these authors' works and sayings from an early age; references and quotations abound in his articles and books. Germany (and Austria) were of course also considered the homeland of classical music, with composers like Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, Mahler, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Strauss, Wagner, and many more. Baschwitz was familiar with most of these composers, and continued to listen to them throughout his life: first through live performances in the family circle and concert halls, then through gramophone records and radio.

I already mentioned that young Baschwitz was proud of the achievements of the newly unified Germany, the role of Prussia, and enlightened earlier leaders like Frederick the Great. He read the memoirs of these great statesmen, and frequently quoted them. They often implied that German *Kultur* was different and more profound than that of 'mercantilist' Britain or 'decadent' France. Kurt Baschwitz's generation often felt that the Empire was the new Greece, becoming obsessed with the new archaeological finds there, which gradually filled Germany's new national museums.<sup>22</sup>

### The Baschwitz's family life

The nuclear family at the Baschwitz's home consisted of father Joseph, mother Hedwig, and eldest son Siegfried Kurt (such first first names were habitually not used). His younger brother, Alfred Bertram, died at the age of nine months. After that, he had a younger sister Johanna, who was later also called 'Hans'. There was also a favourite aunt, Hedwig's sister Lydia Metzger, who often visited. The larger family included his mother's relatives: there were close links with his maternal grandparents, and holidays were often spent with cousins in places like Switzerland.

The children's education followed the Goethe precepts: correction does much, but encouragement does more. Self-discipline and character building were important, cultural development even more so – for instance through extensive reading and active involvement in theatre and music. Ebels-Dolanová received a number of family pictures from Kurt's youth on loan, which characterized the atmosphere at home. Unfortunately, the reproductions in her mimeographed master's thesis are less than perfect; the originals were returned to his widow, and it is not clear where they are now.

<sup>22</sup> See the recent thousand-plus page overview by Dutch Germany expert Frits Boterman. A central reference was businessman-turned-archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), who is particularly known for his Troy dig.

One family snapshot shows Kurt as a young adolescent, dressed as a Pierrot for some party or performance, with a round pointed hat, a fluffy white collar over an equally white shirt, and large contrasting buttons. Alongside sits his sister (?) with a cat on her lap, and two adults behind them. A second scene shows a standing Kurt (with moustache) as an elder adolescent, playing the guitar alongside his sitting sister, who has another string instrument. A third scene shows father and son attentively looking at, and listening to, Kurt's mother playing the piano and his younger sister playing a violin. A further scene shows Kurt's mother Hedwig and aunt Lydia alongside a gramophone with a big horn, looking at a dancing couple seen at the back: possibly Kurt himself, rehearsing proper dancing steps with his sister.

The final scene is maybe most telling. It shows the entire family taking a meal in the kitchen. Seated around the table set with a large bottle and wide dishes are the mother, aunt, and daughter, all wearing elaborate dresses. In the background to the left there is a smiling female cook with a white apron. In the background to the right is the discreet father in a dark suit. In the centre and the foreground there is a standing Kurt, with maybe a glass in his hand. Smiling, slightly taller than the rest of the adults, he is wearing a shining white shirt or vest. He dominates the picture, as a promising young man, already outshining his father: the obvious future of the family.

It seems to be a key moment, expressing a key sentiment.

## School and student years

From 1897 onwards, Kurt Baschwitz went to the Lessing *Gymnasium* or grammar school in Frankfurt am Main. His autumn 1904 results were marked as just 'satisfactory'. He later told his children that some teachers resented his critical articles in the school magazine, and therefore gave him lower notes. He only had 'good' scores for Gymnastics, Singing, German, and Physics and 'sufficient' scores for Mathematics, History and Geography, Greek, Latin, and French.

He apparently did not take English, and continued to only poorly read and speak it until late in life, which was to affect his international contacts and post-war stature. Nor did he take Hebrew, which would apparently have been a possibility. (Proportionally, Frankfurt am Main had the largest Jewish population of all major German cities at the time).

There was a further snag, according to Anschlag's master's thesis. Kurt planned to take up the relatively new study of economics at university (the only social science at the time). But in order to be admitted, he needed better

grades, as well as a special economics class, which the school apparently did not provide. So he completed these studies at a special grammar school that did have economics, in Bruchsal near Karlsruhe, in the north of his original state of Baden.

He later boasted to his children that this had been no big deal, since by that time he had already read most of the literature anyway. This final little detour allowed him to shave some time off his school career, get better grades, and take up further studies at the University of Heidelberg in the state of Württemberg in the summer of 1905. Note that Germany already had a well-developed railway network, and that the distances between the towns and cities of his youth were therefore limited.<sup>23</sup>

What about student life? Under the Empire, the number of students in the country more than quadrupled to 60,000.<sup>24</sup> There was considerable anti-Semitism at universities; the most traditional and elite *Burschenschaften* or fraternities refused ethnic Jews, although less so if they were baptized Christians. Apparently, Kurt Baschwitz adhered to more-or-less traditional fraternities.

One picture shows him with two comrades in student uniforms, drinking and smoking. Another shows him with a doctor treating a fresh *Schmiss* or sabre wound on his upper cheek, right under the eye. This was a highly visible sign of duelling, a standard mark of manhood and courage at the time. Some cultivated these scars after graduation and throughout their lives. (Baschwitz apparently did not).<sup>25</sup>

Students circulated. When Germany was still fragmented, apprentice craftsmen usually travelled from one regional capital to the next to learn all of the ‘tricks of the trade’. Students also did, to get acquainted with the rest of the country, with different approaches to their disciplines, and to build larger networks. One accumulated points by studying half a dozen relevant subjects during each semester, and often took successive years at *different* universities.

Kurt Baschwitz first went to nearby Heidelberg, then to the far-away Prussian and national capital Berlin, before coming back to the ‘Academy for social and trade sciences’ in familiar Frankfurt am Main.<sup>26</sup> Among other things, he took ‘national economics’. After that, he went on to the South German (i.e. Bavarian) capital Munich, to do his Ph.D. doctoral dissertation

<sup>23</sup> Grade list reproduced, and school career related, by Anschlag, p. 12-13.

<sup>24</sup> Guillen, p. 113.

<sup>25</sup> Ebels-Dolanová, opposite p. 22-23.

<sup>26</sup> Baschwitz’s diplomas and grade lists are kept in a box that was later added to the end of his personal archives kept at the Amsterdam University library/ special collections.

in economics, with the famous Lujo Brentano. But the thesis had mostly *sociological and political* accents.<sup>27</sup>

## The early German social sciences

Germany's accelerated transformation from a traditional rural society with small towns to a modern industrial society with large cities had been very disruptive, even more so than in other major countries. The new sciences of man and society thus focused on understanding and helping to manage this entire process – again, even more so than elsewhere. This held for the whole range of disciplines that emerged one after the other: economics, sociology, applied psychology. Many of its pioneers were reformist liberals, who recognized the legitimacy of workers' social demands but opposed revolution.<sup>28</sup>

The first major German sociologist proper was Ferdinand Tönnies. His most important work was precisely about the opposition between *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), translated much later as *Community and Society*. The former referred to the traditional social bonds and feelings of togetherness and belonging that was associated with families, villages, and regions. The latter referred to the modern social organization that was instrumental to the realization of common goals and associated with voluntary associations, corporations, and the state. Later Tönnies also published a major study on the new phenomenon of 'public opinion' (1922), which influenced some of Baschwitz's early ideas.

Another influential early German sociologist was Max Weber. His most important ideas concerned the supplanting of traditional forms of authority with modern rational-bureaucratic ones, and the *Entzauberung der Welt* or 'disenchantment of the world'. He also noted a third exceptional form of authority, charismatic leadership, which re-emerged in surprising ways after the catastrophe of the First World War. Weber further wrote that 'the protestant ethic' of working hard and saving was a major driver for the rise of capitalism. Weber was an active social liberal, who was involved in left-leaning liberal parties and in the writing of a new democratic Weimar constitution after the First World War.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ebels-Dolanová, p. 28-34.

<sup>28</sup> See Bramson; and Coser.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Mitzman published perceptive psycho-biographies of both Tönnies (*Sociology and Estrangement*) and Weber (*The Iron Cage*) in their social context.

In economics, noteworthy German academics pursued a compromise. On the one hand, there were the 'laissez faire' representatives of the Manchester School, who believed in Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' and at one point seemed to prevail within the British Empire. On the other, there were the anti-capitalist polemics of the German Karl Marx, who preached the necessity of a proletarian revolution. So the German academics founded the reformist *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, the Social Policy Association, to advocate a middle road through state intervention that could help solve labour conflicts and alleviate poverty. Max Weber was an early member of the *Verein*, but later split off a more purely academic sociologists' association.

Under Bismarck, the German empire did indeed become a European *front runner* in introducing nationwide, obligatory social insurance. Opponents labelled the representatives of the association *Kathedersozialisten*, or 'socialists at the (academic theorists) lecture desk'. But Brentano and Baschwitz were both sceptical about socialism.<sup>30</sup>

### Baschwitz's Ph.D. dissertation

Baschwitz thus chose one of the major founders of the *Verein* as his Ph.D. thesis supervisor in Munich. It is important to note that the nature of this exercise was slightly different from what it is today. The final classes of grammar school already included some science. After that, the university curriculum, which conferred a doctorate, on completion, took four years. Today, a bachelor's plus master's degree also takes four years, but an additional Ph.D. usually takes *four more* years after that. So at that time the title of 'doctor' entailed somewhat less than it does today, but it was very important in the title-conscious Germany of those years. It was a cherished entry ticket to the elite and the ruling class.

The first major work of Baschwitz's thesis supervisor Lujo Brentano recognized the positive role of trade unions as 'present-day workers' guilds'. Although Brentano was not a party member or deputy, he was close to both of the liberal factions that ultimately merged to form the second-largest party in the *Reichstag* or national parliament, after the big Catholic centre party. (Baschwitz later wrote one of his very first newspaper articles about a commemoration of this merger). These liberal

<sup>30</sup> Baschwitz's later commemorative article in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, for Brentano's 85th birthday on 18 December 1929. (Repr. in Ebels-Dolanová, opp. p. 91).

groups had put their hopes on the supposedly liberal-minded Crown Prince Friedrich, but he was ill and only ruled for a brief period of three months between Wilhelm I and II.

So Brentano helped inspire Baschwitz's doctoral dissertation. But, at the time, 'Economics were not a well-defined territory like today', Baschwitz later said: 'It was even a new discipline, related to all the other social disciplines' such as sociology.<sup>31</sup> His dissertation was labelled 'A critical research' project on 'The organisation of urban owners of houses and land in Germany – Their development, essence and functioning' (1909). Baschwitz described it as 'an attempt [...] to draw an image of the typical urban homeowner, as it emerged from speeches and writings, [but] primarily from the functioning and goals of their own organisations'.<sup>32</sup>

He collected, ordered and interpreted a huge amount of detailed historical and social documents and data. First, he visited the considerable Munich 'chapter', its substantial office, and library. Then other local chapters, and the *Zentralverband*, or national federation. Baschwitz's dissertation can be seen as a study in social (or political) economics, or as one in economic (or political) sociology. The owners' self-image played a key role, but also the federation's mode of operation.

It was a typical example of how civil society played a mediating role between the state and markets, he wrote. The first part of the dissertation looked at the development of this entire social stratum, and its organization. The second part looked at the interplay of home ownership with the economics of capital and credit. The third part looked at the role of fiscal law. The fourth part looked at other legal matters. The fifth part looked at rent. The sixth part looked at how all of this affected competition and supply in the housing sector.

The study concluded (p. 184) that the house-owners saw themselves as the backbone and primary representatives of the propertied middle classes. They favoured 'free markets' and were against price distortion through subsidized social housing projects. They defended small shopkeepers against department stores. They opposed big capital and the banks, but were also against excessive taxes and the state. The dissertation's appendices provided figures about their numbers, a list of all 237 local chapters, and an excerpt from the latest federation report.

Baschwitz completed his dissertation in 1908. The subsequent year, it was officially published in an economic book series that was edited by

<sup>31</sup> Interview KB, Amsterdam daily *Het Parool*, 25 April 1964.

<sup>32</sup> Opening pages of the study.

Brentano. Anschlag's master's thesis (p. 12, 109, n. 10 and 11) quotes some positive reviews from specialist journals. At the same time as Baschwitz, Brentano also had several other promising Ph.D. students. One was the later liberal leader Theodor Heuss, who would become the first president of the post-war Federal Republic, and to whom Baschwitz paid a special visit in his later life.

After completing his *Doktorarbeit*, Baschwitz had officially become an adult, responsible for his own further life and career. On the one hand, he gradually grew into the role of the male intellectual. He was not very extraverted, but rather somewhat introverted. And occasionally even somewhat of a loner for long stretches of his life. After marriage and the birth of his children, he was often a somewhat aloof patriarch, retiring into the inner *sanctum* of his study, eternally filled with cigar smoke. He loved his children but was not closely involved in their everyday life: such things were often left to mothers in the middle class families of those days.

On the other hand, he often tried to express his emotional attachment to his family, for instance by explicitly dedicating most of his books to one close family member or another. The first editions of *Mass delusions* in 1923 were dedicated to his first wife, the last edition in 1932 to his mother. *You and the mass* of 1938 was dedicated to (the memory of) his father. *The struggle against the devil* of 1948 was even dedicated to his favourite aunt, Lydia Metzger-Bikard. And finally the major *Witches and witch trials* of 1963-4 was dedicated to his second wife, Ilse Scholz.

## Writing skills

In 1909, Kurt Baschwitz was still only 23 years old. The big question was what he was going to do next. What kind of career did he want to pursue? Would he get into economics or finance, work for a corporation or the state? Or did he fancy a more multi-faceted and lively job? He had always had a knack for writing and had tried to further develop this skill, as he felt he might later make it his profession.

Baschwitz later told his children that at the Lessing gymnasium in Frankfurt am Main he had founded a school magazine, and had largely filled it himself. At the same time, he also tried to publish elsewhere. One opportunity was in a promotional monthly of the Stuttgart savings bank, where his father Joseph had found a job as a representative – also selling life insurance. Young Kurt had contributed the story 'On the threshold of the afterlife', to a special Christmas issue. It covered only two dense pages,

four columns in all. But looking back at it, one can easily see that it was indeed relatively well written and well construed.<sup>33</sup>

This tale is ostensibly related by a lonely medical doctor, who had been invited to celebrate Christmas at the happy house of Otto, his friend since university days, his wife, and their children. At one point, the visitor tells the kids a dramatic tale. About a student with debts, who was forced to break off his education after the sudden death of his father and provider, with whom he lived. The son was desperate, went out to buy a gun, and tested the cold metal on his head. But before pulling the trigger, he opened a drawer to take one last nostalgic look at a blonde lock of his fiancée.

He then suddenly discovered a piece of paper that had been hidden from sight. It was headed: 'Life insurance'. He was thus able to complete his degree, to marry and found a family – with three lovely little children. 'Just like us!' the daughter interrupts. The kid then suddenly makes the connection. 'Papa, were you that student?' The mother's eyes fill up with tears. The father silently takes a little box from his desk, and opens it. It contains a blonde lock, a little revolver, and the piece of paper in question ... with the letterhead of the Stuttgart bank. So it seems that Kurt did indeed have a knack for writing, early on.

There is even an apocryphal story that he wrote a complete science fiction novel. The year after Baschwitz died, his own social science faculty in Amsterdam engaged Norbert Elias, another Jewish-German scholar who was much younger, but whose life had partly run parallel to Baschwitz's own. Elias later became world famous for his studies about the psychodynamics of the civilization process over the last few centuries.

Two young admirers interviewed Elias for a major Dutch weekly. In it, he mentioned that at an early age, he had been inspired by a novel about a futuristic war between *The two planets* by Kurt Baschwitz. At one point in this novel, the Martians used a giant magnet to disarm the troops of a hubristic Earth emperor. Unfortunately, it turned out that the interviewers had misheard, misunderstood, and misspelled the name. The novel had actually been written by Kurd Laszwitz.<sup>34</sup>

During his university career, Kurt Baschwitz continued to further hone his writing skills. He returned to Frankfurt am Main for part of his last year before submitting his dissertation in Munich. This was the city where the

<sup>33</sup> 'Auf der Schwelle zum Jenseits', Beilage zur Nr. 109 (in traditional Gothic or *Frakturschrift*). Reproduced in Ebels-Dolanová, opposite p. 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> A.J. Heerma van Voss & A. van Stolk, 'De geschiedenis van Norbert Elias', *Vrij Nederland*, 1 Sept. 1984.

*Frankfurter* (later *Allgemeine*) *Zeitung* (*F.Z.*) was published: one of the oldest and most prestigious of all German newspapers, with many Jewish staff and readers. Frankfurt also was (and remains) a financial and economic hub, so it devoted special attention to financial and economic matters.

Since Kurt Baschwitz was a doctoral student in economics, someone may have given him an introduction there, and he may have done an internship or minor job at the newspaper at some point. During a critical phase in his later career, he claimed that he had worked on the editorial staff of the famous *F.Z.* for a year, which was certainly a bit of an embellishment.<sup>35</sup>

After obtaining the ‘Doktor’ degree in economics, Baschwitz thus asked himself the question: ‘Should I become a Journalist?’ An experienced journalist gave him the answer: there were too many already, but too few good ones.

The supposed talent for writing is not enough in itself. It is very often the case that young people [like yourself] – just because they count as poets or at least writers within the family circle – conclude that they are apt for journalism [... But] there have also been many who had been highly talented as writers but who completely failed as editors – to their own distress and to their newspaper’s detriment. The journalist must know how to write, but not everyone who can write is a journalist.

This wise elder counsellor continued, tongue-in-cheek.

So: not every scribbler must unconditionally want to go to the press. There are many unrecognized geniuses among the young rushing forward, who have just completed their final exam. This [kind of feeling] simply goes with that age. But they must be told that neither immature young people, nor those without a completed general education, can be let loose in the public sphere. We know that the doctor’s title [that you just obtained] is in itself not proof of aptitude.

Who was this advisor? It was his own alter ego, 22 years later, after he had reached the top of the trade as editor-in-chief of the prestigious weekly of the newspaper business, in an article on the same question.<sup>36</sup>

35 He claimed this in a C.V. submitted in 1947, when he was desperate to be finally named full professor of press science in Amsterdam after waiting 12-14 years. One was in a letter to the ‘Press Purge’ Commission (dated 16 April), the other a letter from the mayor and aldermen of Amsterdam to the Education minister (dated 19 November), which was based on Baschwitz’s information. More about this matter in the relevant later chapter.

36 K.B., ‘Soll Ich Journalist werden?’. *Zeitungs-Verlag*, Jhrg. 31, Nr. 2, 11 January 1930.

## Hamburg and the *Fremdenblatt*

But where to go to find a first job, as an aspiring journalist of just 23 years old? One history claims that later, with few exceptions, 'All the important newspapers were published in Berlin, often bringing out two or three editions daily, and reporting the Reichstag debates in great detail. This was a lively, nervously aggressive and undifferential media world, concentrated in the Kochstrasse just to the south of the political square mile represented by the Friedrichstrasse, Wilhelmstrasse and Unter den Linden, between Schlossplatz and Pariser Platz, near the Brandenburg Gate'.<sup>37</sup>

But more typical for the German press was the fact that, until then, it had remained much more decentralized than that of either Great Britain or France. Germany had *thousands* of daily newspapers: all of the present and former state capitals had relatively healthy ones. So at this point it was more interesting for Baschwitz to try and get work at one of these: preferably a somewhat internationally oriented one, in a booming part of the country.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most rapidly growing, lively, and cosmopolitan regions was the extreme northwest, where all of the major seaports of the country were crammed into a relatively small area. The largest was Hamburg on the Elbe River. The second was Bremen, on the Weser. Both gave direct access to the North Sea, and through it to the Atlantic Ocean. The third was Lübeck on the Baltic Sea, but from there ships had to pass through the straits between Sweden and Denmark to get to the ocean.

In his history of newspapers (1938), Baschwitz said:

The big newspapers 'within the empire', so in various parts of the country outside Berlin, rejected the qualification of 'provincial newspaper'. The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* acquired its distinctive character through publisher Albert Broschek who took over this old family paper [...] in 1908. At the time it did not even have 40,000 subscribers; after a few years they were 150,000 – even though the subscription fee was not particularly low for Germany. But together with the massive sales the contents were improved as well, and thus the significance of the newspaper.

So much of this expansion took place during Baschwitz's own first few years there.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Stürmer, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> *De krant door alle tijden*, 2nd ed., p. 251-254.

<sup>39</sup> *De krant door alle tijden*, p. 255.

The new owner was a dynamic man. Broschek soon acquired a copper plate printing facility, allowing him to print better pictures, added illustrated pages, and supplements: a relatively new phenomenon. The editorial offices were right in the heart of Hamburg. Over just half a century, the city's population had more than quadrupled to well over 700,000. It had an 'old town' with canals, chaotic and smelly. The old outer harbour of Sankt Pauli on the riverbank had plenty of ferries and boats arriving and departing all the time.

The standard *Baedeker* travel guide of those years, which Baschwitz probably bought and consulted when he first went there, listed five major railway stations, dozens of large restaurants, a dozen major hotels, half a dozen major theatres, a few concert halls, a circus, and a zoo. So a bachelor like Baschwitz, who liked music and plays, could go out as much as he wanted. The streets bustled with wholly new electric tramways and new taxi cars.<sup>40</sup>

Baschwitz continued his overview of the press situation:

The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* is only mentioned here as a particularly successful representative of a certain category of newspapers within the empire. These were newspapers with circulations among the highest in Germany – meaning that they sold 100,000, sometimes 150,000, but only in one case 200,000 copies. These newspapers played a big role in the public life of the town where they appeared. They treated cultural affairs with predilection; often the theatre critic was the most popular figure of the editorial staff. They often had a special representative or their own editorial office in Berlin. They kept foreign correspondents abroad, often shared with similar other papers.<sup>41</sup>

Baschwitz was hired in mid-February of 1909 for a trial year, to be automatically renewed if he fulfilled expectations. The pay was 3,000 Marks a year, with four weeks of holiday. From that date on, his name regularly turns up in the annual New Year's donation lists for the local association of journalists and writers. This association also co-sponsored an annual gala, the *Künstler und Presseball*, to benefit the retirement funds for the relevant professions.

<sup>40</sup> I checked the 1904, fourteenth revised edition in English for Northern Germany.

<sup>41</sup> *De krant door alle tijden (The newspaper though the ages)*, p. 255.

## Liberal journalist

The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* (abbreviated as *H.F.*) claimed to be ‘the largest political daily of Northwest Germany’. It was also a very serious quality paper, well considered – soon even abroad. Yet few complete collections from those days survive today.<sup>42</sup> It long had both a morning and an evening edition, normally closing at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., respectively. They began with a classic title banner, including all kinds of publishing info with an elaborate, fancy seal in the centre. The first page often had one major headline across – particularly during the dramatic days that were to follow.

The paper had five columns in rather small and dense print, with little space in between. After the main story, minor items succeeded each other, flowing from one column into the next, in eternal succession. There also was a *Tagesschau* of smaller topical subjects. For the present-day reader, the pages make a very grey and not very lively impression. Readers of those days must have had a great capacity to focus on minuscule printed texts; they did not, after all, have the audio-visual distractions that began to flourish soon thereafter.

The paper consisted of one main news section and five further sections every day: usually a total of 24 pages, sometimes 36 during the weekends. The second and third sections focused on economic and financial affairs, concerning shipping, trade, and the stock markets. Further sections were devoted to national and local politics, and news from associations and churches. Then there was the weather forecast, a poem and games, reviews on sports and music, theatre and arts, literature and science – the whole familiar range. Soon there was also an ‘illustrated review’ with pictures, as well as a women’s page at some point.

In the course of his fifteen (!) years at this paper, Baschwitz probably contributed to most of these sections, in one way or another. Most of the time as an anonymous editor, sometimes with just his initials, and only rarely with his full name, in the case of a few longer opinion pieces. The paper apparently was in relatively good health, as it had a substantial number of pages with ads, both small and large. For instance, there were ads for large family firm clothing stores such as C&A and P&C, which are still in existence today.

<sup>42</sup> I had to consult them at the *Institut für Zeitungsforschung* in Dortmund, which has wide-ranging microfilm archives. But they are of course in Gothic *Frakturschrift*, which is hard to read for someone not overly familiar with it – let alone to scan very rapidly and completely. A digitization project is underway, which will make it much easier to research specific aspects of his role, but this was not completed in time for me to use. The plan is to make it available and searchable through the website of The European Library.

The *H.F.* was a liberal paper, and Ebels' master's thesis on Baschwitz noted that he could freely express his political sympathies. At the end of his first year he published a piece lauding the earlier merger of the liberal factions in parliament, for instance, and a year later he published another on the centenary of the liberal first president of the German parliament – an assimilated and later ennobled Jew.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, he began to reflect on broader party politics within the framework of the Empire. On the last day of his first full year, the 24-year-old was allowed to publish a noteworthy 'annual political overview' that covered two-thirds of a page. He expressed his doubts about the capacities of the 'dutiful civil servant' Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the new chancellor, although he was said to be close to the liberals. But Baschwitz proved more critical of the rightist national conservatives who obstructed revisions in Prussia's very unequal electoral system, which gave them a completely disproportional influence. Baschwitz also supported social reforms, but opposed the violence stirred up by some leftist social-democrats in the capital Berlin.<sup>44</sup>

He consistently pleaded against division and for national unity. He also began to reflect on international politics, and on Germany's aspiration to be accepted as a major new world power by the ruling triumvirate of France, Britain, and the U.S. Ebels noted that Baschwitz published articles about the importance of population strength and growth, but also about the need to have a major fleet with access to the ocean and to colonies through the Suez and Panama canals.<sup>45</sup>

Another noteworthy piece focused on imperial grandeur: from the thousand-year 'Holy Roman Empire of the [Austrian and] German Nation' to the present day. It lyrically compared ancient scenes of subjects enthusiastically acclaiming the boat of a Roman emperor, to those of present-day Germans acclaiming a giant Zeppelin airship dressed in national colours and hanging over a major imperial ceremony in which Wilhelm II had inaugurated an equestrian statue for his father Friedrich.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Articles about the Deutsche Freisinnige Partei DFP (17 December 1909), and about Eduard von Simson (11 December 1910). Ebels-Dolanová, p. 34–35.

<sup>44</sup> 'Politische Bilanz', 31 December 1910 (Section 4, p. 17). Von Bethmann Hollweg was chancellor from 1909 to 1917. He initially tried to work out deals with the British, but panicked over the rising Russian threat from the East. He also proved unable to contain the belligerence of the army command.

<sup>45</sup> On 28 February 1911, and 20 June 1912.

<sup>46</sup> 'Aus Gassen und Höfen, von Dächern und Fenstern, tönen die Jubelrufe der Menschen und steigen vereinigt wie die Meeresbrandung brausend empor zu dem Wirklichkeit gewordenen Märchenschiff [...] im blauen Luftmeer'. 'Von der Kaisertrone', *H.F.*, 20 October 1911.

So even though he was nominally a left-liberal, Baschwitz already felt attracted to patriotic dreams with chauvinistic overtones well before the outbreak of the First World War – just like most of his contemporaries. Dreams about a re-united Germany finally taking up its rightful place among the other major world powers. We all know how this ended, but we need to take a closer look at how this appeared at that time, in that place, and to that social group.

### The ‘Balkan wars’: prologue and trigger for WW I

Most present-day western readers have forgotten, for instance, that the run-up to ‘The Great War’ (later re-baptized the First World War) did not start in the West, but in the East. Namely with the unravelling of the Turkish Ottoman Empire after 1908; with the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire vying over the spoils in the Balkans and over stable access to the Mediterranean; and with the smaller, resurging states in the same area, which were also vying for independence and territory. The Balkan wars of 1912-13 already produced unspeakable horrors, killed tens of thousands of civilians, two hundred thousand soldiers, and displaced millions. Already the major capitals were aware that this might sooner or later degenerate into a general conflagration. Arms expenditures of the six largest European nations thus rose with fifty percent over the five years preceding the war.

The editors of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* probably also had major discussions among themselves about where these events might lead, where Germany’s legitimate interests lay, and how they should be defended. The first trigger of further escalation was the assassination of Austrian crown prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife by Gavrilo Princip during a trip to Sarajevo in 1914. The earlier annexation of Bosnia by the dual monarchy in Austria Hungary was contested by its resurging neighbour Serbia. But Franz Ferdinand was not just any crown prince. He embodied the sole hope of Germany’s prime ally Austria Hungary for reform and rejuvenation. His uncle Franz Joseph was 84 and had already reigned for 66 years.

Gavrilo Princip in turn was not a ‘lone wolf’ assassin, as his compatriots claimed at the time, but a member of a seven-man team, armed with revolvers, bombs, and cyanide capsules. This team was close to the Black Hand secret society and was condoned by parts of the Serbian security apparatus and by the Pan-Slavists in Tsarist Russia – which was also Christian Orthodox. Russia in turn was a member of the mighty Triple Entente

**Figure 3**

Front page of the illustrated supplement to Baschwitz's *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* on 30 June 1914, on the eve of the outbreak of the First World War. Headline: 'About the murder of the Austrian couple, successors to the throne' (in Sarajevo).

East-West pact with France and Britain. (Through which Britain meant to keep Russia in check to protect its own strategic interests in Asia).<sup>47</sup>

In response, Austria issued an ultimatum for the immediate and complete dismantling of these 'terrorist' networks, and more. When these demands were not immediately and fully met, it declared war on Serbia only a month later. Baschwitz wrote a piece on the 'aggressiveness' of the Slavs at the time. He also wrote a wider article on the threat of the war, and Germany's interests overseas, for a specialized magazine that was also published in Hamburg.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The most complete recent study to reconstruct the actual course of events is Clark's monumental 2012 study, which partly replaced Tuchman's earlier classic. For the Indian connection, see Frankopan, Chapter 16.

<sup>48</sup> Baschwitz's articles during the run-up to the war, in the *H.F.* 31 December 1910, 28 February & 20 October 1911, 29 July 1914; *Afrika Post* 9 August 1914 (Jhrg. 27, Nr. 15). These are listed in Ebels-Dolanová's chronological overview of Baschwitz's articles of those days – an appendix that could not be included in the published version of her master's thesis, but that was deposited at the Baschwitz Archives.

The succession of headlines on the front page of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* aptly sums up the miscalculations of the last week before the general conflagration. Tuesday 28 July: 'Efforts to localize the war'. Wednesday 29 July: 'The English-Italian mediation proposal'. Thursday 30 July: 'Better outlook for a European peace'. Friday 31 July: 'On the eve of the decision'. Saturday 1 August: 'Germany in a heightened state of war danger'. Sunday 2 August, special edition, 7 am: 'The first day of mobilization'. Sunday 2 August, second edition: 'Silence before the storm?'

### The outbreak of The Great War

Socialists and pacifists had earlier persisted in demonstrating for peace, but were now swept away. When news of a general war finally broke, crowds of up to ten thousand people *celebrated* in the major capitals of Europe, and thousands of volunteers registered at recruitment offices. They were all deeply convinced of their countries evident moral and material superiority, and expected to be 'home by Christmas'. That is to say, in four *months'* rather than in four *years'* time. Hamburg papers reported enthusiastic scenes at the Hamburg to Hannover railway station, where families said goodbye to their loved ones. The local infantry regiment number 76 had 3,000 men, of which only 647 were to survive – many crippled or otherwise handicapped. A total of 40,000 Hamburg soldiers were to die.<sup>49</sup>

Baschwitz had also been mobilized, but he was reportedly rejected on medical grounds.<sup>50</sup> Ebels-Dolanová's' master's thesis observed (on p. 114 and elsewhere) that it is probable that Baschwitz later came to feel uneasy about *not* having served in the end, and about spending the latter half of the Great War as a foreign correspondent in the relative comfort of the neutral Netherlands. He may have overcompensated for this guilt by cultivating an ultra-patriotic stance over the next period of his life, an attitude that at times became shrill – as we will see.

Meanwhile, anti-Semites claimed that Jews had dodged the draft, and that Jewish businessmen profited from the war. During the very same month Baschwitz was to travel to Rotterdam to become a foreign correspondent

49 Hamburg municipal and local history sites, and that of the regional public broadcaster NDR.

50 Ebels-Dolanová, Ch. 1914-24, p. 44, 197, n. 1, referring to information provided by Baschwitz' youngest daughter. The exact reason is unclear. It may have been innocuous (flat feet, thick glasses), or related to his father's recurring illnesses.

**Figure 4 Baschwitz in a uniform, before the First World War**



there, the Prussian war ministry ordered an official investigation into the proportion of Jews in the military. It turned out to be *no* different from that in the general population.<sup>51</sup>

In some respects, however, Baschwitz was even more in the midst of things at his desk than at the front. In retrospect, the First World War became the first truly modern war. Its outcome was not so much decided by the valour of the soldiers on the battlefield, as by the factories on the home front churning out endless quantities of vehicles, weapons, and explosives. That is to say, by the alliances' respective industrial strengths, the total firepower and destructive capacity that could ultimately be mobilized. Hence also the unprecedented importance of winning the 'hearts and minds' of the working population, taxpayers, and voters at home.

New printing techniques had meanwhile produced a popular mass press with million-copy titles in all major countries, along with posters and flyers with chauvinistic overtones. Better photographic cameras added true action pictures for the first time. The gramophone played nationalistic songs, early

<sup>51</sup> Kitchen, *Modern Germany*, p. 189.

movies reconstituted historic events along the familiar lines of 'us versus them'. Advertising and early public relations (increasingly abbreviated as PR) were in the process of becoming more sophisticated and beginning to exploit motivation and emotion. This is how modern propaganda took off. Heroism on one's own side and atrocities on the other, both real and imagined, played a key role.

Prize-winning British *Sunday Times* journalist Phillip Knightley later published an overview book about war correspondents and propaganda during the modern age. With the title *The First Casualty* (meaning: 'The first casualty in war is The Truth').<sup>52</sup> He summed up:

The First World War was like no other war before or since. It began with the promise of splendour, honour, and glory. It ended as a genocidal conflict on an unparalleled scale, a meaningless act of slaughter that continued until a state of exhaustion set in [...] More deliberate lies were told than in any other period of history, and the whole apparatus of the state went into action to suppress the truth.<sup>53</sup>

Young Baschwitz was to be caught in the crossfire – as we will see in the next chapter.

52 Alluding to American senator Hiram Johnson's famous statement (in relation to America's entry into the war). It turns out this is actually a variation of an older German proverb: 'Kommt der Krieg ins Land/ Dann gibt's Lügen wie Sand' ('When war visits a country, lies become as numerous as grains of sand') Quoted by Fernand van Langenhove, p. 1.

53 Quoted from a later re-edition (London: Pan 1989), p. 80.



### **3    1914-1918: War and Propaganda**

This is a book about the works, life and times of Kurt Baschwitz. His first book for a larger audience was published soon after the First World War. It was imbued with his experiences, feelings, and views about the conflict: its origins, atrocities, and propaganda from both sides. It is therefore imperative to delve somewhat deeper into the polemics of those days, and into more recent research about these same issues.<sup>1</sup>

How did these issues initially look from the vantage point of Hamburg and the editorial staff at the *Fremdenblatt*? Why was Baschwitz suddenly sent to Rotterdam – the major seaport of the neutral Netherlands – halfway through the war, to monitor both the media there and those of the Allies? How did he feel about the disastrous end of the war, the Versailles Treaty, and the fateful burdens it imposed on Germany?

#### **Wider historical context: The mobilization for war**

For a long time, France had been Germany's rival and archenemy on the continent, and vice versa. However, the creation of a new alliance between France and Russia before the turn of the century, complete with assistance for the modernization of Russia, had created a completely new situation for Germany, which was stuck in the middle of the two allies.

The German Empire in Central Europe had suddenly become doubly exposed along two borders: the heavily fortified one with France in the west, as well as the highly penetrable one with Russia in the east. Further, Germany knew that it would ultimately become vastly outnumbered by Russia's larger army and population. For this reason, the previous army commander Alfred von Schlieffen had developed a strategic and tactical plan for such an exceptionally risky two-front war. This involved a quick

<sup>1</sup> For this chapter, and my analysis of Baschwitz's subsequent, unconventional book *Der Massenwahn* I needed to make a thorough study of the latest insights about the war, its causes and consequences, the propaganda and rumours, the real and imagined atrocities, that ultimately resulted in the Versailles treaty and the Weimar Republic. I studied a dozen major recent studies on these matters, and dozens of old and new documents. What was meant to produce just a few pages, and then possibly an appendix of a dozen, expanded to a larger essay of 60 pages, with 130 footnotes so far. I may publish this essay separately. As a result, I have chosen to simplify the discussion given here, focusing on Baschwitz and the German view of those days, and to what extent these views square with some of the latest research.

'defensive offensive' through neutral Belgium to circumvent the heavily fortified border with France. With this plan, it would be possible to take Paris within a mere six weeks, and then be ready for a more protracted and larger onslaught on the other side.

Allied propaganda later claimed that Germany had decided within a week after the assassination of Austrian Franz Ferdinand to launch a general war, during a special *Kronrat* or crown council of the *Kaiser*. After the war, this became a key element in the claim that the sole and unique 'war guilt' lie on the German side. The Germans, however, called this a falsification of history; and in his later memoirs, the sovereign was adamant in his denial that such a meeting had taken place.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the fateful *Kronrat* may also have functioned to distract attention from a decisive event on the allied side. The year before, foreign diplomats in Paris had already been alarmed by the election of Raymond Poincaré as French president. This was soon followed by a renewed extension of military service, a near-doubling of the army, to match that of Germany. This was hailed by the 'revenge' camp, and seen by many as the prelude to an inevitable war. From 20 to 23 July 1914, Poincaré and his prime minister then paid a key visit to the Czar and his cabinet in Saint Petersburg, the capital of Russia. This visit happened only *ten days* before the war actually broke out.

On the very first day of the state visit, word leaked about the precise formulation of the Austrian ultimatum, which would most probably be unacceptable to Serbia. At that time, the key question was whether the resulting war would remain localized, or spread to involve other states. Clark's impressive new overview *The Sleepwalkers* gives an extremely detailed account of the precise course of events. (It was hailed by the *Washington Post* as 'easily the best book ever written about the subject').

It reported on the Franco-Russian talks: 'The key point was alliance solidarity, and that meant not just diplomatic support, but the readiness

<sup>2</sup> His memoirs said: 'The much-discussed so-called Potsdam Crown Council of July 5<sup>th</sup> [1914] never took place. It is an invention of malevolent persons. Naturally, before my departure, I received, as was my custom, some of the Ministers individually, in order to hear from them reports concerning their departments. Neither was there any council of ministers and there was no talk about war preparations'. (Von Hohenzollern).

Both the *Kaiser* and some of the highest army and navy commanders left for a *summer holiday* at this exact point in time. There may also have been confusion with a *Kronrat* that took place two years earlier, on the eve of the Balkan War, where a decision of that kind was indeed considered – but the chancellor had immediately intervened to kill the idea. One should add that Clark and others mention a series of occasions where the high officials of other great powers had also proposed starting a 'preventive war'.

for military action' – including a military review of some 70,000 men. The French ambassador later reminisced that one of the minor princesses present at a state dinner that same evening had already told him that she had received secret confidences. 'There's going to be a war [...] There'll be nothing left of Austria [...] You're going to get back Alsace and Lorraine [...] Our armies will meet in Berlin [...] Germany will be destroyed'. And people then toasted to that.<sup>3</sup>

The Austrian declaration of war on Serbia was thus only a further trigger for the dominos, which began to fall one after the other. Because of its vast territory and population, Russia needed time to mobilize, which it soon did in support of its ally Serbia. This caused a panic among the Prussian political leadership that played into the hands of the military hawks.

When skirmishes occurred and Russia refused to back down, Austria's ally Germany declared war on Russia. In turn, this led Russia's ally France to mobilize. When France also refused to back down, Germany declared war on it as well. Germany then invoked the exceptional 'vital emergency' (of a two-front war) to demand 'free passage' through the rugged Ardennes region in neutral Belgium's southeast in order to confront France. When this was refused, Germany invaded Belgium. Meanwhile, not only French, but also British, troops rushed into Belgium to help.<sup>4</sup>

### **The HF and German press's rendering of the war**

On Tuesday, 4 August 1914, a 6 am special edition of Baschwitz's *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* featured a headline across the front page decrying 'The dual alliance war of aggression', blaming Russia and France. Later that day, a 6 pm special edition had a similar headline announcing 'The start of the war'. Baschwitz himself, his editor colleagues, the vast majority of the educated middle class, and most Germans in general, firmly believed and continued to believe that the Entente nations had *forced* the general war upon them – not the other way around.<sup>5</sup>

3 A princess of Montenegro, quoted in Clark, p. 444-448.

4 British PM Lloyd George claimed that until the German invasion of Belgium 95 percent of the population would have been against joining the war, but after it 99 percent was in favour instead. But Clark shows that there was an influential pro-war faction in the cabinet. Williams (p. 433, 449) gives detailed estimates for the 1910 and 1914 defence strengths of the powers involved. Both alliances approximately matched each other at the outset, and even after Turkey and Italy joined. The U.S. ultimately made all the difference.

5 Compare with Baschwitz, *Der Massenwahn*, p. 198-200. Also, p. 111-112.

Baschwitz now lived outside the centre of Hamburg, and had possibly been joined by his mother and sister. Probably they lived on the Breitenfelderstrasse 64, on the greener side of the Alster Lake. Although far from the front lines, the city was immediately confronted with the consequences of the outbreak of hostilities. The still-almighty British fleet soon sealed off the entire North Sea, and thus most traffic to and from the Atlantic seaports in the northwest of Germany. Activity dropped off dramatically in Hamburg's harbour and city centre, where the *H.F.* had its editorial offices. Circulation of the paper initially doubled, but advertising probably began to suffer soon.

Soldiers and journalists in all countries initially nurtured a schoolbook view of the coming war that largely dated back to Napoleonic days, or even before – even though there had been other wars since then. Adam Hochschild noted: 'Many French and Austrians did not wear camouflage uniforms, but combat outfits of brilliant red and blue, and had no metal helmets either'. Most were totally unprepared for the impact of new inventions like the ultra-rapid machine gun and razor-sharp barbed wire, which made human wave attacks extremely costly and soon led to a protracted stalemate along opposing trenches.<sup>6</sup>

Baschwitz, too, may initially have been rather naïve about what a modern, industrial war implied. At one point, he published a two-page interview with a Hussar about the campaign through Belgium. It is not entirely clear whether this story was meant as fact or fiction, but it was widely reprinted by other papers.

A lieutenant supposedly told him a sentimental story, about the romantic chivalry of his group of horsemen. They had been forced to stay over at a small farm for three days, the Hussar said, to wait for the infantry to catch up. The farm was run by a lone young woman, not particularly pretty. Initially she was tense and fearful, but loosened up and became friendlier after she saw that they had no evil intentions. They did not so much fancy her, he added, as felt touched by her 'feminine kindness'.

When it was time to take leave, 'came the tears; she pressed the hand of the *Fähnrich* [reserve officer candidate] time and again; and we too were very moved by the separation aches of their young friendship. Every one of us put a little present in the saddlebag [that was hanging there] to say goodbye: cigarettes, a little bottle of wine, and such things. In his chocolate package, the officer candidate [later in turn] found her picture – framed in a small silver hanger of little value'. That is how the French may have found it, he added, when he was severely wounded behind enemy lines shortly

6 Excerpt in the *INYT*, 29 July 1914, from his book *To End all Wars*.

thereafter. They would of course accuse him of having looted it. This story sounds too good to be true, and the realities of the war in Belgium and elsewhere were quite different – as we will see.<sup>7</sup>

Going over the four subsequent years, it is noteworthy that the prime headlines across the front page of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* mostly focused on the military fronts. They emphasized the progress of the Central Powers, and the setbacks of the enemy Alliance. On the one hand, this reflected the imposition of propaganda and censorship by the army command, similar to some other countries. On the other hand, it seems at odds with the small, family ad pages deeper into the *H.F.* Happy announcements of betrothals, marriages, and births were gradually supplanted by obituary notices of ever growing numbers of military men, as well as of civilians who had died prematurely.

Documents about Baschwitz's private life during these years are scarce: he may have lost or even destroyed them. He later sorely regretted some of the positions he had defended at the time, both in his newspaper articles and in his subsequent first book, *Der Massenwahn*. Today, it is difficult to put oneself back into his shoes. For this reason, I will devote some attention here to the wider context and to the German perspective of those days. The very latest historical research gives a more nuanced picture than the simple 'good-versus-bad' one that long prevailed.

### **Journalists' impressions about the opening skirmishes in the West**

For one, it is important to take a close look at the 'first impressions' about the war – as psychologists have since taught us, first impressions tend to stick. During the first few days, news from the front lines was halting and incomplete. The easternmost major city of invaded Belgium was Liège/Luik, the southernmost major city of the adjacent neutral Netherlands was Maastricht. They are both on the Meuse/Maas River, only some 25 kilometres apart. In between was the town of Herstal. For a quarter century, Herstal had been home to the Belgian 'FN' or 'national factory of weapons of war', as well as a notoriously rebellious proletariat. It even had a *home* arms industry, as workers produced parts to sell to the factory.

Maastricht and the southernmost border of the Netherlands were also the best observation posts as points of passage for the wounded, refugees,

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Baschwitz, 'Die Feindin' (The enemy woman). Written for the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, but reprinted in many other newspapers in Germany and Austria over time. Quoted here from a reprint in the *Mährisches Tagblatt*, 3 November 1915.

and journalists – and therefore, for stories. The largest newspaper of The Netherlands was *De Telegraaf*. On Friday, 7 August 1914, just before the weekend, it published the very first supposed ‘eyewitness’ reports from the front line by ‘a special correspondent’. This piece by a distant colleague of Baschwitz was widely quoted all over Europe, and thus played a key role in setting the stage for the further course of events.

It opened:

Liège has not yet capitulated, because the Belgian people offer superhuman resistance. Yesterday two thousand German troops had advanced to the *Fabrique Nationale* in Herstal. They were received by terrible gunfire. Every house – even the small miner homes – had been turned into fortifications. Barricades were put up, children and women dragged along ammunition. Armed resistance lasted until the last man, the last woman, in the narrow streets had been knocked out of combat.

Another item a bit further down in the same newspaper already reported that this had created ‘talk of a German punitive column that would level the Belgian villages in revenge over the attack by citizens on the Germans going through’.<sup>8</sup>

Other Dutch newspapers, then Belgian and foreign ones, copied these and similar stories, and also talked about widespread civilian resistance. Baschwitz later described a famous related political cartoon ‘showing heroic Belgian mothers, with a number of under-age children holding on to their aprons, shooting through windows and door openings’ at German generals riding by in the street, high on their horses.<sup>9</sup>

### **Land war atrocities: German rumours and Belgian realities**

All of this seemed to confirm the worst nightmares the Prussians had had since the latter half of the previous war in 1870: a *levée en masse* and a *guerre à l'outrance* – a mass mobilization and a total war to the extreme. That is to say, a partisan, guerrilla, or peoples’ war with *franc-tireurs* and other treacherous acts committed behind the frontlines.

This triggered numerous German reports of the sniping, killing, and mutilation of wounded and dead soldiers by women, children, and the

8 Retrieved through the Delpher Press databank.

9 *Der Massenwahn*, p. 239; also see p. 91.

elderly. Of fingers cut off to take wedding rings, but also of eyes scooped out: ears, noses, and genitals cut off. Such ‘war lore’ stories – a few true but most false – had resurged during every major European conflict of the previous centuries, and again during the recent, atrocious Balkan wars of 1912-3. Now they resurged again.

Knightley’s book on war correspondents and propaganda reported that: ‘The German press abounded with stories of hospitals filled with German soldiers who had had their eyes gouged out. The *Weser Zeitung* reported that a ten-year-old boy had seen “a whole bucketful of soldiers’ eyes”, an atrocity story as old as the Crusades (p. 106). *Die Zeit im Bild* ran an account about a French priest who wore a chain of rings around his neck – taken from fingers he had cut off. Baschwitz’ own *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* said that Belgians gave German troops ‘cigars filled with gunpowder’ which blew up in their faces.

The headlines across the *H.F.* front page of Saturday 8 August said: ‘On Belgian soil – The victory of Lüttich’ (the German name for the city). But then, immediately below, was another headline about ‘Monstrosities’ (*Scheusslichkeiten*) committed against Germans in Belgium. An inside page had a smaller headline about a ‘shameful witch-hunt’ (*Hetze*), followed by a long list of acts of violence perpetrated against German civilians and property. Five days later, a front-page headline again spoke of ‘The Belgian horrors’. Another five days later, an article on an inside page reported a call for witnesses to give their testimonies to the authorities, and to register them in writing.

The German Emperor had already noted privately that ‘the population of Belgium [...] behaved in a diabolical, not to say bestial, manner, not one iota better than the Cossacks. They tormented the wounded, beat them to death, killed doctors and medical orderlies, fired secretly [...] on men harmlessly standing in the street – in fact by pre-arranged signal, under leadership’.<sup>10</sup>

The Emperor demanded that the King of the Belgians be notified that such actions would have grave consequences. That same day, the commander of the Prussian Second Army decreed that individual crimes would from now on lead to collective punishments – such as heavy fines, hostage-taking, or the burning of entire houses, villages, and neighbourhoods.

Meanwhile, the Belgian government recognized the risks, and reminded civilians to leave resistance to the regular army and the militia. The latter consisted of two parts: 46,000 members in full uniform, the other 100,000

<sup>10</sup> Personal commentary on a Belgian message concerning the militia uniforms, noted in the ‘Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts’, quoted in Horna and Kramer, p. 18-19, n. 41.

with only shirts and armbands – although there may even have been a brief shortage of those because of the onrush of volunteers. According to recent Hague conventions (of 1899 and 1907), these militiamen were to be considered legitimate fighters, not civilians.

But the Germans had had reservations about these new rules, and had not properly circulated them. Whenever they thought there was civilian resistance, therefore, they often imposed mass punishment – as in the old days. This was also done because the aforementioned Schlieffen plan of attack depended upon extraordinarily rapid progress through Belgium. The German offensive was thus accompanied by a long string of large-scale war crimes. Baschwitz's grave mistake was that, in the context of the day, he did not or did not entirely believe the Entente reports about these crimes.

On the one hand, the early German reports of atrocities committed against their troops and citizens had included a wide range of older 'war lore' and hearsay, of gross exaggerations and inventions. At the time, there had not yet been social-psychological studies of such legends and hearsay, and journalists and authorities had often not learned how to weed them out. In fact, this particular case inspired the *very first* systematic study of rumours and the processes involved. This was written by a sociologist who wrote a detailed report in French, which was adopted by the Belgian government in exile in France, and was translated the next year into Dutch, English, and Spanish, and a year later into German. But a famous later theorem warned, 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'.<sup>11</sup>

This is important because, on the other hand, these rumours helped trigger an uninterrupted series of German mass atrocities against Belgian civilians: in Aarschot, Andenne, Tamines, Dinant, and then Louvain/ Leuven. The latter, also called 'the Oxford of the Low Countries', saw a large part of its university and unique library destroyed. In recent years, historians have gone back to the original reports, to verify them in painstaking detail. They proved largely true and well documented.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See the 1916 study by Fernand van Langenhove. The modern field of study only took off 30 years later – that is to say, after the next war – with Gordon Allport's 1947 study on *The psychology of rumour*. Meanwhile, American sociologist William Thomas and his wife had formulated their famous theorem in 1928.

<sup>12</sup> See Horne and Kramer; and Lipkes.

## Baschwitz and the mutual accusations

News stories about these war crimes caused international outrage, which many ill-informed Germans still felt was unjustified. There was a flurry of government initiatives to have them mobilize their international contacts. In mid-September, for instance, Baschwitz's *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* published a special supplement in half a dozen (!) languages, with a call for its readers to order a number of copies to send to their personal contacts overseas, with personal by-lines. This was published under the title 'Help the Truth to Victory'.<sup>13</sup>

Around the same time, some 93 world-famous German intellectuals published an 'Appeal to the World of Culture' claiming their country had *not* started the war, and that they could not believe their army had a policy of mass reprisals, terror, and atrocities. This was signed by world-famous scientists like Ernst Haeckel, Max Planck, and Wilhelm Röntgen, and included a dozen recent Nobel Prize winners. Among them was the famous Lujo Brentano who had supervised Baschwitz's Ph.D., although he later distanced himself from the appeal. Baschwitz most probably identified with it as well.<sup>14</sup>

The British immediately engineered a response by 52 of their most popular authors, including James Barrie (of *Peter Pan*), G.K. Chesterton (*Father Brown*), Arthur Conan Doyle (*Sherlock Holmes*), Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*), and H.G. Wells (*The War of the Worlds*). The government had formed a top-secret propaganda department in Wellington House, which coordinated closely with the 'press lords' for the rest of the war. Lord Northcliffe, owner of *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, would later even be promoted to Minister of Information.

Meanwhile Belgian, French, and British investigatory commissions had also begun to take testimony from eyewitnesses, publishing their final reports on the mass atrocities in the spring of 1915. An estimated 5,500 Belgian and a further 1,000 French civilians had been killed, they concluded; 20,000 houses destroyed and 1.5 million people (almost a fifth of the population!) forced to flee. The report by the British commission under Lord Bryce was particularly influential, both at home and abroad. It even triggered violence against German civilians and property, which the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* reported under a front-page headline about the 'Heightened fury of the English rabble'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 18 September 1914, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Brentano and others claimed they had only consented to the principle of such an appeal by telephone or telegraph, but had not approved the ultimate formulation.

<sup>15</sup> 'Gesteigerte Wut des englischen Pöbels', 15 May 1915.

**Figure 5**

One of the earliest and major themes of allied propaganda was that German troops went out of their way to mutilate and kill babies and children. This 1915 cartoon 'The gentle German' was produced by prominent British artist Edmund J. Sullivan (1869-1933).

In spite of some precautions, however, these testimonies also included a number of rather dubious stories: about group rapes in public squares and the cutting off of breasts, about crucifixions, about babies carried around on bayonets and roasted, about troves of baby hands carried around in uniform pockets. The interrogators were not able to exclude all such hearsay, such as about the systematic amputation of children's hands. Which then became a signature story, echoed in many Allied press cartoons. But this story about imagined atrocities derived from real atrocities reported only a few years earlier – only about the cruel Belgian colonization of the Congo.<sup>16</sup>

Such exaggerations undermined the credibility of the initial reports for sceptical outside observers, including German journalists like Kurt Baschwitz. In *Der Massenwahn*, he wrote extensively about *Greuelbehagen* (pleasure in horror stories) and *Lustmörderphantasien* (fantasies about

<sup>16</sup> See two recent books by American historian Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* about the Congo (1998), and *To End All Wars* about the First World War (2011).

lustful murders): how they originated, spread, and were picked up in newspaper reports.<sup>17</sup>

Baschwitz felt that the British had an all-powerful propaganda apparatus: they had a more highly developed media system and a global empire; they controlled the main trans-Atlantic cable and had set up a very effective operation in the United States. Germany failed to match that. At times, Baschwitz went to the capital to report for the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*. On one occasion, in the summer of 1916, the German war press office had invited journalists to meet with them, he said, about an unprecedented French atrocity in the newly emerging air war – but urged them *not* to report it yet.

Baschwitz wrote,

I will never forget the session of the press conference in Berlin where this horrible event was discussed. The spokesman of the military staff had a difficult task. Why would the authorities forbid the papers to print the news – since the information would already have reached Berlin in the form of a rumour, possibly further exaggerated? Why would they not provide an official version, for publication by the press?

The journalists were told to wait a few days, to prevent people abroad from pretending that it was a mere German propaganda story.

It was an atrocity of the first order, Baschwitz explained. A French plane had thrown forty bombs on the inner city of Karlsruhe, on a holiday. Some had hit a special *children's representation* given in the tent of Circus Hagenbeck, set up on a square near the railway station (possibly the original main target). The city and its centre were familiar to Baschwitz, because of his own last year in grammar school nearby. Some 120 civilians died: of those, no less than 71 were children. 169 more were wounded. The army command was possibly also afraid that the news might not only outrage, but also demoralize, their own civilian population.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Der Massenwahn* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), p. 66-74 (including a reference to the Congo connection), 100, 196, 216 and following, 225.

<sup>18</sup> On the Catholic holiday of Corpus Christi, 22 June 1916. These were the early days of mutual aerial warfare. The French at first exalted, as it was supposedly a successful reprisal, but later claimed it had been a tragic mistake. The quote is from Baschwitz's section on 'The child in war hate propaganda'; in a subsequent article on 'Germanophobia and the manufacture of opinion'. The event returned in *Der Massenwahn* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), p. 129-130. Eyewitness accounts and more details are available on the websites of the city and the regional broadcaster (SWR).

### Sea war atrocities: Blockades, U-boats, and the *Lusitania*

I have already mentioned that Hamburg had been confronted with the consequences of the hostilities right from the start of the war – even though it was far from the front lines. The British had immediately imposed a maritime blockade that hit the harbour and its trade hard. The city and its press, including the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, were therefore at least as much focused on sea warfare as on land warfare.

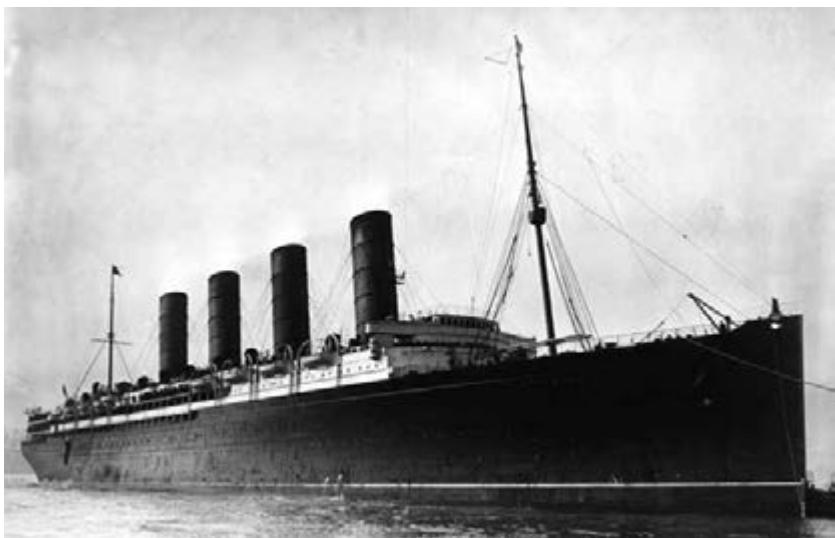
The main reason for the hostility of Britain, Baschwitz and his colleagues felt, was that Germany had been in the process of surpassing it in industrial strength. Also, Britain's primordial trade position in the world risked being challenged by Germany's growing – if still inferior – fleet. Germany had increasingly come to depend upon maritime exchanges for its exports of factory products, but even more so for the imports of fertilizers, agricultural produce, and as much as a third of its food – needed to feed an exploding urban population.

So, well before the war, Britain had begun considering the possibility of taking control of (all entries and exits of) the North Sea, from the Channel in the south to the minor archipelagos next to Scotland strewn across in the north. Nominally, such a blockade entailed a violation of international maritime law, even in wartime. Particularly if it was also applied to neutral shipping and ports, and if the definition of 'contraband' to be intercepted was gradually stretched: from arms and explosives to everything else, including food and medicine. Baschwitz felt that this was equivalent to the Medieval barbarity of a prolonged siege.

A specialized American monograph by an academic historian later called this 'the first large-scale use of food as a weapon in the twentieth century' and added that the ultimate 'collapse of the German war effort was induced *as much* by prolonged hunger as by military reversal'. As the ensuing famine caused huge numbers of civilian victims, Baschwitz considered it to be a massive British atrocity, but it was hardly recognized as such by the neutral countries and by posterity.<sup>19</sup>

As soon as the Germans had become aware of their strategic vulnerability to a maritime blockade, they had begun to build a small *Untersee-* or *U-boot* fleet of '*Wunderwaffe*' submarines (matching those of the British and the French). Submarines could sneak out *under* a surface fleet to try to impose

<sup>19</sup> Vincent, Chapter 2 and 6, and the flap of the book.

**Figure 6**

The British *Lusitania* (here on its pre-war trial run) was promoted as the fastest and largest Transatlantic liner at the time, capable of carrying almost 2200 passengers. Its May 1915 sinking by a German U-boat, also killing a number of American adults and children, was presented as another deliberate atrocity, and was widely expected to make U.S. president Wilson join the war. But it took another two years for this to happen.

a blockade on the enemy in return. Though it was of course much more complicated to entirely isolate the British isles and ports – particularly on the Atlantic, neutral American side.

When the British blockade began to bite in early 1915, the Germans announced unlimited U-boat warfare against all merchant ships supplying Britain. The latter began to use a wide range of ruses to get through anyway: transporting war material on passenger ships, falsely flying a neutral flag, disguising navy ships as merchant vessels and then attacking a U-boat manifesting itself on the surface – and subsequently capturing and then executing the entire crew (the so-called *Baralang* affair).

Initially, German U-boats usually fired only one torpedo, making only one hole in the hull. This would make a ship sink only very slowly, because most new ships had compartmentalized holds (even more so after the disaster of the *Titanic* of the White Star line only a few years before). This usually gave crews and passengers enough time to get into the boats, evacuate, and survive. In the spring of 1915, this went terribly wrong; it is worthwhile

to look at the details, since as Baschwitz observed this was earmarked as another premeditated and outrageous German atrocity.

The *Lusitania*, a very large, luxurious, and fast British Cunard liner was on its way from New York to Liverpool. During the previous voyage it had falsely flown a neutral flag (as the main advisor of U.S. president Wilson was on board under a false name), but not this time. Such ships often carried considerable merchant loads, including 'contraband' war material. The Germans had put a notice in the papers of the still-neutral U.S., warning passengers that they took considerable risks when they booked on such ships. This did not prevent multimillionaire Alfred Vanderbilt to board, however, or an art collector with sealed tubes containing paintings by no less than Rembrandt and Monet.

Off the coast of Ireland, the *Lusitania* was hit. The initial limited torpedo explosion was soon followed by a *second* much larger explosion, causing much greater damage and making the ship go down much faster than expected – in slightly over a quarter of an hour. Some 1,198 people drowned, including 123 Americans, 291 women, and 94 children – many of them infants. The British army later produced a famous recruitment poster with a dramatic artists' rendering of the actual sinking, with surviving passengers trying to swim for their lives or drowning. This was aimed at Irish men, who were particularly reluctant to join the British army at this point.

The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* reported the event with a front-page headline; Baschwitz later noted that the outrage abroad again focused on the Germans as consistent 'baby killers'. He later noted that 'Enemy rousing of public sentiment had exploited the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* with the greatest fervour and unprecedented effectiveness'.<sup>20</sup>

The Germans claimed they had fired only a *single* torpedo, and that the larger second explosion must have been caused by something else. For instance, it could have been a huge load of ammunition and materials for explosives that Britain urgently needed at that point in time, and that the ship did indeed transport secretly. This was of course adamantly denied by both the British and the Americans, even after the war was over. And yet it turns out that the Germans and Baschwitz were right in this case.<sup>21</sup>

Upon the centenary of the event, several overview books made a detailed reconstruction of the entire affair that revealed a pattern of duplicity on

<sup>20</sup> *Der Massenwahn* (3rd ed.), p. 93-99, 227-228.

<sup>21</sup> By contrast, Larson comes up with other explanations for the second explosion like a concentration of coal gas (rather than the ammunition that was indeed on board).

the side of the highest British authorities. They *had known* all along that there had been only one torpedo. Their naval intelligence had cracked the Germans' codes and was able to follow their communications

Yet they had not informed the captain of the ocean liner about recent submarine activity in the area, its targeting of the *Lusitania*, or even the recent opening of a safer, alternative northern route. They did not provide the expected military escort to the liner, and even withdrew their warships from the zone (which were under orders never to try and immediately rescue survivors anyway – as this was considered too risky).

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, had earlier written to the head of the board of trade that it was 'most important to attract neutral shipping to our shores, in hopes especially of embroiling the United States with Germany'. A prominent ex-officer and historian of British naval intelligence later concluded that 'the most likely explanation is that there was indeed a plot – however imperfect – to endanger the *Lusitania* in order to involve the United States in the war'. That very same evening, President Wilson's closest advisor indeed confidently told the U.S. ambassador at a dinner party in London: 'We shall be at war with Germany within a month'.<sup>22</sup>

A *New York Times* review of Larson's bestselling book on the affair added that Churchill had afterward all but celebrated the sinking of the *Lusitania* as a great Allied victory, saying 'The poor babies who perished in the ocean struck a blow at German power more deadly than could have been achieved by the sacrifice of a hundred thousand fighting men'.<sup>23</sup>

Yet President Wilson still hesitated and ultimately postponed the decision to enter the war for another two years, after Germany agreed to suspend such unrestricted U-boat warfare. He felt America was not yet ready to enter the war, either psychologically or militarily.

## The neutral Netherlands

Whereas the neutrality of Belgium had been violated, the neutrality of The Netherlands was respected during the First World War (but not during the Second, as we will see later). The Netherlands had earlier fought wars against Belgium, France, and Britain, but not against the new Germany.

<sup>22</sup> Details in Larson. Churchill: p. 190. Beesly: p. 323-324. House: p. 281. Churchill's deputy Fisher reportedly later wrote to his German colleague Von Tirpitz: 'I'd have done the same myself' (p. 333).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in the review by Hampton Sides. *INYT*, 7-8 March 2015.

Its main seaport of Rotterdam, where Baschwitz was soon to be sent, had instead flourished because of the intensifying shipping and trade links to Germany's main heartland of mining and industry up the Rhine River. This waterway had been greatly improved on both sides of the border during the last quarter of the 19th century.

As a smaller, neutral buffer state between the larger warring powers, The Netherlands also soon became a spy's nest full of international intrigue. In Rotterdam, the Germans operated from a consulate office in the so-called 'White House' near the Old Harbour, which Baschwitz was to visit frequently. It was a brand new eleven-storey tower building right in the centre, overlooking both the entire town and the river. Locals grandiosely labelled it 'the first skyscraper of Europe'.

The Rotterdam city archives hold an elaborate hand-drawn and coloured 'spy map' that the German secret service had produced at that time, which identifies and locates the key players on the opposing side – and their whereabouts in the Netherlands. This map identifies the British operation in Rotterdam as being run from the innocuous-looking office of a steamship company on the nearby central *Boompjes* quay. Its director happened to be a neighbour and friend of the head of the Rotterdam river police, and according to current historiography probably bribed him as well.<sup>24</sup>

In the Dutch public sphere, the Allies seemed to have the upper hand. Baschwitz later said that 'For an isolated German abroad, it was difficult to breathe in a surrounding atmosphere of delusional Germanophobia'. He felt that the leaders of the country tried to guard their *sang-froid*, but the public was constantly bombarded with Entente propaganda. 'Anyone who travelled to [such] neutral foreign countries during the war years will remember the paralysing impression they made on him: the horror representations shrieking out at you, from the windows of the bookshops, the arrangement of the newsstands, of the reading tables in cafés, the barbershop, etcetera.'<sup>25</sup>

It should be added that the warring parties on both sides, their information services and major media, also tended to offer regular journalists lucrative side jobs and subsidies. It was not unusual for a Dutch editor to do his own work in the morning, and then act as the 'foreign correspondent'

<sup>24</sup> Richard Tinsley and François van 't Sant, respectively. See: Klinkert. (This latter policeman later went on to become a noted Dutch spymaster, in charge of paying off the many extramarital children and prostitutes of the prince consort. More information can be found in the 2015 biography by Sytze van der Zee).

<sup>25</sup> *Der Massenwahn* (3rd ed.), p. 141, 66-67.

for a foreign paper in the afternoon. Of course this created a grey area of conflicting loyalties, which was sometimes used to influence coverage.

Apart from that, if the allies on either side heard that a news outlet had money problems, they would often approach them with an offer of secret funds in exchange for useful services and psychological warfare. Russia had, for instance, spent inordinate amounts on pro-war newspapers in Paris. Joan Hemels recently published an elaborate case study of how Austria Hungary secretly subsidized a nominally neutral major Dutch press agency with considerable prestige and overseas influence during these very same years.<sup>26</sup>

### The arrest of Baschwitz's predecessor

The *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* had always been a typical daily for a major seaport and its internationally minded citizens. One of its main focuses was shipping news: about the arrival and departure dates and times of ships, the quantities and qualities of the various types of cargo, noteworthy passengers and where they came from or went to. But as soon as the war and the blockade had begun, much of Hamburg's trade had shifted to neutral Rotterdam.

So the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* had hired a foreign correspondent for this important hub: Baschwitz's immediate predecessor Paul Vollrath, a former captain of the Hamburg HAPAG, which had grown into the largest shipping company in the world.

As shipping information slowly became more confidential because of the war and the blockade, Vollrath built a Rotterdam network of informers at shipping companies and hotel lobbies. He reported home by phone or cable, through the communication and transport link in Wesel along the Rhine River, but on the other side of the border. The information was reviewed and censored there by the war information department of the German security services. Then it was relayed to the editors of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, Baschwitz among them.

The Netherlands had just set up their own first military intelligence service, GS III. There were 25 people attached to the General Staff, but it mostly worked through the local police. Over the course of 1916, the naval war escalated further. U-boats from both sides attacked merchant ships supplying the other side. This meant that Rotterdam 'shipping news'

<sup>26</sup> Bohemian Robert Saudek and his 'Hollandsch Nieuws Bureau'. See Hemels, *Een Journalistiek Geheim Ontsluierd*.

about vessels going in and out was no longer mere commercial information, but increasingly became a closely guarded military secret. From the very beginning, the British had been suspicious of this correspondent of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, as well as of other German journalists.

The Dutch authorities had already told Vollrath that he could no longer travel to Flushing or Vlissingen (which overlooked access to the main Belgian seaport of Antwerp through The Netherlands), and that he could only call the Wesel communication hub during the day. They wanted to be able to overhear the conversations, and suspected that he might somehow be using secret codes.

The Entente services probably also helped inspire alarmist newspaper articles at this point in time. The largest daily of the country, the Amsterdam *Telegraaf*, had turned very anti-German. It carried a sensational piece about a huge German spy ring operating in Rotterdam, supposedly employing no less than 142 men and 62 women (also as seductresses). The more neutral Rotterdam daily, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* abbreviated as *N.R.C.*, later published a similar piece.

In late September 1916, Paul Vollrath was arrested as a spy along with some of his informers, and brought to the headquarters of the river police. He was held for some time and was then acquitted just before Christmas, and later again upon appeal – as Baschwitz was to report triumphantly in the *H.F.* At the time there probably was a lack of solid proof that he had put Dutch ships and lives in danger – so he was merely expelled as an unwelcome alien.<sup>27</sup>

The owner of the *Fremdenblatt* back in Hamburg probably was in a panic. The first Dutch newspapers to report the arrest of Vollrath appeared on Monday 2 October 1916. The *H.F.* staff probably conferred feverishly about the issue. They urgently needed a new correspondent for this vital post. Preferably a young bachelor, who could go at once. Preferably someone without a naval or military background so as not to cause further friction: a young economist or generalist might do. Anschlag refers to an assignment letter to Baschwitz by his boss, dated only two days later, on Wednesday 4 October.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> According to Dutch newspapers at the time. Baschwitz on Vollrath's appeal: *H.F.*, 26 May 1917, p. 2. Klinkert (p. 35, n. 27) maintains he may have been the 'Captain Vollard' figuring in the 1916 memoir *My Experiences in German Espionage* by 'M.', published in New York.

<sup>28</sup> Arrest reports in *De Tijd*, 2 October. Follow up: *Leidsch Dagblad*, 5 October 1916, among others. Letter: in Anschlag p. 15, n. 35.

## Baschwitz urgently sent from Hamburg to Rotterdam

According to his surviving Dutch registration card, Baschwitz's Hamburg passport was dated the very next day, Thursday 5 October. He probably spent the next few days preparing, and may then have taken an international train over the weekend. He reported to the foreigners' police in Rotterdam and was registered on Tuesday 10 October – all within a week. He went to live in the same quarters where his predecessor Paul Vollrath – now in jail – had lived on the Claes de Vrieselaan 118a. This was slightly to the west (but more or less within walking distance) of the centre of the town and the old harbour.<sup>29</sup>

I already mentioned that the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* usually had one major news story on the front page, followed by smaller items on topical affairs running through its columns. On the next few pages, this culminated in the '*Letzte Drahtmeldungen*': the very latest, communicated by telegraph or telephone. The major category of these came through neutral neighbouring states: primarily The Netherlands and Switzerland, and to a lesser extent Denmark.

This section often relayed news from allied newspapers or press agencies available there, such as the British Reuters. Most of the Dutch reports came from the Rotterdam bureau, some from The Hague or Amsterdam – where the *H.F.* probably also had lesser collaborators. I checked for these crucial dates. For the week after the Vollrath arrest, there was nothing at all from Rotterdam, which was quite unusual. The day Baschwitz arrived, by contrast, there was already a flurry of news items.

His first impressions about the country and the atmosphere proved to be a great shock. In Hamburg and Berlin, he had been completely enveloped by the German version of the war as censorship and propaganda had taken a firm hold. Here, he was suddenly exposed to radically different versions of events. To his great surprise, the supposedly neutral Dutch press gave considerable credit and exposure to the completely opposite Entente presentation of events.

At first he could not understand why this would be the case, but it would continue to intrigue him, later leading to his first book *Der Massenwahn*, about mass delusions. Early in his time in The Netherlands, he wrote a comment that although *De Telegraaf* and *Het Nieuws van den Dag* – and even the liberal *Algemeen Handelsblad* in the capital of Amsterdam – may have been published in Dutch, they were somehow managed by Belgians, French, and British, and profoundly anti-German.

<sup>29</sup> It may have been a sublet, as the card mentions 'Van Strijen' and the profession of 'expéditeur' for the main tenant.

The *Algemeen Handelsblad* abbreviated as *A.H.* devoted an ironic comment to correct this 'Incorrect reporting'. It said that the new correspondent of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* might have been misled by partisan local sources, or by the seemingly French- or English-sounding names of some key editors of those publications. One could limit oneself to laughing off this nonsense and folly, it said, but since the *H.F.* was not insignificant, it needed rectification – as it further contributed to poisoning the atmosphere. Baschwitz was off to a rather bad start with his Dutch colleagues.<sup>30</sup>

### The situation in Rotterdam in 1916

In many ways, Rotterdam resembled Hamburg: both were major inland seaports close to major river mounds. The old centres had many picturesque canals, but were also chaotic and smelly. As they were both completely destroyed during the next war, one needs old maps or travel guides to reconstruct the local situation at the time. Rotterdam and its suburbs claimed almost half a million inhabitants at this point, including a considerable recent influx of some 8,000 Belgian refugees.<sup>31</sup>

Like Hamburg, Rotterdam still had several unconnected railway stations, which served different destinations and companies. Train travellers from Germany like Baschwitz arrived at the Maas station on the northeastern riverbank. Boat travellers from Germany further up the Rhine arrived at the *Oosterkade* or Eastern quay next to this station, where smaller boats also ensured onward connections to lesser provincial towns along the Dutch waterways. The better-off guests from the Central powers stayed at the fancy Maas hotel, located on the nearby central *Boompjes* quay.

Tramways connected these transport hubs and the centre to neighbourhoods farther away. The city had a lively art scene and a major museum, with a noteworthy collection of Dutch masters from the Golden age. It also had a number of major theatres, concert halls, and variety theatres. But by 1916, energy savings had led to a reduction in heating and lighting, and earlier closing times, so the collective mood had sunk as well.

Although the Netherlands were neutral, transport and trade had gradually come to suffer. Dutch coal mines in the extreme southeastern province

<sup>30</sup> *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 November 1916.

<sup>31</sup> Out of a million Belgian refugees nationwide, which made the population in The Netherlands temporarily swell from 6.2 to 7.2 inhabitants: a rise of some 15 percent.

of Limburg apparently long continued to supply Germany.<sup>32</sup> But North Sea traffic was heavily contested. Almost every day, the Rotterdam newspapers reported about Dutch, British, or German ships that had hit a mine or were torpedoed. Interestingly, in most of the dozens of cases, the crew was indeed reported to have been given ample opportunity to get into lifeboats. On occasion, they were even dropped off near land.

But the hostilities still meant that shipping fell sharply, particularly after the British succeeded in imposing an ever-tighter embargo on *transit* goods destined for Germany. Many harbour workers were laid off; there was labour unrest and abject poverty, food rationing and soup kitchens. Since demonstrations against the rising prices and growing scarcity regularly got out of hand, military and police were considerably reinforced and highly visible. This contributed further to the grim atmosphere.

The war was visible in other ways as well. A number of soldiers from the warring parties were provisionally interned in camps or hospitals. Toward the end of the war, prisoner exchanges between Britain and Germany through the Netherlands accelerated.<sup>33</sup>

### **Baschwitz's monitoring of the Dutch and foreign press**

It is important to emphasize that Baschwitz's assignment concerned a key time and a key place. On the one hand, it took place in early October 1916 – exactly halfway through the war, before the balance began to shift. On the other hand, it was at a point when propaganda was playing an ever more decisive role. Further, he was sent to one of the major communication hubs through which Anglo-American and world news seeped to the Central powers.

Baschwitz's personal archives still contain the original 'letter of assignment' for Rotterdam. He was promised an allowance of 225 Guilders or 513 Marks per month for expenditures on top of his salary – which was probably not bad. There was no more talk of 'shipping news'. His task instead became monitoring the 'press voices' (which was also equated with 'public opinion' at the time): not only from neutral Holland, but even more so from major enemy states like Britain. He was also to try to encourage the selling of *HF* supplements, illustrated magazines, and other related publications at newsstands in The Netherlands.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Luijten, p. 72 and following.

<sup>33</sup> See the chronicle of WW I on the website of the Rotterdam city archives.

<sup>34</sup> Reproduced in *Anschlag*, between p. 14 and 15.

His foreign language skills were probably limited at the time, but he may have received local help. He was to transmit his articles by telephone to the aforementioned Wesel communications hub, just across the border in Germany. To prevent overlap, Baschwitz was to remain in regular contact with a Dr. Otto Gaupp at the Grand Hotel Victoria in The Hague, who apparently also contributed occasionally from the seat of government.<sup>35</sup>

Baschwitz probably frequented the central Post Office and the 'Reading Cabinet' private-public library, then located near the central *Beursplein* (Stock Exchange Square), the *Blaak* railway station, and the Old Harbour. At one point, he mentioned occasional collaboration with colleagues at the local liberal quality paper *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, which were also nearby.<sup>36</sup> While this paper was officially neutral, it was often close to city and harbour interests that favoured trade with the German hinterland.

The Netherlands was ideologically diverse, with four major political currents, two secular and two religious, which were later called the 'pillars' of Dutch civil society. Each had its own newspapers and network of social organizations in different domains. The liberal current of the enlightened bourgeoisie (to which Baschwitz felt close) had the *Algemeen Handelsblad* in Amsterdam, the *Nieuwe Courant* in The Hague, and the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in Rotterdam. These papers tried to refrain from overtly taking sides in their reporting, as best as they could. This procured the additional advantage that the Germans allowed the export of extra copies to occupied Flanders in neighbouring Belgium.

The Catholic current of the two Southern provinces directly bordering Belgium had the national *De Tijd* and *De Maasbode*, published in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. They sympathized most with the plight of the similarly Catholic Belgians and with the cause of the Entente nations of Britain and France, and were thus very anti-German. The Protestant current had *De Standaard* and other newspapers, while the socialist current had *Het Volk*.

<sup>35</sup> In the spring of 1916, he had contributed a general piece to the *HF*, on The Netherlands and the Dutch press, which also branded *De Telegraaf* as viscerally anti-German. It had been translated by the *Nieuwe Amsterdamer*, and then re-published in the *Haagsche Courant*, 5 May 1916.

<sup>36</sup> These colleagues possibly included, at least initially, Anton Lievegoed, then on the night staff. Hemels wrote: 'Until late 1916, he was a helpful and expert colleague for foreign correspondents who needed reliable news' (in Hemels' lemma on Lievegoed for the *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*). We will later return to Lievegoed, who went on to become the first 'private lecturer' for newspaper science in Leiden, and then head of the new Dutch Government Press Service.

## Baschwitz's black sheep: Louis Raemaekers

The largest and most national daily *De Telegraaf* was also very anti-German for the entire war. Louis Raemaekers, the main editorial cartoonist of *De Telegraaf*, had become one of the most effective international propagandists for the Entente cause. He became Baschwitz's principal '*bête noire*' or black sheep, as a supposed Germanophobe and demagogue. Raemaekers had briefly studied in the Belgian capital Brussels in his youth and had subsequently become an art teacher in The Netherlands, but then he began to make political drawings that attracted attention. He felt personally outraged by the reported German atrocities.

Raemaekers drew a country in ruins, strewn with the corpses of civilians amidst rivers of blood. But 'The Rape of Belgium' was more often symbolized by a vulnerable, half-denuded young woman, terrorized by male brutes somewhere between gorillas and Neanderthals. Baschwitz said Raemaekers consistently depicted German soldiers as *Lustmörder* or sex murderers.

The cartoonist also consistently took the most extreme horror stories of crucifixions and amputations and condensed them into a single striking image that would jump off the paper and into the face of the reader. His creations, which had clear black lines and occasional primary colours, were easy to reproduce. Soon they were syndicated and carried by influential foreign newspapers, such as Lord Northcliffe's popular *Daily Mail* in London, and *Le Journal* in Paris.

Raemaekers then moved to London and got an agent – which to Baschwitz was proof of where his loyalties really were. Indeed, it was Wellington House, the powerful secret British propaganda service, which took the successful cartoonist under its wings. It organized an exhibition and published books of his most effective work. One was even prefaced by the prime minister himself. It then organized a promotional trip to the still-neutral United States, where Raemaekers even met President Woodrow Wilson in person.

In the U.S., his cartoons were picked up by the almighty Hearst syndicate, which published hundreds of papers. Millions of copies every day. There is no doubt that the Dutchman whom Baschwitz despised single-handedly helped influence the further course of events. No less than former President Theodore Roosevelt later called his cartoons 'the most powerful of the honourable contributions made by neutrals to the cause of civilization in the World War'.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Quoted by Ariane de Ranitz. She wrote a Ph.D. dissertation and a book about Raemaekers. There was also a renewed burst of interest about him upon the centenary of the beginning of the war, with another exhibition and book.

The situation of Baschwitz's closest relatives had changed. His father had become chronically ill; he could probably no longer work or support the family, and he ultimately landed in a sanatorium in Frankfurt am Main. Kurt had gradually come to replace his father as the adult male and responsible head of the family, even though he had long left their original home.

His mother Hedwig and his younger sister Johanna probably had already gone to live with Kurt during his last months in Hamburg, and managed his household. Migration papers mention Breitenfelderstrasse 64 as the common address of all three at the time. Obviously, it would be better if the two women could follow him to Rotterdam. Everyday life was not easy in the neutral Netherlands, where there were also shortages – but it was still infinitely better than life in a Germany at war and under blockade.

Kurt's mother Hedwig followed him to Rotterdam after almost a year, in the autumn of 1917. Her card in the Rotterdam archives says that she registered on 4 September 1917. Kurt probably could not accommodate her in his sublet, so she went to live not too far away at the 'Royal': then a 'pension' or boarding house, later a hotel. It was located on the Witte de Withstraat 18-20. The street and its surroundings were considered the local Fleet Street, where the *N.R.C.* and other major papers were located, and was right in the heart of the central 'city triangle'.<sup>38</sup>

## **The German famine and a Dutch relief campaign**

The very first item Baschwitz reported from Rotterdam concerned the 'fairy tale' spread by Reuters, that German troops on the Western Front were plagued by shortages: not only of ammunition, but also of food. The troops received priority supplies, but the home front was increasingly affected by the British maritime blockade. Baschwitz knew this full well; before he left Germany, he had already experienced the first of a series of notorious *Kohlrübenwinters*, where turnips began to replace potatoes as the main staple (the harvest had also been hit by a worldwide drought that year).<sup>39</sup>

Baschwitz later tried to illustrate the aggravating situation with telling anecdotes from Holland:

<sup>38</sup> This area was heavily hit during the next war, rebuilt, and is today one of the most fashionable hangouts for youngsters.

<sup>39</sup> 'Englische Märchen von der Westfront', *H.F.*, 10 October 1916.

A small, wholly un-dramatic, wholly insignificant everyday experience, therefore even more characteristic. We have completed our meal at a Rotterdam restaurant. We are leaving and have reached the doors. The old gentleman in our company – just arrived from Germany – hesitates, looks back at the table we have just left. On the white linen lies half a roll – that one usually leaves nonchalantly after a rich meal.

But this is not what happens.

With a few steps the old gentleman from Germany returns to the table. And with a red face he puts the leftover piece of bread in his bag. He does not need it, either now or in a few days time, when he will travel back and bring fresh bread along. But he comes straight out of a country where family members are dealt thin slices of dark substitute bread – weighed on a letter scale. He sees that the people at the nearby tables notice and whisper. Is it compassion or malicious pleasure that one reads in their faces?<sup>40</sup>

Correspondents from the neutral U.S. had already noted growing shortages and obvious signs of malnourishment in Germany. Medical professionals from Britain later confirmed that the average calorie intake in Germany had dropped by half or even two-thirds during the last years of the war. Compared with the last pre-war year, the death rate among civilians rose by almost 10 percent in 1915 and 14 percent in 1916, and even by 32 percent in 1917 and 37 percent in 1918. There was also a sharp drop in birth rates. Vulnerable groups were particularly hard hit: women, children, and the elderly.<sup>41</sup>

Dutch churches and charitable organizations had meanwhile begun to organize special holidays for underfed German children, to help them get back to a healthier weight: first for a group of 500 children, and by the end for some 40 groups of that size – a total of 20,000 children. Both German and Dutch railways provided free transport for these events. Baschwitz noted that pro-Entente papers like *De Telegraaf* suggested that the numbers

<sup>40</sup> The longer quotes here are from a later piece on ‘Deutschenhass und Meinungsmacherei’, p. 545–548. The printed pages are among Baschwitz’s papers, but it is not entirely clear where and when they were published. Possibly in an edited overview, together with essays of others, under the title *Weltkriegsbuch*. It is an early reflection on the themes of *Der Massenwahn*, where such fragments return (p. 226 and elsewhere).

<sup>41</sup> Post-war reports quoted in the detailed study by Vincent, p. 49, 137, 146, 170.

were even larger, and that these events boiled down to a massive attempt to provide relief to the enemy.<sup>42</sup>

At one point, Baschwitz wrote:

We move on and arrive at the Rotterdam railway station. Behind the window of a train leaving in the direction of the German border, a jostle of numerous children's faces with red cheeks. There are moving goodbyes. With tears on both sides – also on that of the kind-hearted women and men who brought their temporary German foster children to the station.

Many transports have already arrived of children with bleak and emaciated faces. Many transports have already returned to the homeland – with young creatures restored to resilience, thanks to the self-effacing care of their Dutch hosts. They try to keep a low profile, for fear that their charitable work might otherwise be made impossible.

The British sensational press had already coined a new invective for these hosts: 'Hun pamperers'.

This is where the puzzlement that would lead to Baschwitz's first book, about propaganda and enemy images, began. 'Already during the war, the Dutch – just like the other neutrals – proved ready – immediately and wholeheartedly – to help with all these initiatives as good people: not only with child relief, but also with prisoner exchanges and other charitable works. This makes the contrast between good works and evil opinions. How can such a contradiction be explained?' he wondered.

Now let us imagine the child transport, returning from Dutch hospitality to the suffering homeland, on its journey through Netherlands territory to the German border. At this point the concerned lady accompanying them admonishes one of the little ones to scratch its boots on the floor, so that they do not look so new anymore. Otherwise they will be confiscated at the border, and the child will be told to make do with the old pair in its suitcase.

A bit further down a group of boys crowding around a friendly welfare worker discusses how to hide a precious piece – an extra tablet of chocolate – for one of the siblings back home. The children in Germany are not familiar anymore with the brown, sweet, nourishing stuff – an everyday

42 'Die Zaungäste'; 'Die deutschen Kinder in Holland'. *H.F.*, 4 November 1916; 26 May 1917.

treat for all the children in the world out there. Because at the border, they will possibly search the bags to see if the piece of chocolate does not exceed the very small regulatory limits. In spite of all begging and tears, they may take it away.

The customs people preferred to be lenient, he added, but when they felt that they were observed by their superiors, they could suddenly turn harsh.<sup>43</sup>

### Spring 1917: the U.S. entry into the war

For several years, the long front lines had hardly budged along a broad strip of some 500 kilometres long. Muddy trenches and barbed wire ran all the way through Northern France, from the Channel coast to the Swiss mountains. Some sixty million shells (!) had been fired in the protracted battle over the key fortifications around Verdun on the Meuse River in the northeast alone. They had reportedly caused 379,000 French and 335,000 German casualties, but changed little.

A senseless slaughter with similar numbers developed around the Somme River in the northwest. The British commander of largely inexperienced regional volunteers consistently underestimated the hardened German troops.<sup>44</sup> The British Prime Minister later confided to a journalist, 'If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don't know and can't know. The correspondents don't write, and the censorship would not pass the truth'.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, there was rising unrest in giant Russia. The Germans facilitated the return of Lenin from his Swiss exile. The 'bourgeois' revolution of early 1917 was followed by a communist autumn revolution. The subsequent peace treaty of Brest-Litowsk allowed the Germans to redirect their Eastern divisions to the Western Front. The British and French armies thus came under a worrying amount of additional pressure.

Only the entry of the U.S. could break the stalemate. But president Woodrow Wilson had narrowly been re-elected with a 'whisker thin' majority, 'decided by a mere 4,000 votes in California', because of his solemn pledge

43 'Deutschenhass und Meinungsmacherei', p. 545-548, op. cit.

44 According to historian Peter Barton, on the occasion of the centenary of the event. In a series of 3x50 min. television reconstructions, repeated on BBC Two on 17 August 2016 (and also on the French science channel RMC Découverte on 17 April 2017).

45 Lloyd George to the chief editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, after hearing a private presentation by the war correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. Quoted in Knightley, p. 79.

to voters that he would keep out of the conflict. After the *Lusitania* outrage, Germany had agreed to suspend unrestricted U-boat warfare. But as American supplies to Britain had since gradually picked up to an estimated value of ten million dollars per day, Germany felt forced to announce a resumption of the unrestricted attacks on merchant ships in early 1917.<sup>46</sup>

The final straw was the release of a top-secret telegram from German Secretary of State Alfred Zimmermann. This telegram had been intercepted and decoded by Britain, which then spun it as an attempt to push Mexico to invade the U.S. A year earlier, big headlines across the front-page of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* had reported skirmishes along the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>47</sup> The U.S. feared that the Mexican revolution and civil war might spill over, and lead to initiatives to reclaim the border states they had lost seventy years earlier. However, the telegram only said that if the U.S. gave up their neutrality in Europe and attacked Germany, then Germany might in turn give up its neutrality in America and support a Mexican attack on the U.S.<sup>48</sup>

But the 'revelation' of the telegram helped turn public opinion around, as well as major Washington policymakers. At the beginning of Holy Week in the spring of 1917, President Wilson gave a solemn speech meant to convince Congress. On the eve of Good Friday, it was Baschwitz's Rotterdam bureau that relayed the bad news. A headline across the front page of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* noted an *Erklärung des Kriegszustandes* – a declaration of war.<sup>49</sup>

A huge propaganda effort then began with the intention of further convincing the American people, through the famous Creel commission on 'Public Information'. The core message was again built out of stories of real and imagined atrocities. But the U.S. hardly had a regular land army at hand anymore. It took more than a whole year to fully organize it and transport it to Europe, to help turn the tide there. Between the declaration of war and the full mobilization of the American army, the Germans tried to force destiny with a 'final offensive', presented as almost successful by them.

Whereas the U.S. still only had 300,000 men on the ground by the spring of 1918, by that autumn they already had a decisive 1,800,000 in Europe. An American study later reconstructed how the German military position

<sup>46</sup> The quote is from Fleming's recent overview study, which took another critical look at the detailed background of U.S. entry into the war.

<sup>47</sup> H.F., 22 & 23 June 1961.

<sup>48</sup> See the monograph by Tuchman for more on the Zimmermann telegram.

<sup>49</sup> Thursday 5 April 1917, evening edition.

abroad, and the food situation at home, had ruined civilian morale there – which dropped sharply from early 1918 onwards.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, Wilson announced a peace plan based on his famous ‘14 points’. This included a definite end to secret diplomacy between the great powers, the dismantling of multinational empires, and independence for new states.

### Baschwitz family events

In the spring of 1918, Kurt’s sister Johanna had also followed him, probably living with her mother Hedwig in the same ‘Royal’ boarding house – not too far from Kurt’s address in Rotterdam. Her card in the Rotterdam archives says that she registered on 21 March: just in time to celebrate her 29th birthday there. That same day, Baschwitz reported a *Zornausbruch* (‘outburst of rage’) by the Dutch Foreign Minister John Loudon in Dutch parliament. Loudon railed against the pressure that the Allies continued to exert on his neutral country.

A month later, a local newspaper listed Johanna’s intended marriage, and a month after that, she married in Rotterdam.<sup>51</sup> They may have been betrothed before the hostilities began. The bridegroom’s name was Otto Wilhelm Thelen. He was described in the official papers as an ‘interned German officer’ from Hagenau (Hagueneau). It turns out that this was a brand-new air force base of the Empire, only very recently built near Strassburg (Strasbourg).

I found that Otto Wilhelm Thelen had been an engineer, involved in plane-building and flying, and had been promoted to captain. His brother Robert had been one of the foremost pre-war German pioneers and heroes in the field of aviation.<sup>52</sup> Otto Wilhelm Thelen and Johanna Baschwitz had a son, Peter, who at one point contributed to the famous *Der Spiegel* newsmagazine after the next war.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Albig, p. 295. Also in the Dutch book I edited with Jeroen Jansz, *Psychologische praktijken*, p. 191.

<sup>51</sup> The bridegroom had been born in Berlin. Announcement: *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 25 April 1918. Marriage: 8 May 1918, documented in the family register.

<sup>52</sup> Otto and Robert were among the twelve children of a Berlin producer of brewery equipment. Robert was involved in plane building and flying from as early as 1910 onwards, and was the holder of many records (see his German Wikipedia page [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Thelen](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Thelen)). He apparently introduced his brother Otto Wilhelm to these activities. The latter ultimately became manager of a plane-building company in Frankfurt am Main in the late 1930s. Inevitably, they became entangled in the NS war effort.

<sup>53</sup> In connection with *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the publication of which Baschwitz advocated as a friend of her father – as we will see.

In the summer of 1918, a new threat emerged, not only for civilians in warring countries, but also for those in neutral ones. In late July, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, which Baschwitz probably read every day, first carried a minor item on a virulent epidemic, under the heading of 'Spanish flu'. It noted that at the Rotterdam margarine factory of Van den Bergh (later Unilever), almost 200 people had suddenly fallen ill.<sup>54</sup>

A follow-up item one week later had said that as many as a quarter to a half (!) of all employees had reported ill at the telegraph office and the postal services, at the tramline company, and in many private offices. The health authorities counselled all citizens, such as the Baschwitzes, to stay away from crowds and fun fairs – which were soon forbidden. But this did not stop the contagion.

People throughout Rotterdam reported high fever, coughs, sore throats, and muscular pains – resulting in general exhaustion and fainting. Ads promoted the famous *Abbey* cough syrup as a miracle cure, but in vain. The most seriously ill stopped eating and drinking, had trouble breathing, and died within a few days. Some 22,000 people died from the flu in the Netherlands during these years, and another 38,000 from pneumonias that were probably partly related.

In August, word came from Frankfurt am Main that Kurt's father, Joseph Baschwitz, had died in the sanatorium there. He may have been already weakened, the means of proper treatment may have become scarce, or the flu epidemic may have aggravated his case. Because physicians were still largely unfamiliar with the new disease, the symptoms were widely misdiagnosed. The epidemic had spread from the Front Line through Belgium, and the Germans thus labelled it the Flemish flu.<sup>55</sup>

The mass celebrations at the end of the war spread the virus even further. It is today estimated that as much as 20 percent of the world's population was infected, and between 50 and 100 million people actually died. That is to say, more people from each of the warring parties died from the flu

<sup>54</sup> It was called the 'Spanish' flu because that was the neutral country where it had first been reported. The King was even said to have almost died, but was supposedly saved by drinking lots of Bacardi rum as a disinfectant. However, the contagious disease was later found to have originated in China, been brought to the U.S. by railway workers, and then settled in a key Kansas army camp. From there, American soldiers had brought it to Europe, in spite (or even because) of the 14 to 26 vaccinations they got against other diseases).

<sup>55</sup> Kurt's youngest daughter told biographer Ebels-Dollanová 65 years later that he had died of diabetes after many years in a sanatorium. This may or may not have been the sole cause of death; such patients often die from complications such as organ failure.

than from the extremely murderous war itself. Ever since, there has been a latent fear of a similar new epidemic.<sup>56</sup>

## Germanophobia

There was little compassion for the hunger and diseases hitting Germany's civilian population – not on the side of the public in the neutral countries, and even less from that of the warring countries. Baschwitz described press sentiments in late August/early September 1918, after both Germany and Austria had made belated offers to finally end the war:

How do the peace sentiments appear in the street scenes of Rotterdam, which is not as Germanophobic as Amsterdam, or even Geneva? On the newspaper booths those Dutch and foreign journals are exhibited (and from them those pages) with which the vendors hope to cater most effectively to the tastes of the passing multitude [...]

All newspaper booths display the title page of *La Vie Parisienne*, showing a little Paris lady with a giant black soldier. Next to it is an English cartoon that derides the Germans as barbarians, by pairing the crown prince with the king of the Huns.

A Dutch magazine had a drawing where Germany dances with Death. Germany says: 'Enough, enough, I want to stop'. Death answers: 'You invited me, now you must dance on!'. All express some kind of *Schadenfreude*, or malicious pleasure. Baschwitz added, 'That is how it has gone for four full years of war'.<sup>57</sup>

Baschwitz and his colleagues observed that the Germanophobia in neutral and Allied countries had reached delusional heights. The emperor and Prussia were deemed to be 'half Asian', descending from Genghis Khan and the Mongols, or from the Vandals and the Huns of Attila. Baschwitz's papers contain a full page from a serious American newspaper, in which professors of physical anthropology discuss the definite scientific proof that the famous archeological find of *Homo Heidelbergensis* had, in fact,

<sup>56</sup> Such as the so-called 'Swine' or 'H1N1' flu of 2009, the ins and outs of which I discussed in my study *Mood Contagion*, Ch. 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Der Massenwahn*, p. 246-248. (The text is rather idiomatic here, so the translation is approximate).

represented 'the first Prussian'. That is to say, the Prussians were still close to the primitive Neanderthals. In the same article, the skulls of only 10 percent of Germans were said to resemble those of the civilized modern humans of other western nations.<sup>58</sup>

The general suggestion was that it was not a question of just an authoritarian state and a disciplinarian mentality. But that the savage Prussians and Germans were *genetically* more prone to committing atrocities and war crimes than the allies were. Baschwitz and others countered that this was forgetting Serbian war crimes during the Balkan wars, Russian war crimes in East Prussia and Eastern Europe.

As well as British war crimes during the Boer War, or in Ireland during its current independence struggle; American war crimes after the Spanish war, during the annexation of the Pacific islands, including the bloody subjugation of the Philippines. Or the widespread deployment of millions of 'coloured' people by the allies, as cannon fodder or support troops on the murderous European battlefields.<sup>59</sup>

## 1919: Paris and Versailles

After the U.S. entry into the war, it had still taken a full year for the balance to finally begin to shift decisively. Throughout the late summer and the early autumn of 1918, the Central Powers lost ground. On 11 November, an armistice was signed in the Northern French town of Compiègne, whereby the Germans agreed to withdraw all troops from foreign soil. But there was widespread confusion over the exact terms: the French treated it as an unconditional surrender, while the Germans still hoped the U.S. would broker a fair deal.

The *H.F.* recalled its correspondent from The Netherlands. The Peace conference began on 18 January 1919, in the splendid untouched palaces of the greater Paris. The aliens police and foreigners register noted that Kurt Baschwitz and his mother left Rotterdam exactly a week later, travelling back to Hamburg. Initially, the mood there was relieved, as citizens still believed they would see the 'peace without annexations or reparations'

<sup>58</sup> This article quoted professors from the American Museum of Natural History and the Evolution Chair at Columbia University. 'Prussian ferocity' by Dr. Ballou of the Academy of Sciences, in the *Chicago Herald & Examiner*, Weekly section, Sunday 2 June 1918.

<sup>59</sup> Further elaboration in my separate essay on the war's atrocities and propaganda, to follow later.

that had been floated earlier. But the mood soon turned sour as it gradually became increasingly clear that Germany would be made to pay very dearly.

All 27 Allies were represented in Paris, but the three major powers met in 145 closed sessions to make all of the important decisions. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George sat between his colleague Clémenceau and President Wilson (as he later quipped, 'between Napoleon and Jesus Christ'). From the beginning, the conference and its agenda were hijacked by the 77-year-old French Prime Minister, who took great pride in his nickname *Le Tigre* and was set on revenge. Nationalist emotions had been whipped up so high through the atrocity-based propaganda that it had become impossible to prove either rational or wise. (Critics add that Germany itself had proved just as vengeful when it imposed previous peace agreements on the French and the Russians).

Lloyd George wavered. The successive Prime Ministers of Italy (the fourth big power) became increasingly disaffected. American President Wilson got ill, lost control, and many of his idealistic 'fourteen points' were soon forgotten. Baschwitz's subsequent book *Der Massenwahn* tried to reconstruct the gradual derailment of this whole process, using, for example, incriminating revelations in the memoirs of critical statesmen and diplomats who had attended.

The peace treaties were not negotiated, but imposed upon the Central Powers. They were signed in separate suburbs: in Germany's case, it was Versailles. The centrepiece of this treaty was the innocuous-sounding 'Article 231', which meant that Germany accepted the *sole* responsibility for having started the war, and for the entire destruction it had subsequently caused. The allies made catalogues of all the damages, added them up and came to a total of 226 billion gold Marks to be paid in reparations, which was later reduced to 132 billion – reportedly the equivalent of 284 billion pounds or 442 billion dollars in 2015. More than half of this was earmarked for France, which had accumulated a huge war debt.<sup>60</sup>

At one point, annual reparation payments were maximized to run only until 1963, but were later lowered and extended to run to 1988. Germany was to hand over large parts of its military and civilian air force and maritime fleet, huge numbers of trains and lorries, and even cattle – anything that could easily be moved abroad.

Frontiers were substantially redrawn: Alsace-Lorraine became French again and three other key industrial border regions were neutralized or marked as collateral for 5, 10, and 15 years, respectively. Baschwitz and his colleagues at the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* and other major newspapers felt

60 Figures and comparison of war debts in Vincent, p. 15, 159.

outraged. (Only a minor part of the total sum was ultimately paid before the Nazis came to power).

One Allied critic was a financial adviser of the British delegation who resigned in protest: John Maynard Keynes, who subsequently published a study of *The economic consequences of the war*, and became world-famous during the depression. He called Versailles a misguided French attempt to destroy its rival Germany – although not quite like Rome's decision to simply flatten its rival Carthage. Baschwitz noted that the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing, key presidential adviser Edward M. House, and even President Wilson himself, had increasingly despaired about Clémenceau's uncompromising attitude in private.

The Prime Minister of Italy, Francesco Saverio Nitti, proved to be a Cassandra. He soon published *Peaceless Europe* and similar books, warning 'as a friend of France and an enemy of German imperialism' that this treaty 'born by hate and rancour' would prove counter-productive, and only lead to new wars. In one fell swoop, he published a range of secret treaties the European allies had earlier concluded to divide Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the rest of the world among themselves, in flagrant contradiction with their official reassurances to the U.S.<sup>61</sup>

While the Peace conference dragged on, an estimated 800 adults per day died of hunger in Hamburg and North Germany alone. When the future American President Herbert Hoover tried to introduce an emergency food relief program during the spring, French Prime Minister Clémenceau is said to have quipped 'There are twenty million Germans too many' anyway.<sup>62</sup>

The Berlin statistical offices calculated that the blockade had led to an extra mortality from hunger and disease of *three-quarters of a million* civilians up to the time of the armistice. But the worst was still to come. After this, the allies took control of many of Germany's last maritime supply lines through the Baltic Sea and largely blocked them as well, until the Weimar Republic finally gave up all resistance, and signed the *Diktat* half a year later. Even after signing the document, it took years for the food and health situation to stabilize. Later academic studies from the Allied countries only slightly reduced the estimated number of famine victims.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> On 26 February 1922, the *New York Times* carried a page and a half on 'Europe's secret treaties [...] How the Paris conference was hampered by hidden agreements – about which Mr. Wilson and the State Department had no advance information'.

<sup>62</sup> Just before the First World War, Germany had almost 60 million inhabitants and France had almost 40. Clémenceau's remark – possibly made to a journalist – was reported widely (even by President Wilson), but I have not been able to track a precise original source.

<sup>63</sup> Vincent, p. 17. Also compare the English Wikipedia overview on the Blockade.

Baschwitz felt that the media and public opinion in both neutral and Allied countries tended to overlook this major atrocity, and instead focused exclusively on German misdeeds. (He himself largely did the opposite). In my earlier work, I have labelled such a communication process the 'selective articulation' in the social construction of meaning. This occurs largely spontaneously, through the accumulation of a wide range of intermediary processes: philosophical, economic, social, political, historical, geographic, linguistic, semiological, and psychological.<sup>64</sup>

64 *Understanding global news.*



## 4 First Book: On Mass Propaganda and Enemy Images

Baschwitz's experiences, feelings, and views concerning 'The Great War' of 1914-18, and the resulting Versailles conference of 1919, were reflected in his reporting of those days. But he also initiated a more thorough reflection on the processes underlying these events, which culminated in his first book aimed at a larger audience, *Der Massenwahn* (literally *The mass delusion*), printed in 1923. It soon sold out, and had to be reprinted that same year. *Der Massenwahn* provided large amounts of alternative information about these same traumatic events, but also the outline of an entirely new theory about propaganda and the psychodynamics of enemy images – half a century before that became standard fare.

### One more example: The 'corpse factory' hoax

Baschwitz's reporting and book discussed the contested origins of, and blame for, the war. He also discussed the stories of atrocity that were peddled by the media during the war. He confronted the accusations of German misdeeds with those of the Allies' misdeeds. *Der Massenwahn* discussed the power of propaganda, but also pointed to an underlying psychological dynamic: the urge to believe in the nobility of one's own side, and in the evil of the other side. Let us zoom in on only one example, from among the many he provided.

On Thursday, 16 April 1917, Baschwitz received a shock upon opening the largest local daily, the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*. His personal archives still contain the clipping, with underlining in red. The headline on the front page says: 'Lubricants, explosives and animal feed from corpses'. This became one of the most widespread and influential atrocity hoaxes spread by the Entente Allies.

The article said: 'This message confirms the sensational story about the grisly new German industry [...] We have long known that the Germans undress their dead behind the front lines, and tie them together' in packages. They were then, the article claimed, loaded onto trains to Liège, and to the north of Brussels, to be recycled in some kind of 'corpse factories'. Baschwitz immediately felt outraged about this *Kadaverlüge* or 'cadaver

lie' and *Leichenfettmärchen* or 'corpse fat horror tale'. He returned to this story repeatedly and extensively in his first book.<sup>1</sup>

The story had a long prehistory. The original German 'Schlieffen' plan of attack had been based on a very rapid *Blitzkrieg*, particularly through Belgium. For that purpose, the army had brought an unprecedented cavalry to bear, with 40,000 horses. Many horses were soon wounded or killed, and one logistical problem was how to dispose of the large dead bodies, which weighed half a tonne or more each.

Since there was a great scarcity of fats, the Germans tried to recycle the animal carcasses. It was too inefficient to transport them over long distances, so one or more recycling plants were built close to the Front Line to make useful fats and powders out of them. They made soap, candles, and fodder – and also dearly needed glycerine and even nitro-glycerine for explosives.

These installations were called *Kadaver-Verwertungs-Anstalt*, or *KVA*. Normally, the German (and Dutch) word *Kadaver* is reserved for animals, and only in exceptional cases for humans. But in French and English, the words *cadavre* and 'cadaver' might be more easily used for humans. The confusion may therefore have originally arisen unintentionally and spontaneously among the Entente civilians and military men who heard about the German installations, but subsequently the misunderstanding was intentionally fanned further by propagandists. These early rumours got new life a few days after the U.S. announced that it would join the war, when there was a further surge in demand for atrocity stories.<sup>2</sup>

The *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* newspaper had carried a short item by a German front reporter on such an installation in a Belgian town near the German border. This story was then picked up by Belgian resistance newspapers, such as the conservative catholic *La Belgique* (which had been re-baptized *La Libre Belgique*), which was partly printed for refugees in The Netherlands. Baschwitz surmised that this might initially have been an inadvertent error by a zealous nighttime editor overestimating his language skills. But the original minor German piece was then elaborated into a much larger embroidered story, which was not about the recycling of animal corpses, but of *human* corpses.

Another resistance newspaper was *L'Indépendance Belge*, partly printed for refugees in England. The original German story, and the new Belgian twist to it, were also picked up by Northcliffe's *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, and other newspapers in London. Berlin immediately issued a clarification

<sup>1</sup> *Der Massenwahn*, p. 53-57, 72, 202 a.o.

<sup>2</sup> Also see Lipkes, p. 611-614.

about the German word *Kadaver* usually applying to animals, unlike the English word ‘cadaver’. Independent translators concurred. Berlin denied categorically that the installations processed human corpses. But these denials were willingly ignored by most Allied papers.

A week later, on 24 April 1917, the same *La Libre Belgique* even said that the German denial only confirmed the truth of the original revelations. (The related clipping is again still among Baschwitz’s personal papers). The article claimed that a closed railway wagon with German cadavers, naked and tied together in packages, had even mistakenly arrived in neutral Rotterdam!

The article also said that it had been a pleasure for Belgians to hold newspapers with this description from the British Reuters news agency under the nose of the German watchmen – who proved to be vividly impressed. ‘The idea of being transformed into stearin was even so unpleasant to them, that a German *Landsturm[er]* refused his meagre portion of margarine’, it said. Baschwitz could not believe that people would believe this stuff.

Baschwitz’s target Raemaekers based one of his most famous propaganda cartoons on it. It

depicted bodies of German soldiers being loaded onto a cart in neatly packaged batches. This was accompanied with a comment by [British writer] Horace Vachell: “I am told by an eminent scientist that six pounds of glycerine can be extracted from the corpse of a fairly well nourished Hun [...] They are sent ruthlessly to the blast furnaces. One million dead men are resolved into six million pounds of glycerine”.<sup>3</sup>

After the war was over, both the French and the British secret services proudly claimed to have invented and pushed this psychological warfare hoax. During the mid-1920s, for instance, the former British chief of intelligence in France paid a visit to New York. During a dinner party there, he boasted that he had simply switched the captions next to German pictures of horse cadavers and human corpses. He had not realized that there was a reporter in the audience, however, and the next day this claim ended up in the *New York Times*.<sup>4</sup> There was an outrage over this admission of trickery in Britain and elsewhere, and as soon as he got off the boat again he felt forced to issue a formal retraction.

<sup>3</sup> Also see the Wikipedia article about the ‘German Corpse Factory’ for further references ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_Corpse\\_Factory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Corpse_Factory)). This earlier hoax contributed to doubts and hesitation when the first reports about the Nazi extermination camps began to leak out in 1942. Also see: Horne and Kramer, p. 410-411.

<sup>4</sup> *NYT*, 20 April 1917 & 20 October, 29 November 1925.

To underline his integrity, he even added that he had at the time refused to use the *faked diary* of a German soldier that supposedly confirmed the corpse factory story. This diary had been produced and offered to him by the general headquarters in France. This faked diary actually existed, and was apparently exhibited for some time in the Imperial War Museum in London. Since it put the veracity of other German soldier diaries into question (such as those used in other Entente atrocity reports), however, it was later made to disappear from sight.<sup>5</sup>

The whole affair illustrated that, while some of the atrocity stories may have been true, many were twisted or invented. They became influential not only because they were trumpeted through propaganda, but also because people tended to believe that they themselves and their own group were basically good, and that opposing groups were basically evil. People therefore spawned and cultivated illusions about both their own and enemy nations.

## Mass delusions

When still in The Netherlands, Baschwitz had apparently already begun working on the manuscript for his first book *Der Massenwahn*, which I prefer to translate as *Mass delusions*.<sup>6</sup> His earlier doctoral dissertation had had a very narrow scope and had been aimed at a very narrow audience. Since he had been a newspaper journalist for a decade or so, this book was much broader in scope, and aimed at a much larger public.

*Der Massenwahn* was primarily aimed at the German home audience, which was deeply puzzled by the course and outcome of the war, of the peace negotiations, and of the Versailles Treaty. They all wondered: What happened to make all of this happen?

Like his later books, *Der Massenwahn* was a *hybrid* text: halfway between popular and scholarly. On the one hand, it was clearly meant to be written in accessible, everyday language – although the German of his day and social class often still tended to use unnecessarily complicated words, long-winded phrases, and rhetorical styles. On the other hand, he also provided documentation.

5 Knightley, p. 105-106.

6 After some hesitation, I have decided to usually translate *Der Massenwahn* (singular) as *Mass delusions* (plural), as it seems to be more appropriate in English. I am aware that in some cases (for instance, with regard to the notion of Germanophobia), he meant a singular phenomenon.

Baschwitz often had a strange way of debunking. The reader would have to make an effort to follow his argument. But then he would suddenly say: No, this is not how it is! This is a rather confusing habit. But still: he used a journalistic approach, alternating between the narration of events and the analysis of their nature. He tried to show that things were often different from how they seemed. Yet he tended to allude to sources in rather general terms, and gave few precise footnotes.

In his work, Baschwitz tried to develop broad social scientific explanations for these psychological phenomena. The various disciplines that are familiar today were then still in the process of being defined and demarcated. Baschwitz was an economist by training, with a sociological bend, and not a psychologist as such. Yet he also picked up psychological ideas here and there and tried to apply them, but remained very idiosyncratic.

In *Der Massenwahn*, for instance, he explicitly or implicitly borrowed concepts and theories from various psychological domains and schools, but not always in an explicit or coherent manner. From general, experimental, and perception psychology, for instance, the notions of internal and external force fields and balances came into fashion at the time through the Gestalt or configuration school, in Berlin and elsewhere. These influenced Baschwitz's central notion about 'evening out' or unburdening – prefiguring Leon Festinger's ideas about 'cognitive dissonance' and reduction (more below).<sup>7</sup>

### The role of preconscious and unconscious processes

A relatively new insight was also that 'introspection' was of limited help, since people themselves often did not know or understand why they felt or did certain things. Instead, one had to make systematic observations and comparisons to be able to decipher the underlying processes. One set of psychological schools focused on pre-conscious processes, another on unconscious processes.

The psychology of learning through associations developed rapidly. In Russia, Ivan Pavlov and Vladimir Bechterew had discovered how preconscious reflexes worked; in America, John Watson and the behaviourists were to further discover how conditioning worked. The psychodynamics of motivation also came to the fore through the studies of clinical psychology and psychotherapy. In Europe, Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts

<sup>7</sup> As his 'mass psychology' successor Brouwer used to point out in his 1960s lectures. Also see: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 186-189.

had further developed ideas about unconscious impulses: how they leaked through in various forms of experience and behaviour, and how they influenced people's reactions.

While developing the manuscript for *Der Massenwahn*, Baschwitz undertook an effort to read and understand several of Freud's relevant books, such as his *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (English: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*). His personal archives contain eight pages of notes on this text, discussing relevant notions such as *Denkhemmung* ('inhibition of thought'), and *Affektsteigerung* ('emotional arousal').<sup>8</sup> But he did not really adopt a coherent psychoanalytical framework; instead, he just used certain concepts. Similarly, he implicitly alluded to some of the defence mechanisms (like denial, sublimation, repression, displacement, projection), but not always in a systematic way.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, both psychologists and sociologists wrestled with the question of how to connect the individual, the group, and the collective. The older 'mass psychology' of Scipio Sighele and Gustave Le Bon (to which we will return in Chapter 8) had proposed emotional contagion and hypnotic suggestion as explanations for such connections. The early French social psychology of Gabriel Tarde had already moved from one-sided imitation to mutual interaction, but Baschwitz and others were apparently not aware of this important shift.<sup>10</sup>

Anglo-American authors later claimed that 'social psychology', as such, had been born with Edward Alsworth Ross's book with that title, just before the First World War. Notions like the herd instinct (Wilfred Trotter) and the group mind (William McDougall) continued to be invoked widely as well. So Baschwitz could not yet build on a coherent grid of concepts; instead, he tentatively tried to invent explanations for the causes and consequences of persuasion as he went along. This also held for his ideas about media audiences and public opinion.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> File 119. Freud's book was published in 1921, but Baschwitz refers to the 1923 edition. He may thus have only procured and read it when he was completing his own 1923 *Der Massenwahn*.

<sup>9</sup> The nature and implications of Freud's *Massenpsychologie*, its predecessors and followers, are spelled out in my earlier study *Mass Movements*.

<sup>10</sup> The relations between these earlier authors and their concepts are spelled out in my earlier study *Crowds, Psychology & Politics*.

<sup>11</sup> To get acquainted with all the ins and outs of the seemingly strange text of *Der Massenwahn*, I began by producing an almost thirty-page 'reader report' with the basic context of the book, a detailed summary of the parts and chapters, and sections of both the original and the later rewritten version. I also produced a very complete register/ index: of all the people, books, and periodicals quoted; of all the socio-historic events commented upon or alluded to; and of all the various sociological and psychological notions and analytical concepts he invoked. Upon

## Publication of the first two editions

*Der Massenwahn* was published by the reputable C.H. Beck. C.H. Beck had begun as early as 1763, when a printer of that name in Bavarian Nördlingen also opened a bookshop and a publishing house, and even started a local newspaper. His son, Carl Heinrich, further built it into a major academic publisher. A century later, his grandson Oscar moved the business to Munich: not only the capital and major cultural centre of the state, but also of the whole of southern Germany. It published big names like Albert Schweitzer and Oswald Spengler's famous *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The decline of the West*). So Kurt Baschwitz was in good company.

A Beck ad announced *Der Massenwahn* as 'A book about mass delusions, about war delusions, about the conscience of the world and about the hatred of peoples'. It said that [in spite of hyperinflation]: 'Every German should collect his last bank notes to acquire this book and its surprising insights. Every foreigner should check the ideas of the author against his own experiences. All readers would thereby do themselves a true service, and at the same time help their fatherland and the world of culture.'<sup>12</sup> It claimed to solve both the riddle of the war itself, and its aftermath.

The first two editions of *Der Massenwahn* were published in *Frakturschrift* or 'Gothic print'. This style was increasingly subject to debate at the time. Some favoured it as traditional and typically German, while others wanted to replace it with a more modern and international script. The controversy lasted throughout the Inter-War period and even into the Nazi era, with some publishers going back and forth between the two styles.

One consequence was that the first two editions of Baschwitz's first book were in fact harder to read for foreigners, although they were nominally better known abroad. The third, completely revised edition was in a more modern font, much easier to read, but was less known abroad, as it was released just prior to Hitler's power-grab.

The book had an Introduction about our 'superstition': Our mass delusions about mass delusion. The first part dealt with individual reason and contagious mass delusions: whether sane or insane. The second part dealt with war delusions, and wishful images of the enemy as a man and as a warrior. The third part dealt with world conscience, with the need of neutrals to worship (the mighty winners) and to unburden themselves

publication of this biography, I will post this entire reader report (as well as another one on his equally complex *Du und die Masse*) on a related website.

<sup>12</sup> Reproduced in *Anschlag*, p. 16.

(of their bystander behaviour). The fourth part dealt with the futility of slogans, with beloved and unbeloved peoples, and with the hatred for some. The conclusion already spoke about ‘mirror thoughts’ and images on these scores.<sup>13</sup>

The preface was titled ‘About the careful use of this book’. It began with a quote from Johann Gottlieb Fichte: ‘An author should think before his readers, not for them’. In other words, he should aim to stir their autonomous reflection.

The book also displayed Baschwitz’s classical German *Bildung* (education, formation) in other ways. The chapters often begin with a quotation from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Nietzsche, or others. They devoted ample attention to Prussian luminaries: from Frederick the Great (*‘Der alte Fritz’*, his writings on Machiavelli, and his correspondence with Voltaire) to the more recent Bismarck. The chapters refer to these thinkers’ opinions on leaders and followers, the limitations of democracy, the press and public opinion. There are also ample discussions of major historical events, of wars and revolutions, both older and more recent.<sup>14</sup>

### **The logic of mass delusions and enemy images**

Mass delusions were not purely the result of propaganda, Baschwitz claimed; they could not be corrected by simply providing better information. The importance of the British control over the transatlantic cables had been overestimated, as had the Americans’ persuasion skills. His evidence of this was that the British had failed to ‘make opinions’ during their war with the Dutch Boer settlers in South Africa, and the Americans had also failed during their Civil War. Furthermore, public opinion was subject to sudden swings, which people later tended to forget about.

Both Frederick the Great and Goethe had already noted that the judgment of history adapted to success or failure. The Gospel of Saint John said: ‘In the beginning was the *Word*’. But Goethe’s Faust said: *‘Im Anfang war die Tat’*, or: ‘In the beginning was the *Act*’. It is not words that lead to actions, Baschwitz concurred, but actions that lead to words and the corresponding feelings: to discourses. History is always written by the victors, not by the losers. So the judgment of history is often a mass delusion, and there is a system underlying such historic errors of judgment.

<sup>13</sup> Also discussed in Ebels-Dolanová, p. 49–75.

<sup>14</sup> Also discussed in Ebels-Dolanová, p. 52–63.

Mass delusions are not the result of some mental disease, as they prevail among otherwise healthy people. Rather, they result from *Wünscherfüllungs-träume*, wishful thinking, about friends and foes. They result from mental shortcuts and *Entlastungs-bedürfnis* (the need to unburden oneself). Followed by *Tun-müssen* (when we are forced to do or accept certain things). Resulting in *Glauben-wollen* (wanting to believe the ideas that correspond to those actions or objects). A community of thinking does not, then, result from a herd instinct, but rather from a common responsibility (of a nation, for instance) for past and present actions, at home or abroad.

This is reflected in the consequences of war and the resulting mood of peoples. We flee our guilty feelings and repress our conscience. On the one hand, this leads to a reverence for the winners (and their supposed moral superiority). On the other hand, it leads to despising the weak losers (and their supposed moral inferiority). This helps to create *Kehrbilder* or reverse/mirror images. The horrors imposed by the victors (i.e., starving children) transform into the horrors imposed by the losers ('baby killers'). It is no use to try to enlighten people about the facts, because these processes are rooted in unconscious psychodynamics.

All this takes a special form for neutral peoples like the Dutch and Swiss during the First World War, Baschwitz wrote. The almighty British fleet was able to create facts on the ground (such as the blockade). The neutral bystanders felt incapable of and unwilling to intervene and do something about this, such as allowing food supplies to transit through their territory. This then posed a threat to the neutral peoples' self-respect, which mobilized their need to admire the victors, and then to unburden themselves by believing in – or even relishing – exaggerated horror stories.

As a result, some peoples came to be loved, and some peoples came to be hated. The French profited from this hate-mongering; the Germans were made to pay the price of it. This would not change as long as the Versailles Treaty was in place in its original form, Baschwitz felt. Only a renegotiation could alter the situation – both the material one and the psychological one.

## Reception, at home and abroad

*Der Massenwahn* became an immediate bestseller in Germany, which was still thirsting for explanations about the course of both the war and the peace negotiations and their loss. It immediately sold out, and was reprinted that same year. The publisher produced a promo flyer which underlined:

'This book is something completely new' in this domain. It also carried a long list of review 'blurbs' from the wider press. Some examples are:

*Preuische Jahrbücher*: 'The most valuable [things] that have been said about the biology [...] of public opinion in a long time'. *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*: 'A brilliantly written, refreshing and liberating book'. *Das Tagebuch*: 'An in many respects free spirit [...] has created a work here that no statesman should ignore'. *Weserzeitung*: It sheds 'light on so many political problems, that are otherwise difficult to grasp'. *Deutschösterreichische Zeitung*: 'It succeeds in making sense of the apparent senselessness of our contemporary experiences'. *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*: 'It belongs in everybody's hands'. *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*: 'The results [...] are really surprising'. *Hamburger Zeitung*: 'A commendable work'.<sup>15</sup>

The weekly of the nationwide newspaper publishers' association (which Baschwitz would later come to lead) hesitated, but spoke of an 'entirely new theory of delusions' which – if confirmed – might 'to some extent have a revolutionizing influence on the shaping of international foreign politics'.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, some minor national conservative journals took particular notice.<sup>17</sup>

More important for his international reputation was a glowing reference to the book by a key American social and political science pioneer Harold Lasswell. He was a pupil of Charles Merriam, who had been an advisor to president Woodrow Wilson, directed the wartime propaganda bureau in Rome, and then took over the chair of the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago – home to some of the most interesting social scientists of the country and the century. (Including Robert Park and Herbert Blumer, who were to develop an alternative approach to mass psychology in their 'collective behaviour' sociology).<sup>18</sup>

Merriam had sent his young graduate student Harold Lasswell to Europe on a special mission. He was to interview experts from various countries about their experiences with wartime propaganda. This resulted in his

<sup>15</sup> Printed flyer found in a copy of the second printing, in the final boxes containing several odd editions and translations of Baschwitz's work that were recently added to his archives in Amsterdam.

<sup>16</sup> *Zeitung-Verlag*, 1924, no. 25, p. 79–81, quoted by Anschlag, p. 9, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Baschwitz even contributed an article to a *Politische Wochenschrift für Volkstum und Staat*, 12 July 1928. (Also see: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 116–117).

<sup>18</sup> Park and Blumer emphasized the 'natural history' of emergent social phenomena and the role of 'symbolic interaction' in them. This was an approach of which Baschwitz appeared to have remained unaware, even though his successor Brouwer later adopted it. Also through overview handbooks by Robert Park and Herbert Blumer's pupils Neil Smelser, Kurt & Gladys Lang, Ralph Turner & Lewis Killian, which I all read as a young student of mass psychology.

1927 Ph.D. dissertation 'Propaganda Technique in the World War'. This text became a classic, although it is sometimes denounced for its somewhat detached/relativist/cynical discussion of various ploys – including the thorough exploitation of atrocity stories – regardless of whether they were true or false.

Lasswell concluded (p. 220-222): 'Small, primitive tribes can weld their heterogeneous members into a fighting whole by the beat of the tom-tom and the tempestuous rhythm of the dance'. But in modern society 'a new a subtler instrument must weld thousands and even millions of human beings into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope. A new flame must burn out the canker of dissent and temper the steel of bellicose enthusiasm. The name of this new hammer and anvil of social solidarity is propaganda'. But 'it demands its raw meat cooked and garnished by adroit and skilful chefs', because 'more can be won by illusion than by coercion'.

Lasswell had an early interest in psychiatry, psychodynamics, and psycho-analysis. He felt 'the best work' about propaganda had been done in Germany, with Ferdinand Tönnies (on public opinion) and Kurt Baschwitz (on mass delusions) 'among the conspicuous names'. He wrote:

There are, no doubt, profound psychological dispositions, which facilitate the work of the propagandist in fastening war guilt upon the technical enemy [...]

Perhaps the most ingenious explanation is the one put forward by Baschwitz, who describes the mind of the public as in conflict between the disagreeable fact of war and the wish to believe that the good is triumphant in the universe. It must, therefore, be that one's own nation is vindicating the right against the wrong.<sup>19</sup>

(I will return to such psycho-dynamic theories of enemy images below.)

Merriam went on to become the major founding father of American political science, Lasswell to become the major founding father of political communication and political psychology. Both merged new kinds of abstract theories with new types of practical research. And both later contributed to a 'great leap forward' in the fields of attitude change and persuasion during the next war.

<sup>19</sup> Lasswell, p. 1, 53-54.

## The belated and revised third edition

The first two editions of *Der Massenwahn* appeared in 1923, when the financial, economic, and social situation in Germany seemed to be at its worst. An official of the British ministry of foreign affairs later said about those days: 'Germany, an outcast in Europe, threatened with economic ruin and financial disaster, political disintegration and civil war, was practically at her last gasp, and by her desperate plight a danger – not only to her immediate neighbours, but to Europe as a whole'.<sup>20</sup>

Around the mid-twenties, with the new Treaty of Locarno, the situation stabilized somewhat, and seemed to take a slight turn for the better through the consolidation of the war debt, reparations, and loans. But from 1929, the situation deteriorated again. The Wall Street crash made the Americans recall their loans. Social and political tensions thus intensified, the centre parties shrank and the extreme parties expanded – both on the communist left and the fascist right. This made Baschwitz and his publisher decide to undertake a new edition of the book.

People referring to Baschwitz's work often seem unaware that this later version of *Der Massenwahn* is not merely a re-edition, but was almost completely rewritten from scratch. It had a different focus and a completely new subtitle. The manuscript was apparently more or less completed in the autumn of 1931. The subtitle of *Der Massenwahn* had previously been *seine Wirkung und seine Beherrschung* or 'its functioning and control' (i.e., its mastery, or management). The subtitle now became *Ursache und Heilung des Deutschenhasses* or *The Causes and Healing of Germanophobia*.<sup>21</sup>

Baschwitz had initially even proposed to make 'Hatred of Germans' the first element in the main title, but ultimately they thought it wiser to keep the familiar *Der Massenwahn*. The new publisher, Heinrich Beck (fourth generation), approved the idea of shifting the emphasis further from the psychological to the political. In their correspondence, quoted in the master's thesis by Anschlag, Beck stated: 'That will be the best, in the turbulent times we are going through'.

<sup>20</sup> In a memorandum about 'respecting the Locarno treaties' by J.C. Sterndale Bennett, published in *Documents on Foreign policy 1919-1939*, edited by M. Dakin et al. (1966). Quoted in Boterman and Vogel, p. 211-212.

<sup>21</sup> Also see Ebels, p. 135-42. After some hesitation, I have decided to often translate '*Der Deutschenhass*' as 'Germanophobia'. 'Hass' is literally 'hate' and has a stronger connotation. But 'phobia' has a more general meaning, and has been used more widely in many such newly composed terms, or neologisms.

The whole notion of a 'hatred of Germans' fitted perfectly into the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the early 1930s, but feels uncomfortable to us today, after the Second World War. In this book, Baschwitz referred to the Versailles treaty, its nature, and its imposition, and called for its renegotiation. On occasion, the new version of the book was even more polemical than the earlier one. But it is important to recognize that Baschwitz always remained a democrat, pledged to the rule of law. He opposed intimidation and violence, which initially came mostly from the left, but later from the right.

Baschwitz had spoken out against Hitler and National Socialism, in both press and radio comments. But the publisher urged him to tread carefully. 'Now is maybe the last possibility to bring out your book in the present form. Who knows what new events the spring [of 1932] will bring'. He urged 'a certain diplomatic prudence': toning down his direct attacks on the Nazi party, which 'might still come to power'. Apparently, Baschwitz removed some even more explicit attacks at the latest stage of revision.<sup>22</sup>

A flyer promoted the new work in the following way.

This book about *Mass delusions* by Kurt Baschwitz, which quickly became famous, has been sold out for years. But the transformative ideas of this book did not remain without effect. They belong to the most important discoveries of the post-war period, in the domain of the psychology of politics. They have not been seriously contested from any side, once they had been expressed.

It added:

In truth, the new edition is a completely new book. It continues to track the problem of mass delusions – up to the history of our own day. Beyond the special case of Germanophobia, it covers mass delusions as a phenomenon of humanity, which manifested itself in all ages and cultures, and exerted profound effects. The author does not offer a scholarly book, but knows how to connect scientific quality with absorbing readability. The book will profoundly grip the emotions of the readers.

<sup>22</sup> Letters of Beck to Baschwitz, dated 6 February 1932 and 24 November 1931. Quoted in Anschlag, p. 36–38, note 50 and 59. (He refers to a specific file in the personal papers of Baschwitz, but I have not been able to locate these letters; the archives may meanwhile have been reorganized).

So the book was completely rewritten. The first two editions of the book had consisted of 5+1 parts, with 16 chapters and 276 pages. The revised third edition consisted of 8+1 parts, with 41 chapters and 385 pages. These sections did not entirely run parallel, and few fragments remained completely intact.

Baschwitz also tried to improve the documentation. The first editions had had some notes, but no separate bibliography. The revised third edition had a 'selected bibliography' with 61 items (mostly books) published up to (and including) 1923, and 46 items from after that year. Of those, 28 were published in or after 1929, among the renewed crises. This shows that Baschwitz closely followed the course of events: the new trends that pointed to a further rise in extremism, and an impending threat to democracy. Hence his sense of frustration and his sometimes shrill tone.

### Revisionist views of war and peace

Baschwitz had felt vindicated by a wide range of newly published source materials. These were not only from Germany itself, but also translations from allied and neutral countries. Press studies, diplomatic memoirs, articles, interviews, and quotes reconfirmed his version of events concerning the beginning and end of the war.

One example was Italian Prime Minister Francesco Nitti's aforementioned book *Peaceless Europe*, which revealed the pre-war secret treaties between the Europeans (of which the Americans had remained unaware), and France's arm-twisting of its allies in Versailles.

Others had meanwhile begun to challenge a wide range of the major atrocity stories from the war. One was Arthur Baron Ponsonby, a more pro-German cousin of the very anti-German British Foreign Secretary. He was also a great grandson of Lord Grey (of the famous tea scuttle), and the son of the private secretary of Queen Victoria. The son was himself born at Windsor Castle, later her page. Educated at elite colleges, Ponsonby was a diplomat, secretary to the liberal leader, an MP opposed to the war, later Labour Undersecretary of State, and ultimately the leader of the House of Lords. In 1928, he published the bestseller *Falsehood in War-time*.

Ponsonby said that lies had been widely used to create and sustain a 'war will' by Britain and its allies. He undertook the debunking of some twenty influential claims. At the time, many welcomed the book as a breath of fresh air. Some present-day observers emphasize its flaws, whereas others have

distilled a further theory of enemy images from it.<sup>23</sup> Over the next dozen years, Ponsonby's book was reprinted almost every year (!). It was translated into German and French (with help of the German Foreign Ministry and information services). During this time, Ponsonby became a pacifist activist.<sup>24</sup>

## Explanatory framework

The entirely rewritten, new edition of *Der Massenwahn* tried to further elaborate the entire psychodynamics of enemy images. Baschwitz extended and further filled in the theory already outlined in the first editions, to replace the simple, Manichaeist vision of friends and foes. He also gradually expanded his vocabulary of specific notions and analytical concepts linked to it.

I produced a list of the German terminology with English translations and page references (for the last and most complete edition of the book). This came to six and a half pages with some 200 items.<sup>25</sup> To give a taste of his style of reasoning, at the end of this chapter I provide a few fragments from a kind of intermediary summary Baschwitz gave at three-quarters of the way through the book.

Baschwitz repeated that it was wrong to simply blame 'the masses': time and again, it had been the leaders that made things get out of hand. This was to become a red thread and a consistent message through all of his books and his life's work about the 4 P's (propaganda, press, politics and persecution). He also devoted ample space to statesmen: what they did, and what they failed to do.

To Baschwitz, the most puzzling case was the seemingly idealistic American President Woodrow Wilson. He had not been anti-German before the war, and his principled 'fourteen points' declaration at the end of the war had sounded fair. The problem was that it had been applied very unevenly:

<sup>23</sup> Adrian Gregory's 2009 *The Last Great War* expressed criticism of Ponsonby's work (as did Lipkes; Horne and Kramer). By contrast, Anne Morelli's 2001 *Principes élémentaires de propagande de guerre* reportedly derived the 'elementary principles of war propaganda' from it.

<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, Ponsonby's book later stirred up scepticism about the real atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Second World War – including the first revelations about the concentration camps and gas chambers. Other noted sceptics quoted by Baschwitz in his discussion of the origins of the First World War and its atrocities even went on to become outspoken Germanophiles – at an entirely wrong moment in time. One was the Norwegian jurist Herman Harris Aall, who ultimately became a Nazi sympathizer; another was the American social historian Harry Elmer Barnes, who reportedly became a Holocaust denier.

<sup>25</sup> The entire list is in my preliminary 'reader report' on this book, to later be posted on a related website.

the East and Central European empires had been dismantled, and many new states were given independence, but the allied Western empires themselves had not been dismantled at all. On the contrary, they had divided the new overseas spoils among themselves under various pretexts. Furthermore, Wilson had failed to rein in Clemenceau's shortsighted '*revanchisme*'.

Baschwitz could not know at the time to what extent Wilson had been ill in Versailles, to what extent his wife and doctor had later feigned to pass on his messages to the outside world. Nor did anyone know about the rigidity and personality problems that prevented Wilson from making concessions and doing deals (which also led to the refusal of Congress to ratify the Paris treaties and join the League of Nations). He subsequently became one of the first major contemporary subjects of elaborate political psycho-biographies.<sup>26</sup>

### Reception of the revised edition

The new version of Baschwitz's *Der Massenwahn* probably rolled off the presses somewhere around the summer of 1932. Major newspapers again reviewed it throughout the autumn. His colleagues at the *Hamburger Correspondent* lauded his engaging style and broad-ranging fundamental psychology.

The *Kölnische Zeitung* said the book spoke of 'The behaviour of peoples with regard to each other, of national hatred, which – in times of war – takes the form of mass delusions'. This had been demonstrated by the hatred of Germans during and after the [previous] war, it said, as had already been noted in the earlier review of the first editions of the book. But the correctness of the analysis had since been reconfirmed, it added, by the events around the military occupation of the industrial Ruhr area by France and Belgium in 1923 – as soon as Germany fell the slightest bit behind with its reparation payments.<sup>27</sup>

Within half a year of the publication of the completely revised third edition of *Der Massenwahn*, Baschwitz's worst fears came true. Hitler became chancellor, and arranged further election 'successes'. Thereafter, rather than peacefully renegotiating the terms of the Versailles treaty, he simply revoked

<sup>26</sup> Sigmund Freud (who had been extremely disappointed by the outcome of the war) soon collaborated secretly on a very one-sided study by his patient, American ambassador William Bullitt (a political adversary of Wilson). The English translation of this study only came out in 1967. By that time, Alexander and Juliette George had already published a much more serious attempt. Ever since, Wilson has remained a favoured subject of discussion among political psycho-biographers.

<sup>27</sup> Resp. 29 November & 2 October 1932.

them and worked toward a new confrontation. Baschwitz was stamped an ethnic Jew overnight, fired from his influential position, and scrambled to flee to The Netherlands.

Over the subsequent years, Baschwitz gradually came to regret the one-sidedness of his earlier patriotism, his blindness to real German war crimes in Belgium and elsewhere, and his polemic against Germanophobia. His references to the first editions of *Der Massenwahn* became ever scarcer. References to the third edition (easier to read but less distributed and known abroad) were completely absent. To his inner circle, he expressed regret about these youthful mistakes.<sup>28</sup> Had Baschwitz been alive today, he might have even taken action against the photographic reprint of the third edition that is still distributed by a far-right group.<sup>29</sup>

The whole notion of Germanophobia has also encountered renewed interest. On the one hand, as we have seen, it is popular amongst far-right circles. But on the other hand, there is also interest in the wider, mainstream context. Since reunification, Germany has rebounded to the position of the most dominant and economically healthy power on the continent, by far. In other countries, this inevitably stirs up bad memories and calls up old ghosts.<sup>30</sup>

### **Fast forward, to later stereotype and conflict studies**

In my analysis, however, *Der Massenwahn* is an interesting precursor of stereotype and conflict studies for entirely different reasons. It can also be seen as an early attempt to spell out (aspects of) ethnocentrism and the 'psychodynamic of enemy images'. Although it exerted only limited influence, it connects with strands of thought that only returned to the fore of psychology and the other social sciences half a century later – during

28 See Ebels-Dolanová, p. 142 (notes 94 and 95) and 200.

29 The reprint was published in 1999 by the vaguely named 'Verlag für ganzheitliche Forschung' ('holistic research') in Viöl, NordFriesland. Further research shows that this organization belongs to the periphery of the equally vaguely named 'Bund für Deutsche Götterkenntnis'. This small pseudo-religious group is in fact an anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi outfit, building on the 'Völkisch' ideas of Erich Ludendorff and his wife. (The former was a military leader alongside Hindenburg at the end of the First World War. He was a proponent of the 'total war' concept and of the 'stab-in-the-back' legend. About the betrayal of the 'almost victorious' army by 'defeatist' politicians and businessmen at the civilian home front. He became an early companion of Hitler, but later fell out with him). The present-day group was forbidden for some time in the Federal Republic, but due to a procedural mistake, it was again allowed. It is still closely surveilled by the Bundes Verfassungs Schutz, however.

30 See the related commentary in *Die Welt*, 18 February 2015.

and after the Cold war. Let me briefly outline some of the traditions that led to our present-day insights into similar problems.

First of all, Baschwitz's notion of Germanophobia surprises us in its original context, and for good reason. But it is not unique. The other major Western nations also provoked resistance and resentment: France did, Britain did, the U.S. did. After the Vietnam war, for instance, the U.S. generated a whole literature on the 'anti-Americanism' of overseas protesters.<sup>31</sup> The implication, of course, is that the resentment is illegitimate and irrational. Yet the proponents may feel that they have good reasons for it.

In a wider sense, similar ideas have also been applied to other social groups or categories: gender, (supposed) race or ethnicity, culture, religion, secular ideology, and more. We have seen anti-feminist, anti-gay, anti-black, Anti-Semitic, anti-Arab, anti-papist, anti-fascist, and anti-communist movements. Of course we experience these orientations as widely differing in their legitimacy. But the central mental operation is the same: we assign people we do not agree with to a fixed category with fixed characteristics, and then attach a negative valuation to them. I have shown elsewhere that this also applies to the current confrontation between the West and Islamic radicals or Jihadis.<sup>32</sup>

About the same time as Baschwitz, an American author also wrestled with this general phenomenon, and coined a new term for it. That was Walter Lippmann: an influential journalist who was one of the two close advisers of President Wilson that helped inspire his famous '14 points' – a high-minded internationalist declaration of principle, including a proposal to found the League of Nations.

Lippmann's seminal text *Public Opinion* (1922) borrowed the term 'stereotypes', used for the 'clichés' in printing technique. He posited that citizens cannot fathom the social world in its full complexity, but only through simplifications. This also imposes constraints on democracy, he added. New professional classes of information gatherers (journalists, academics) should therefore help develop more appropriate appraisals of the world. And politicians should favour the 'manufacture of consent' in support of necessary policy decisions.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See the work of the Hungarian-American social scientist Paul Hollander, for instance.

<sup>32</sup> See my 2013 book *Stranger danger and the epidemic offear*.

<sup>33</sup> This later contributed to a 'social construction' approach. See my *Understanding Global News*. Radical critics Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman had earlier shown that vested interests often play a decisive role. See their *Manufacturing Consent*.

All of this spawned a whole new field of study. After the next war, for instance, Baschwitz's colleagues at the University of Amsterdam, Hubert Duijker and Nico Frijda, conducted a major overview study about *National Character and National Stereotypes*, for the new U.N. organization for education, science, and culture, UNESCO – which of course included the views of Germans. At the same time, Brouwer, Baschwitz's successor in the mass psychology chair, did his doctoral dissertation in Dutch on 'Stereotypes as [a kind of] Folklore'.

Today, psychologists have reconfirmed Lippmann's claim that we do not directly live in the real world, but in a mediated world of 'mental representations' (such as national and other stereotypes). This inevitable mediation has entirely different implications. Some social psychologists had earlier focused on 'social categorization': the highly intuitive ways in which we ascribe certain characteristics to ourselves and to others, which is also based on appearance and labels. These ascribed characteristics then translate into notions about why we – or our opponents – do certain things and refrain from others.<sup>34</sup>

'Attribution theory' discovered that we all have a kind of ultra-fast supercomputer in our heads, a sorting machine. If we, or people of the same social category, do something good or well, we tend to automatically ascribe it to the superior qualities of our category. By contrast, if we, or people of the same social category, do something bad or poorly, we tend to equally automatically ascribe it to an unfortunate concurrence of exceptional circumstances – we explain it away. For people of an opposite social category, in both cases, we tend to automatically do the reverse. The logic is that our own ego and self-respect should be spared as much as possible. (Think of exalted sport club fans, for example)

This then linked with the theory of 'enemy images', which had also been under development since the beginning of the Cold War. The enemy images held by two opposing camps often have mirror-like characteristics, such as about who is to blame for the emergence and escalation of a conflict. Today, there is a complete library of scholarly literature about these processes. At the same time, statesmen and diplomats need to understand how their opponents see the world, if they are to interact more effectively with them.<sup>35</sup>

34 These ideas were initially proposed by European social psychologists, who were again partly of Jewish descent. See *Human groups and social categories* (1981) by Henri Tajfel and colleagues; *Social Representations* (2000) by Serge Moscovici.

35 See the famous 1961 article by Uri Bronfenbrenner in the *Journal of Social Issues*, and the 1967 overview book by David Finley and colleagues. A later accessible and illustrated overview of these same kinds of reasoning can be found in Keene.

Baschwitz had already ventured into this ill-defined moral and intellectual minefield during and after the First World War. But social psychological conflict studies, war and peace studies, 'polemology' and 'irenology', only really took off thirty to fifty years later. There is evidence that Baschwitz took notice of these new developments toward the end of his life.<sup>36</sup>

Thus some of Baschwitz's early approaches later proved to be dead ends or wrong turns, whereas others proved to be prescient and fertile. This whole archipelago of related fields is today studied within a variety of inter-disciplinary studies. One is 'the psychology of politics' or political psychology, which Baschwitz himself identified.<sup>37</sup>

### **Selected excerpts from Baschwitz' provisional summary of *Der Massenwahn* (mass delusions)**

(Three quarters into the final edition, on its 'laws')<sup>38</sup>

We do not suffer injustice because we are underappreciated. But we are underappreciated because injustice is being done to us. Doing injustice makes a people less unloved than suffering injustice. Unavailability makes one beloved; vulnerability to foreign attacks stimulates the hatred of the attackers. Because of the need of the collective soul to unburden itself, the completed act is equivalent to the planned one.

36 An elaborate interview with Dutch 'polemology' professor Bert Röling from the weekly *H.P.* (10 March 1962) is in Baschwitz's files. It has the telling headline 'A disquieting discipline'. The article referred to the possibility that 160 million Americans and 200 million Russians might die in an accidental nuclear war. Only half a year later, the world came really close to such a war during the Cuban missile crisis. The Dutch researcher Bert Röling was among the continental European pioneers of this new approach, along with French Gaston Bouthoul and Norwegian Johan Galtung. The early Anglo-American practitioners were John Burton, Morton Deutsch, and Herbert Kelman. Also see the overview in the article on 'Peace and Conflict Studies' on Wikipedia for more references ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace\\_and\\_conflict\\_studies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_and_conflict_studies)).

37 One recent book overview of political psychology was edited by Huddie (2013). The second of four parts is entirely devoted to 'International relations', Ch. 11 to 'Image theory', Ch. 12 to 'Threat perceptions', and Ch. 13 to 'Crisis management', p. 334-423.

38 These are quoted from the third edition. Although this edition was even more apologetic than the first two, it was also slightly better at apodictically explaining some of the purely psychodynamic claims of the whole approach. The argument is sometimes a little convoluted, so literal translation is very difficult. I have skipped the more idiosyncratic parts that focus on Germany's own fate in the First World War, and highlighted the more universal claims, which might also apply to the semi-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial conflicts in which the Neutral and Allied countries were involved (both at this point in time and later).

Inflammatory propaganda belongs to the delusional hatred against a people. It accompanies and aggravates it, but is not the cause of the mass delusion. Smart people who do not yet crave the mass delusion, do not accept such a propagandistic treatment that runs counter to their healthy notions of rationality and morality. Typical mass delusions can neither be created nor eliminated through planned propaganda. Sudden fundamental changes in popular mood have often occurred without preparatory propaganda, or even in contradiction to previous propaganda. (p. 254-255)

The need to unburden oneself manifests itself more painfully, the refusal to be enlightened more tempestuously, depending on how blatantly and saliently the extent of an inflicted injustice is demonstrated to a responsible community – and the more difficult it is made for it [that community] to close its eyes. The more bitterly it will hold on to the delusional wish to believe in evil, to irrationally shift blame to the victim. At the same time, the delusional wish to believe in the benevolence of the hate profiteer, and the blind urge to venerate him, become more unlimited. (p. 256)

Hatred between peoples knows only one criterion. Everything the hate-object does is unjust and reproachable. Everything the hate-profiteer does is just and right. It does not matter what is being done, but who does it. (p. 258)

The state of mass delusion can be recognized from the splitting of consciousness. Connected with it is a reluctance to enlighten oneself, which would otherwise be exceptional. Splitting of consciousness: Man resists becoming aware of his own knowledge, his own observations and his own conclusions. But only within a partial area, limited by a particular need for unburdening. He remains fully conscious of his waking senses in other areas, and uses his common sense. (p. 258-259)

Knowledge and education do not prevent descending into mass delusion. Warm-hearted and good-natured people experience it – the pressure of conscience – especially painfully because of the unfulfilled demands for humanity. Their craving for the self-deceptive means of mass delusion, for blaming the victim, therefore expresses itself particularly tempestuously and apparently crudely. (p. 259)

A mass delusion does not simply consist of incorrect views, which one might refute. However forceful the words, one cannot prove that witches do not exist in view of a burning woodpile [with a stake on top]. Men caught in a mass delusion want to believe things of whose untruth and irrationality they were (and will again be) convinced in a state of sane thinking. (p. 260)

The mass delusion is a flight, a hiding from one's better self, an effort to keep one's self-respect with treacherous means. In these cases, man is not overpowered by the 'mass' – that is to say the influence of the consensual feelings of the many. Instead, he flees into this 'mass', into this consensual feeling, that seems to provide him with a treacherous justification – so as not to have to listen to the urgent and countervailing voice of his own reason. (p. 260-261)

## 5 1919-1933: The Weimar Republic and the Mass Press

Baschwitz's second book aimed at a larger audience was to be about the freedom of the press, and *The newspaper through the ages*. Although it was nominally a history covering the entire western world, it more specifically reflected his experiences, feelings, and views about the role of the press in the unstable Weimar Republic between the end of the First World War and Hitler's coming to power. During those days, many thought that controlling of one or more major daily newspapers would also bring control over large swaths of public opinion and thus a receptive electorate. Baschwitz was in a good position to observe this power play, in which governments and parties, banks and conglomerates, tried to capture audiences – and then turn them into electorates.

### Wider historical context: The Weimar Republic

The war marked the end of an era, and the end of all four great Central and East European empires: Germany and Austria-Hungary, of course, but also Tsarist Russia and Ottoman Turkey. Each of these empires had been led by more-or-less authoritarian hereditary rulers, whose legitimacy had long been accepted without question, both at home or abroad. By contrast, the end of the war marked the further consolidation of the Atlantic empires: colonial Britain and France, of lesser countries along the coast, as well as the newly emerging informal empire of the United States.

Just before the armistice of 11 November 1918, the German chancellor had removed the Emperor, thus creating a de facto Republic. The seat of the head of state was temporarily transferred from the militaristic Prussian Potsdam of the *Kaiser* (next to Berlin) to the quiet Thuringian Weimar 'of Goethe and Schiller' – a reference to the other, more 'humanistic' side of German civilization. Meanwhile, mutinies and revolts broke out all around.

The day after the opening of the fateful Versailles conference, there were elections for a constitutional assembly in Germany. The social-democratic SPD got 37.9 percent of the vote; its former left wing, USPD (which subsequently evolved into a communist party) got another 7.6 percent. The Catholic centre party got almost 19.7 percent, the secular left liberal DDP 18.6 percent, and the right liberal DVP only 4.4 percent. The national

conservative DNVP got only 10.3 percent at this point. After a purely left-progressive government soon failed, the Weimar Republic was governed by varying coalitions with some kind of liberal support.

Liberals (like the aforementioned sociologist Max Weber) played a key role in the writing of the Weimar constitution. Before the war, Baschwitz had sympathized with the progressive left-liberal party. In the chaos after the war, however, he instead felt gradually more attracted to the more conservative right-liberal party (of Gustav Stresemann and others). But the quick succession of Weimar crises ultimately killed Baschwitz's cherished liberalism entirely.

It took several months – perhaps more than a year – for the disastrous consequences of the Versailles Treaty of 28 June 1919 to sink in, for both German politicians and the general public. The empire had faded by then, and the republic was blamed for the catastrophe. The new reality soon began to destabilize the fragile Weimar Republic, and continued to do so in successive stages.

Workers in Berlin, Munich, and elsewhere had already tried to stage revolutions and declare Soviet-type regimes, but these were soon put down by bloody repression. Former army leaders like Ludendorff in turn claimed that the 'almost victorious' army had been 'stabbed in the back' by the capitulationist Weimar politicians and businessmen on the home front – particularly the Jews. Veterans in Berlin, Munich, and elsewhere tried to stage coups, but failed. There were regular street battles between left and right-wing militias; top statesmen were assassinated. There were a total of 376 political murders, and these largely went unpunished.

The first half of the 1920s were presided over by the Catholic social-democrat Friedrich Ebert; the second half by the Prussian *Junker* (and former army leader) Paul von Hindenburg. The allies had initially demanded the latter's extradition as a 'war criminal' along with the *Kaiser*, but many Germans persisted in venerating him as a 'war hero' instead. The longer the chaos lasted, the more there was a broadening call for a 'true' leader and a 'strong' regime.

Being used to single power-holders at the top of clearly vertical organizations, people found it hard to accommodate to the new, more diffuse horizontal structures. In political psychology, this became known as the struggle for a *Vaterlose Gesellschaft*, a society without a father figure, who could provide the symbolic and psychological illusion of cohesion. Many longed for a charismatic leader.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the time, Freud and a range of Freudians published a number of tentative essays and books on these matters. More in my article 'The killing of the father', *Political psychology*, Vol. 5

## Hamburg at the time of Baschwitz's return

With the end of the war and the empire, Baschwitz was recalled from Rotterdam to Hamburg in late January of 1919. As a foreign correspondent, he had worked alone. He returned to the editorial staff of the newspaper, but also to the once-great main seaport of giant Germany, which was now in clear decline. The British naval blockade, which was maintained for another *half year*, contributed to widespread unemployment, poverty, and even starvation – which was painfully visible everywhere. Food scarcity, food tampering and food riots were a recurring phenomenon.

Baschwitz knew that since the second year of the war, bread had been rationed. Thereafter, it had gradually been replaced by an unsavoury dark *Kriegsbrot*, or war bread. During the next winter, potatoes were gradually replaced by *Kohlrüben*, or turnips. Meat consumption dropped by half, as did that of milk, fats, and other proteins, as well as the average calorie intake. Emaciated women, children, and elders gradually became more vulnerable to disease.

The tuberculosis rate doubled. Dysentery, scurvy, rickets, and hunger oedema became widespread and were highly visible. The influenza epidemic at the end of the war had hit Germany particularly hard: Berlin alone had reported 1,700 victims on a single day in the weeks preceding the armistice. Vitality and productivity dropped sharply. Suicides went up – often of adult mothers with small children they were unable to feed.<sup>2</sup>

Studies showed that the brain and mental development of youngsters became impaired. Adults lost their faith in national and international justice. In a famous but contested study, a well-known American psychoanalyst later noted that these were the childhood years of the later *HitlerJugend* – the *Führer's* 'youth movement'. He mentioned 'the prolonged absence of the parents, the return of the father in defeat, extreme hunger and privation, and a national defeat in war, which meant the loss of the prevailing political authority and left no viable replacement with which to identify'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet at this point in time, there was still hope for the rapid amelioration of these problems and a better future. In Hamburg, the first post-war elections in the spring of 1919 brought a clear majority of no less than 50.5 percent of the vote to the social democratic party SPD, with another 8.1 percent

(1984), Nr. 3, p. 391-414. German: *Psyche – Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, Vol. 38 (1984), Nr. 12, p. 1124-1148. See also my *Mass movements*, Ch. 5 on 'The super-ego and identification', p. 77-100.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers and details f.i. in Vincent.

<sup>3</sup> Loewenberg. More in Vincent, p. 150, 156 a.o.

to its former left-wing USPD. So – to the horror of Baschwitz and other liberals – the total was close to sixty percent for ‘The Reds’.

## Hunger and food riots

A few days before the signing of the Versailles treaty, which would finally begin to lead to some relief, there was a revolutionary explosion in Hamburg of the type that was to be the focus of Baschwitz’s later book *Du und die Masse* (*You and the mass*). It came to be known as the *Sülze-unruhen* (the unrest about brawn or ‘headcheese’: various minor and less attractive pieces of meat in a jelly).

One producer had recommended this product for its ‘great nutritional value’ and ‘delicate taste’. But when a barrel fell from a cart and burst, bystanders were appalled by the unseemly sight of the yellowish decaying mush. They broke into the workshop and reportedly found hints that rats, cats, and dogs had been included in the mix. Apart from the manufacturer, the protesters also blamed a lack of oversight by the old and the new authorities.<sup>4</sup>

In his later book on mobs and riots, *Du und die Masse*, Baschwitz described this scene:

A group of excited people gained access to a small butchery in the city centre and maltreated the owner and some of his personnel. Because they had supposedly put repulsive ingredients in [the food] – these were the days of surrogates for many food products. A procession of no more than thirty or forty persons – mostly loudmouth youngsters – moved through the business district for hours on end.

They dragged along a cart with an elderly man, whom they constantly threatened and maltreated. A sign hung around his neck said that he was the foreman of the shop in question. No one acted to protect him: neither the police, nor people from the crowds that continued to stream through the streets. They witnessed the scene with partially fearful and partially indifferent looks, before taking up their own affairs again.

In other words, the bystanders were reticent to get involved.

<sup>4</sup> Further details in a 2002 Hamburg M.A. thesis by Sven Philipski, *Die Hamburger Sülze-unruhen 1919*, published by the Adolph von Elm institute and the Heinrich Kaufman Stiftung.

When the several small groups found out that they could enter offices, houses, and public buildings with impunity, and bark harsh orders, this whole activity crystallized into a plan to occupy the City Hall – the seat of the government that steadily warned against such ‘one-sided actions’.

The defenders of the City Hall, two platoons of *Bahrenfelder* volunteers, soon saw themselves in the same situation as that upon the storming of the Bastille [in 1789 revolutionary Paris]. They, too, only had provisions for one day. The attackers had armed themselves with rifles, which members of the useless ‘civil guard’ had allowed them to take away without resistance.

Meanwhile life just went on around them, Baschwitz repeated:

There was a coming and going of curious people, the turning up and leaving of armed men. Some fired from behind the rungs of the spectators. For fear of causing a bloodbath among the crowd of onlookers, the defenders felt held to frustrating prudence. Other attackers fired with ordinary and machine guns from the windows and skylights of neighbouring houses.

But in the end, it was all a futile exercise, Baschwitz wrote:

The hours-long shooting match could not really harm the defenders, who were well-trained militarily. But they did not need to count on reinforcements or other outside help. In the end, they entered into negotiations about an armistice, let themselves be disarmed – half taken by surprise – and subsequently marched off in formation. On their way, a number of them were maltreated, wounded, or killed in the streets crawling with people. Most retreated to safety. So the new power-holders of the city-state of Hamburg ruled within the ‘stormed’ City Hall.

However, the situation was reversed after only a week, Baschwitz added. On 1 July, the front page of his own *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* had a headline across the front page about the entry of troops into the city. Similar leftist uprisings, street-fights, right-wing coups, and assassinations recurred throughout the country during the first few years of the Weimar regime – and the restoration of republican order always seemed to be merely provisional. This was the dire situation of the exhausted nation to which Baschwitz had returned.<sup>5</sup>

5 The elaborate scene description is taken from three lively pages in his *Du und die Masse*: slightly condensed and translated literally from the second Dutch edition, p. 105-107. It is not

## Baschwitz's marriage and family

What about his personal life? Kurt Baschwitz had officially been baptized at 29: after the war had already started, but before he left for Rotterdam. The Evangelical Lutheran church was the major protestant denomination in Germany. It is not entirely clear whether this step was related to the dating of Erna Luise Erika Thiessen-Temmel and some kind of informal betrothal, or whether those only happened upon his return from Rotterdam. She was a minor actress, pianist, and concert singer from Berlin.<sup>6</sup>

His papers still have an envelope with a number of silly doggerel verses or little poems he wrote for, and gave to, Erika during these years. Or even three different variations on the same theme, like that of the 'green vase' – in which the flowers that he brought home for her every now and then landed.

Sieh Erika, mein Blumenstrauss/  
Schaut schüchtern aus dem Väschen aus/  
So lieblich ist es fast wie Du/  
Und winkt Dir tausend Wünsche zu.

('See, Erika, my flower bouquet/  
Timidly looks from the little vase/  
Almost as lovely as you/  
And signals a thousand greetings.' )

They did not have time for a long courtship. So they married on 25 September 1919, eight months after his return from Rotterdam, in a church ceremony in Hamburg. According to one expert, such 'mixed' marriages had become very common. Some 60 percent of marriages in Hamburg and 44 percent in Berlin reportedly took place between ethnic Jews and 'Aryans'.<sup>7</sup>

entirely clear here whether Baschwitz was himself present at part of the events, spoke to eyewitnesses, or used written reports from his own and other newspapers. It is clear, however, that it was one of the few contemporary mob scenes that directly helped inspire his later pivotal book.

<sup>6</sup> There may have been some kind of informal betrothal. His eldest daughter Gisela said (in the long JHM video interview to which we will return, approximately at minute 10 a.f.), that he was baptized 'because he wanted to marry in church'. His later release form from the Westerbork transit camp (to which we will also return) even said that he had not only been baptized in 1915, but had actually married in that year.

<sup>7</sup> According to a study by Dutch eugenics expert Marianne van Herwerden, quoted in an article by Dutch physical anthropologist Machteld Roede, herself the author of a book on the question of race. *NRC De Week*, 3 August 2015.

**Figure 7**

Picture of Baschitz's wife and three children, probably taken by Baschitz himself, around the late 1920s

These were, no doubt, among the happiest years of his life. For her first birthday with him, on 11 April 1920, he wrote: 'I cannot give you (bank) notes, just a few poems – what else can a writer-man do?' One poem said:

'Ich danke ihr für das halbe Jahr/  
Das für uns beide so glücklich war/  
Und das uns als Ausblick fürs fernere Leben/  
Die Hoffnung der schönsten Zukunft geben'.

('Thank you for the half year/  
That was so happy for us both/  
And as a perspective on the rest of life/  
Makes us hope for a wonderful future.')

They had three children in quick succession. The eldest son, Horst, was born in 1920; the eldest girl, Gisela, was born in 1922; the youngest girl, Rotraut, was born in 1923. Unfortunately, all three grew up during the years in which the Nazis gradually came to power and during the subsequent crisis and war. Each was affected by these dramatic events and their consequences at different stages of their development, and developed different and sometimes conflicting personalities. I will return to their stories.

One family picture shows Erika as a young mother, seated, with her son almost cheek-to-cheek. The eldest daughter is serious, and looking up to her elder brother. The youngest daughter is distracted, a bow in her hair. Most of what we know about the everyday personal life of Kurt and his family comes from the middle child, Gisela. Through a concurrence of circumstances, to which I will return, she later also became a 'noteworthy' person for the larger world. She thus gave a number of interviews in her later life. At the age of 73, she even gave an almost three-hour long, videotaped one, from which I will frequently quote.

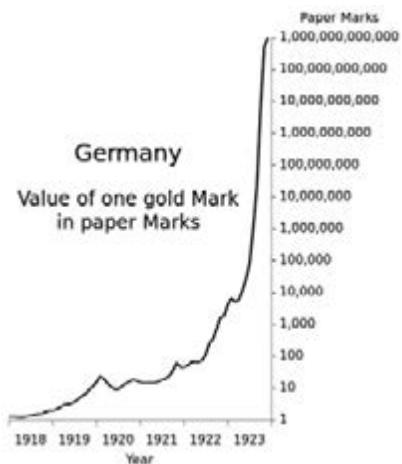
She said her father had once told her he believed in God, but not 'in the way that children do'. Religion did not play a major role at home, not even for their mother. The eldest two children received a Christian education, but according to Gisela this was only so that they would be admitted into an 'ordinary' (by which she apparently meant Christian) school. They started the day with prayers there, she said, were told great stories from the bible, and all of the Baschwitz children got good grades. They were an ordinary, middle class German family.

### Fall-out from Versailles: The hyper-inflation of 1922-3

The earlier optimism over the end of the war and the change of regime had long faded. To support his young family, Baschwitz and a colleague tried to earn some extra money by offering their services as 'cramming' coaches for students at the newly founded Hamburg University.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the government had not been able to find the billions of gold marks for the war reparations that had been imposed on it. As soon as it had marginally fallen behind on a minor delivery of telephone poles, France and Belgium resumed hostilities, striking at the key mining-and-industry

8 Newspaper announcement, also reproduced in Ebels-Dolanová, opposite p. 51.

**Figure 8**

Efforts to pay the huge war reparations imposed by the Versailles treaty triggered astronomic inflation and further widespread poverty under the early Weimar republic.

areas across the border – further adding to the general sense of frustration and anger.

France and Belgium invaded and unilaterally occupied the Ruhr area; the Allies had already given the other adjacent areas an exceptional status. The Weimar regime initially tried to solve this problem by printing extra money – which of course made it rapidly lose value. In the spring of 1923 it already cost 21 thousand marks to buy a single dollar; by autumn of the same year this had risen to the astronomical sum of 4.2 trillion.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, this translated into a dire social situation, including for the young Baschwitz family. One overview sums up: 'The middle classes lost all their savings in the inflation, but the government could not afford any compensation. Pay in the civil service was reduced to way below the pre-war levels. The vast majority of the pensioners were ruined'.

Labour was heavily affected as well:

<sup>9</sup> Herein lies the origin of the German obsession with controlling inflation, revived time and again thereafter, and persisting to this very day – in recent times even affecting the European Union, European Bank, and Euro policies.

The ranks of the unemployed swelled alarmingly. Average real wages fell to a mere seventy percent of pre-war levels.' Malnourishment and illness continued to be widespread under the early Weimar regime. Therefore, the state 'was totally discredited in the eyes of those millions who had patriotically bought war bonds and other government paper. The republicans had first stabbed the country in the back, then robbed the little man of his savings. This was fertile soil in which radical political movements could readily take root.<sup>10</sup>

This was the dire situation that was reflected in the tone of Baschwitz's first real book for a larger public. As we have already seen, Kurt had spent the years immediately after his return to Germany reworking his observations about the war and the unjust peace into a book about the dynamics of war propaganda and enemy images: *Der Massenwahn*. Apparently, his discussion resonated with the general atmosphere of disappointed patriotism that had spread through the entire country; it was soon sold out and had to be reprinted that same year.

The first two editions of *Der Massenwahn* carried a somewhat grand personal dedication:

The battle ranks of men have been broken. Now the women stand in the midst of the struggle, like in prehistoric days. The war after the war hits caring mothers, the most impacted group, in a form that entirely wears them down. Their unsung silent everyday heroism defends the survival of the German home, and saves the spiritual values over the years that defence fails the German homeland. This book is dedicated to one in the army of companions-in-distress, never failing in loyalty and courage – Erika.<sup>11</sup>

### **Leaving Hamburg, amidst early warnings from Munich**

The unexpected success of this first book may have contributed to Baschwitz's decision to leave Hamburg, which seemed to be fading from its former promise, as the Allies had confiscated much of the German fleet and imposed restrictions on its rebuilding.

<sup>10</sup> Kitchen, *Modern Germany*, p. 207–9.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted here from the first page of the second 1923 edition.

The actual move, with three very young children in tow, must have been burdensome, particularly for his wife. But she may also have looked forward to resume her artistic career, by returning to Berlin. For both, it would be a step up the ladder to move to the resurging nation's capital. So Baschwitz took leave of his paper after fifteen years, on friendly terms.

His boss Broschek wrote a nice letter of recommendation to a later employer, hailing Baschwitz's empathy and quick understanding, his good manners and easy cooperation. A week before the end of his contract, Baschwitz in turn addressed two of his trademark tongue-in-cheek doggerel verses to his colleagues. One, of 12 lines, was for 'the high editors' about the ongoing feuilleton (or soap opera) of 'high politics'; another, of 14 lines, was for those lower in the pecking order, 'below the line'. It was time to embark on the next phase of their life.<sup>12</sup>

But dark clouds were gathering. In the wake of the war, followed by a steady succession of economic, social, and political crises, anti-Semitism had begun to rise again. Its prime focus was Jews' supposed ethnicity; religion played only a secondary role. A rabbi recommended a 1924 brochure by Baschwitz's thesis supervisor on anti-Semitism to the public. It discussed the social history of the phenomenon, and concluded it would probably fade away as Jews gradually assimilated and would no longer be seen as quintessential 'Others'.<sup>13</sup>

There was a general feeling that the country's parties and unions and associations would prove able to contain the dark forces of the crowds. But in his later book on mass psychology, *Du und die Masse*, Baschwitz himself wrote:

The theoretical claims, which had always taught that one had to put one's hope in the organized masses which kept their common sense, fell silent – when the suddenly swelling rush to the Hitler movement in meetings and on the streets became noticeable. Here one saw an organization with a disciplined structure, that openly and emphatically swore off logical consultation and systematically encouraged the wild passions of the masses.

<sup>12</sup> The Broschek testimony is in a file with another recommendation letter for his later job at the *Zeitung-Verlag*, along with other official papers and diplomas. These are in a special file among the last batch of personal and confidential papers that his biographer Vera Ebels-Dolanová got from his youngest daughter – but only later. They were added to the Baschwitz archives in the Amsterdam University special collections in 2015. The doggerel verses are also reproduced in Ebels' master's thesis, opposite pages 76-77.

<sup>13</sup> Brentano.

Baschwitz continued: 'It emerged in peacetime, after the immediate consequences of war and revolution had been overcome, it apparently grew as a result of mass propaganda, which conceded with unprecedented candour and indifference its correspondence with the darkest theories of the first mass psychologists – primarily those of [the earlier Frenchman] Le Bon'.<sup>14</sup>

A roving reporter for the liberal Amsterdam newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* – which Baschwitz later came to favour – warned in turn: 'I recently heard Hitler. For three full hours I heard him say things of which only a very small percentage sounded sympathetic to me. Yet I was not bored for a moment. And rarely have I seen a crowd of a thousand so spellbound by an orator, and react so well – just like the little man on the stage wanted'.

The journalist warned whoever loathed Hitler's theories 'that this young guy is a verbal wizard and a mass psychologist of a very exceptional quality – and that such people can do more with crowds than all politicians writing thick and scientific books taken together'.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, after U.S. banker Charles Dawes engineered temporary American loans, the situation had seemed to quiet down somewhat around the mid-twenties.

### A Weimar press torn between ideology and finance

In contrast to Great Britain and France, Germany had long lacked national unity and a truly national capital. In the half-century since the formation of the Empire, however, both had grown at double speed. Since the Prussian capital had become the German capital, greater Berlin had quickly swelled to well over four million inhabitants, suddenly making it one of the very largest of the European metropolises.

Berlin harboured the old elites alongside the new rich, blue collar workers alongside the unemployed – a proletariat receptive to revolutionary ideas. But it also had classical and avant-garde art museums, as well as many brand new cinemas and musical theatres. Some called it a *Spree-Athen* (Athens on the Spree river), others a *Fassaden-Babel* (a Babylon of façades). One

<sup>14</sup> *Du und die Masse*, quoted from the second edition, Part I, Chapter 4 (p. 35–36 in the second Dutch edition). It was later shown that large parts of *Mein Kampf* were in fact paraphrases of Le Bon (Stein).

<sup>15</sup> Articles from 7 March 1923 by Berlin correspondent George Nypels of the Amsterdam *Algemeen Handelsblad*. In his biography *De Revolutieverzamelaar* by Henk van Renssen (Amsterdam 2006), p. 220, 222. Quoted by van Liempt (2010), p. 21, 20.

of Baschwitz's many roles at his new newspaper, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, was as a reviewer of books, theatre, and movies, so he had landed right in the heart of things.<sup>16</sup>

Berlin had soon become the country's media centre par excellence. According to one estimate, around the mid-1920s some 3,000 newspapers (mostly smaller regional ones) were published throughout the country. The Foreign Ministry listed 66 of these as of some importance. At the same time, some 30 newspapers were published in the national capital itself and another 30 minor ones in its outskirts – with a sum total of 3 million copies daily for the agglomeration as a whole.

But many of the smaller regional newspapers gradually linked up with national media groups, whose headquarters were also in the national capital. Berlin was home to three major newspaper publisher groups. The largest, Ullstein, was considered one of the main pillars of the Weimar regime. A second, Mosse, also had Jewish owners. Another giant was Scherl, owned by the industrialist Alfred Hugenberg, who at the same time was also head of the national-conservative DNVP party.<sup>17</sup>

At first, the press environment was clearly a *Weltanschauungs* or *Gesinnungspresse*: a worldview or ideological press. This meant that most papers had open affinities with one party or another; editors and journalists were supposed to toe the line in their articles. But over the course of the 1920s, some fundamental transformations took place – as Berhard Fulda convincingly demonstrated in his 2009 dissertation on the subject. Things changed slowly and seemingly superficially, so few fathomed the profound political implications they would ultimately have.

As newspapers experienced financial difficulties, industrialists and bankers began to systematically buy into them. Yet co-ownership did not always mean they had a direct influence on editors and readers, let alone acquire solid voting blocks for election time. This was particularly true as modern tabloids gained importance – putting more emphasis on entertainment and gossip, with more illustrations and pictures.

By the end of the decade, Fulda claims, these tabloids had already conquered 80 percent of the entire newspaper market in Berlin. In theory, they still promoted the same party lines as before; but in practice, readers no longer cared. They no longer identified with them, and instead began to follow their own intuitions and instincts on voting days. That is to say:

<sup>16</sup> Boterman and Vogel, p. 71, quoting an overview book on *Metropolis Berlin*, edited by Brunn & Reulecke, p. 26ff.

<sup>17</sup> Fulda, p. 12, 14, 17, 21.

they began to float and become volatile. The 'new' party of the Nazis was the first and foremost to profit from this.

### The D.A.Z.: a German *Times*?

Within this press field, Baschwitz's new Berlin newspaper *D.A.Z.* was a special case. He himself later related how a consortium of Hamburg owners of its forerunner, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, had long put it at the disposal of the imperial government – to the extent that the government could even appoint its chief editor – in exchange for lucrative state orders. This gained it the nickname of the *Kanzlerblatt*, the chancellors' (or Prime Minister's) paper.

At the end of the First World War, the now 'national' paper *N.D.A.Z.* was seized by red revolutionaries, who re-baptized it *Die Internationale*. It opened with glowing front-page headlines: 'Workers! Soldiers! Comrades! Brothers!' and 'Let's get to work!' But this lasted only for a day. (The historic copy is still among Baschwitz's papers).

Baschwitz wrote: 'But [in] late 1918, the paper was liberated from all such official and non-official bonds', as it was renamed *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. As property of the active publisher Reimar Hobbing, and after the sudden death of the major industrialist Hugo Stinnes, it evolved into a paper that acquired a place among the most prominent German newspapers'. The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* meant to speak for 'the national interest', although rather from a centre-right than from a centre-left perspective. Stinnes had been made a right-liberal DVP deputy and had played a major role in promoting talks and deals between employers and unions.

Baschwitz explained:

When the industrialist Hugo Stinnes provided the means for a reorganization of the Berlin *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* after the [First] World War, he motivated this by pointing out that the German press lacked a *Times*. In other countries, too, one finds this label time and again, whenever someone tries to express that a newspaper is more attached to quality than to the quantity of its readers. In other words, that it is less attached to being read by as many people as possible, than by those who have the highest intellectual demands, and exert a decisive influence in politics. Of course, not all newspapers aspiring to this have reached their goal.

With this in mind, the newspaper now actively pursued a truly national distribution – first by overnight train delivery, then through simultaneous editions. Baschwitz wrote:

The telegraph connections, and the hiring of one's own lines, had long made it possible to print one and the same newspaper in different places at the same time. As long as Stinnes could provide the needed funds under the Weimar Republic, the Berlin *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* could print a South-German edition in Frankfurt that corresponded word-for-word [with the Berlin edition], and distribute it from there.

That was a relatively new phenomenon.<sup>18</sup>

### Baschwitz's own political evolution

In view of the crises of the 1920s, both the newspaper and Baschwitz himself gradually drifted more to the right. This can be gleaned from a large number of his own articles and comments. Ebels produced a 40-page 'close reading' analysis of them for her master's thesis, as well as an elaborate 40-page article list (not included in its published version, but deposited with it at the Baschwitz archives).

Of course one should be wary of a 'perspectivistic' slant, and not interpret Baschwitz's intentions at the time through the lens of later events – the breakthrough of Nazism, anti-Semitism, the Second World War, etc. He remained a steadfast believer in democracy and rule of law, but occasionally went along with arguments that sometimes look dubious in hindsight.<sup>19</sup>

On the one hand, in line with the earlier and later editions of his book *Der Massenwahn*, and in line with mainstream politics at the time, he continued to blame most of the country's ills on the Allies, their propaganda concerning Germany's exclusive war guilt, the huge reparations, enemy images, and a widespread 'Germanophobia' abroad in general.

According to Baschwitz at that time, this was all on the part of France, and to a lesser extent on the U.K. and the U.S. – although he welcomed any kind of rapprochement and lessening of Germany's burden. He did not yet give many signs of having thoroughly re-evaluated his earlier positions on Germany's role or the question of war atrocities in Belgium and elsewhere. On the other hand,

<sup>18</sup> *De krant door alle tijden*, 2nd ed., p. 182, 110, 236, respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Ebels-Dolanová, chapter 3, particularly p. 75-134. Also see Anschlag, p. 19-28.

he always advocated preserving internal ‘unity’ in the country, as well as a sense of purpose and strength. Let us briefly review his positions concerning the various ideological currents and themes of these days.

Like so many with a similar background, Baschwitz was an anti-communist first. The Russian Revolution and the various revolution attempts in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, inspired his disgust and mistrust. So did the ‘independent’ USPD, the radical left-wing split-off from the social-democrat SPD, which later evolved into the communist KPD.

He even pleaded for the censoring and banning of the movie *Potemkin* by the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein because it glorified revolution. Anarchism and terrorism likewise inspired his disgust and mistrust: rather than showing sympathy for people like the notorious American anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, he wrote, one should show sympathy for the victims of their attacks.

Social-democrats shared a number of Red illusions, he said. On occasion, many had been ‘fellow-travellers’ with the communists. They often railed against the wrong targets. Pacifists railed against ‘militarism’, but Germany’s problem was that it was powerless against the unjust Ruhr invasions, as it had been almost completely disarmed. Would-be proletarians railed against the *bourgeoisie*, he added, but the educated middle classes were the backbone of society. Leftists also railed against fascism, long before it posed a substantial threat. All of this was a distraction from the real problems, he felt.

At one point, Baschwitz even proposed founding a *Liga der anständigen Menschen* (league of decent citizens), who would swear allegiance to the state and to the constitution.<sup>20</sup> He also felt that Weimar parliamentary intrigue and party politics were often unconstructive and merely divisive. Mud-slinging and smear campaigns against individual leaders, for example, sometimes resulted in their assassination (from Matthias Erzberger to Walther Rathenau).<sup>21</sup>

By contrast, political corruption should be exposed, as in the scandals around the Barmat brothers and the SPD, or later around the Sklarek brothers and all political parties – even if there was a whiff of anti-Semitism around these outrages. According to Baschwitz, leaders and states should

<sup>20</sup> On 14 August 1927. Compare with the last sentence of his book *Du und die Masse*, used as a motto for the present study.

<sup>21</sup> It had fallen upon the Centre (Catholic) party politician Erzberger to sign the armistice, which was heavily contested. Rathenau originally was an engineer and then boss of the Allgemeine Electricitäts Gesellschaft AEG appliances corporation, then a DDP (left-liberal) politician, and ultimately a Minister of Foreign Affairs, who realized a contested rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Both were killed by the right-wing terrorist group ‘Organisation Consul’.

be strong (as Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and Prussia had been), albeit within the framework of a modern democracy. Even dictators like Lenin and Mussolini had apparently learned this from history.

Baschwitz's attitude toward national conservatism and the emerging new right were sometimes ambivalent. I have already noted that he may have felt guilty about having been declared unfit for military service, and about having spent the latter part of the war in the relative comfort of the neutral Netherlands. He thus expressed some understanding for the feelings of soldiers who invoked the 'eternal brotherhood' born in the trenches, and for the frustrations of veterans in civilian life and thus about their organizations occasionally derailing.<sup>22</sup>

But, as I said earlier, one must guard against reading such statements through the prism of (what was then still in) the future. It was only in subsequent years that things really began to turn sour. The sudden return of the debt crisis from late 1929, and the renewed massive unemployment and widespread poverty, provided a unique opportunity for the Nazis to seduce large numbers of voters. Baschwitz himself was, of course, never in the least tempted by National Socialism, and spoke out against it. It ran against all of his gut intuitions about violent intimidation and naïve visions.

### From *D.A.Z.* to *D.N.N.*

Meanwhile, the ambition to build Baschwitz's rather small *D.A.Z.* into a key player in the centre of the Weimar media landscape increasingly proved to be a very costly affair. Its industrialist owner Stinnes had bought it and then merged it with other papers: such as the *Tägliche Rundschau*. Claiming that this had boosted circulation, he increased the advertising rates. But later this turned out to have been largely based on a bluff.

In 1929-31, the newspaper needed subsidies of around four million *Reichsmarks* per year. Interest groups hoped that this might procure them a foothold, both among the staff and its policies, and the readers and their votes. Baschwitz's own 'exemplary' *D.A.Z.* thus ultimately became a paradigmatic illustration of how power plays behind the scenes risk undermining the 'objective' and 'neutral' stance of a newspaper. This then became one

<sup>22</sup> Ebels-Dolnavová. Stab-in-the-back legend: p. 86-89. Veterans: 105-114. Anti-Semitism and Jews: 93-95.

of the major questions that inspired his later book *De krant door alle tijden* (*The newspaper through the ages*).

Fulda writes (p. 43):

The fate of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* was a manifestation of this belief in the political power of the classical press: Stinnes purchased it in 1920 to secure industrialist influence; after his death it was secretly bought up by [a bank consortium for] the Prussian government in 1925; less than a year later it was taken over by the *Reich* government on [the right-liberal leader] Stresemann's initiative, before being sold again when the affair came to light. [However,] none of the owners achieved any noticeable advantage.

Among those who bought a small part of the press at this point of time was industrialist Alfred Hugenberg, a major national conservative leader. In spite of the huge success of the papers of his own Scherl group, however, his right-wing DNVP party was to increasingly lose electoral support, and then grow closer to Adolph Hitler's upstart Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei or NSDAP. The new editor-in-chief Fritz Klein increasingly considered the *D.A.Z.* to be 'his' paper. In these circumstances, Baschwitz probably began to feel ill-at-ease there.

Baschwitz had been considered an expert on urban affairs (because of his dissertation), and on mass politics, the war debt, and international relations (because of his first book). Over the course of 1928, he produced a weekly overview of foreign affairs, and become one of the major editorial writers. His boss later recommended him as a 'collaborator with many-sided interests, a friendly nature and pleasant manners'. He also praised 'his gift to treat even difficult problems in a form that is generally understandable, and to show larger connections using his comprehensive historical knowledge'.<sup>23</sup>

And yet, at the very end of that same year, their ways parted. Baschwitz later emphasized that he had come to, and worked at, the *D.A.Z.* during the era of Gustav Stresemann: the leader of the right-liberal DVP party, who had been instrumental in resuming a constructive dialogue with the Entente nations – first briefly as a chancellor, then as a moderate minister of foreign affairs (1923–29), that is to say until his death.<sup>24</sup> But the *D.A.Z.*

<sup>23</sup> Recommendation letter of Fritz Klein to Kurt Baschwitz' next employer, the *Zeitung-Verlag*. In a file with 'Documents', added to the Baschwitz archives in 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Letter to the Dutch 'Press Purge' commission, 16 April 1947. See the later relevant chapter 11.

now began to grow closer to the DNVP national conservatives, and to veer further to the right.

It is not entirely clear whether Baschwitz already knew that he was a good candidate for an interesting vacancy that would soon open at the *Zeitung-Verlag*. But for the first four months of 1929 there was a brief interlude in which he wrote for the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* or *D.N.N.*, in the capital of Saxony: 200 kilometres away from Berlin, but with a good rail connection. Such newspapers retained their own character, and exerted local influence. But they had also gradually begun to create links among themselves, to form larger press groups that would be more efficient and carry more weight.

Baschwitz wrote:

Dr. Wolfgang Huck had an interest in a number of such newspapers, and people talked of the Huck conglomerate. Yet the ties were rather loose, and the chiefs of the various newspapers had considerable freedom. The *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, which belonged to the Huck conglomerate, for instance, in every way bore the stamp put on it by Professor Julius Ferdinand Wolf, who had been its publisher and chief editor for many years. The paper, which had been founded in 1893, reached a circulation of 130,000 copies in 1931.<sup>25</sup>

Baschwitz published a number of routine articles on various subjects for the *D.N.N.* A remarkable one was titled 'Die Hölle auf Erde' ('The hell on earth') about the new weapons systems under development that went even further than those employed during World War One: more and better planes, submarines, tanks, gases. The horrors of a future war would be a special challenge to statesmen, he wrote.

But maybe he was also happy to disengage from directly writing about the increasingly contorted everyday politics from 1929 onwards, and to largely limit himself to the special subject of press affairs, when he was finally hired by the *Zeitung-Verlag*.

### **Editor-in-chief at the *Zeitung-Verlag***

By this time, Baschwitz had become a well-known journalist, a good candidate for some chief editor position, and had influential sponsors. In 1929, his former chief at the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* was elected chairman of

25 *De krant door alle tijden*, p. 255.

the influential Berlin Press Association. His former chief at the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* had been on the board of the prestigious 'Verein Deutscher Zeitungsverleger', the national association of newspaper publishers, for some 15 years. His former chief at the *Dresdner Neuesten Nachrichten* became its first vice-chairman at this point in time. So he had great introductions there.<sup>26</sup>

Every Saturday, the newspaper publishers' association published the *Zeitungs-Verlag*. It was a medium-format subscription magazine of some twenty pages for routine issues, but was not for sale at the newsstands. It carried articles on all aspects of the newspaper trade, as well as a wide variety of larger and smaller ads that ranged from printing machines to journalistic personnel.

For his master's thesis, Anschlag created an elaborate reconstruction of Baschwitz's role here. The magazine had kept the same chief editor throughout the 1920s, but he was meant to stop at the end of the decade. So the first chairman of the association and his director started looking for a possible successor. Baschwitz's former employers sent enthusiastic recommendation letters for him (which are still in his archives). On 1 July 1929 he was first hired for a three-month trial period, and then kept to further learn the ropes under his predecessor. In a sense, it was a dream job: it allowed him to retreat from current affairs journalism, become more aloof, and focus on larger press issues.

Publishers, the association, and the magazine were now supporting the further emergence of the new science of *Zeitungswissenschaft* or 'newspaper studies' at various universities. For instance, the Friedrich Wilhelm University in the capital Berlin had just founded a special institute and appointed an extraordinary professor for the field.

In mid-1928, the publishers, the association, and the magazine had held their annual meeting in Berlin, and that is possibly where Baschwitz had gotten better acquainted with them. In mid-1929, the same meeting was held in Heidelberg, and that was where Baschwitz was then hired as the new chief editor. Here, too, the university institute played a great role: the theme of the meeting was explicitly, 'Newspapers and science'.

In his new job, Baschwitz supervised the everyday editorial process and wrote his own lead articles. But from the start, he also advocated more attention for readership and audience studies. He also wrote book reviews – such as a mixed one on the fourth volume of Otto Groth's monumental new overview work *Die Zeitung*, subtitled 'a system for newspaper studies'. He called it an

impressive piece of work, but said that unfortunately it was primarily an accumulation of source materials, with little or no personal vision.<sup>27</sup>

### Contributions from other academic disciplines

Baschwitz also became responsible for organizing annual meetings around a well-defined theme, as well as the voluminous special issue of the magazine that usually accompanied them. For the first meeting prepared by him (in the spring of 1930 in Bochum) the subject became: 'The reader and his newspaper – About the *psychology of the newspaper reader*'.

This subject was introduced by Baschwitz himself, who wrote the following about newspaper audiences: 'The market square in the city would not have enough room for the tens of thousands of readers of a [single] newspaper, even with just a medium-range circulation [...] The chief of the newspaper must deal with this invisible mass – with its feelings and thoughts, with its needs and demands'.

He continued:

If press people would have had to wait until the psychologists and sociologists had taught them how to fathom the mental impulses of the reader mass and to treat it accordingly, then there would have been no single newspaper with a successful distribution today. No: first there was practice and only now comes the theory that tries to distil a scientific explanation out of the accumulated practical experiences.<sup>28</sup>

Note the key observation here. The postulation that a media audience was an 'invisible mass', subject to some of the same processes and dynamics as a visible mass or crowd gathered in a market square. Mass psychology and press studies were thus twin disciplines in his mind, studying similar phenomena. This was also an early plea for more empirical study. Baschwitz's introduction was immediately followed by an invited lecture about market and readership research, given by a major German professor in applied and experimental psychology.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Zeitungs-Verlag*, 25 October 1930. Jhrg. 31, Nr. 43, col./ p. 1731-1732.

<sup>28</sup> *Zeitungs-Verlag*, Festausgabe zu der Hauptversammlung der VDZV, 27 May 1930. Baschwitz returned to the subject of reader research in radio talks for the *Deutsche Welle*, in early December 1930.

<sup>29</sup> Walther Moede from Berlin, who published the first volume of his *Lehrbuch der Psychotechnik* that same year.

Over the subsequent years, Baschwitz continued to promote reflection about the place of the newspaper and its readers within society from a variety of angles – for instance, social linguistics. For the mid-1931 meeting in Vienna, the theme became: ‘The larger language areas and their press’. Think of the German, French, and English language areas, and the reach of their earlier war propaganda. Of course all of these questions had profound implications for European and world power politics: of the recent past, the present, and the near future.

One strangely chauvinist contribution came from the new Berlin correspondent of the liberal Amsterdam *Algemeen Handelsblad*, who Baschwitz got to know at this point. The correspondent claimed that the Dutchman was *the* most thorough newspaper-reader in the entire world. He supposedly spent ‘hours at home in the evening, captivated by his newspaper. And for whom his paper could not be elaborate, thorough, trustworthy, and multi-faceted enough’. The correspondent also spoke about the role of the larger Dutch language area in Europe (including Belgian Flanders), in Asia ('Dutch' Indonesia), and in Africa (the *Boer* settlers in the South). The name of the correspondent in question was Max Blokzijl, who will return in this story.<sup>30</sup>

On all such occasions, Baschwitz steadfastly pleaded for an interdisciplinary approach to the new newspaper science. So he also participated in the Seventh German Sociologists’ Conference of autumn 1930, which was entirely devoted to ‘Press and public opinion’. This conference featured the elder sociology pioneer Ferdinand Tönnies, author of a fundamental study on the ‘Critique of public opinion’. At the First German Sociologists’ Conference, twenty years earlier, sociology pioneer Max Weber had in turn already presented a paper on ‘the newspaper business’. In his own contribution, Baschwitz expressed doubts about the vagueness of terms like ‘mass’, ‘public opinion’, and even ‘paper’, and pleaded for developing a more precise vocabulary.<sup>31</sup>

So not only did the early newspaper scientists seek support from the slightly more established sciences of man and society like psychology and sociology, history and political science; conversely, these disciplines also recognized the importance of the press and its readers, studies of audiences

<sup>30</sup> First as one of those who recommended Baschwitz to Amsterdam University; but later also as the prime National Socialist voice in the occupied Netherlands, affecting censorship and propaganda. The 1931 quote from the special issue of the *Zeitungs-Verlag* (1 June 1931) was reproduced in the first (pre-war) edition of Baschwitz’s *De krant door alle tijden*, but scrapped from the second (post-war) edition for this reason.

<sup>31</sup> KB, ‘Die Soziologen und die Presse – Eindrücke’, *Zeitungs-Verlag*, 1 November 1930, columns/pages 1779-1782.

and of public opinion. Baschwitz favoured a press science that did not only focus on formal newspaper institutions, on their visible buildings and papers, but on the *informal collective subjectivity* linked to them, the invisible mass.

This is reflected in the 4P themes of his successive books: on propaganda and enemy images, on press censorship and freedom of expression, on politics and mass movements, and on persecution and hate campaigns. This focus on the evolution of collective subjectivity formed the basis of his unique lifelong approach.

### Baschwitz's talks and lectures

Apart from his writing skills, Baschwitz had meanwhile also tried to develop his speaking skills. He had begun to give public lectures, which were announced as science-based but easily understandable for a lay audience. They were not always minor affairs. Sometimes they were given in a concert building, announced through newspaper ads, and demanded entry fees of 1 or 4 or more Marks – with a rebate for students.

The themes of the talks were often spin-offs from his journalistic endeavours or his books. Upon the publication of the first editions of *Der Massenwahn*, for instance, he had spoken about 'Mass delusions and the Art of politics' in the main hall of a major Hamburg event building, which was named after the founder of the education society, Johann Carl Daniel Curio. A press review by local colleagues praised the ambitious initiative, the highly interested audience, and their lively applause.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after Baschwitz had settled in the capital, an even more ambitious and highly topical series of three major presentations took place in the Berlin Philharmonic, concerning *Der Redner* ('The Orator'). He and a colleague presented analyses and comments about rhetoric and its effects on the mass. These talks were illustrated by having well-known actors deliver major historical speeches. There were three instalments presented on three separate evenings. The first was about 'Revolt and revolution', with speeches from Danton and Robespierre, to Lenin and Kerensky, and also Bismarck and Mussolini. The room was full, and the event received glowing reviews.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See: *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, announcements 3 & 10 February 1924. Reviews under 'Kunst und Wissenschaft' and 'Forschung, Lehre, Bildung', 13 February.

<sup>33</sup> From 13 November 1925 onwards. See, for instance, the elaborate review in the *Berliner Börsenblatt* stock market newspaper, 14 November 1925. Also see a typescript and other materials in file 156 of the Baschwitz archives.

The second instalment was about the theme of 'War and peace', and the third was about 'Delusions of witchcraft and hatred between peoples'. Note that these were the days when Hitler began to attract growing attention for his apparently engaging speaking style, which rendered his audiences spell-bound. The proceeds of the three evenings contributed to a special national fund that had recently been set up to help the ailing Zeppelin company realize its ambitious project of building the giant LZ-127 airship, which was meant to replace some of the passenger steamships plying the Atlantic.<sup>34</sup>

### The new audiovisual media

Another major innovation of those same days also fascinated Baschwitz: radio. He had often written about it in the *D.A.Z.* In the eyes of contemporaries it was a somewhat mysterious but remarkably effective new communication medium. Soon, Germany had three to four million registered sets. Most middle class homes had one. Later, the Nazis gave priority to producing cheap *Volksempfänger* versions, so as to be able to reach more workers as well. Radio brought its own attractive new formats, from music to plays, and later even live sports.

The new public broadcasting organization *Deutsche Welle* had a powerful central emitter in Königs Wusterhausen near Berlin, but was relayed by peripheral stations elsewhere. It also broadcast abroad, for instance in Austria. Baschwitz soon agreed to give individual lectures of half an hour on his main subjects, and even consecutive series of three at one-week intervals.

The earliest series dealt with *Die Kunst der Massenführung* (the art of leading masses) and similar familiar themes: a highly topical theme, in view of the rise of Nazism. A digital search led me to their precise dates and time slots in various programme guides; copies of some typescripts are still in the Baschwitz archives.

Yet primarily Baschwitz was and remained a newspaperman. Written and printed texts are linear, discursive, and tend to support the elaboration of rational arguments' pros and cons. But the spoken word can become much more personal, express feelings and moods in more contagious ways, sometimes even provoke grand collective emotions.

<sup>34</sup> Its first transatlantic trip took place in 1928, its first round-the-world trip in 1933. But a Zeppelin filled with highly inflammable gas burst into flames near New York in 1937, largely sealing its fate. On the eve of the Second World War, Germany then became the first to build passenger planes with more than 100 seats.

Hitler and his propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels soon woke up to the extraordinary powers of the new audio-visual media: not only radio, but also film. By 1929, some fourteen million Germans per week were watching a movie in the already five thousand cinemas throughout the country. The Nazis saw a further great opportunity to stir their hearts and minds.<sup>35</sup>

Within only a few years time, the Nazis would even begin to experiment with television, by broadcasting the Nuremberger *Parteitag* to offices and *Fernsehstuben* (television cafes) in the capital Berlin. With regard to film, they promoted the production of propaganda documentaries like Leni Riefenstahl's *Die Triumph des Willens* about those same mega-events, and about the Olympics. They also promoted dramatic feature films rewriting the history of earlier historical epochs and made at the Babelsberg studios, such as *Friedrich der Grosse* (the national idol). Media-wise, this opened up an entirely new realm.

### The unravelling of the Baschwitz couple

After their move to Berlin, Baschwitz's wife apparently tried to revive her career, under the artist name Erika Bronów. Kurt even noted her program 'Kunstreise im Urwald' ('Artistic voyage in the Jungle') in the *D.A.Z.*<sup>36</sup> I have been unable to find more details on her performances. It is clear, however, that they gradually began to drift apart.

By the early 1930s, their marriage was a decade old and had lost its sparkle. His work brought him to receptions, premieres, and conferences – also often staying over in other towns. He was approaching the latter half of his forties. This time of one's life is often marked by what German psychoanalysts later labelled a *Torschlusspanik*: a panic over the closing of the door – to new romantic and erotic experiences, to some kind of rejuvenation. Compare the somewhat related notion of a 'midlife crisis'.

Much later, after Baschwitz's death, Ebels interviewed his youngest daughter for her master's thesis, including about his earlier personal history. In about the year 1932, Ebels writes, 'His marriage disintegrated. Kurt Baschwitz felt a great lack of spiritual connection to his wife; the lack of any kind of connection whatsoever increasingly weighed on her, too. He was often away from home'.

<sup>35</sup> Radio set and cinema visitor numbers: various estimates quoted in Boterman, p. 388. Anschlag (p. 154-155) also provides a list of Baschwitz's radio talks.

<sup>36</sup> 5 June 1927.

She added:

Next to his work – first at the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, then at the *Zeitung-Verlag* – the lectures, articles, and reviews took much time. At home, he mostly sat in his study, to read and write. [His wife] Erika Temmel-Thiessen, who had been used to a creative, adventurous, active, and enterprising life, was socially isolated. After her marriage and the birth of three children in quick succession, her career as an actress and concert singer came to an end.

Ebels continued:

In spite of his frequent physical absences, however, Kurt Baschwitz was certainly not emotionally absent for his children. He compensated the absence during weekends with common excursions, reading and talking to them, listening to music [together]. He was also the one who gave them sexual information, who was open to their problems.

In her isolated situation, his wife could often not handle three very active and enterprising children. But everyday care, for her children and husband, fell on her – even if there was domestic help. There is a family anecdote dating from these years, that Kurt Baschwitz was very surprised he was not able to make drinkable coffee by pouring hot water over un-ground beans in a cup.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, a break-up was approaching. Whereas the first editions of his book *Der Massenwahn* had been dedicated to his bride Erika, the completely rewritten 1932 edition was suddenly devoted to his mother Hedwig instead.

There are also indications in a number of personal letters from those days. One is apparently a June 1931 letter from another woman to Erika, announcing that she would break off her own relationship with Kurt. Another is a September 1932 letter of Kurt to Erika saying, 'Let me free', with reference to yet another woman.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> She ascribes this information to the youngest daughter, but also spoke to Baschwitz's (much later) second wife, Ilse Scholz. Ebels, p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> Notary list of possessions and papers, established after Baschwitz's death. Among the personal belongings kept by his youngest daughter, later given to Ebels, and still later added to the personal papers in the Baschwitz archives, kept in the 'special collections' of the university library.

The next month, Erika officially started divorce proceedings. The divorce was formally pronounced in February 1933. The next month, Baschwitz fled to Amsterdam, alone. A Dutch notary later reconfirmed the divorce there.<sup>39</sup>

### Return of the economic crisis and the surge of the Nazis

The eldest daughter later said that the family was better off than most people. They were relatively well to do and lived among the city's elite in the fancy Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg, with its green parks and the summer residence of the Prussian kings.

The family [of Hitler's propaganda man] Goebbels with their four kids also lived there. One could meet them in the streets. We were warned to go out of our way to avoid them. Like children who are warned against the bogeyman, equivalent to the devil [... But] at one point a former maid visited us. She was very nice, I was fond of her. She recounted merrily, that they [her family] had all become Nazis.

This horrified the Baschwitzes.<sup>40</sup>

There had been a profound shock. The Wall Street crash of late October 1929 had made the Americans recall their short-term loans from early 1930 onwards, which had previously kept the German economy afloat. The economic crisis thus returned with a vengeance, with unemployment shooting up to the unprecedented and unequalled level of thirty percent. Successive governments seemed powerless. This made the Weimar political centre soon melt, and drove voters to the far left and the far right. Hindenburg and his advisers then invoked the special emergency clauses of the Weimar constitution to gradually turn the majority-rule parliamentary republic into a minority-rule authoritarian presidential republic.<sup>41</sup>

Baschwitz's boss, the chairman of the association of newspaper publishers, thus wrote in the 1931 New Year issue of the *Zeitungs-Verlag*: 'We have

<sup>39</sup> The divorce was pronounced in their Berlin suburb of Charlottenburg, to become effective on 18 April 1933. It was reconfirmed in a Dutch notary declaration of 15 May 1933. (According to papers in the same batch that Ebels later added to the Baschwitz archives).

<sup>40</sup> First parts of the almost three-hour video interview with Baschwitz's eldest daughter Gisela / Isa, available in the Amsterdam Jewish Historical Museum, abbreviated as JHM from here.

<sup>41</sup> One recent elaborate overview of the political implosion was the 3x40 minutes television documentary *Geheimnisse der Weimarer Republik* by Uli Weis, broadcast on the ZDF Info channel on 9 July 2016.

long known – or at least could know – that after the seeming flourish of 1927 and 1928 there was a threat of [renewed] harsh distress and dark worries. Things have gotten even worse than we were to expect and fear'.<sup>42</sup>

Baschwitz in turn wrote:

In just a few years, the population of Germany had experienced how riches, savings, interest claims had simply been swept from the earth in the whirl of inflation. On top of that, it now saw the chances for work and bread disappear. It suffered more from unemployment than other peoples, most of all [because of] the fear of a new, unstoppable slide into Nothingness. The curve of votes cast for the National Socialists closely followed the curve of unemployment.

And then: 'It was not the intimidation by his heavies that opened the road to the chancellorship for Hitler. But the impression made by his large faction in the *Reichstag*, by the millions of votes voluntarily cast for him – who scorned parliamentarianism'.<sup>43</sup>

Baschwitz saw the beginning of the end come nearer. His eldest daughter remembered: 'He talked a lot about politics [at home ...] He was a journalist, he knew more than other people – first at the *D.A.Z.*, then at the *Z.V.*' She reminisced about her father's reactions: 'He was politically very involved, and highly emotional about what was going on. He never talked about Hitler, but about *Der Feldwebel* ["The Sergeant" – meant condescendingly]'. She continued:

He had read *Mein Kampf* [*My struggle* – Hitler's notorious memoir and program, with its second part completed in 1928], and had understood that one needed to take it seriously. 'That man will drag along the entire arms industry', he said. It did not mean that much to me as a small child, but I heard dad's warnings on the radio. He felt that foreign countries had muzzled Germany so much with the Versailles Treaty, that a man like Hitler could rise.

<sup>42</sup> Dr. Heinrich Krumbhaar, *Zeitungs-Verlag*, 3 January 1931.

<sup>43</sup> *Du und die Masse*, second edition, Part II, Chapter 13, p. 162 and 159, respectively, in the second Dutch edition.

## Hitler to power

Hitler's party had had only 2.4 percent of the vote before the new economic crisis hit. This number skyrocketed to 18.5 percent after the crisis returned with a vengeance, and then further doubled to 37.8 percent in the mid-1932 elections. Some initially dismissed this as an exceptional event, a freak outcome. But in new late-1932 elections, the Nazis lost only a few percentage points. Their emergence was also accompanied by a rising campaign of terror against their opponents.

Baschwitz's eldest daughter recalled:

My father listened to the results, tense and nervous, pacing up and down in front of the radio set. Suddenly, he stood still and said: 'Children – never forget! A third of the German population has chosen this man in free elections!' We stood assembled around the radio, and he stood with his finger in the air. He added: 'I do not want to live in a country like that, I am going to leave!' And he left [a few months later].<sup>44</sup>

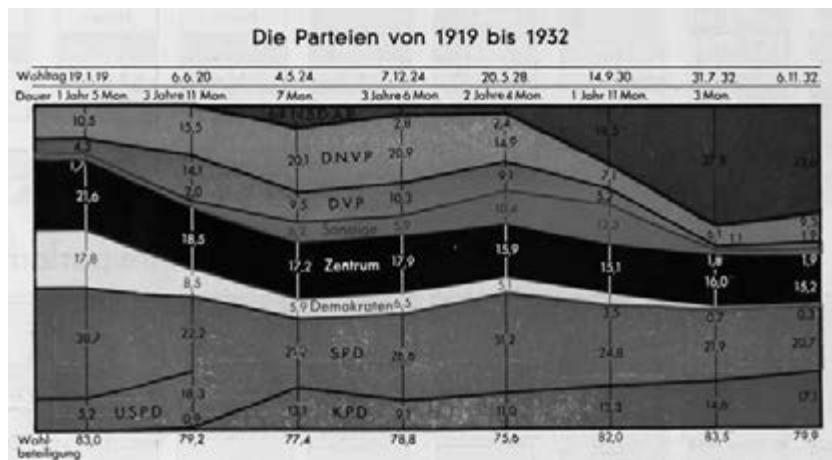
By the new year, Baschwitz saw a telling summary of the political evolution of the last dozen years, in a special supplement of the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* that is still among his personal papers. A diagram clearly demonstrated the melting away of Baschwitz's favourite liberals in just a few years' time, of all the other smaller centre and even rightist parties, and the dramatic growth of the Nazis.

An ad for the Nazi press in the same supplement claimed its circulation had exploded, along with the membership of the party: from 7 in 1919 to 550,000 in mid-1931. 'Every minute a new fighter', it boasted, all 'Trumpeters with the Swastika flag'. After trying all kinds of other solutions with various politicians from the Catholic Centre party, president Hindenburg and his 'camarilla' of advisers finally saw no other option than to make Hitler chancellor, later in that same month of January 1933.

Hitler's fans exulted. One woman wrote to her daughter:

Daddy came running with an extra edition of the newspaper. Daddy's face was radiant. I laughed as well, but when the first mirth was over, I

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Nanda van der Zee, weekly *De Groene Amsterdamer*, 29 April 1998. With two added sentences from the long video interview available at the JHM, about the same subject and scene. In November, Hitler got 33.1 percent. She referred to March 1933, but on that occasion, Hitler got 43.9 percent (after a surge in repression).

**Figure 9**

Official diagrams of successive Weimar election outcomes show a steady Catholic centre party (in the middle, in black), and social-democratic SPD. But the moderate liberal parties fade away, whereas the extreme left communist KPD (bottom), and even more so the extreme right NSDAP (dark top) surge – to more than a combined fifty percent. Baschwitz probably saw this specific diagram, which helped him make up his mind to flee abroad.

had to sit down, and let a few tears run over my cheeks. At last, at last! This once so simple man, who had been in the trenches, sits in the place where Bismarck sat – after the most incredible attacks and slanderous campaigns. Fourteen years ago he had seven followers, now thirteen million. That is the result of an unbelievable energy, power, and self-sacrifice that have seldom occurred in world history. And the struggle is only beginning.<sup>45</sup>

Events did indeed soon accelerate. The *Reichstag* parliament building was set on fire. The Nazis accused a Dutch communist, triggering a wave of repression against political opponents. At the same time, they began to advocate boycotts against Jewish businesses and professionals, press for

45 Long after the war, Dutch scholar Bart van der Boom did an elaborate study of 'ego-documents' like letters and diaries that survived in The Netherlands. This letter by Elisabeth Gebensleben from Braunschweig was written to her daughter in Utrecht. Quoted in Van Liempt (2010), p. 10.

their dismissal from key institutions. Jews were molested in the streets. So Baschwitz concluded that he, too, might soon be in the line of fire.

Sources differ about exactly when and how he left. The eldest daughter was adamant that he must have left in early March 1933, as he was already gone on her eleventh birthday by the middle of that month. He left for Amsterdam, probably first on a tourist visa – or maybe he had some journalistic pretext. He quickly oriented himself there, then decided to stay and apply for a permanent residence permit as a refugee. To do so, he demanded an official letter of dismissal from his employer – which he soon got.<sup>46</sup>

On the 26 April his boss, the chairman of the association of newspaper publishers, sent him the notice: ‘Very honourable Herr Dr. Baschwitz! We are forced by the course of events, to suspend you from your post as editor of the *Zeitung-Verlag* at the earliest possible date’. He would apparently still be paid for the next few months, and could even get the entire sum at once. He would also be free to leave, in order to pursue other options.<sup>47</sup>

So, on the one hand, the association implicitly conceded that there was outside pressure to let him go. On the other hand, they tried to accommodate him by providing him with time and money to pursue alternatives. It was all very hush-hush. Apparently, the leaving of the editor-in-chief was never explicitly mentioned in the columns of the weekly itself.

## Split-up and departure

Baschwitz’s eldest daughter later said that, until that point in time, she had hardly been aware that he was, or might be considered, ethnically Jewish. Meaning that she, and her brother and sister, might be considered half-Jewish. Her mother, by contrast, was *Reichsdeutsch* – supposedly of ethnic German stock. As they would stay with her, they would probably be considered less Jewish and more ‘Aryan’. But it was a great and unexpected drama for them.

Gisela/Isa stated that her father was a typical bookish person, a ‘scholar. He loved his kids, but ...’ She suggests that he did not know very well how to express it. She herself confessed emotionally, ‘I loved my father much more than my mother. I worshipped him. I thought he was so special – as small as I was. And that has remained’. She said: ‘I felt it was terrible [that

46 Gisela/Isa note, quoted by Anschlag, p. 124-125.

47 The original of this letter is reproduced in Anschlag, opposite p. 43.

he was to leave], I almost died. So we said goodbye; he left by train'. She added: 'I seem to have written him a very sad letter' saying 'I never want to go through this again'.

Baschwitz must also have felt contradictory emotions during the last stretch of the long journey to Amsterdam. While the train rolled past the Eastern docks, into the giant Central Station. Next to the IJ waterway connecting the North Sea canal and the Zuiderzee inlet (which had recently been closed by the giant Afsluitdijk dam and thus turned into the IJsselmeer interior lake). Then, walking out of station into the busy square buzzing with trams and taxis. Straight ahead would have been a large avenue with grand hotels: from the Victoria just in front of him, to the Krasnapolsky on the Dam square further down.

A new future seemed to lie ahead, although fraught with great uncertainties. Little could he fathom that it was from this very same 'CS square' that he would be deported some ten years later to the Westerbork transit camp, in view of a further transport to certain death in the East. It would also be in this very 'CS square' that his son would be flaunting a bazooka some twelve years later, and that his eldest daughter would almost be killed by sniper fire when she crossed the battle lines as a courier during the very last day of fighting of the Second World War.<sup>48</sup>

The return to The Netherlands, with which Baschwitz was somewhat familiar after having spent the latter half of the First World War there, was also a strange experience for other reasons. He had not considered himself a Jew. But he had been fired because he was considered both a Jew and a regime critic. Now he found Jewish social workers in Holland standing ready. They probably helped with getting him registered as a refugee, somewhere around July.

According to his eldest daughter, they also impressed on Kurt that his children might be considered half-Jewish if they stayed behind, and might thus possibly also be at some kind of risk at some future point. So they offered help for them as well. He therefore proposed to his ex-wife that they be sent to The Netherlands, too. Her reaction was categorical: 'Not without me'.

At that point he made up his mind to try and start anew with a clean slate. And also to give their troubled and cancelled marriage a new try.<sup>49</sup>

48 A 'bazooka' was a portable recoilless anti-tank rocket launcher, which the allies probably parachuted to the local resistance forces.

49 Gisela/ Isa Baschwitz's video interview available at the Jewish Historical Museum JHM, approximately minute 8, and minute 15 a.f. She claimed that at her father's funeral (in 1968), a

## Reunited abroad

The eldest daughter Gisela said that she was still in German school at that point. Initially, she was not supposed to say anything. But after a decision had been made to follow her father, she took a few teachers into her confidence: that they were not going to come back after the 1933 summer break. ‘Some said: “Are you leaving because of Hitler? What nonsense! It is not going to last. Within half a year he will be gone”. For us it did not exist, she said: Jewish or non-Jewish. There were only nice people and not-nice people. [But] I had a female teacher of French, probably Jewish, who said: “I envy you”’.<sup>50</sup>

She says that at one point she had also been in some kind of youth group.

But suddenly, I could not be standard-bearer anymore. A blonde friend of mine took over. Although she was full-Jewish [but others apparently did not know]. My parents laughed their heads off [...] My brother was in boarding school. At one point he came home in a brownish uniform. My mother said: ‘take it off immediately!’ He said: ‘But then I cannot go back’. She said: ‘Then you will not go back’.<sup>51</sup>

Baschwitz would have preferred to move straight on to the U.S. But for that he would have needed money, which he simply did not have. He had had some savings earlier, but lost them in an investment gone wrong. So he wrote to an acquaintance in the U.S., to ask for help with a so-called affidavit: a sworn statement to guarantee his livelihood. It never came. His eldest daughter said he inquired after the war. ‘The man said that he had not known it was so urgent. That was the attitude of many people’.

According to surviving letters that he sent home, he felt upset about what he had seen along the way, between departure and arrival: ‘I saw so much agony and despair and doom among people around me. Also among acquaintances, and those who used to be big people [...] So you should not be surprised about my depressed state’. He also wrote about the trouble of finding an apartment in Amsterdam, the high costs of decorating it and of

former Jewish social worker had told her that they had *pressed* her father to bring his children to The Netherlands at that point in time (and that she might not have been around anymore if they had not).

<sup>50</sup> Same JHM video itw.

<sup>51</sup> JHM video itw., approximately minutes 20-22. It is not entirely clear whether these two incidents took place during the last period in Germany, or the first period in The Netherlands; she also mentions the ‘Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland’.

paying the movers, as well as other financial worries. He pressed Erika not to take any risks during her trip: not to say anything careless, not to try and smuggle anything – as the dangers were too big.

He also forced himself to write: 'We should really be happy [...] Because we belong to the exceptions, to the few. Apart from that, it will be really "*gezellig*" (that is the Dutch word for [the German] "*gemütlich*") here' (both more or less the equivalent of snug, cosy). He said Amsterdam was nice and looked a bit like Hamburg, where they had spent the happy early years of their marriage – with the waterway, the canals, and the old town.

He was first trying to identify possible future sources of income: 'I want to have my family here, but I want a minimum of security'. They might get some help in the beginning: 'Maybe from a scientific fund, 75 guilders per month (=150 marks)'. Or maybe later 'course fees', as a 'private lecturer' at the university. This was a precipitous drop from his previous comfortable Z.V. income.

Apparently, he had also decided he wanted to make a completely new start with their marriage. His letters began with '*Meine liebe Erika*' (My dear Erika), and ended with 'a thousand greetings and kisses [...] for you and the children, in love and fidelity, your Kurt' (!). He added, rather clumsily: 'Is our marriage anniversary on the 20th or the 25th of September? At home I could always check it on our silver showpiece, the breadbasket. But here I have no clue'.<sup>52</sup>

In the autumn, both mother and children packed as well. The eldest daughter Gisela said, 'Then we arrived in The Netherlands. My father stood on the platform [at the train station]. Of course it was difficult in the beginning. But it did not matter – because father was there. And my mother felt the bride again'. They did not advertise that they had been divorced and lived like all other couples, sleeping in the same bed.

Gisela continued: 'The Dutch were so nice, they did not snarl like in Prussia. The Jewish Refugee Committee received me so well, education-wise, that I could later attend the Barlaeus gymnasium [grammar school ...] Holland was marvellous. The school system was different, not so military'.<sup>53</sup>

A whole new phase seemed to open up.

<sup>52</sup> Letters, 20 September-3 October 1933. Part of the new batch from the youngest daughter, added by Ebels-Dolanová to the Baschwitz archive in 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Same JHM & *De Groene* interviews.

## 6 Second Book: On the Mass Press and Newspaper Audiences

*De krant door alle tijden (The newspaper through the ages)*, Baschwitz's second book, was basically inspired by his Weimar experiences – although its writing and publication were delayed by his exile. This book reflects upon the recurring power plays concerning the mass press that have occurred throughout the West over the last two centuries – or even the last two millennia (more below). It also completed Baschwitz's own gradual switch from practical journalism to theoretical press studies, and set him up for a professorship with an institute of his own. This chapter shows how these two developments evolved through several stages, which both alternated and intertwined.

### Press studies in Germany and the Netherlands

Baschwitz's previous employer, the *Zeitung-Verlag* weekly magazine for newspaper publishers, had carried small items about what was going on in the field, both at home and abroad. But it also published larger articles and book reviews about the psychology, sociology, economics, politics, and history of the whole domain of newspaper studies. Thus, within only a few years time, Baschwitz was brought up to date with all the ins and outs of the entire business. Furthermore, he became aware of various ongoing initiatives to turn these reflections about the implications of the mass media into a serious academic discipline.

We have seen that once a year in late spring/early summer, the weekly had published a *Festausgabe* or special issue, in preparation for the general assembly of the association that was attended by all of its wheelers and dealers. This issue was always linked to a conference on a topical theme. An early one that Baschwitz attended was probably the 1929 one in Heidelberg, on 'Newspapers and science'. One of the speakers was Jewish-Hungarian Karl Mannheim, who later became world famous for his contributions to the wider sociology of knowledge, ideologies, and generations.<sup>1</sup> For Baschwitz,

<sup>1</sup> Mannheim later fled to Amsterdam around the same time as Baschwitz, where he reportedly stayed with the psychology professor Geza Révész, whom he and his wife had already come to know in Budapest. But unlike Baschwitz, he was able to move onwards to London, setting his life and career on a different path.

Heidelberg was also a return to his first *alma mater*, where publishers had just supported an initiative to set up an institute on the newspaper trade under Hans von Eckardt.

Baschwitz later said that he had already been sounded out at this time about the possibility of becoming a professor there, but declined. He preferred his editorship at the *Zeitung-Verlag* in the capital for the time being, which was also a rather prestigious job and well paid. He had a young family that had known lean times, so he was happy to be somewhat better off. But Heidelberg still invited him for individual lectures and, he later claimed, gave him several years to think about the offer and change his mind, if he wished to.

Until 1933, Baschwitz wrote, the most important institutes in newspaper studies were those located in Berlin (led by Emil Dovifat), Leipzig (Erich Everth), Cologne (Martin Spahn), Munich (Karl d'Ester), Heidelberg (Hans von Eckhardt), Münster (Heinrich Bause), Hamburg, Kiel, and Freiburg. The North Rhine – Westphalia library in Dortmund (under Erich Schulz) also had an institute for newspaper research that was closely related to others (particularly Münster) and to the press organizations.<sup>2</sup>

But by the time Baschwitz was fired from the publishers' weekly, it had already become too late to make the switch to academia, for instance at Heidelberg. Jews were being pushed out there too, and their places taken up by Nazis. By that time, he later told his family, there were already too many 'black uniforms' in the faculty there.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Zeitung-Verlag* and its editor Baschwitz had of course received regular updates about other academic initiatives to make room for the new discipline of press or newspaper studies, called 'publicistics' or journalism, at various universities. Not only those in Germany itself, where the political situation now began to deteriorate rapidly, but also in the neighbouring, still neutral, Netherlands. Baschwitz may also have retained a few contacts there from his earlier stay.

There had already been three Dutch Ph.D. doctoral dissertations on various aspects of the press. The 'Circle' of Dutch journalists had long advocated the creation of university courses along similar lines as in Germany, but there had been differences in approach, and progress was slow. Then, in October 1931, there was suddenly a controversy about the *simultaneous*

<sup>2</sup> Overview: 3 p. typescript by Baschwitz about 'newspaper science at German universities' (precise date unclear, in the archives of the International Institute of Social History).

<sup>3</sup> Heidelberg: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 142, 200; Anschlag, p. 44–45, 123 n. 31. In a later C.V. (in a letter to the Dutch 'press purge' commission, 16 April 1947), he claimed that he had actually been officially called to become a professor of journalism in Heidelberg in 1932 – which has so far not been confirmed from other sources.

creation of not one but two *competing* positions as ‘private lecturer’ for the new field. One was in Leiden, the other in Utrecht. The former soon produced its first Ph.D. dissertation about ‘Public opinion, press and state’ in 1932.<sup>4</sup>

At several other universities there was talk of taking similar initiatives – not least in the capital Amsterdam, which was also the main national press centre. These reports had already gotten Baschwitz thinking about a possible return to the Netherlands and an academic career there. In 1932, the municipal university in the Dutch capital had celebrated its tri-centenary (in fact that of its predecessor, the ‘Atheaeum Illustrē’), with a flurry of new initiatives – including the award of dozens of honorary doctorates to a wide range of luminaries.<sup>5</sup>

### Tentative manuscript on ‘The state and the press’

As soon as Baschwitz arrived in Amsterdam in the spring of 1933, even before his family had followed him during the autumn, he apparently went to check with insiders about his long-term prospects – and felt reassured. In late September, he literally wrote to his wife: ‘When you check the children out [of school] and in case they ask, feel free to tell them I have been called [for a post] by Amsterdam university – with a view on a [later] professorship’. This was of course a bit over-optimistic. But he must have had, or soon made, contacts who were in-the-know about preliminary discussions on the subject.<sup>6</sup>

He immediately set to work on a highly topical but also ambitious manuscript of 112 pages: a study in ‘newspaper science’ about ‘state constraints’ on the press – its forms and its consequences.<sup>7</sup> It was of course written in German, but it was never published: not in Dutch and not later.<sup>8</sup> Germany itself was already off-limits, Austria increasingly so, and even neutral Switzerland was becoming reticent to provoke its mighty neighbour. Publication in The Netherlands was possible, but preferably with a less openly political

<sup>4</sup> There were several versions given of the Leiden/Utrecht controversy between A.J. Lievegoed and W.N. Van der Hout. See Hemels, *De Journalistieke Eierdans*, Ch. IV. The Ph.D. thesis was by Hugo Samkalden.

<sup>5</sup> Alumni magazine *Spui 45* (2016, No. 2), p. 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> Typewritten letter dated 28 September 1933. In the same batch and file provided by his youngest daughter to Ebels-Dolanová and later added to the Baschwitz archives in 2015.

<sup>7</sup> *Die staatliche Gebundenheit der Presse, ihre Formen und Folgen – Eine zeitungswissenschaftliche Studie*. Typescript in the UB/ BC Baschwitz archives, file 174.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the material returned in a journal article, and in his subsequent Dutch overview book *De krant door alle tijden*.

title and subject – particularly since the text was written by such a newly arrived exile who was still in limbo.

The introduction of this manuscript poses a key question: Is the press still a big power? When Bismarck had tried to silence the *Frankfurter Zeitung* after the expansion of the Empire, the latter had defiantly countered the Iron Chancellor: 'In our times it is easier to conquer a few duchies, than to destroy a sheet of paper'. The almighty leader had also failed to silence the ideological press – first the catholic, then the social-democratic one.

Democratic countries like the U.S. and the U.K. had recently tried to limit certain 'excessive' powers of the press, but autocratic regimes in Germany, Italy, and Russia had simply shackled it, overriding its mostly lame protests. Would they be able to get away with this in the long run, or would these policies in the end prove to be counter-productive? This was the question that Baschwitz sought to answer in his essay.

The manuscript has two main parts. The first was about the foreseeable consequences of an *un-free* press. First, Baschwitz wrote, this would lead to the intellectual dominance of the *foreign* press; second, it would lead to 'secret papers' of all kinds; and third, *state* sponsored papers had already proven to be no substitute for a free press. The successive developments in France under the absolute monarchy, the revolution, the terror, the Napoleonic regimes, and beyond, provided ample historical proof for this.

The second part of the manuscript then discussed the sliding scale from censorship to dictatorship. In these circumstances, the people would inevitably lose trust in the press, in the authorities, and in their version of events, and would start to look for (or secretly produce) alternative sources of information, he said. But more importantly: the autocrats would not get appropriate *feedback* from their subjects anymore, either from the elites or masses. They would therefore not be able to *finesse* their policies, and would thus begin to make crude mistakes. Therefore, total press censorship and press dictatorship – like that of the Nazis – would ultimately prove to be self-defeating, he confidently predicted.

The manuscript ends with an 'outlook' chapter on the foundations of press freedom. Healthy economic exploitation provided the best guarantee for an independent press, he said, and diverse competition within a free market. Of course there had been occasional excesses, in Weimar and elsewhere: a sensationalist or campaigning press, overdependence on advertising, press barons and trusts. But reforms to limit their influence should never undermine the principles of freedom and competition themselves, he warned. They were indispensable for the proper functioning of democracy, and the intellectual life of peoples.

His work on this manuscript must also have stirred second thoughts and first regrets, about Baschwitz's earlier book on mass delusions – the last edition of which had been published only the year before. On the one hand, Baschwitz must have realized that his image of the First World War, who started it and who committed atrocities, and of the Versailles Treaty, had been highly influenced by Prussian and German management of the press at the time: in the authoritarian ways of propaganda, indoctrination, and censorship and supplemented by a degree of self-delusion and self-censorship on the part of patriotic journalists. As at his own *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*.

On the other hand, he must have realized that after the war several of the most prestigious and seemingly independent newspapers of the Weimar Republic had increasingly become subject to co-optation by outside financiers with a hidden agenda, ranging from government and political parties to banks and business groups. This also held for his own *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, which was first owned by the industry tycoon Stinnes, and later had a small participation of the business tycoon Hugenberg. These vested interests implicitly translated into some nominations and policies, some do's and don'ts for the editors.

Due to the contradictions in its orientations, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* was increasingly caught in the eye of the storm. On 8 June 1933, the liberal Dutch *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, with which Baschwitz was familiar from his earlier stay, carried a report from its Berlin correspondent with the headline 'The light that went out – The ban of the D.A.Z.'

The piece noted that the paper had previously 'justly been called an oasis. But even here the plants could no longer fully thrive'. The brief ban was for a comment entitled '*Bruderzwist*' ('fraternal strife') by its chief editor Fritz Klein, which discussed the problematic relations between Hitler and the Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss.<sup>9</sup> After the *Gleichschaltung* or 'bringing into line' of the press, the Nazis replaced Klein – though subsequently he grew closer to them before he died in a horse accident.

### Baschwitz's lobby at the University of Amsterdam

Baschwitz's typescript *Die Staatliche Gebundenheit der Presse* carries a handwritten note that it had been completed by 29 November 1933. It probably soon proved impossible to publish in this form. But it was useful to

<sup>9</sup> Dollfuss cultivated a Mussolini style dictatorship to block the local Nazis. His assassination the next year opened the road for them, and for the later *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany.

show around, to establish his *bona fides* as an academic scholar – not just a journalist. He probably made the maximum number of carbon copies, circulating them from December onwards.

The entire next year, 1934, was then devoted to an intensive lobbying campaign. The chairman of the relevant Amsterdam faculty board was linguist Albert Willem de Groot, and its secretary happened to be David Cohen – whom Baschwitz had probably met through the relief network for Jewish refugees like himself (to which we will return).

The archives of the faculty board and its chairman permit a detailed reconstruction of the long march of Baschwitz to be made ‘private lecturer’ in newspaper studies at the University of Amsterdam. One expression of support apparently came from editor-in-chief Day von Balluseck of the prestigious liberal Amsterdam daily *Algemeen Handelsblad*, and from its Berlin correspondent at the time Max Blokzijl (who later had a falling out over their opposing attitudes toward Nazism).<sup>10</sup>

The proposal was apparently also supported by Anton Lievegoed, whom Baschwitz may already have met in Rotterdam, where he was an editor at the equally prestigious liberal daily *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*. He had recently been made the first Dutch private lecturer of press studies in Leiden, and was about to be named head of the first Government Press Service.<sup>11</sup>

In early spring 1934, the faculty chairman De Groot apparently sent out a circular asking various colleagues what they knew about Baschwitz and his work. One reaction came from the noted social-democrat criminologist Willem Bonger, who said he had known Baschwitz for some time, that his Dutch was ‘already quite good’, and that he would surely prove to be a boon as a private lecturer.

The history section and its chairman Hajo Brugmans then looked into the matter further. Baschwitz produced a note for them clarifying that he did not plan to lecture on journalism, but on the *history and social psychology* of journalism – subjects then within the realm of that faculty. (Elsewhere also described as: the social psychology and sociology of the relations with its *readers*, earlier also characterized as an ‘invisible mass’). He provided an outline for a series on ‘The History of the Newspaper Trade’, which would ‘at the same time [be] An Introduction into the Science of the Press’.

<sup>10</sup> Blokzijl became president of the Dutch Association in Germany, and later a secret sympathizer of the Dutch national-socialist movement NSB in The Netherlands. After the German invasion, he became a pro-German radio commentator, with a considerable voice in the press policies of the occupier. After Liberation, he became the first collaborator to be executed in 1946. Von Balluseck became Dutch representative at the U.N. in 1949.

<sup>11</sup> More in Hemels, ‘Kommunikationswissenschaft in den Niederlanden’.

The note identified seven historical themes, such as technical developments, 'origins of the news trade', 'political publicity', 'private enterprises and the state', 'censorship', 'development of the professions of publisher and journalist', and 'the age of the mass press'. On another occasion, Baschwitz added that he planned not to limit himself to lecturing, but also would do 'scientific research' about newspapers 'throughout the whole world'.

The history section discussed the matter mid-May 1934, in a meeting chaired by Brugmans. It decided to indeed proceed and recommend Baschwitz's appointment to the faculty. The next month, the faculty consented, and in turn recommended the same appointment to the Academic Senate. But at this point there was a delay of almost half a year. Why?

### The economic crisis, cutbacks, and delay

Things had been moving forward precipitously thus far, but now they suddenly hit a roadblock. At this precise moment in time, the depression had begun to bite into academic employment. The mid-1930s minutes of the governing bodies of the university and the faculty all discuss the necessity of cutbacks and of bringing costs down.

Various approaches were proposed. One proposal was to lower the retirement age for professors from 70 to 65. Another possible measure was to cut the salaries of the lower academic staff. A 'first' assistant earned 1,800 guilders per year at the time, a 'second' assistant 900, or even 500 if he also had free board and lodging in a hospital, for instance. There was also a program for unemployed intellectuals, for meagre pay. At a later point they even got ...*food coupons*.

At the same time, the university was still a large institution with a considerable budget. During the preceding academic year 1933-34, it had had 2,735 students, of which 724 were women. The philosophy and literary faculty (including history and art history), where Baschwitz's appointment was proposed, had 20 percent or 555 students, of which the exceptionally large number of 301 – more than 50 percent – were women. The faculty itself had six 'sections', with some other isolated representatives of the early behavioural sciences as well.

This included a chair for education (Philip Kohnstamm) and another one for psychology (the Hungarian Géza Révész); even a proposal for 'parapsychology' (Wilhelm Tenhaeff) was under discussion (and later accepted in Utrecht). The faculty thus employed fourteen 'ordinary' professors and eight 'extra-ordinary' professors (often part-time). It had five ordinary associate

professors or lecturers, and two extraordinary ones. And then there were the 'private lecturers', as well.

The 'private lecturer' positions had one advantage: they did not really weigh on the budget of the university. The title of 'Privaat docent' was primarily an academic honour, in the Germanic world as well as in The Netherlands. It showed that someone was in principle considered to be qualified for a possible full professorship at some undefined later date. Appointments were often made for new (sub)disciplines, which still had to 'prove' themselves. This held for press studies.

Usually, there was no remuneration from the university itself. In special cases, however, some private lecturers were allowed to directly demand a financial contribution from their individual students. According to notes in the archives, a few private lecturers in the faculty were indeed allowed to charge between 10 and 50 guilders per course series, mostly between 25 and 40 guilders depending on the category of student. But with a small number of students, this produced only a very meagre part-time income for the lecturer.

The response from the 'Curatorium' (Trustees) of the University to the Academic Senate initially proved reticent about the proposed nomination of Kurt Baschwitz and a colleague as new 'private lecturers'. It asked whether the number of private lecturers was not already too high: this single faculty had 23 out of the university's total of 55 'private lecturers' – more than any other faculty. It also said there had to be a 'proven need' for the new subject, and that the candidate should really be 'excellent'.

The response mentioned that appointing foreigners would limit the room for native candidates, who were often also unemployed. However, another file contained an incomplete list of some 600 professors and private lecturers who had already been fired in Germany. It announced the setting up of an 'Academic Support Fund' like those that had already sprung up in the U.K. and the U.S. Its chairman was to be law professor Paul Scholten and its secretary the economist Herman Frijda, who also had links to the relief work for Jewish refugees. The fund was to help finance temporary appointments for exiles, until they would be able to move on – to the Anglo-American world, for instance.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Minutes and correspondence of the University Trustees, the Literary Faculty board and chairman, 1933-1935, kept at the Amsterdam city archives (also at its Alkmaar depot), files 1801-1803, 1931 a.o.

### 'Private lecturer' at last

The appointment of Baschwitz only returned to the Senate agenda in early December 1934. An internal note by Cohen two weeks before said it might be better 'to leave certain arguments out' – possibly a reference to his uncertain status as a Jewish and/or political refugee from Germany. In the end, Baschwitz was finally officially appointed on 25 January 1935.

He was thus finally able to take a first step on the academic ladder (at the advanced age of almost 49). He gave an inaugural public lecture on Tuesday afternoon, 5 March 1935, about 'The emergence of the world press', in the ivy-covered central university lecture building of the Oude Manhuis Poort.<sup>13</sup> Built around an interior square in the very heart of the old town, next to a picturesque gallery connecting two canals that today is still lined with small antique and second-hand book stalls.

Baschwitz began his inaugural lecture with an introduction in heavily accented Dutch, but continued in German – and the printed text was also in German. The lecture itself focused on the emergence of newsletters, first written then printed, and on the large role of trading hubs like those of The Low Countries – first also Belgium but later mostly The Netherlands – in the early rise of a 'world press' (which at the time was largely in the main international and diplomatic language, French). He covered the large roles of the two strong western provinces of North and South Holland, the capital Amsterdam, and also those of Haarlem, Leiden, and even the seat of government The Hague.

In line with university tradition, at the end of the lecture, Baschwitz individually thanked all those who had helped or inspired him during the previous few years: the chairman of the literary faculty Albert Willem de Groot and its main historian Hajo Brugmans, as well as the economic historian Nicolaas Posthumus and antiquity historian David Cohen, who had helped him get started through the committee for Jewish refugees (more about this in a later chapter). He also included criminologist Willem Bonger and economist Herman Frijda (neither of whom would survive Nazi rule).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> There is confusion about Baschwitz's mandate. His proposal and its acceptance may initially have been limited to the '*history* of the daily newspaper'. But Anschlag (p. 49–50, 126, n. 27) pointed out that the university yearbook spoke of 'journalism', and the titles of Baschwitz's lectures soon veered off to related subjects like 'reader psychology, public opinion, mass suggestion, propaganda', etc.

<sup>14</sup> Bonger committed suicide at the time of the invasion; Frijda was deported to Auschwitz and was killed there in 1944.

Furthermore, Baschwitz said that he was thankful for the presence of 'leading personalities' from the newspaper world, and of the boss of the brand new Government Press Service (his own predecessor in Leiden, Anton Lievegoed). He mentioned his 'unforgettable teacher' in Munich, Lujo Brentano, who had trained him in 'scientific thinking'. These acknowledgements show that he had quickly built a multidisciplinary academic network in Amsterdam, and was seeking support throughout the press world for his future plans.

Baschwitz's inaugural lecture was hailed in articles in the major newspapers.<sup>15</sup> The nomination thus gave him a visible and respectable social position. He soon had letter-paper printed with the heading 'Dr. Kurt Baschwitz, private lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, Weissenbruchstraat 35, Amsterdam – West'. It was just around the corner from the thoroughfare Haarlemmermeerstraat, leading to the well-connected nearby Hoofddorp-plein. (The area was later included in the adjacent Southern Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood, to which we will return).

This private lectureship was meant to be the first step on the road to a paid full professorship in press history, if his lobby proved successful in the end. This depended on his ability to bring on board not only the journalists' circle, but also the association of newspaper publishers, who were in a position to provide a significant financial contribution. But this was still to prove a very long road, much longer than he could possibly have suspected at the time.

Over the next few years, Baschwitz published his first two scholarly articles in academic historical journals.<sup>16</sup> They paid one hundred guilders a piece – which he badly needed. But he wanted to go further, and immediately set to work on a larger authoritative overview book *De krant door alle tijden* (*The newspaper through the ages*). This was an appropriate title and angle, as the 'mere history' approach distracted from his more pointed earlier polemics on state control in Germany and elsewhere, which were now carefully embedded in it. Baschwitz's papers still have a large number of files with clippings from and on newspapers from many other countries – most starting at this exact point in time.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Inaugural lecture: *De Telegraaf*, *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, *De Gooi- en Eemlander*, and others – or even the Red *De Tribune* of those days.

<sup>16</sup> 'Schreckenherrschaften und ihre Presse', in the newly launched *International Review for Social History* of the Amsterdam institute, Vol. I (1936), p. 273-310. (More about it below). As well as 'The history of the daily press in The Netherlands', in the more established *Bulletin of the International Committee of Historical Science*, Vol. 10 (1938), p. 96-113.

<sup>17</sup> Newspaper clippings used as research for this book: archive boxes with files 48-62 and 63-80

He was encouraged in this ambitious endeavour by an extremely inventive and versatile Jewish publisher in Amsterdam.<sup>18</sup> Isaac Keesing was the son of a commissioner in diamonds. Originally trained for banking, he had instead turned into an economic journalist. He had first developed his own 'Keesing system' – a financial archive for stock traders – and later made similar ones about counterfeits and medical news, and from mid-1931 onwards a well-known 'historical archive' about 'contemporary events' – to which we will return.<sup>19</sup>

Keesing gave Baschwitz a contract for his book on newspapers. According to his correspondence, the Dutch translation was ready as early as the spring of 1936. He was paid, but to his great irritation the publication was delayed time and again until 1938.

The accumulated delays had great and negative consequences and resulted in a postponement of almost ten years for both his nomination as a full professor, and for the further take-off of press studies in The Netherlands. The war, of course, was about to intervene.<sup>20</sup>

### *De krant door alle tijden: The newspaper through the ages*

The title of the book's introduction immediately laid down Baschwitz's bold and central claim for a 'press science': 'What is most important about a newspaper [...] are its readers'. It is not the legal institution, the noteworthy building, or even the paper product displayed at the newsstands. Instead, it is the 'invisible mass' of readers, its audience or public, which shares certain orientations and which as a whole weighs in on social and political processes.

He also introduced the main distinction on this score. On the one hand, there are mass papers with large circulations, which represent quantity.

<sup>18</sup> See the conclusion of *De krant door alle tijden* (p. 277 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

<sup>19</sup> As 'press professor' Baschwitz later even planned to play a role at the archive's 25th 'silver' jubilee, which celebrated its many volumes, 12,000 pages, and one and a half million items.

Report in the daily *Leeuwarder Courant*, 2 July 1956, which always closely followed press affairs.

<sup>20</sup> In 1935, Keesing Publishers even had their own pavilion at the world fair in Brussels; in 1936 they had 80 employees, for 16 different publications and their own printing plants in four capitals, for four different languages. (The printed edition of *Keesing's World News Archives* lasted until 1988. Recently, there was a plan to integrate it with *The Wikipedia Library*).

Baschwitz's daughter Gisela/Isa later said he expressed irritation about the repeated delays. He may have felt that it hampered his prospects of being quickly named to some full and paid 'press studies' position at the university, which was beginning to be discussed by some insiders in Amsterdam. It did indeed take another ten years, because the war intervened.

On the other hand, there are elite papers with smaller circulations, which represent quality. It is a widespread and recurring misunderstanding, he repeated time and again, to think that the former are more influential than the latter. But the latter are being read by the opinion leaders (to use a term later introduced by Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld). Elsewhere, Baschwitz related this to 'the hierarchical principle', postulated earlier by American social psychology founder Edward Ross (without realizing that Ross had been heavily influenced by his French predecessor Gabriel Tarde on this score).<sup>21</sup>

The first chapter of *De krant door alle tijden* then delved into the preliminary question: What did people do before there were newspapers? Baschwitz argued that they had had the same 'intellectual needs' for societal information. (His Amsterdam communication department successor Denis McQuail was later to adopt the term 'uses and gratifications' of media in this context).

According to Baschwitz, one needed only to look back at the ancient Roman Empire. Of course there had been no mass papers in the modern sense at that point in time. But the *pontifex maximus* or high priest had annals for decisions, appointments, and major events of the year displayed on white boards in the central Forum square in Rome. These annals were consulted by the citizens and copied by travellers from elsewhere. Afterwards, they were stored in the state archives.

Julius Caesar turned this into the *acta diurna*, or daily reports. Amateur and professional correspondents took notes on the facts and their own takes on events in the capital, gossip, and rumours. Multiple copies were then made and sent to powerful and influential subscribers in the provinces. Provincial correspondents wrote similar reports for the elite in the capital.

One could even *buy* specialized journalists for these purposes in the slave market. Chrestus was one of the first newspaper entrepreneurs to better organize this whole activity for profit, and Cicero was one of the first readers to express outrage about his sensationalism and untrustworthiness. Of course the power holders tried to manage their public image, Baschwitz added, and to corrupt others. The faces of emperors recurred in statues and coins, as troubadours sang their praise. These were early examples of political 'spin'.<sup>22</sup>

A similar system re-emerged during the Renaissance, Baschwitz wrote, with two basic components. The first was diplomatic correspondence from

<sup>21</sup> In his best-known work *Les lois de l'imitation* (1890, translated as *The laws of imitation*).

<sup>22</sup> Baschwitz remained enough of a journalist to focus on the 'good stories'; scholarly research has since amended many of these views.

**Figure 10**

Baschwitz's key Dutch book *The newspaper through the ages* (1938) had a cover designed by artist Albert Hahn Jr. (1894-1953), commissioned by Keesing publishers.

foreign courts, the second commercial information distributed through major trading houses. These networks soon covered most of Western Europe. Venice (with its privileged links to the Orient) was a major early hub. At first, however, such newsletters were still largely hand-copied.

After printing had been invented, first one-page pamphlets and then multi-page *Gazettes* with varied news items emerged, gradually expanding both in frequency and circulation. (French was the main international language at the time; others used similar but different terms for newspapers). The Low Countries played a key role. During the same year that Baschwitz's book finally came out, Swedish historian Folke Dahl discovered a large batch of the very oldest Dutch publications, and soon became a regular correspondent with Baschwitz. He published an article on how Amsterdam was 'the earliest newspaper centre of Western Europe'<sup>23</sup> (A role that later fell on New Amsterdam – i.e., New York – as the major newspaper centre of North America and the world as a whole).

<sup>23</sup> See the article in the Dutch book magazine *Het Boek*, Vol. XXV (1939), No. III, p. 161-197.

Baschwitz then discussed various national developments during successive historical periods. The Germanic world remained divided in a multitude of states and regimes, he wrote: one capital after another provided liberal ‘windows of opportunity’ for relatively free papers, which were often soon forbidden and denounced by other less liberal capitals. France, by contrast, was soon highly centralized and authoritarian, and tended time and again to revert to publishing only one ‘official’ newspaper, which was then often mistrusted by its citizens.

In England, parliament long tried to control reports about its proceedings until independent newspaper enterprises emerged. *The Times* of London had been founded in the late 1780s, and soon became an international reference. The U.S. generated a wide range of local papers rather than national ones, which gradually became organized into larger groups during the nineteenth century. These papers had considerable financial means, and sent resourceful reporters to the four corners of the globe (think of Stanley’s famous exploit of tracing Livingstone in the jungles of central Africa, for example).

Baschwitz also discussed how technical innovations had transformed the entire business. The telegraph accelerated long-distance exchanges, and ultimately contributed to the further rise of the various press agencies: Wolff in Germany, Havas in France, Reuters in Great Britain, and the Associated Press in America – which soon tried to divide the world among themselves.

Automatic typesetting machines and rotating printing presses sped up production, lowered prices, and gave rise to a daily mass press over the course of the nineteenth century. Novelists like Alexandre Dumas and Charles Dickens had begun to develop *feuilletons* (serial novels) that were comparable to the later ‘soap operas’: long stories with endless new developments in daily instalments, meant to promote the fidelity of an audience. Émile Zola demonstrated the power of intellectuals with his front-page article ‘*J'accuse*’, which confronted the very highest military and civilian authorities head-on during the Dreyfus affair (when a Jewish officer had been falsely accused of treason). The press thus became a major vehicle for social change.

The first edition of Baschwitz’s book had a small additional concluding chapter, ‘Past and present’. It mentioned that there were now newspapers all over the world, from South America to East Asia, flanked by radio and movies, in a hundred different languages. It had become impossible to take note of all of this, both for amateurs and professionals. ‘And yet this problem has been solved – in a surprisingly simple and therefore practical way. Of

course it was a newspaperman who found this solution – namely I. Keesing Jr.' (That is to say: the founder of the publishing house for the book itself).

Keesing was mentioned because he had built the *Keesing's Historisch Archief*, consisting of frequent instalments with summaries of reporting about major issues by the best newspapers in the world. The registers were continually updated, and ultimately assembled in annual volumes. Apart from the Dutch original, there were also German, French, and English editions (i.e., the *Keesing's Historical Archives* in London). Keesing's example had even been followed by others. Here it must also be noted that over the years Baschwitz himself apparently wrote such abstracts as a freelancer, and/or acted as an occasional editor for the *K.H.A.*.

Since Baschwitz's Dutch was still not good enough, the original manuscript for *De krant door alle tijden* had again been in German. It does not mention a translator; he or she may have been a professional recruited by the 'international publisher' Keesing's. Some materials relevant to this book survive in the archives, and there are even indications that he tried to get a German version published for the Post-War second edition.<sup>24</sup> But as the situation had evolved in entirely different ways by that time, this would have demanded substantial rewriting. When he did not get an immediate enthusiastic response, he apparently dropped the matter, since he was caught up in other activities.

Dutch newspaper reviews of course focused on the quotation in which a Dutch correspondent claimed that his countrymen were 'the most thorough newspaper readers in the world'. Even though its author, Max Blokzijl, was in the process of becoming a controversial figure at home.<sup>25</sup>

A recurring point of criticism in the reviews of *De krant door alle tijden* was that the book could be seen as a journalistic introduction to the subject, rather than a typical scholarly study.<sup>26</sup> It had few footnotes, and usually gave only one version of contested events. The two-page 'selected literature' section mostly referred to general books on the subject, with little reference to specialized articles from scientific journals. This enabled it to reach a lay readership at the time, but did little to secure it a lasting reputation in newspaper studies among the subsequent generations.

24 Baschwitz archives, Box XXXII A9, Files 48-62 'Zeitungsgeschichte', etc.

25 In Chapter XXVIII, p. 225.

26 See for example a short notice in *De Telegraaf*, 15 February 1939.

## Again: The question of censorship and propaganda

The last full chapter before the conclusion (in the first edition) returned to the question of censorship and propaganda, which was first exacerbated by the First World War. Of course, Baschwitz had already elaborated on these themes in his earlier book *Der Massenwahn*. But he mostly referred indirectly and fleetingly to that now, because by this time he felt that his close identification with Germany's travails during and after the war might easily be construed as a *faux pas* in The Netherlands.

The chapter focused on the new press dictatorships that had emerged in Russia, Italy, Germany and elsewhere – and which, he argued, were a clear aberration from the norm. This was an early reflection on the causes and consequences of authoritarianism and totalitarianism for the media. Baschwitz predicted confidently that they would prove counter-productive and self-defeating in the end.

It would only be after the Second World War that Baschwitz reached his ultimate goal of becoming a full professor of press science in Amsterdam, and that his book *De krant door alle tijden* got a second edition. This time, however, the last chapter was not the one about the new press dictatorships anymore. Instead, he added a much more hopeful chapter discussing his earlier prediction that such restrictions would inevitably make people lose trust in the authorities and their version of events, and start to look for (or secretly produce) alternative sources of information.

This is exactly what happened in The Netherlands during the occupation of the Second World War: a significant part of the population secretly listened to Dutch exile radio, broadcast in short wave from Britain. Independent news was further spread by an underground press, first hand-copied, then mimeographed and finally printed, which was later claimed to have been proportionally the largest and most successful of the whole of occupied Western Europe. I will return to these subjects later.

Baschwitz's immediate successors published a range of more specialized studies in Dutch about the subject of press history. In 1939, Maarten Schneider presented a Ph.D. thesis in Leiden on the history of the Dutch general printing office. A few years later, he published a more elaborate history of the Dutch press, which went through four editions. Joan Hemels later helped further elaborate and update it. Baschwitz's successor in general newspaper science Maarten Rooij split off lecturing on the history of the press with a separate chair occupied first by Schneider, then by Hemels.

Thereafter, Flemish historian Theo Luykx published a wide-ranging book about the international evolution of the communication media, broadening the scope to the new audiovisual media. Such books superseded Baschwitz's older and more limited book as teaching material both at the newly founded professional schools and at the universities, and it was not reprinted again. In the longer run, they were largely replaced by Anglo-American handbooks.<sup>27</sup>

### Excerpts from the book *De krant door alle tijden (The newspaper through the ages)*<sup>28</sup>

Everything considered mysterious about the power of the press lies embedded in the link between the reader and the newspaper. What does he want from his newspaper? What does he tolerate from it? Can the state take up this instrument, and how does the reader look at it? Wealthy owners of newspapers and controllers of trusts: how far does their power over public opinion and politics reach?

The answer to these questions lies in the history of the newspaper realm. Its lessons speak a clear language, beyond the noise of everyday struggles. In the course of these accounts, the reader will come across the names of almost all newspapers commonly cited as a daily source of information, about all events in the world. From its history and environment, he will then better understand its essence. (Introduction)

People often assume that when there were no printed newspapers yet, governments had it easier with public opinion. Or rather: that they did not encounter and fear public opinion.

Of course 'public opinion' is a somewhat vague and ambiguous notion. In practice, it often does not mean the opinion of the majority, but rather the opinion of those circles whose consent matters to a government. And depending on the different nature of those circles, it employs different means of propaganda to influence their opinion.

<sup>27</sup> See Schneider & Hemels; Luykx.

<sup>28</sup> Translated from the second Dutch edition, p. 5, 51, 82, and 66-7, respectively.

Emperors and kings felt forced to engage in the front ranks of such a struggle – as long as there was no periodical political press to give an overview of such debates. Flyers and pamphlets were the weapons used. (Chapter VII)

There is no *unlimited* freedom of the printed press, and there should not be. Of course newspapers are held to the laws of the state. They must respect the norms that apply to social interaction. And if they take their duty seriously, they will consider it their special task to respect the rules of morality – even those that cannot easily be formulated legally.

Whenever one speaks of *press freedom*, one means the right to the free expression of one's opinion within the framework of generally binding laws and customs that protect the honour of another human being. Press freedom does not then mean the right to impunity for utterances forbidden to a private person.

In practice, therefore, the push for press freedom meant that most of the time newspapers did not wish to remain subject to very special stipulations and interdictions meant only for them. We are concerned with the factual course of development, and not with all kinds of theories invoked in favour or against the principle of press freedom.

The factual course of development was that even the government of the state never felt that one could seriously demand a private person to be allowed to continually criticize the higher authorities by means of a periodical publication belonging to him. The relative freedom that the weeklies in The Netherlands enjoyed at first, only concerned *reports from abroad*. As noted before, as early as 1620, Dutch printers [also] made English editions of their journals for export to England [and later French editions for France]. (Chapter XII)

During the second year of the French revolution, press freedom was introduced officially and with great ceremony. But only two years later, in 1793, it ceased to exist. Seventy journalists and collaborators were executed as enemies of the revolution – writers from all camps. We already talked about the fate of the hyper-radical revolutionaries. But they were not the only ones to meet this fate. The *Directoire* had 60 further publishers and collaborators of newspapers locked up and 45 banned. Wherever the armies of the French revolution came during their

campaigns, enemy-friendly newspapers were repressed and Francophile journals were supported or founded. Despite all the proclamations of press freedom. (Chapter IX)



## 7     1933-1939: Exile and Mass Politics

Baschwitz's third book for a wider audience was to be a reflection on how the Nazis and other new authoritarian parties exploited mobs, crowds, mass events, and mass movements to suggest broad popular support. It looked back at both earlier historical examples and at existing theories about mass derailments.

Baschwitz and the wider exile community in The Netherlands were transfixed by the unfolding disaster in Germany. He received help from Jewish networks and came to successively work for two outfits documenting the growing persecutions and helping the victims. The first was a vaguely named 'information bureau' – an early forerunner of one of the largest present-day collections on Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, in fact. The other was a newly founded institute for social history, which smuggled the archives of major leftist leaders and groups of great historical significance out of Germany.

### **Wider historical context: Nazi rule, terror, and refugees**

The First World War had triggered high hopes for an end to excessive privilege, and the furthering of social equality. Both soldiers and civilians had shared the misery. In its wake, then, there was a rise in violent mass movements to try and force destiny. The 1917 Russian Revolution seemed promising, and there were immediate attempts to copy it abroad. But after the new Soviet Union experienced civil war, famine and collectivization, the incapacitation and death of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin's elimination of Leon Trotsky, and the show trials of political dissidents, many initial international sympathizers gradually lost their illusions.

In Italy, Benito Mussolini had started out as a socialist, but had shown the true face of his fascism in his 1924 March on Rome. In Germany, Hitler tried to copy this feat, but only broke through later – when the deep economic crisis returned with a vengeance. All three of these movements seemed to have been brought to power by the spontaneous revolts of mobs, crowds, and masses, but the new regimes soon subjected and regimented the unleashed forces in true military style. There seemed to be no way back.

Within a month of Hitler becoming chancellor, the Reichstag parliament burnt. A Dutch communist was accused of arson. But this also provided an ideal pretext for the introduction of emergency rule, a further ban on both

communist and socialist parties and unions, the end of civil liberties and the rule of law, and then the integration of all of the supposed 'national' forces with the Nazi party to form one giant bloc. This new conglomerate established its headquarters in the city of Nuremberg, and held impressive annual crowd gatherings.<sup>1</sup>

The omnipotent Nazis now braced for the further persecution of the Jews. Julius Streicher's notoriously anti-Semitic paper *Der Stürmer* had long campaigned for this. The new Nuremberg race laws defined a 'Jew' as someone with at least three Jewish grandparents, or with only two Jewish grandparents if he or she was also married to a Jew or practiced the Jewish religion. Jews were gradually excluded from the civil service and other professions, as Baschwitz had been. Their businesses and possessions were confiscated. They were also further stigmatized and molested.

Many people tried to get away from this political and ethnic persecution. Many of the Germans and Austrians who fled Nazism had academic degrees, and had been university teachers and researchers.<sup>2</sup> They included brilliant physicists and many other top-rank natural scientists, who would later play a key role in developing new and superior allied weapons. But they also included psychologists like Sigmund Freud and many other social scientists, who contributed to the development of entirely new approaches to man and society.

Many of the latter immediately began to try and crack the secret code of the mysterious appeal of Hitler, Nazism, and Anti-Semitism. For instance, various strands of the Freudo-Marxists – ranging from the early Wilhelm Reich to the 'Frankfurt School' of social research (with studies by Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Franz Neumann, Siegfried Pollock, and others) – suggested a variety of theories. But these ideas could not be published inside Germany, and only received wider circulation after the Second World War. Baschwitz was apparently not aware of them when he wrote his own pre-War book *Du und die Masse*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is of course a huge literature on this subject, as well as telling audiovisual materials. These range from Laurence Rees' compelling recent documentary trilogy *The Dark Charisma* of Adolf Hitler made for BBC television in 2012 to Leni Riefenstahl's spellbinding 1934 Nazi movie *The Triumph of the Will*.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers: H. Pross, *Die Deutsche Akademische Emigration*, p. 167, quoted in Ayçoberry, p. 91 and elsewhere. Social science: H. Stuart Hughes.

<sup>3</sup> For the relevant analyses of Freud, Reich, and the Frankfurt School, see my *Mass movements*. Further overviews of relevant approaches are given in Ayçoberry and Stuart Hughes; Kitchen, *Fascism*; Hamilton.

Many refugees with limited means and contacts initially fled to Germany's smaller neighbours in Western Europe: Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, Switzerland. It was harder to cross the seas to more secure Great Britain or the United States. From 1933 to 1939, The Netherlands were governed by four centre-right to right cabinets led by Hendrikus Colijn and his so-called 'anti-revolutionary party', or ARP. They always had one protestant party as well as the major catholic one, and sometimes the coalition was extended to include the liberals. While these governments allowed some political and ethnic Jewish refugees, they always tried to limit the flow.

During the first six months of 1933 alone, the first wave of 15,000 refugee Germans is said to have fled to The Netherlands – including Baschwitz. Throughout the 1930s and until the invasion in 1940, this number swelled to a cumulative total of 50,000 or 60,000. But there are often disparities in such estimates, depending on how exactly they are calculated.<sup>4</sup>

### The Jewish support networks in The Netherlands

In the first few weeks after Baschwitz arrived in The Netherlands, he read a Dutch interview with a 'top expert' of the German Ministry of the Interior, which provided a first outline of the Nuremberg race laws – then still to be proclaimed. It was published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, with which he was familiar from his earlier stay. The clipping is still among Baschwitz's papers. The 'top expert' boasted: 'In this work, my collaborators and I feel [...] purely as men of science, as racial experts'. He clarified: 'I am just about to design a questionnaire'. But he also added threateningly: 'The answers can be verified, if necessary'.<sup>5</sup>

He further elaborated: while 'Aryan' is a broad category, 'of German stock' is 'a much stricter notion'. (Baschwitz's wife Erika was considered 'of German stock'.) And 'non-Aryan[s] are those who have at least one Jewish grandparent. We are looking at race, not at religion. But the original religion is [also] proof of race. So the baptized Jew is considered a Jew'. The fact that Kurt himself had been educated as an Evangelical Lutheran, had been baptized a Christian, and was entirely assimilated, would thus not necessarily exempt him.

Baschwitz needed to start procedures to get a residence permit, and possibly a work permit as well. People in The Netherlands probably quickly told him that it was best to seek expert help. Jewish networks had long before

<sup>4</sup> See the chapter by Alexandra Paffen in Boterman & Vogel, p.149.

<sup>5</sup> N.R.C., 2 May 1933, file 129.

**Figure 11**

Impressive arch-image of the 1934 Nazi *Reichsparteitag* in Nuremberg, with a small elite of individual leaders standing out, against huge anonymous blocs of regimented followers.

established international organizations to help Jews fleeing the pogroms in the East. They helped the refugees settle in Western Europe, move onwards to other continents, or, of course, settle in Palestine. These networks were now re-mobilized to assist those fleeing the Nazis.<sup>6</sup>

By far the largest Jewish population in The Netherlands, with some 100,000 people, lived in Amsterdam, but traditionally there were also smaller communities in several provincial towns (such as Groningen and Enschede). The major coordinating body was the newly founded *Comité voor Bijzondere Joodsche Belangen*, or CBJB (Committee for Special Jewish Interests), which was described as 'created by the Israeli churches in The Netherlands' – although many members felt more or less secular.

The CBJB had a board consisting of prominent citizens. Its president was Abraham Asscher, the scion of a world-famous diamond house. One

<sup>6</sup> Within the U.S., the umbrella organization became the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society HIAS; outside the U.S. it collaborated with similar British and German organizations in HICEM, with its headquarters in Paris.

noteworthy member was the liberal senator Samuel van den Bergh, the son of the founder of a margarine factory (which later merged with a competitor to form the Dutch 'Union', and then with the British Lever Brothers to form Unilever).<sup>7</sup> Later his son George van den Bergh, a law professor, would also befriend Baschwitz.

Immediately after Hitler was made chancellor, and the first wave of refugees – to which Baschwitz belonged – arrived in The Netherlands, the Committee also formed a subcommittee, the *Comité voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen*, or CJV (Committee for Jewish Refugees). This subcommittee was headed by its secretary David Cohen, a professor of ancient history at the University of Amsterdam. Asscher and Cohen remained central figures in the overall organization, but they differed in both character and style.<sup>8</sup>

Several committee members were active within the liberal and social-democratic parties. During these years, Baschwitz himself veered back from right-liberal to left-liberal sympathies. The Dutch *Vrijzinnig Democratische Bond* (VDB, Liberal Democratic Union) was comparable to the German DDP, and a consistent ally of the social-democrats (even merging with them after the next war). These largely secular intellectuals also had good academic connections, particularly at the (municipal) University of Amsterdam.

In a memoir, Cohen later explained the practical functioning of his subcommittee during these years. It was important to show the Dutch authorities, he wrote, that the Jews took care of their own. During the two and three-quarters years between March 1933 and December 1935, they helped a first wave of 5,837 refugees with a total budget of a million and a quarter guilders. A third of that 'emergency fund' came from abroad, but two-thirds was raised among both Jews and non-Jews through bequests of wealthy individuals, street collections, lotteries, performances, and lectures.<sup>9</sup>

One campaign called on the various liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, dentists, accountants, etc.) to support their refugee brethren in need. There was an Academic Support Fund to get refugee academics temporary places at universities, after which they would preferably move on. There were also private initiatives to provide support, like the Oppenheim-Fischel Fund and

<sup>7</sup> W.J. Reader, *Fifty Years of Unilever* (London: Heinemann 1980), Ch. I. A full biography of Van den Bergh was recently published by Pim Reinders (Amsterdam: Balans 2016).

<sup>8</sup> See Schrijver's 2000 biography of Cohen. More about the general situation in Blom et al.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, p. 73-74, 77 a.o.

the Gomperts-Springer Foundation. The former was also chaired by Cohen, and helped Baschwitz as well.<sup>10</sup>

A noteworthy role was played by Gertrude Cohn, the administrative secretary of the Refugee Committee who had completed an early feminist school for social work in Berlin. After that, she had moved to the U.K. But as a German, she had been forced to leave Britain for the neutral Netherlands during the First World War. She married the Dutch mining engineer Jacques van Tijn, with whom she travelled all over the world (and whose family name she kept after their return and divorce). She was to supervise Baschwitz's case during his most difficult years.<sup>11</sup>

### Finding a neighbourhood and a house

Meanwhile, the other Dutch people were largely focused on their own problems. By the mid-1930s, unemployment had risen to half a million – over fifteen percent of the working population. A revolt in the working class Jordaan neighbourhood in Amsterdam had killed five and seriously wounded another 56. Rotterdam and smaller cities saw similar events. A mutiny on a naval cruiser was violently repressed. Some people expressed a reluctance to let Jews from Germany into the country.

In the beginning of his time in Amsterdam, Baschwitz still had some savings and the lump sum from his dismissal from the *Zeitung-Verlag*. He found an apartment at Weissenbruchstraat 35: nominally in the western part of town, but quite close to the new southern part of town where many Jews had recently settled.

The old Jewish quarter near the Waterlooplein in the centre of town had become run-down and decrepit. So when a social-democratic alderman had pushed the development of the new and modern Plan South neighbourhood during the 1920s, the Jews who could afford it preferred to move there. The most middle class part was the Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood, which had

<sup>10</sup> Mentioned in a written note from Baschwitz to Posthumus, 29 September 1939 (in the IISH files).

<sup>11</sup> During the Second World War she was further drawn into the work of the Jewish Council and its ambiguities (more in the chapter on the next war, Ch. 9). She became involved in exchanges with other countries and the settling of Jews in Palestine, ultimately including herself. See the article by Bernard Wasserstein, in the *Vrouwenlexicon*, included in the Huygens Resources, of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences. (Also see: Presser, *Ashes*). Wasserstein also recently published her full biography in English: *The Ambiguity of Virtue* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2014).

**Figure 12**

Dutch 1933 flyer calling for donations to the 'Emergency fund' for destitute Jewish refugees fleeing Germany.

streets named after various Dutch rivers. Over the course of the single decade of the 1930s, the number of Jews in this neighbourhood more than quadrupled, swelling from a mere 4,000 to 17,000. There was even a new synagogue built.<sup>12</sup>

Quite naturally, middle class Jewish exiles from Germany tended to settle there as well. Sometimes, they seemed to form enclaves. In the streets, they stood out because of their slightly different demeanour, often speaking German amongst themselves. Some Dutch citizens frowned upon this. But the German children were faster to adapt. The Jewish Refugee Committee organized special Dutch language crash courses to help them integrate more quickly.

Baschwitz's children joined these courses, too. His eldest daughter later remembered:

My brother was twelve, I was eleven, my sister nine and a half. It began with Part One, with *Aap, Noot, Mies* [the famous illustrated Dutch reading primer]. But I got special teachers, went much faster, and arrived at Part

<sup>12</sup> Figures from the Dutch Wikipedia article 'Lekstraat synagoge'. The article 'Geheugen van Plan Zuid/ Markante Zuidbewoners' has a long list of who lived where and when.

Ten within only a few months. [Jewish social worker] Ms. Frijda helped get me into the Dalton school [then a brand new concept of freer education, co-inspired by Dewey and Montessori]. It was nice, one could follow one's own pace.

They were mostly posh children, but they took one immigrant kid in for free. I did not even have the clothes. After that, I could get straight into the Barlaeus gymnasium [the oldest and best-known grammar school in the centre of town, next to the major Leidseplein square]. That is also when I changed my name from Gisela to Isa.<sup>13</sup>

Her brother and sister also changed their first names from overly German to more neutral sounding ones at this time.

## Getting to know Anne Frank

In Amsterdam, the Baschwitzes re-encountered some friends and acquaintances they had already known in Germany, such as the Franks. Kurt had known Otto from Frankfurt, where he had been friends with his brother. Both had briefly studied in Heidelberg. Both had been among the first Jews to flee Germany in 1933. Both later contemplated trying to get a visa for the U.S., but in vain. (As a recent *New York Times* column reminded its readers, '94% of Americans disapproved of Nazi treatment of Jews, but 72% still objected to admitting large numbers').<sup>14</sup>

The Frank family came to live in a second floor apartment on the Merwede square, right behind the iconic, brand new twelve-story building with the somewhat grandiose nickname 'The Skyscraper'. The Franks were the opposite of 'ghetto Jews', according to one female friend from those days: they were prosperous, cultivated, and integrated.

They even formed the hub of an active social life, according to another. They were well regarded. 'There was this story that Mr. Frank made Sunday morning breakfast, and brought it to his wife', she added. He was also seen as 'An ideal daddy, because he was so much involved in his girls' education'. The two families had daughters of somewhat similar ages: the Baschwitzes

<sup>13</sup> Video interview at the Jewish Historical Museum JHM, appr. minute 23, a.f.

<sup>14</sup> Poll taken after the 1938 *Kristallnacht*, quoted by Nicholas Kristof, 'Anne Frank today is a Syrian girl', *INYT*, 26 August 2016.

had Isa and Rody and the Franks had Margot and Anne, who were only a few years younger.<sup>15</sup>

Isa later remembered that occasionally 'The families used to visit each other for afternoon coffee. I used to go around mainly with Margot, who was three years younger than I. Anne was a very vivacious girl who, because she had a heart condition, was rather pampered and spoiled and always got her own way'. She added: 'That was a problem between the parents. Mother Frank said: "Now sit down!" But father Frank said: "Oh, leave the child alone, she's so small". Father and daughter adored each other. We will later see that after the war, Kurt Baschwitz played a major role in encouraging the publication of Anne's famous diary by her father.'<sup>16</sup>

### The Wiener bureau

Once the family was reunited and settled in Amsterdam, the next big question for Kurt Baschwitz was how to get some kind of job. Preferably something in journalism or writing, with which he was already familiar. Preferably something in German rather than Dutch. His Jewish contacts put him in touch with Alfred Wiener, a German Jew who had also just fled the Nazi regime. He was about to set up an 'information bureau' in Amsterdam, and needed assistance. This is where Baschwitz got his first Dutch job, beginning in early January 1934 – although it was probably paid for in large part by the aforementioned Jewish funds for social assistance to the refugees.

But what was the nature of this bureau and job? That long remained a great mystery. Kurt's eldest daughter, who was only 11 or 12 then, later said he emphasized the humdrum nature of the tasks at the time, calling it 'washing dishes'. But it may in fact have concerned something like reading, clipping, and filing German newspapers. Baschwitz mentioned it very briefly on his C.V.; Ebels' masters thesis devotes one sentence to it. Anschlag's masters thesis adds a note giving a further hint.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Quotes from friends Laureen Nussbaum and Hanneli Goslar, in the television documentary *Anne Frank Remembered* by Jon Blair (1995), made in association with the BBC and Walt Disney Pictures. It also contains the only seven seconds of live images of Anne Frank, which turned up in an amateur wedding video made by neighbours.

<sup>16</sup> Record of an interview on Anne Frank and the diary with Mrs. H.G. Teske-Baschwitz (Gisela/Isa) on 12 January 1981 (at the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation); statements from the Blair documentary. Also see: Lee, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> Isa: JHM video interview, min. 28-29. Ebels, p. 147-8. Anschlag, p. 46 and note 44, p. 125, which refers to a mention of Wiener in Z.A.B. Zeman's 1964 book *Nazi propaganda*.

Wiener was the same age as Baschwitz. After the First World War, he had become a high-ranking official of the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, who had marked Hitler and the Nazi party as a dangerous threat very early on. During the late 1920s, he had been instrumental in creating its civil rights group at the Wilhelmstrasse bureau, which documented the rise of anti-Semitism. After fleeing to The Netherlands, his 'information bureau' was meant to continue exactly that activity – albeit under cover.<sup>18</sup>

Exiles like Wiener and Baschwitz were of course forbidden from engaging in any overt political activity, let alone creating problems with the (so far) 'friendly regime' in a much larger neighbouring country. Several refugees were expelled for such activities throughout the 1930s. The Nazi regime also kept a close eye on Dutch correspondents and the Dutch press.<sup>19</sup> Baschwitz's own C.V. and his earlier biographers suggest he stayed only very briefly at the bureau, but he may in fact have remained until late 1936.<sup>20</sup> In the course of 1937, Wiener began to think about moving to Great Britain due to the rising risks of a future invasion of The Netherlands. In April 1938, he engaged Baschwitz's successor to help transfer the whole accumulated collection to London.<sup>21</sup>

As the war came closer, Wiener's 'information bureau' became the Jewish Central Information Office (JCIO), later reporting to the Political Intelligence Department (PID) and partly financed by the British and later the American government services. At the end of the war, it assisted the prosecution at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. After the war, the bureau also began to record systematic interviews with the surviving eyewitnesses – foreshadowing Steven Spielberg's later Shoah project in which Baschwitz's daughter Isa was to participate. Today, the total files reportedly stretch 17.5 miles or 28 kilometres.

<sup>18</sup> Wiener had done a doctorate in Arab literature at the University of Heidelberg, and had worked some years as a journalist and in the Middle East. He had fought in the First World War and been awarded an Iron Cross.

<sup>19</sup> See the Paul Stoop's Ph.D. dissertation 'Nederlanse pers onder druk – Duits buitenlands persbeleid en Nederland, 1933-1940', Amsterdam Free (Protestant) University, 1987.

<sup>20</sup> 13 January 1937 letter of Baschwitz to Posthumus, about ending his employment with Wiener and entering into the employment of the IISH.

<sup>21</sup> Baschwitz's successor was the much younger Louis (Wolfgang) Bondy (1910-1993), who had been the Paris correspondent for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (where Baschwitz had been an editor), until he was also fired for being a Jew. (See his profile in Ernst Fischer, *Verleger, Buchhändler & Antiquare aus Deutschland und Österreich in der Emigration nach 1933*. Elbingen: VDA 2011, p. 26-7). The Wiener collection came to consist of photographs, letters, papers, periodicals, and books. The collection opened on 1 September 1939: the day the Nazis invaded Poland and the Second World War officially began.

The archive with Baschwitz's papers at the Amsterdam university library also contains carbon copies of a concept plan for the post-war founding of a 'Social Psychological Institute for Scientific Research into Anti-Semitism and Related Phenomena'. It may have been inspired by a similar American wartime project, which resulted in the famous study *The Authoritarian Personality*, for which German Jewish exile Theodor Adorno (Wiesengrund by his father's name) is always credited as the (alphabetically) first author.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, the 'Wiener Collection' in London found new patrons among wealthy Jews in Great Britain and the United States, but their funding was intermittent and halting, and at one point part of the collection was even shipped off to Tel Aviv University. In late 2011 it found an entirely new home in appropriate academic surroundings: a renovated Georgian townhouse on Russell square in Bloomsbury, flanked by the Birbeck College history department and the School of Oriental and African Studies at the university of London.

The museum opened with the telling exhibition 'A is for Adolf', about the Nazis' indoctrination of children. This included the German board game 'Jews out' in which 'the first player to chase six Jews out of the walled ghetto was the winner'. All this material had been collected from the late 1920s and early 1930s onwards, when Wiener (as well as Baschwitz) was still in Germany, experiencing the rise of Anti-Semitism first-hand.<sup>23</sup>

### **German-Dutch ties during the 1930s**

Since the take-off of the German giant – first with the Wilhelminian Empire and then the Weimar Republic – ties with its smaller Dutch neighbour had grown ever closer. During the 1930s, Dutch Rotterdam was still the major harbour for the dense German Rhine-Ruhr concentration of mining and industry just across the border. The economies were closely intertwined in many other respects – as were the cultures.

The rapidly developing Germany had become a major reference over the preceding half-century, as much as France and England had been earlier

<sup>22</sup> Presser's later overview book *Ashes* mentioned that 'the Antisemitism research group [in Amsterdam] disbanded before it could publish its results' (p. 543). The title and text in File 136 are in German, but the proposed budget of twelve to fifteen thousand is in Dutch guilders.

<sup>23</sup> D.D. Guttenplan, 'World's oldest Holocaust Museum in London, gets a new life', *International Herald Tribune (IHT)*, 26-7 February 2012.

(the U.S. still formed a more distant horizon). Those three foreign languages were all taught in grammar or even high schools; most educated Dutch were supposed to speak and understand them, at least a bit.

A growing number of Dutch scientists had in turn studied or worked for a few years at one of the major German universities. In the natural sciences, for instance, the early Dutch Nobel Prize winners Van 't Hoff and Kamerlingh Onnes had done so. In the sciences of man, the founder of Dutch psychology Gerardus Heymans had done so as well, as had several sociologists. There continued to be frequent exchanges, and it was thus not at all strange for Baschwitz to seek academic employment in The Netherlands.

Dutch periodicals claimed a total of seventeen correspondents in Berlin in 1933 (some probably part-time or overlapping), many of whom were appalled at what they saw unfold. Soon after Baschwitz's arrival in The Netherlands, the liberal Amsterdam *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which was to become his favourite Dutch newspaper, expressed its bafflement:

When one will later investigate how it was possible that hundreds of thousands, that millions, believed and simply parroted historical and scientific untruths, one will surely find what made the minds ripe for this: the deceptions of the [First] World War.

The collapse after such high flourishing and such big dreams of the future; the foolish revenge of the victors; the rapid succession of periods of the deepest misery and apparent prosperity; hunger and despair; the vulgarities and abuses of which the upstarts of the republican regime made themselves guilty; corruption and decay within the civil service. But also the irresponsible and shameless smear campaign against a minority that was conveniently blamed for everything. A smear campaign that has been going on for ten years, and that still gets more fierce every day – most of all within the brown press.

Baschwitz wholeheartedly agreed.

After an early boycott against Jewish shops, the same Dutch correspondent called it: 'Lame. Shameful. Infantile. Ridiculous. Also fear-inspiring, if one thinks where this will go if it is not stopped soon. It was a method of religious and race struggle, that one had supposed [to be] gone forever – within a civilized Europe'. A Jewish commentator from the Dutch social-democratic *Het Volk* even wrote: 'The whole of Germany has become

a horror, a running ulcer on the body of our continent, a mockery of civilization, a shame for humanity'.<sup>24</sup>

## A lively German and Jewish exile community

Exiles found it relatively easy to fit into The Netherlands. German books were widely sold and read; there was even a special Dutch magazine about them. After the Nazis came to power, almost 50 Dutch publishers began publishing exile books by famous writers *in German*: 300 until the war, two-thirds of them by only two of the biggest publishers.<sup>25</sup> So Baschwitz's next book, highly critical of the Nazis, was not only written in but also first published in German – by a Dutch house. There had also long been a Dutch-German friendship society, rather conservative at first, but later opening up somewhat.<sup>26</sup>

By the mid-1930s, there was a lively exile community in The Netherlands – most importantly in the capital Amsterdam. A prominent example was the famous Mann family. The father, Thomas Mann, who had recently won the Nobel Prize for literature, disapproved of the Nazis. He visited The Netherlands several times, then settled first in Switzerland and ultimately in the U.S.

His eldest daughter Erika was also a writer and director, a major figure of the satirical *Pfeffermühle* (Pepper Mill) exile-run theatre company, which was also very critical of the Nazis. (We will see that one of their numbers identified Jews as the witches to be hunted in modern times, and may have further stirred Baschwitz's interest in this connection). For several years, Erika and her group made Amsterdam their home base.

Thomas' eldest son, Erika's younger brother Klaus, ran the exile literary magazine *Die Sammlung* (*The Collection*) from Amsterdam, which published contributions of some 300 authors over 24 months. But it got increasingly political, and after a polemical piece by Klaus's leftist uncle Heinrich, many

<sup>24</sup> *Handelsblad* correspondent: George Nypels, April 1933. From his biography *De Revolutieverzamelaar* by Henk van Renssen (Amsterdam: Podium 2006), p. 232-234. *Het Volk* commentator: Henri Polak, May 6. Both quoted in Van Liempt, p. 36-37, 466-467.

<sup>25</sup> One was Allert de Lange, the other was Jewish publisher Emanuel Querido, who brought out 110 titles in German: mostly by Jewish and/ or progressive writers like Joseph Roth, Arnold Zweig, Klaus and Heinrich Mann, Ernst Toller, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Anna Seghers.

<sup>26</sup> The German-Dutch ties of these years were reconsidered much later during several academic conferences, with the papers collected in books. See Boterman & Vogel. Study: p. 236. Publishers: p. 152-153. Books: p. 237-238. Also see the earlier collection edited by Dittrich & Würzner.

noteworthy German writers disengaged: Klaus's own father Thomas, but also Herman Hesse, Robert Musil, and Stephan Zweig.

Klaus and his friends used to hang out at the famous *Jugendstil Américain* hotel and restaurant at the central Leidseplein Square. His friends included British writers Christopher Isherwood, E.M. Forster, Stephen Spender, and W.H. Auden (who ultimately married Klaus's sister Erika Mann). The Nazis demanded that the activist brother and sister be expelled from The Netherlands, however, and they ultimately left.<sup>27</sup>

## Employment at the new Social History Institute

Meanwhile, Baschwitz's 1935 inauguration as private lecturer in newspaper history had led to another job in Amsterdam – although with more delay than his own C.V. and earlier biographers suggest. It was only later, in 1936, that it really took form. He was employed as a 'special assistant' to the history professor Nicolaas Posthumus at another newly founded institute in Amsterdam.

It is again useful to look into the wider background of this initiative. Baschwitz's new boss Posthumus had studied law in Amsterdam, but had soon adhered to the Clio association of *history* students, did his doctoral dissertation on the Leiden cloth-making industry, and was then named professor at the Netherlands School of Commerce (which then evolved into Rotterdam University) from around the First World War onwards.

Posthumus also set up a Netherlands Economic History Archive in The Hague. It was initially meant to focus on the archives of companies and their organizations, but he soon included cooperative and trade union materials as well. By the mid-1930s, he decided to split off these latter parts and form a separate International Institute of Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam, where he had gotten another university chair. The first IISH building, at Keizersgracht 264, was inaugurated on 11 March 1937.<sup>28</sup>

At the time, German socialist leaders had felt forced to flee to Vienna, Prague, and other nearby foreign capitals, trying to save their archives at

<sup>27</sup> Chapter on Erika and Klaus Mann in Holland by Alexandra Paffen, in Boterman & Vogel, p. 149–163. Also see the preceding chapter on Thomas Mann and Holland by Léon Hanssen.

<sup>28</sup> More on the IISH website. Posthumus received generous funding from Nehemia de Lieme, the liberal director of the Central Workers Insurance and Deposit Bank, who already paid for much of the cadre training for the social-democratic unions and party. He was also a Zionist who helped salvage the library of the Jewish Labour Bund from Eastern Europe. Since the Nazis had come to power in Germany, such collections were in immediate danger.

the same time. But as Hitler set his eyes on Austria and Czechoslovakia, it became urgent to move both people and papers elsewhere. In 1938, the IISH paid 72,000 guilders (640,000 in 2015 euros) for the archives of the German Socialist Party. Posthumus and his librarians travelled to meet various exiled leaders and acquired many of the papers of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, anarchists Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, Stalin's adversary Trotsky, socialists Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, and many others.<sup>29</sup>

Just before the 'phoney war' prelude started in 1939, the most precious parts of these newly purchased IISH archives were temporarily moved to Britain for safekeeping.<sup>30</sup> After the war, the Institute continued to acquire archives of leftist unions and parties, including those from other continents. It came to house the archives of the international women's movement, later NGOs like Amnesty International and Greenpeace, and much more.

Today it is one of the very largest collections of its kind in the world, and has been brought under the wings of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences (KNAW). In recent years, it moved into a brand new purpose-built building with fifty kilometres of shelf-space in the Eastern docks area. It even digitized important parts and put them online: the complete Marx-Engels papers were made available to the general public by late 2015, for example.

Movement newspapers were of course interesting objects for this collection, and general newspapers as a record of social history. So Posthumus was immediately open to Baschwitz's proposal of developing further initiatives with regard to a department or 'institute for newspaper history'. The IISH still has some of the correspondence between the two at the time. It shows that Baschwitz first officially asked for a position in a letter dated 23 April 1936, and estimated the additional costs for books, journals, newspapers, etc. would be a mere ... 200 to 300 guilders. But again there was considerable delay before he was actually engaged.

The prospect of this new job also inspired Baschwitz to undertake a very elaborate study of how radical pamphlets and papers stirred *revolutions*, and even wars. He delved into the details of the role of the press in the American Revolution, and thereafter in the French Revolution and subsequent wars. He even looked into some of the Marxist literature on such subjects.

29 NRC De Week, 17 August 2015.

30 France and Britain formally declared war on Germany, but did not initiate actual fighting yet.

His article appeared in one of the first issues of the newly launched *International Review for Social History*, published for the IISH by the closely associated house of Brill in Leiden. The 35 pages can be seen as a first stab at the subject of his subsequent mass psychology book, *Du und die Masse (You and the mass)*.<sup>31</sup>

### The first seeds of a press department

Baschwitz said that he himself did not expect to be paid during the first year; he just wanted support for his work as a private lecturer, and the help of a secretary or assistant, for three half-days per week. At this point in time, he was probably still officially employed by Wiener, but in fact largely paid by the Jewish Committee. Posthumus answered on 6 May 1936 that he was very interested, but first had to consult the Board. He also contacted the Jewish Committee about possible ongoing complementary support for him. All this took time.

There was a proposal to raise Baschwitz's eventual salary to 200 guilders per month, although only a quarter would be paid by the institute itself. The rest would still be supplemented by the Jewish Committee. In secret, a letter suggested that it would be better to spare his ego and not tell him about this. Baschwitz did not want to live from hand-outs, but to earn a normal salary in a normal academic position.<sup>32</sup>

The 1937 IISH annual report noted: 'Because of the importance of his subject, a place in one of the cabinets was assigned to Dr. K. Baschwitz, private lecturer at the University of Amsterdam. He brought together all that the institute possesses about the history of the press and public opinion, and thus organized a more or less permanent exhibit in his office'. This exhibit sowed the very earliest seeds for the later press institute, which was ultimately only founded more than a decade later.

One of Baschwitz's main tasks at the IISH was the further elaboration of plans with relation to the further study of the press. He wrote several elaborate notes on related subjects. One note was the aforementioned three-page outline of the development of 'newspaper science at German universities',

<sup>31</sup> 'Schreckenherrschaften und ihre Presse', with a summary in English. *IRSH*, Vol. I, pp. 273-309. The article has elaborate footnotes, but it is noteworthy that he refers only sparingly to American and French sources directly, and mostly to German translations of them. Also see: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 148-149, 154, 207.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to Posthumus, by the Committee for Special Jewish Interests, 21 April 1936 (in the files of the IISH).

with a list of nine existing chairs, their occupants, major overview books, and their common journal.

A second note gave the program for a nine-day course on three themes for journalists in Geneva, Switzerland. Not only a professor, but also various practitioners would act as speakers: from such dailies as the *New York Times* and the *News Chronicle*, press agencies such as Reuters and Havas, and the representatives of international organizations like the new radio union.

A third note spelled out aspects of the 'economic changes' in the newspaper world after the First World War (in six themes and 18 sub-themes), as well as aspects of the press as a source of 'contemporary history' (in four themes and 10 sub-themes). Think of *Keesing's Historical Archives*, with which he was also involved. All of this was nominally in view of his writing possible papers for a historical conference.

A fourth note detailed a plan for a series of brochures to further introduce newspaper studies to The Netherlands. Each brochure would be 32 pages, with a production cost of some 90 guilders, and a thousand copies each. He added a list of a dozen possible subjects. He later mentioned that Elsevier had shown some interest in publishing these.<sup>33</sup>

In early 1938, Baschwitz was still expressing confidence that his entire pet project aimed at the founding of a separate press institute with its own funding was making good progress. In a letter to the Jewish Committee, he mentioned that his friends and colleagues, professors Van den Bergh and Hajo Brugmans, had visited Mr. Alex Heldring, the new director of the liberal Amsterdam daily *Algemeen Handelsblad*, to request that he convince the Association of Newspaper Publishers to provide financial support for the study of newspaper science at Amsterdam University, and thereby strengthen Baschwitz's position.

But later in 1938 he suddenly seemed to realize that many such plans were now put on hold, in view of the persistent economic crisis and growing speculation about a possible new war. In a handwritten note to professor Posthumus, he conceded on the subject of an 'Institute for Press History' that 'understandably, these days, nothing can be done for it'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The third note, accompanying a letter dated 7 April 1936, was probably related to the Third Conference of Dutch historians, to be held in The Hague, on 30 May 1936.

<sup>34</sup> Letter of Baschwitz to Ms. Van Tijn of the Jewish Committee, dated 26 February 1938 (in their archives, at the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation NIOD).

## The wider historical milieu in 1930s Amsterdam

At this point we should note again that, in one sense, Baschwitz basically was, and always remained, *a social historian*. It is true that he was slowly turning into a pioneer of press and communication science, with a special interest in social and mass psychology. But *all* of his major books and most of their major spin-offs were basically historical studies, albeit with a journalistic touch, about the 4 P's – first about propaganda and enemy images, then about the press and newspapers, soon about politics and mass movements, and later a trilogy about persecutions and witch hunts.

During the later 1930s, Posthumus and others introduced Baschwitz to the milieu of professional historians: in the Netherlands in general, and in Amsterdam, and at its university, in particular. It is useful to take a peek at some of this cast, because they will later return in key roles for Baschwitz's professional and personal life – just before, during, and after the next war.

The 'general history' chair at Amsterdam University was held by Hajo Brugmans, who advocated contemporary history with a somewhat engaged style. He published major works about Amsterdam, the First World War, and leading Dutch personalities. But Brugmans would turn seventy in 1938, and thus retire. So there were already discussions about a possible successor. One good candidate was Jan Romein. Brugmans initially opposed him as too radical, but later changed his mind. Romein was indeed appointed the next year, and went on to become one of the most original, productive, and popular historians of his generation.<sup>35</sup>

Romein had studied with the famous Johan Huizinga in Leiden, then the 'pope' of Dutch historians. It was there that he met his later wife and co-author of many works, Annie Verschoor, as well as his friend Jef Suys. After the First World War and the Russian Revolution, the three initially adhered to the newly founded Communist Party Holland, and became collaborators with its journal the *Tribune*. When Stalin took over, they resigned, but retained their Marxist inspiration – and thus continued to be mistrusted by the influential Christian democrats (and later social democrats) who were in power in The Netherlands. Before and after the war, this was to frustrate their nomination as university professors.

<sup>35</sup> The Amsterdam history tradition was discussed in Niek Graaf's 2015 master's thesis, and summarized in the alumni magazine *Spui*, January 2016. Major works by Romein (with his wife) ranged from *The testators of our civilization* (4 vols., 1939-40), about 36 of the most important Dutch personalities throughout the ages, to *On the Watershed of Two Centuries*, about 1900 as an international turning point in many different domains (2 vols., 1967, completed after his death; English version published in 1978).

So rather than seeking a regular job, Romein had initially chosen to become a freelance researcher, writer and translator – of huge standard works like the nine-volume *Harmsworth Universal History of the World* and many others. This was facilitated by the fact that he received a modest heritage, procuring him a regular rent as basic income. He also founded a private institute offering courses to prepare students for the ‘M.O.’ exam, which allowed one to become a history teacher in a grammar or high school.

He did this together with his aforementioned friend and colleague Jef Suys, who had himself become a history teacher. They were later joined by Jacques Presser, who had in turn become a history teacher at the newly founded Vossius Gymnasium in the South of Amsterdam – a spin-off from the overburdened Barlaeus Gymnasium in the centre. Just before the war, the History Section at the University of Amsterdam invited Presser to teach the ‘didactics and methodology’ of the discipline, but this position was terminated soon after the occupation. Meanwhile, the trio’s private institute had trained some one hundred history teachers in all – procuring them a significant network and some influence.

Romein, together with well-known writers Menno ter Braak, Edgar du Perron, and many others, also took the initiative to found a ‘Vigilance’ committee of intellectuals at the outset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, like those in several other West-European countries. They were to warn against the dangers of a further rise in fascism and Antisemitism. Within a few years, this committee expanded from 80 to 1,100 members, including many influential authors, professors, and other intellectuals. But soon a heated discussion broke out about whether the committee should only warn against fascism and Hitlerism, or also against communism and Stalinism. Before a reform could be realized, however, the German invasion had already taken place.

In the meantime, Romein, Suys, and Presser had become a kind of ‘Young Turk’ triumvirate of contemporary history in Amsterdam, and Baschwitz had gradually grown closer to them. Romein wrote the introduction and recommendation of Baschwitz’s first book on witch hunts at the outset of the occupation – which was published under a pseudonym. Presser even became the temporary foster father of Baschwitz’s eldest daughter during the first years of the war.

With Posthumus and others, Romein then became one of a small group of professors that began to call for the university to break out of its ‘ivory tower’, to become more involved in society, and to promote a reflection about its own political significance. This demand gained strength just before, during, and immediately after the war, and would culminate in the

founding of a '7th' political and social science faculty (PSF) at Amsterdam University.

When the PSF finally came about, Romein pushed proposals to nominate Suys, Presser, and Baschwitz as three key professors there. The former two proved controversial, as we will see; only the latter was not. This is how Baschwitz finally got his chair in press history and press science in 1948: at the advanced age of sixty, ten to twelve years later than he had initially hoped.

### **Further family problems**

The Baschwitz children had been transplanted from Berlin to Amsterdam at the vulnerable ages of ten to thirteen. The ease with which they assimilated differed. They all changed their names from rather German-sounding to more neutral ones: Horst became Hans, Gisela became Isa, Rotraut became Rody. The daughters differed. In pictures, the eldest looks more like her father, the younger like her mother.

In a late 1936 letter to Jewish social workers, Baschwitz already was complaining that his son, then an adolescent of sixteen, was increasingly troublesome. A year later, the son was apparently sent to work on a farm at the Helmershoek in Usselo (today the municipality of Lonneker), on the outskirts of Enschede. Together with its twin Hengelo, Enschede formed a booming centre of textile and machine industries in the Twente region of Overijssel province, on the Eastern border of the country near Germany. Horst/Hans was apparently to stay there for the next six or seven years.<sup>36</sup>

Even more preoccupying were the grave health problems of Baschwitz's eldest daughter Gisela/Isa. She was forced to spend some 11 months altogether in the main Amsterdam hospital named after Queen Wilhelmina. It turned out that she had osteomyelitis: a bacterial infection and inflammation of the bone marrow and bone, sometimes also leading to abscesses.

It had to be treated with antibiotics, but penicillin had only just been invented and was not yet mass-produced. Five operations over a year and a half proved extremely difficult and painful. Worse: they were not insured, so it cost a fortune that they did not have. The savings Kurt had brought from Germany had long evaporated. So they were forced to sell paintings, furniture, and later even the grand piano to which Erika was very attached

<sup>36</sup> The local Twente *Tubantia* newspaper published lists of citizens moving in and out, and mentioned him several times in late 1937 (3 & 9 October, 10 November, 4 December).

because of her professional singing and possible lessons. 'Everything went into my leg', the daughter later used to sum up rather laconically.<sup>37</sup>

She had to stay inside and/or in bed for prolonged periods of time: reading newspapers, illustrated magazines, and books. It was a sad period of hard struggle for her, but in her memories it became closely intertwined with the merriment outside that she partly had to miss. Because as a teenage girl, she was confronted with the romantic 'fairy tale' betrothal of crown princess Juliana with the handsome young prince Bernhard from the former small principality of Lippe-Biesterfeld in Germany, their glamorous marriage, and the happy birth of their eldest daughter Beatrix.<sup>38</sup>

After returning home, she had to be extra careful with her weak legs, and walked with crutches. This meant that she needed to be accompanied in the tramway streetcar when going to grammar school, often twice a day. So in the end she missed quite a lot of classes, and had to repeat her second year. She also missed a large part of the third year, but proved able to catch up. She could skip the German language class, of course. During her fourth year in school, her health stabilized – well before the war broke out.

But the illness recurred every now and then, and later in life she even had to be operated again. All of this may have helped build her headstrong character, however, which was to show during the war.

### Begging for money to avoid bankruptcy

Because of the huge costs of his eldest daughter's illness, Baschwitz fell behind on his everyday payments. In the course of 1937, his calls for additional financial help became increasingly shrill. He deplored that someone like him 'would look at money like a literary day labourer, and cry'. The same letter mentioned that sociology professor Steinmetz had approached the Amsterdam University association (AUV) to provide Baschwitz with a special contribution of 250 guilders – apparently repeated annually until the war. It was emphatically not meant to cover 'living expenses' in any way, however, and was thus booked as 'travel expenses'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Video interview, JHM, appr. minute 31 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Successive queens Wilhelmina, Juliana, and Beatrix all married (former) aristocrats from various German states – as there was still a great supply of them. There had already been a spike of monarchism with the deaths in 1934 of Wilhelmina's mother Queen Emma, and Wilhelmina's Prince-consort Hendrik.

<sup>39</sup> Letters to Prof. Posthumus, 26 July 1937, and 1 June 1938 (in the IISH files). Decision AUV meeting 28 March 1938, reported in the daily *Het Vaderland*, 2 days later. Also see Overman's

But this help was not enough to solve his problems – by far. In early 1938, Baschwitz calculated the balance and concluded that he was sinking ever deeper into debt, and risked personal bankruptcy. He had probably long felt embarrassed about the earlier bankruptcies of his own father, and felt appalled at such a prospect. He approached his friend and colleague professor Van den Bergh, who also contacted his friend and colleague professor Brugmans, and told him to keep the faith (with a Dutch proverb: 'When the need is highest, help is near').<sup>40</sup>

A few weeks later, a Jewish social worker turned up to further gauge his situation, and make a report. The hospital fee had been 11x55, or 605 guilders – the last 180 of which he had simply been unable to pay. He also owed 72 guilders to the doctor who had treated Isa, needed 8 guilders a week for further injections and medicine, and more for the 16 radiation treatments she was still to have. All of this ate up the household budget.

He therefore owed 150 guilders in bank loans, a full quarter rent of 3x49 or 147 guilders, and 37 guilders in back taxes. They calculated that the extra money he needed *immediately* amounted to 348 guilders (the equivalent of well over three thousand 2015 euros): a considerable sum for him during those days, in relation to his very modest and partly irregular income.

This even included an advance of 40 guilders to buy mere ... food. The Jewish Refugee Committee wrote him that they would provide him a supplement of 10 guilders a week over three months, so a total of some 135 guilders. He answered that he felt 'ashamed' that he was forced to accept it. 'Without your help I would be completely finished'. It had been a 'horrible year, and I am still fearful about the near future'.<sup>41</sup>

## Chasing after odd jobs

It is true that two of his major books were published that same year. But the Dutch one on the press had been endlessly delayed and the advance

study, p. 188-9

40 Letter, Van den Bergh to Baschwitz, 31 Jan. 1938. In the archives of the 'Joods Maatschappelijk Werk', now at the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation (NIOD). (A large part of the archives was sent to London for safeguarding before the war broke out, and returned afterward).

41 Financial calculations: Report of a Jewish social worker on a visit to Dr. Kurt Baschwitz, dated 18 February 1938; and letter by Ms. Van Tijn, dated 4 March 1938. Horror and fear: Letters of Baschwitz to Ms. Van Tijn of the Jewish committee, dated 26 Febr. 1938 and dated 20 March 1938, in the same archives of the pre-war Jewish Social Work, now kept at the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation. (The conversion rate of 1938 guilders to 2015 euros was 8.88).

had long been spent; whereas the German one on the mass would prove hard to distribute abroad and earn any significant royalties at all. In the end, the large Dutch publisher Elsevier had refused to get involved with the politically sensitive book, saying that it feared German reprisals if it did.

The smaller Dutch publisher Feikema, Carelsen, & Co. would have trouble reaching Germanophone audiences, however: the *Anschluss* or joining of Austria to Nazi Germany took place in March 1938, and the remaining German-speaking part of Switzerland was a rather small market. *Du und die Masse* was also translated into Dutch, but Baschwitz felt that the politically naive Dutch were 'not ready for it'. Its publication, planned for 1940, was then held up by the German invasion.<sup>42</sup>

So Baschwitz was always looking for more freelance writing work in his field, to further supplement his limited regular income. Among the dailies, the liberal *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* had been his main reference in Rotterdam; the liberal *Algemeen Handelsblad* was his main reference in Amsterdam.

He had written about the *Algemeen Handelsblad*'s origins in both *De krant door alle tijden* and *Du und die Masse*, earlier about its centenary in the D.A.Z., and later about its 125th anniversary in the newspaper itself.<sup>43</sup> Its bosses favoured and were to continue to favour his press chair and related institutions. Baschwitz later said he had published 'a series of popular science articles' in it before the war. But they may have been limited in number and were probably unsigned; they do not turn up in searches of the major Dutch press databank Delpher.<sup>44</sup>

Also in 1938, Baschwitz published a brochure that might be considered a further extension of *De krant door alle tijden*, a kind of additional chapter. It related how the spreading of newspapers had in turn contributed to the spreading of 'general knowledge' in Western Europe, and to a new type of 'concise summary' of it. As a result, the first encyclopaedia, by Pierre Bayle, had been published in French: again not in absolutist France but in the freer Netherlands. It had soon been followed by similar British and German 'universal' or 'conversation' dictionaries, also 'for women and youngsters'.

<sup>42</sup> As quoted by Gisela / Isa, in the JHM video interview.

<sup>43</sup> Anecdote about its founder being chased through the streets during the revolutionary year 1830 in *Du und die Masse*, Chapter 16. Also see *De krant door alle tijden*, Chapter 28. Review of centenary book: D.A.Z., 25 December 1927. Review of 125th anniversary book: A.H., 11 December 1953.

<sup>44</sup> Contributions of the 1930s mentioned in a letter with a somewhat embellished C.V. to the post-war press-purge commission, dated 16 April 1947.

Baschwitz noted that the first series of volumes of the most famous larger encyclopaedia, by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, had been published in France, but the further series was again published in the freer Netherlands. Finally, the first edition of the major Dutch encyclopaedia was later written single-handedly by Dutch Baptist pastor Winkler Prins during the 19th century; the fifth edition, with contributions by hundreds of scholars, came out between 1932 and 1938.

Press scientist Baschwitz had himself contributed an article on journalism to this encyclopaedia. It said: 'First of all it concerns the news of the day, so reports about events that have just taken place. One might also say: the first characteristic of journalism is topicality [*actualiteit*, in Dutch...] Next to topicality, publicity is a second necessary characteristic of journalism [...] making public'.

Baschwitz's 60-page brochure on the history of encyclopaedias was a kind of promotional gift for prospective buyers.<sup>45</sup> But it was published without his name attached to it, and looked like a kind of commercial copywriting job – taken on to earn urgently needed extra cash. Over subsequent years, he continued to contribute to other reference works as a freelance writer, and later also to the first Dutch 'systematic encyclopaedia'.<sup>46</sup>

### Darkening clouds on the horizon

In late 1938, things got even worse. During the last days of September, Prime Ministers Neville Chamberlain from Britain and Édouard Daladier from France visited Hitler in the Bavarian capital of Munich, to make a deal with him. Joyful crowds greeted them upon their return home, but Baschwitz had no illusions. According to his eldest daughter, he was terribly upset by the news: 'Now there will be a global conflagration'.<sup>47</sup>

Britain and France did indeed pressure their ally Czechoslovakia to give territorial concessions to Hitler. Yet Germany was to occupy the whole of that country within half a year. Another half a year later, Germany and the

<sup>45</sup> Also see Ebels-Dolanová, p. 149, 207.

<sup>46</sup> The 'first Dutch systematically structured encyclopaedia', or ENSIE, published a dozen volumes on all scientific disciplines, between 1946 and 1960. His close colleagues Jan Romein and Hendrikus Josephus Pos were among the main editors. Baschwitz contributed the mass communication subjects 'press, propaganda and public opinion', as well as 'advertising' in volume VII, p. 325-344 (*Anschlag*, p. 75, n. 115)

<sup>47</sup> Isa, video interview, kept at the JHM, minute 37 ff.

Soviet Union divided Poland between themselves and invaded it – thus triggering the first stage of the Second World War.

Baschwitz even announced that he was going to write a book about *Die Dummheit in der Politik* – about the stupidity of political leaders and their wishful thinking. It would also be aimed at those Dutch leaders who had long continued to believe in the viability of neutrality, and who had occasionally even shown some sympathy for the pacifist movement that carried insignias of a ‘*Gebroken Geweertje*’ or ‘broken little gun’.<sup>48</sup>

Yet military insiders had no doubt that the Germans would not only invade Belgium but The Netherlands, too, in a near-future war. This would be done partially in view of the country’s great harbours and long coast, which would help escape another crippling British maritime blockade. The Baschwitz archives contain a review from a 1938 Dutch opinion weekly, which he probably read at the time. It was about a newly published book by a former British military attaché in The Hague, and emphasized its particularly ominous first chapter.

It noted the near-completion of the reinforced new defence line in the French northwest, named after war minister André Maginot: an impregnable series of elaborate fortifications on top of multi-story concrete underground buildings connected by kilometre-long tunnels. The author added darkly that this only made it more probable ‘that Germany will try to make an evasive movement through The Netherlands’ the next time.<sup>49</sup>

So Kurt Baschwitz began to worry about his future safety, and that of his family. It would be better to try and emigrate again, to Great Britain or the United States, but his personal financial crisis had left him with no money to even start a procedure. Yet, as recent exiles, they might be among the first to be targeted by the invader. His wife was fully German, and it might be wise to begin to separate again. He himself was now considered an ethnic Jew, one who had also written and spoken critically about the Nazis. His children might be considered half-Jewish. All of this became ever more urgent.

<sup>48</sup> In various publications, Baschwitz spoke about politicians and ‘The power of stupidity’. The latter also became the title of an interesting concise post-war overview article in *Wetenschap en samenleving*, a journal of progressive scientists, Vol. 6 (1952), Nr. 1, p. 197–200. (See the complete translation in the appendix). This article was not so much about leaders as about ordinary people. But the idea for a book on the stupidity of political leaders had originated as early as the 1920s, and was to persist until much later. It was mentioned again in an interview about his last book in the Amsterdam daily *Het Parool*, 25 April 1964.

<sup>49</sup> *Haagsche Post*, 28 May 1938. About a book by Maj. Gen. A.C. Temperly, with a foreword by A. Eden, who had just resigned as foreign secretary in protest against PM Chamberlain’s compromise with Hitler.

On 7 November of the same year 1938, the angry student son of a Jewish-Polish refugee couple expelled from Hannover shot a German diplomat in Paris. The Nazis seized on the occasion to launch nationwide pogroms throughout Germany, on the so-called *Kristallnacht* or 'night of broken glass'. Thousands of men from the S.A. or *Sturm-Abteilung*, the uniformed militia of the Nazi party, took the lead of anti-Semitic lynch mobs throughout the country. 91 Jews were killed, 267 synagogues were torched, and some 7,500 shops were destroyed. After these events, 30,000 Jews were arrested and put in the first concentration camps. This also triggered a new wave of refugees, who flooded into neighbouring countries like The Netherlands.<sup>50</sup>

Citizens and commentators in The Netherlands were shocked and put pressure on politicians and the authorities to enlarge the official quota of refugees per year (only two thousand at the time). But when more came, the numbers were again restricted the very next month, to a maximum of nine thousand. Soon, the frontier was officially closed to them, although some smugglers still helped people across. But these new 'illegal immigrants' were then interned. During the next year, 1939, a self-sufficient camp was built to hold them in a faraway corner of the country: Westerbork in Drenthe province. After the invasion, the Germans further expanded and isolated this into a huge 'transit camp' that would hold Jews before they were sent east by train to an uncertain fate.<sup>51</sup>

Among the 1938 wave of refugees was Kurt's own aging widowed mother: Hedwig Bikard. Originally, the family had been relatively well off, but their savings had completely evaporated. In a letter to David Cohen of the Jewish Refugee Committee, Baschwitz reported that the alien police had demanded that he guarantee her subsistence, and prove that he himself had sufficient income to do so – at a moment when he was in dire need himself. She was ultimately admitted, and for the time being went to live with others in a pension or boarding house close to the Artis Zoo, not too far from the old Jewish quarter. Until she was deported.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Numbers from Van Liempt (2010), p. 45-46.

<sup>51</sup> Numbers from the instalment 'Unwanted strangers', in the television program series 'Other times', broadcast on the second Dutch public channel on 6 October 2015, and accompanying article in the Vpro TV guide *Vrije Geluiden* of that same week.

Prime minister Colijn claimed at the time that The Netherlands had already admitted 16 to 17,000 refugees (after subtracting those who had emigrated again), whereas Great Britain had only admitted 11,000, of whom 4 to 5,000 had already left again. (Cohen, p. 267).

<sup>52</sup> Baschwitz letter to Cohen, dated 14 December 1938, in the aforementioned 'Jewish Social Work' archives at the NIOD. Her address was Plantage Middenlaan 40, close to the Hollandse Schouwburg theatre on number 24 – which became a local 'collection centre' for people to be deported during the war.

## 8 Third Book: On Mass Politics and Parliamentary Democracy

In a sense, Baschwitz's other 1938 book was both a warning and a recommendation. The warning: Hitler was really set on a new war; concessions would not buy 'peace for our time', as Chamberlain famously was to say after their Munich meeting. The recommendation: not to overestimate the 'unstoppable dark forces' of popular support for the Nazis. More pushback from citizens and legal authorities might still be able to break their spell, he felt.

His book revisited and challenged the then-current clichés about mass psychology that were widespread throughout Europe. The book was published in German as *Du und die Masse* (*You and the mass*). It was published in the Netherlands, but only later translated into Dutch as *Denkend mens en menigte* (*Rational man and the crowd*). In my view, this is his most interesting book. But under the circumstances, it failed to have the impact that it merited.

### International worries

Throughout the 1930s, Baschwitz had avidly followed the evolution of European events through both Dutch and foreign newspapers. From early 1935 onwards, fascism and National Socialism seemed to begin their international push, with Mussolini Italy's invasion of Haile Selassie's Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and the slow unravelling of the young League of Nations. This was soon to be followed by massive Italian and German support for the fascists in the Spanish Civil War (culminating in the notorious bombing of Guernica, later painted by Pablo Picasso).

The Netherlands Medical Association (NMA) helped organize an international *Appeal to Statesmen* from 350 noteworthy mental health professionals from the major countries of Western Europe and North America, warning against a re-emerging *war psychosis*, and imploring them to invest as least as much in peace efforts as they had in the new arms race. Queen Wilhelmina of the (still neutral) Netherlands reportedly also supported the manifesto.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See 'War and peace – Manifesto by psychiatrists' provided by Dr. J. Roorda, honorary secretary of the NMA, to *The British Medical Journal*, published in October 1935, p. 694-695.

It was in this context that Baschwitz decided to elaborate on ideas he had already tentatively put forward in some sections of his previous book *Der Massenwahn*, and in lectures he had given since.<sup>2</sup> One should caution that terms like mass, crowd, and group have different etymologies and slightly different connotations in German and Dutch, but also in French and English – and thus fit into slightly different association networks in each language. This has often led to a subtle dislocation of meaning in the translation of the key titles and texts about mass/crowd/group psychology.<sup>3</sup>

At the time, two kinds of arch-images of the mass/crowd/group had become closely connected with the rise of National Socialism in Germany – representing polar opposite views. The first consisted of the recurring chaotic mobs and street fights of the 1920s, started by rowdies of competing party militias, that often left many wounded or dead lying on the pavement in their wake.

The second was that of the highly regimented Nazi rallies of the 1930s, which annually displayed their seeming discipline and might – ultimately in a giant square built for this purpose and their successive manifestations in the party seat, Nuremberg. This image was impressively captured by Hitler's favourite filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl in her notorious Nazi documentary *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*). It projected a kind of spellbinding, Messianic atmosphere.

This is well illustrated by the recollections of some ordinary people. One young girl who lived in Nuremberg at the time vividly remembered the visits of the *Führer*:

One could hear the hails from afar, so you knew the car with Hitler was approaching. And then the '*Heil!*' came ever closer, and became increasingly louder, it was a deafening choir of people shouting '*Heil!*'. Of course I also shouted that, and raised my arm. And then he stepped out of his car, walked from the car to the entry of the town hall, and one could see him rather close up.

<sup>2</sup> In the last (8<sup>th</sup>) full chapter of the 1932 edition, particularly sections 2 and 4.

<sup>3</sup> See my discussion of the (authorized) mistranslation of Freud's *Massenpsychologie und Ich-analyse* as *Group psychology and Ego-analysis*, which led to a generalized misperception of its original intention throughout the Anglo-American world. In my (1984), 'The killing of the father', *Political psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 391-414. (German translation in *Psyche – Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, Vol. 38, No. 12, p. 1124-48. Followed up in my *Mass movements*.

Everybody was enthusiastic, my uncle said: 'Isn't it fantastic?'. But my father said: 'It is a great theatrical piece, it is Goethe's *Faust*'.

This was also Baschwitz's opinion.<sup>4</sup>

### Cultural pessimism about the revolt of the masses

After the apocalyptic conflagration of the previous 'war to end all wars', German philosopher Oswald Spengler had published two massive volumes on *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, translated as *The Decline of the West*. He argued that history moved in cycles of rises and falls, and that Europe and Germany were on a downward slope unless there was to be some fundamental rebirth. These ideas later converged with those of the Nazis.

On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset published his influential *La Rebelión de las Masas*, soon translated into English as *The Revolt of the Masses*, as well as into German, Dutch, and many other languages. He expressed doubts about mechanization and massification, about mass society and mass man: their anonymity, uniformity, and mediocrity. This book resonated widely, most of all among the established cultural elites, both religious and secular, who felt their privileged position threatened.

By the mid-thirties, the famous Dutch historian of mentalities Johan Huizinga joined the fray with *In de Schaduwen van Morgen*, translated into English by his son as *In the Shadows of Tomorrow*, and at the same time into German and other languages. This work began as a mere speech that developed into an essay, then became a small book and a big bestseller. Huizinga denied being a cultural pessimist. He spoke out against Nazism and anti-Semitism, and warned that the madness of the modern world might soon erupt into a frenzy and a fury that would stun everyone.

In his new book, Baschwitz discussed the visions of such Cassandras as well as the emergence of real mass politics during the interwar years.<sup>5</sup> Lenin's October Revolution, Mussolini's March on Rome, Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch and subsequent other *coups de force* were all driven by a certain view

<sup>4</sup> Käthe Müller, in an interview with Dutch public television reporter Rob Trip, August 2008. Quoted in Van Liempt, *De oorlog*, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Spengler: Chapter 2 & 9 (p. 30 & 104 in the 2nd Dutch ed. by Baschwitz). Ortega: Chapter 5 (p. 44-49). Huizinga: Chapter 1 & 6 (p. 18-19, 51-53).

of mass psychology and seemed to reconfirm its basic correctness – or so it was said. Dominant leaders turned out to be able to grab power by appealing to the darkest instincts of masses/crowds/groups in crisis situations, and thus impose a radical change of regime.

These ideas derived from the early mass psychology of the 1890s. The first monograph about *La Folla Delinquente* (*The criminal crowd*) was a master's thesis by Scipio Sighele (later himself an irredentist/nationalist movement leader). Sighele was a student of the socialist party leader Enrico Ferri: a lawyer associated with the newly emerging criminology school of Cesare Lombroso.

They argued that in riots, the mass did indeed make individuals do stupid and bad things, through fermentation and contagion, suggestion and imitation. But for some ('born' or even 'habitual' criminals), this corresponded to their inclinations: they should therefore be taken out of circulation to protect society. For 'occasional' criminals, however, this went *against* their normal inclinations, and they should be let off with only a light sentence, or even a mere warning. (Better and more detailed explanations of the mental processes involved here were later developed by a well-known American social psychologist of Italian stock, Philip Zimbardo).<sup>6</sup>

After French colleague Henri Fournial had done a Ph.D. thesis on the question in legal medicine, the same subject was then picked up by French criminologists like Gabriel Tarde, and medical men like Gustave Le Bon. The latter theorized about a 'dissolution' of the civilized mind in the crowd, leading to a resurgence of primitive tendencies, and a heightened receptivity to the inflammatory slogans of the others and/or of their strong leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Le Bon's apodictic book had meanwhile become a national and international bestseller, and influenced most major politicians of the early 20th century: democratic or dictatorial, left or right. Large fragments of Hitler's notorious *Mein Kampf*, for instance, were in fact copied straight out of the German translation of Le Bon.<sup>8</sup> Baschwitz's mass psychology pupil and successor Brouwer later assigned me to investigate the roots of this approach for my own Ph.D. doctoral dissertation in archives throughout Italy and France, which I did.

6 See Zimbardo.

7 See the histories by Barrows, Nye, and McClelland, as well as Giner.

8 For a detailed comparison, see Stein.

## Baschwitz's plea for a different approach

Baschwitz claimed that the earlier mass psychologists' view of crowds and their actions was slanted, and sometimes based on perceptual illusions. The authors had a tendency to exclude themselves (and their social category) from the mass/crowd/group, and to look at it from above and afar. Furthermore, they contrasted themselves to it in absolute terms: good/bad, rational/irrational, and so on. Instead, Baschwitz proposed the use of a 'relative scale': there might be some of that in certain crowd events, but not all of it and not always. He also proposed a 'hierarchical principle' and differentiation: a clear distinction between the various degrees of individuals' involvement in the group and its actions.<sup>9</sup>

First of all, Baschwitz distinguished between 'visible' and 'invisible' masses – as we have already seen. The visible ones were physically assembled in one place at one time: the participants would be able to see and hear (and smell and touch) each other. They could engage in direct interaction, such as during a performance or a demonstration. The invisible masses, on the other hand, were physically dispersed and only psychologically connected through communication channels and the mass media (like posters, flyers, and newspapers). They could only engage in indirect interaction.

This observation (which he ascribed to American social psychology pioneer Ross) was in fact older: it had already been implied by Le Bon himself. Baschwitz was apparently unaware that it had also thereafter been the focus of Tarde's last book (a collection of earlier essays) on *L'Opinion et la Foule (Public opinion and crowds)*, and that it had even inspired a Ph.D. doctoral dissertation in German on *Masse und Publikum (The mass and the public)* by American journalist/sociologist Robert Park – only translated into English very, very much later.

During the intervening years, Park had become the pioneer of an entirely different American approach to mass psychology: the collective behaviour sociology of naturally emerging social phenomena (later developed further by Herbert Blumer and his 'symbolic interactionist' school). Putting visible and invisible masses/crowds/groups on the same plane allowed Baschwitz to approach the dynamics of newspaper audiences, persuasion campaigns, and public opinion in a similar way – which became one of the hallmarks of his life's work.

The subtitle of Baschwitz's book was *Contribution to an exact mass psychology*. While the first edition focused on an *empirical* mass psychology

9 See the Introduction and Section I-8-d. Compare Ebels-Dolanová, p. 187.

(briefly mentioning new social psychological experiments and surveys), only the second edition (of 1951) devoted more attention to the *exact* numerical measurement of certain aspects.

Instead, the larger part of the book was again based on a comparative historical method, which Hans Delbrück had already applied to wars, Crane Brinton was applying to revolutions, and Barrington Moore would apply to the social origins of dictatorship and democracy. Baschwitz compared different instances of major riots, lynchings, and more, and critically reviewed the standard interpretations provided. His intent was to show that there was much more to them than originally met the eye.

### **Baschwitz's 'empirical' mass psychology**

Baschwitz began the empirical part of his book by reconsidering the effects of wild riots. The most classic examples were the taking of the Bastille prison in Paris on 14 July 1789, or the Tuileries on 10 August 1792. Similar examples concerned the events of 1830-1831, 1847-1848, those in France of 1870-1871, or those in Germany and elsewhere of 1918-1919. In each case, precise circumstances played a key role in each successive stage: tentative steps, impunity, the most radical taking the lead. It is the superstitious belief in the 'devilish crowd' and 'mass daemona' itself, he said, that contributes to the fateful paralysis of bystanders and authorities.

These reactions may affect the troops as well: the rebels may take over their command intact, the troops may begin to fraternize with them, or the army may begin to disintegrate. But during the events in Italy in 1922, or in Germany in 1923 and beyond, it was often the authorities themselves that made the troops stand back, when fascist and Nazi gangs tried to impose their will on groups of people. If it were not for these orders, things would have turned out differently: tentative and unorganized crowds, Baschwitz emphasized, can hardly ever overwhelm decided, organized troops.

Both invisible and visible masses may seem to adhere to some new idea or demand. But even massive crowds can only mobilize a small percentage of an entire city population. Furthermore, a large part of any crowd consists of mere onlookers and bystanders. Many may drift along, but only a few take the lead, and an even smaller group commits violent acts. This was the case during successive republican revolutions in England, America, and France, and more recently also in Germany.

French Blanquists during the Paris Commune, Russian Bolsheviks, Italian fascists, and early Nazis claimed to represent widespread popular

feelings, but in fact they were very small minorities *imposing* their will on other people. They were reluctant to call a 'general strike', for instance; and on some occasions their designs were even frustrated by general strikes called by their opponents.

Furthermore, unorganized masses, crowds, and mass meetings are helpless against persistent troublemakers or organized heavies sent by competitors. This may lead them to appoint their own 'stewards'. The mounting hostilities can easily escalate into recurring brawls, street fights, and near civil war – as it did in Italy and Germany in the early twenties. But it was the changing economic tide of the late twenties that ultimately brought the Nazis their decisive election gains. The president and the army command failed to uphold democracy, law and order, handing dictatorial powers to Hitler and a small clique that could not be voted out again.

Baschwitz cautioned, however, that it is also a misconception that the mere use of force is sufficient to suppress a mass movement: witness Bismarck's failed *Kulturkampf* against the Catholics, or his *Sozialistengesetze* against the Left. Such measures often provoke tenacious resistance instead. Even the use of police goons against the opposition is often ineffective or counterproductive (as in Tsarist Russia). A police state as such cannot impose permanent acquiescence on a population.

### Terror and the dangers of acquiescence

According to Baschwitz, classical mass psychology was misleading. It is only the paralysis of the *will to act* on the side of the legal authorities, which provides violent active minorities with the necessary room to impose their designs, and in turn provokes the acquiescence of peaceful passive majorities. But this acquiescence is only partial and temporary. It is caused by a distortion of ordinary judgment, and a suppression of contrary feelings.

It is also wrong to say that violent minorities commit such crimes 'under the protection' of peaceful majorities. Baschwitz says the opposite is often true: violent minorities commit such crimes *by terrorizing* peaceful majorities. People standing up to them do indeed take a risk of attracting their attention and malevolence. But these people later tend to exaggerate these earlier risks by invoking the myth of 'mass daemonia': the dark unstoppable force of the crowd. Examples were the killing of innocent hostages, for instance in Munich in 1919. But often 'mass crimes' are not committed by masses at all, but by active minorities hiding within them.

This even holds true for most hate crimes against outlawed groups and minorities: religious, racial, national, etc. Already during the Middle Ages, Jews were blamed for the Black Death, heresies, and much more. The Turkish Muslim authorities considered the minority Armenian orthodox Christians along the border to be a dangerous Fifth column during the First World War with the Russians. Poor whites in the U.S. South played a large role in the Ku Klux Klan and the lynchings of blacks. Curiously, this hate is often legitimated with erotic fantasies about the ‘danger to our girls and women’ – even in Streicher’s notorious Nazi rag *Der Stürmer*.

There is thus a ‘differential affect’ reserved for the in-group and the out-group, Baschwitz observed. Authors of the ‘Roman school’ had said that even trial juries, mass meetings, and national parliaments often displayed characteristics of the anonymous and seemingly unanimous crowd. Although this was occasionally exaggerated, it remained true that a ‘silent panic’ often captures passive majorities when they are confronted by vocal minorities.

When they remain inactive in the face of persecution, Baschwitz said, silent majorities strive to maintain their self-respect by implicitly assuming some kind of guilt on the part of the victims (as he had already observed in his previous work on mass propaganda and enemy images). This was another example of ‘unburdening oneself’ and the need for ‘evening out’ contradictory mental tendencies.

The facts provided in this book by Baschwitz thus contradict the claims of the pessimist and Roman schools: that the mental level (morality, intelligence) of the individual automatically sinks when in a crowd. Of course there are lighter forms of credulity, such as those concerning faith healers or ‘get rich quick’ schemes. But we have found no proof that a majority of ordinary people can be brought to violence, said Baschwitz – under normal circumstances. It is the intimidation by violent minorities, the paralysis of the authorities, and the ‘silent panic’ among peaceful majorities that are responsible for most derailments.

A system of government collapses, said Baschwitz, when its leading representatives get the feeling that they fail at the tasks that the times have imposed on them, or become demoralized over the consequences of their errors. Conversely, it can also happen when the subjects give up their consent and acquiescence, and demand justice. This may indeed lead to sporadic revolts. But mass psychology must relinquish its belief in fairy tales and magic formulas concerning mass daemonia and leader prestige (i.e., charisma).

## Publication, translation, and reception

Baschwitz may initially have hoped for a temporary weakening of the Nazis grip on power, which would allow him to publish or promote *Du und die Masse* in Germany. Yet it was already too late, and it never happened. Fortunately, almost 50 Dutch publishers had set up a German-language division, and one picked it up. But the impact abroad was of course very limited.

Baschwitz authorized a translation into Dutch, but by the time it was ready to go to print in 1940 the German invasion had already taken place. It was thus only upon liberation in 1945 that it was first published in Dutch – without any changes. Meanwhile, Finland had been subject to a tug-of-war between Germany and the Soviet Union. It had a Swedish-speaking elite and some Swedish-language publishing houses, one of which published a Swedish translation of Baschwitz's book in 1944. Such ideas were apparently well received by the Swedish newspapers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1951, a new German edition of the book was published (by the more academic publisher Brill in Holland – now led by his friend, history professor Nicolaas Posthumus), and a new Dutch edition as well – by the same publisher as before. There were some minor changes in terminology: the 'Great War' became the 'First World War', etc. There was an additional inserted page before the older discussion of Hitler and his *Mein Kampf*. But subsequent parts on Nazism and anti-Semitism remained largely the same. Assistants also added a register.

The text was re-organized somewhat: five chapters with 21 sections became two-and-a-half parts with 22 sections. The major changes concerned the insertion of entirely new post-war sections about more recent Anglo-American social science literature. The book had previously just mentioned older classics (translated into German) like *Social Psychology* by Edward Ross and *The Group Mind* by William McDougall. But in this new edition, Baschwitz briefly discussed a whole range of newer Anglo-Saxon sociological and psychological publications from the interwar period. These included works by the aforementioned Walther Lippmann and Harold Lasswell on public opinion and persuasion, but also ones by Floyd Allport, Charles Bird, Charles Ellwood, Franklin H. Giddings, and Kimball Young.

Even George Gallup and the newly developed ways to gauge opinions and attitudes (through representative samples and later even scales) were

<sup>10</sup> The cover mentioned praise for them by reviewers in the *Svenska Dagbladet*, and others in Göteborg and Lund papers.

mentioned. While his own knowledge of the English language was still limited, Baschwitz had stirred the university's assistants and students to go orient themselves with these materials immediately after the end of the new war. He had apparently become aware that the recent overseas approaches opened new vistas fundamentally different from the continental European approach thus far.

The first 1938 German edition of *Du und die Masse*, meant as a warning, was widely reviewed as such in the major Dutch newspapers, but of course not in the German or Austrian ones. An elaborate review in the liberal Amsterdam *Algemeen Handelsblad* linked its lessons to Hitler and *Mein Kampf*. The Amsterdam *De Telegraaf* linked it to the manifestations of anti-Semitism. The heading of the review in the Hague *Het Vaderland* even linked it to political psychology – a new field that some foreign scholars had hinted at, but that was only to take off many decades later.<sup>11</sup>

At one point, there was even talk of an English translation of *Du und die Masse*. German-speaking American officials were all over Europe after the war. A high officer at the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force and the 'National Military Establishment' in Washington at one point personally recommended the book to the publishing house newly founded by Henry Regnery in Chicago: witness a (partial) copy of his 1954 letter among Baschwitz's papers. It said:

I want to call your attention to the work of Kurt Baschwitz, professor of social psychology at Amsterdam University. I [...] consider him to be the leading authority in the field of crowd psychology [...]

I am particularly impressed by his book *Du und die Masse*, now in its second edition. To my knowledge this book is the only current analysis which deals scientifically with the problems of revolutionary mass behaviour [...]. I am sure that Baschwitz would agree to include into an American edition examples and footnotes which would render the book most useful to the American reader.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 5 December 1938, 12 February 1939 and 22 November 1938, respectively. Gustave Le Bon had also hinted at the field, as had Graham Wallas. Today it is a thriving discipline, with an international and several national societies, annual meetings, a journal, handbooks, and more.

<sup>12</sup> A copy of the first page (with a letterhead) of the typewritten letter is in File 5-6 of the Baschwitz papers ('unsorted correspondence'). Unfortunately the second page with the signature is missing, so we do not know who sent it.

I vaguely remember having once bumped into an American colleague at a political psychology conference, who said he had very much liked the book, and had tried to promote its translation. But apparently to no avail.

Baschwitz was also interviewed at the time for the Dutch edition of the *Reader's Digest* – one of the dozens of editions in foreign languages that reportedly made its global circulation exceed a record 10 million at one point. But it is not clear whether this interview made its way into other editions, or to the U.S. itself. According to his then-assistant Brouwer, the same *Het Beste* even offered to pay a modest sum for the interview, and asked to what good cause he would like to donate it. Baschwitz reportedly responded that he would like to spend it to the good cause of ... a decent suit – as he was still in dire need.<sup>13</sup>

So, unfortunately, Baschwitz and his provocative ideas on mass psychology remained largely unknown on the other side of the North Sea and of the Atlantic.

### Excerpt from *You and the mass* (Last paragraphs, with its overall conclusions)<sup>14</sup>

Let's beware of an ideology that speaks of a *struggle between ideas*, as if these were autonomous spiritual beings! An exact mass psychology is concerned with people of flesh and blood. Not a single idea, however noble, is safe from terrorists infringing right and the law – they can even be turned into their complete opposites.

Someone capable of normal thinking and pervaded with the truth of his ideas, believes that they are so persuasive that sooner or later they will also come to illuminate other brains. [But only] exceptional exemplars of our species arrogate themselves [the right] to force whatever seems right and good to *them* upon others – by horror and blood, suffering and humiliation. They should not be judged for the various colours they wore and still wear at each separate moment, but for the abnormality they have in common, the disdain for people inspired by delusions of grandeur.

<sup>13</sup> Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten, p. 31-2.

<sup>14</sup> Translated from the Dutch version. The last paragraphs again have rather long and contorted sentences with plenty of appositional clauses. I have tried to provide a literal translation, but felt forced to break them up into almost double the original number of much shorter sentences.

War is the father of all evil: the First World War led to a mental paralysis. It weighed on the governments and peoples of the civilized world like a burden of lead. It cleared the path for violent minorities. It also led too many independently thinking contemporaries astray, into doubting the force and the power of free thought and its honest expression. On the basis of provisional results obtained so far, however, exact mass psychology teaches us the following.

[The belief in] suffocating, frightening, irrational powers [that are] dominating the collective thought and action of human masses is based on an optical illusion. As is the frightening belief in the irresistibility of bullies that speculate on the brutal and blind passions of the mass. In reality, they are only capable of profiting from a transitory state of paralysis, resulting from fear and helplessness.

We want to hope, that practical politics will also acknowledge this important finding prepared by mass psychology. The rediscovery of the *overwhelmingly large majority of decent people*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> My italics. The German version has 'League' for 'majority'. Remember his plea for the founding of a 'League of Decent People' in the D.A.Z., during a brieffull in Germany, on 14 August 1927. Also compare the dictum attributed to the 18th century founder of modern conservatism, Edmund Burke: 'All that is required for evil to prevail, is for good men to do nothing'.

## 9 1940-1945: Hiding From Mass Persecution

Baschwitz's fourth and further books for a wider audience all concerned the fourth 'P': mass persecution. They explored the universal social and psychological processes involved. They were inspired by the emerging Nazi persecution of ethnic Jews, from which Baschwitz himself was forced to hide in The Netherlands, after very narrowly escaping deportation to the east and certain death. However, the books nominally focused on a historical study of witch-hunts, which had plagued Europe centuries earlier.

### **Wider historical context: The run-up to the war**

Soon after Baschwitz had fled Germany, the *Führer* had given his first elaborate public statement about future foreign policy before the *Reichstag*. At that point, he still tried to dampen the rising alarm in neighbouring countries by solemnly declaring that he would respect all existing obligations and international treaties. But as soon as he became well entrenched in power, he began to openly tear up one previous agreement and pact after another. In the end, he retreated from the League of Nations, which he labelled an allied instrument for the enforcement of the *Diktat* of Versailles.

He also began to build foreign alliances with like-minded outcasts, like *Duce* Mussolini in Italy. He chose to support the coup of the fascists of *Generalissimo* Francisco Franco against the legitimate republican government during the Spanish Civil War, so as to acquire an ally on the southern French border. This was followed by the *Anschluss* of Austria, then the grabbing of the *Sudetenland* and the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Through all this, he continued with a plan to build an unprecedented national network of *Autobahn* motorways and favoured the car and truck industry – both useful for rapid and changing military deployments. He also rejected the limitations imposed upon the size of the German *Wehrmacht* army on land, and began to rebuild a *Kriegsflotte* navy for the sea and a *Luftwaffe* airforce as well. Weapons expenditure soon skyrocketed from 0.7 billion marks in 1933 to 10.8 billion in 1937, reaching a sum total of 90 billion for the pre-war years. With the effects of the previous crippling British

maritime blockade in mind, he strived for increased self-sufficiency – by further priority development of synthetic oil and synthetic rubber, for instance.<sup>1</sup>

Fear of another future blockade also reinforced his fixed idea of conquering more *Lebensraum* or ‘vital space’, through a *Drang nach Osten* or a push to the largely less developed east, to gain raw materials through agriculture and mining. He would somehow clear out the ‘inferior’ Slavs and communists, and replace them with Aryan settlers. It would be much more difficult for the Allies to disrupt supply lines over the vast landmass of the Eurasian continent.

Yet he and Stalin initially decided to postpone their inevitable clash, for the time being, by dividing Poland among themselves. This then led to the ‘phoney war’ with Great Britain and France, which was mostly limited to a declaration, without actual fighting (yet). It was only in April 1940 that he launched the war in the west with an attack in Scandinavia ‘to prevent British landings’. This was followed in May 1940 by an attack on the three Benelux countries and France. They had seen it coming, but proved unable to fend it off.

### **Invasion of the Netherlands, flight to the coast**

Just before sunrise on 10 May 1940, German divisions crossed the border and invaded The Netherlands. They made rapid progress. The traditional defence approach had been to inundate a strip of the polders east of the western part of the country where the major cities were located, and to make a stand at the *Grebbeberg* hills in the centre – on only slightly higher ground. But, on the one hand, a new pumping station was not yet ready; and on the other, the introduction of transport planes and parachuted troops had made this approach obsolete. It soon became clear that the Dutch army was ill prepared and would not be able to hold out very long. So the royal family and cabinet fled to Britain to prevent their capture.

The Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB) had been only a small political party. At its peak during the mid-thirties, it claimed 60,000 members and 8 percent of the electoral vote. But as a ‘fifth column’ behind the Dutch defence lines, it still presented a grave danger. So the Dutch authorities put many in preventive custody. They reportedly also found a range of secret files recounting who could or could not be trusted to go along with Nazi

<sup>1</sup> Kitchen, *Modern Germany* (2nd ed.), p. 257.

rule. Baschwitz had apparently been identified as a potential opponent because of his new critical 1938 book *Du und die Masse*.

Baschwitz's daughter Isa recounted:

On the evening of the 14th of May, the doorbell rang. It was a constable from the aliens police: 'Can I come up?' The whole family stood around him, in the corridor. He said: 'You must leave at once! Tomorrow, the Netherlands will capitulate. You are on an NSB-list of adversarial [anti-fascist] Germans in The Netherlands'. There was no mention of him being Jewish. So it was clear: my father had to leave the house without delay.<sup>2</sup>

I had a friend in Heemstede [a southern suburb of Haarlem, close to the coast]. I stayed over regularly, and knew there was an extra room there [possibly to rent out to tourists]. Nothing was running anymore [buses, trams]. So, with the little money we had, we left in a cab, in the middle of the night. I still see the burning petrol harbour – the red glow, the clouds.

The 20-kilometre ride took a long time. 'The road was crowded with people, who still tried to flee to England' via the small seaport of IJmuiden.

We rang the doorbell, and the lady opened, sleepily. So I asked if my father could stay over. She was stunned. We said: 'Tomorrow there will be a capitulation – the queen has already left'. She would not believe us. [But] of course she did not leave us outside, [she] put on a housecoat, served us a drink. So that is where he stayed, briefly. The expression [of going into] 'hiding' had not yet been invented. I went back the next day, by train. He had to pay board and lodging.

The Germans had felt that their progress was too slow, however, and risked British forces landing on the coast. They sent airborne troops to capture the government centre of The Hague, but failed. Then they issued an ultimatum: capitulate, or the inner city of your major port will be bombarded. The Dutch gave in, but their answer was delayed, and the centre of Rotterdam was destroyed anyway. Some 800 people were killed; 80,000 lost their homes.

<sup>2</sup> I have tried to translate as well as I could, from my compacted notes. But the transcription is neither entirely literal nor entirely complete. (Appr. minute 40 a.f., from the 3-hour video interview kept at the JHM). Another qualifier is that Isa's recollection tends to be stylized and/or embellished at points; which is not surprising forty years later. Experts I consulted doubt that such personalized warnings were given; at most, there were only very general ones.

It was one of the biggest attacks on a civilian population in the West at the beginning of the Second World War.

The Nazis had won, and could begin to impose their rule. More than two thousand Dutchmen had died during the invasion: half soldiers, half civilians.

### Return to Amsterdam, half in hiding

When it turned out that the occupier had not come looking for him, Baschwitz left Heemstede after two or three weeks and returned to Amsterdam. But altogether, he was to stay at almost ten different addresses throughout the following period. He mostly stayed in the new *Rivierenbuurt* neighbourhood in the South of Amsterdam, where many middle class Jews now lived: first voluntarily, then forced.

Most of the new streets and houses there were built in the characteristic modern 'Amsterdam School' style. Ample streets, many with trees, alternated with small squares with lawns and flowerbeds. Long blocks, with three or four storeys of individual apartments, the final one with spare 'attic' rooms on top. Mostly yellow-, red-, or brown-stone bricks on the outside, with some variations: the occasional piece of granite here and there. No elevators, but high stairs, both outside and inside, to the upper apartments. Wooden front doors in brown, with transparent varnish, copper handles and letterboxes. A natural look, in fashion during those days, not unattractive.

The eldest daughter Isa claimed that her father remained in hiding in Amsterdam from this early point onwards, but this seems to be incorrect. They stayed together at the Weissenbruchstraat until the summer, when the family did indeed break up, and everybody went their separate ways. Her version of further events sometimes differs from that of her younger sister Rody. Their adolescent personalities already contrasted, and their further experiences during the war and occupation drove them further apart. They were often embroiled, and largely remained so after the war.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ebels-Dolanová spoke to the youngest daughter, who was unable to provide the address of her elder sister at that time. So Ebels privileges the youngest daughter's version of events. When the eldest daughter saw the final master's thesis, however, she protested that it was 'full of mistakes', and demanded that her letter be displayed with all distributed copies. Anschlag later received a detailed note from the eldest daughter, and his thesis tends to give more room to her version of events. I have been able to draw on later even more elaborate statements by the

Isa: 'My mother rented a room from a landlord in the [nearby] Leimuidenstraat, third floor behind. She cooked her own meals, but it was so sad'. She reportedly got some relief through their Church. 'The furniture was sold, except [a few pieces] for my father. He took them everywhere, with his books. Because he had to keep writing, to earn some money'.

According to one version, Baschwitz first stayed with another family for a few months, as a paying guest. According to another version, he had already moved into an attic at a modest Jewish boarding house in the Niersstraat at this point, also in the Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood, and he was able to stay there during the entire first half of the war. On the side facing the street, the building has a row of four small square windows, just half a metre high. It must have been stuffy up there.

I found that this address was noted in the surviving population register, and was therefore known to the German authorities. He was on the fourth floor, had his own entry and toilet, and was isolated from the rest of the house. But they brought his meals up. He got to work on the theme of persecution, meaning to complete the first of his trilogy of subsequent studies on witch-hunts.

The eldest son, Hans (born 1920), had already left several years earlier to work on a farm, and reportedly stayed there during a large part of the war. The eldest daughter, Isa (born 1922), ultimately went to live with Baschwitz's historian friend Jacques Presser and his wife, a bit further down in the same Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood, to finish her grammar school. (I return to her story below). The youngest daughter Rody (born 1923) could not finish school under the circumstances. For the time being, she moved to Blaricum, in the rural *Gooi* area southeast of Amsterdam.

She became a household help staying with neighbours of Baschwitz's other author friend Mozes (later Maurits) Mok. He was to translate Baschwitz's first book on witch-hunts from the original German manuscript the next year, and his father-in-law even offered to pose as the original author (if a pen-name did not suffice to shield Baschwitz). Presser's historian friends Jan and Annie Romein also had a little house nearby. Rody turned 18 in the autumn of 1941, and apparently rented a room in Amsterdam to live on her own and to further train in childcare.<sup>4</sup>

eldest daughter, particularly a 1995 three-hour video interview made for the Spielberg Holocaust Survivors project, available at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam.

<sup>4</sup> Her birthday was October 29. A note in the population register says she checked out of Blaricum in mid-November. But it sounded a warning that she had not yet declared a new address. Ebels-Dolanová (p. 171) reports she worked for the family of Mr. Frits Grewel, and for Mrs. Van Steenbergen in Amsterdam, among others.

## Baschwitz's belated registration as a Jew

In hindsight, the persecution of Jews proceeded in accordance with a perverse plan applied from day one, consisting of 101 successive little steps of increasing segregation and mounting discrimination: forced registration, stigmatization, banning from ever more everyday activities; dismissal from jobs, leading to unemployment; work camps; transit camps for so-called 'migration' and 'resettlement' in Eastern Europe. To the Jews and to the outside world it seemed as if every extra little step was not necessarily catastrophic in itself, but we all know how it ended.

Nevertheless, the Baschwitzes' friends the Frank family went into hiding. Daughter Anne was to write in her diary:

Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. Jews must wear a yellow star. Jews must hand in their bicycles, Jews are banned from trams and are forbidden to drive, Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o'clock and then only in shops which bear the placard 'Jewish shop'. Jews must be indoors by eight o'clock and cannot even sit in their own gardens after that hour. Jews are forbidden to visit theatres, cinemas, and other places of entertainment. Jews may not take part in public sports. Swimming baths, tennis courts, hockey fields, and other sports grounds are all prohibited to them. Jews may not visit Christians, Jews must go to Jewish schools, and many more restrictions of a similar kind.<sup>5</sup>

These measures had begun immediately after the occupation, when the 'Aryanization' of the civil service had forced Jews to declare themselves; they were soon to be suspended and then fired. Next came the various recognized professions like lawyers and doctors: they could no longer deal with non-Jewish clients, and thus lost part of their income. By late 1940, Baschwitz was already fired as an unpaid private lecturer at the university and as a paid researcher at the Institute for Social History – as were his Jewish colleagues.

Next came general registration. In early 1941, all people with 'some Jewish blood' were told to register. Almost 160,000 people throughout the country did, of which 140,000 were labelled as mostly Jewish, the rest (like Baschwitz's children), 'half- or quarter-Jews'. According to a note left in

<sup>5</sup> 20 June 1942. Barnouw & van der Stroom, p. 182-183.

the administration, Baschwitz reluctantly registered on March 21; just two weeks before the (already extended) deadline finally ran out.<sup>6</sup>

This also meant that he was forced to accept the additional first name 'Israel' as further identification (for women it was 'Sarah'). The 15.5 percent of foreigners among the Jews were singled out, two-thirds of whom were Germans like Baschwitz himself (although they were also deprived of their nationality and thus became technically stateless).<sup>7</sup> For the time being, he probably decided to lie low and not attract undue attention to himself.

### The battle for exemptions

When one discriminatory measure followed another, Baschwitz and others began to realize that this might lead them ever further down a path toward certain trouble. This is when many began procedures for a *Sperre* (exemption), and *Rückstellung* (redefinition) as only a partial Jew or a non-Jew. If one declared four or three ethnically Jewish grandparents ('J4' or 'J3'), one was considered mostly Jewish. If one declared belonging to the Jewish religion and being married to a Jew, things were worse. By contrast, if one declared only one or two Jewish grandparents, one was classified as *Gemischt* or of 'mixed blood' ('GI' or 'GII') and let off the hook for the time being.

Ever since his book about masses and crowds, Baschwitz had been in touch with Berthold Stokvis, a Dutch psychiatrist teaching at the University of Leiden, who shared his interest in the social process of 'suggestion'. His brother Benno was a progressive writer and lawyer. A member of the communist party before the war, he was noted for his defences of the famous international revolutionary Henk Sneevliet and of homosexuals, and as a board member of the *Nederlandse Vereeniging voor Sexuele Hervorming* NVSH, the association for sexual reform.<sup>8</sup>

Stokvis was Jewish, and thus limited to Jewish clients. But after his mother was re-classified, he was as well. He was one of only 25 lawyers who got involved in helping Jews deal with the complicated new regulations. People later reproached him for having 'dealt with' the occupier. But he

<sup>6</sup> Population register files, now held at the Central Bureau for Genealogy (CBG), at the National Archives in The Hague.

<sup>7</sup> Presser, *Ashes*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> See the entry by Hans Warmerdam in the *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*. After the war, Stokvis became an MP for the Communist Party, but later left, joined the Labour Party, and published a brochure on the contrast between the two.

replied that he had been able to help save a number of people who would otherwise have been deported and killed. Baschwitz was one of them.<sup>9</sup>

A key question is how exactly Baschwitz survived. The testimony of his eldest daughter and the master's thesis by Anschlag seemed to have solved this enigma, but upon closer inspection their answer is not entirely correct or complete. When I began to delve further into this, staff at the Institute for War Documentation in Amsterdam initially suggested that I look at the so-called 'Calmeyer list' of exemptions in The Hague. But in this context, the label 'Calmeyer list' is often used in a wider sense for the entire population register now kept at the Central Bureau of Genealogy (CBG), and in a narrower sense for certain specific categories of revisions.

There were several ways to try to get a revision. One pertained to religion. An individual could claim that he or she had been falsely registered as member of a Jewish religious community, and show that he or she had been registered as a member of a Christian church.

The other way pertained to ethnic descent ('race'). One method was by claiming to have been born out of an extra-marital affair with an Aryan; another was by claiming that a purely religious label had falsely been interpreted as an ethnic label. This second method was used by a number of Sephardic Jews (ultimately descending from Southern Europe, i.e. the Iberian peninsula, specifically Portugal), who contrasted themselves with the Ashkenazi Jews (mostly from Central and Eastern Europe).

The German official in charge of sorting this all out was Dr. Hans Calmeyer, and Baschwitz's lawyer also had to deal with him. The procedures often demanded loads of additional documentary proof for verification. But much of it was of course bogus, and the Dutch experts and authorities involved were sometimes well aware of this. One lawyer estimated that as much as 90 percent of the requests for exemption rested on some kind of deception.<sup>10</sup>

According to some who survived, Calmeyer often overlooked these deceptions and did what he could to help. (He was ultimately even honoured at the Israeli Yad Vashem Holocaust remembrance centre). According to others, however, he could and should have done much more. All this is important to illustrate Baschwitz's worries during these days. But in his case, other details ultimately proved to be decisive.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In 1968, Stokvis published some memories about the ins and outs of this work as 'Lawyer under the occupation'.

<sup>10</sup> Van Proosdij, quoted by Van den Boomgaard, p. 6, n. 14.

<sup>11</sup> A hyper-critical January 2007 Ph.D. thesis on his role was made by NIOD staff member Carl Stuldreher (reviewed by Max Arian in the weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 4 May 2007). A more nuanced analysis was provided in a 2012 master's thesis by Petra Van den Boomgaard.

## Lecturing at the Oosteinde refugee centre

As a refugee from 1933 onwards, Baschwitz had been helped by Jewish social workers. Later, a 'home' and support centre had been created on the Oosteinde number 16 (next to the Frederiksplein) to provide several administrative and logistical services to refugees. This was also where the *Beirat*, a special counsel for foreign refugees, had an office.<sup>12</sup>

This centre had a cultural department as well, which organized lectures and courses in arts and sciences. From 1937 onwards, Kurt Baschwitz had become a regular lecturer there, for a small fee, just like his Jewish colleague Jacques Presser. They probably already knew each other through the university history department, and their common Dutch friend Jan Romein – who was soon appointed professor there.

During the first years of the occupation, when there was still relative freedom of residence and movement, the Oosteinde centre continued to function as before. At one point there was even a classical concert benefit for it in the posh Amstel Hotel on the riverside. But the Nazi occupiers soon began to impose an entirely new organizational framework on both the foreign refugees and the local Jewish community.

In 1941, they created the 'Jewish Council' as a kind of large umbrella organization, to be headed by Ascher and Cohen – with whom Baschwitz was already familiar from the pre-war coordination and refugee committees. The new Council was lured into cooperation, and the illusion that things could largely stay as before. It played for time, thinking that the war would soon be over. It pushed back against successive steps, hoping to prevent worse from happening. It produced lists of people 'indispensable' to the council and to the larger community. But it was also blackmailed through Nazi hostage taking, and had to concede ever more ground.

The home at the Oosteinde also came to be subsumed under the Council, and was listed in the later printed overview guide of its various departments. Presser said he 'kept a lively memory of the atmosphere on this small island of civilisation and humanity'.<sup>13</sup> Lecturers like him were now given a special small green *Ausweis* or ID pass, which needed to be stamped for validity at the beginning of each new quarter. Baschwitz's 1942 card turned up among materials recently added to his personal papers in

Estimates for the number of people Calmeyer saved run an extremely broad range, from 50 to 15,000. See Van den Boomgaard, p. 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> Ebels-Dollanová, p. 150-151.

<sup>13</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, Dutch ed., p. 422.

the special collections of the Amsterdam University library. It had been validated for the first three quarters of that year, but not for the fourth. What happened?

Baschwitz's personal papers contain the carbon copy of a typewritten post-war note showing that the number of suicides for Amsterdam and The Netherlands shot up dramatically in May 1940: half of those concerned Jews immediately after the invasion. It regressed during the next year, then shot up again in 1942, when mass deportations of Jews began in earnest.<sup>14</sup> One prominent suicide had been that of the writer Menno ter Braak, who had headed the anti-fascist Vigilance committee before the war. Another was Baschwitz's friend Bonger, the criminologist. There were also several other Jewish acquaintances, like members of the Keesing publisher family.

Presser had published an article on anti-Semitism on the eve of the invasion, and had few illusions. He and his wife panicked after the invasion. They tried to flee to the IJmuiden seaport. There were rumours that a special boat had been arranged for Jews to flee to England. But it was impossible to get through, and it proved to be a mirage anyway. The next day they reportedly agreed to slash their wrists together, while sitting in a lukewarm bath at home. But one of them hesitated or woke up and called a doctor and the emergency services, who then also reanimated the other.<sup>15</sup> A few days later, Presser returned to the grammar school where he taught, his wrists in bandages. The pupils knew what that meant.

### **Presser as foster father of Baschwitz's eldest daughter**

Presser came from a very modest background. He was a somewhat reserved and shy person, but a great storyteller, popular with his pupils. By the end of the year, he and his Jewish colleagues were dismissed. The pupils mounted a protest strike, led by Lucas van der Land (later a lecturer in political science) and a friend. Van der Land even refused to return to school and instead took

<sup>14</sup> File 136. In his recent study *Het creatieve brein* (Amsterdam: Atlas 2016, pp. 271-272), neurologist Dick Swaab mentions that 317 people committed suicide in The Netherlands in May 1940 (210 of them Jewish), compared to an average of 71 in the years before. A more recent book by Lucas Ligtenberg mentions a Swaab family of five that committed suicide, and puts the total at 400 (*NRC*, 3 May 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Accounts vary as to who sounded the alarm. According to the obituary by his later boss Loe de Jong, it was Presser. According to Isa, and according to the 1988 biography by Nanda van der Zee (p. 112-113), it was his wife.

private lessons with the dismissed Jewish teachers – ultimately running one year ahead of those who had stayed.<sup>16</sup>

The next year, Jewish pupils were also expelled and sent to a special Jewish lyceum. Baschwitz's eldest daughter Isa had been seventeen when the invasion occurred. She was defined as only half-Jewish, but had already lost a year in the Barlaeus grammar school because of her earlier illness and still had a year and a half to go. The Presser couple had remained childless, and in the summer of 1940 offered to take her in at their Roerstraat home in the same Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood. (This was the street next to where her father went to live at this point). She would help in the household; Presser would help her prepare for her final exam.

Ironically, Isa later remembered this as an exceptionally happy period in her life. She adored Presser, then 41, who was erudite and a great conversationalist. He also played the piano: Mozart, Schubert, Chopin. The melodies later continued to resonate inside her head. She also adored his wife Debora Appel, then 27, also called Dé or (dimunitive) Dee'tje: his former pupil and much younger than him – closer to Isa's own age. So she was more of an intimate friend than a foster parent.

Isa reminisced: 'He worshipped her, and she him. As cold as it was at our house [of the estranged Baschwitz couple], so warm and delightful it was with them', she said in her later video interview. 'It was really a delight to live with them, fantastic!', she added. With a sad look in her eyes, and biting her lip, even more than forty years later.<sup>17</sup>

She continued: 'Both parents of Dee were Jewish. They lived on the Amstel [the riverside]. We had the habit of eating at their place on the Shabbat one week; they would come to us the other week. That is how I first witnessed the Jewish rites, first heard Jewish words I did not know'. The Pressers 'gave me pocket money. I saved, to show my gratitude, and give them a beautiful vase from Focke & Meltzer [a well-known posh shop, selling Bohemian crystal]. But they were mad at me'. Pocket money was for little nothings, 'every now and then a chocolate éclair or so'.

Dee's mother concluded: "Well, she's O.K., for a *Shikse*" [a non-Jewish girl]. I did not know what that meant. Everybody laughed, but they had to explain it to me. Afterward, we would walk back to the Roerstraat'. The three of

<sup>16</sup> Presser, *Ondergang*, Dutch ed., Vol. I, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Appr. minute 1:24.

them, arm-in-arm, close together. ‘Very cosy, very convivial. It was always interesting with them’.

At one point, there were all those new laws: no more radio, and all that. ‘They had it through the Jewish weekly [supervised by the Nazi regime]. But my father did not know those things. I said: “You should not read it. Then you don’t know, that’s all there is to it.” But soon those notes came. ‘I can still see them: those yellow cards. Where you had to declare all four grandparents. Your *Ahnen* or ancestors’.<sup>18</sup>

According to a graduation list published in the local *Algemeen Handelsblad* newspaper, on 19 May 1942 Isa finally got her final grammar school diploma. She had to leave the Pressers.

I would have liked to go study medicine, but at that point, half-Jews [like me] were no longer allowed to. Through an acquaintance of my father, I landed in a small private clinic, the Spinoza hospital. I was the only one without a nurses’ diploma, so I had to become an intern [and live there, as a trainee]. At one point, I had to sit next to a patient under narcosis after an operation, and warn the female director as soon as he woke up. It turned out he was an English pilot who had been shot down. One had to be careful: there were also pro-German nurses and housekeepers.

### **Baschwitz’s arrest and deportation to Westerbork**

By mid-1941, Hitler felt strong enough to break the deal with Stalin, and to launch his ‘Barbarossa’ offensive against the Soviet Union. In December, Japan attacked the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, and brought the United States into the war. This upset the previous balance of power.

In early 1942, Nazi leaders discussed the logistics of the ‘final solution’ of the ‘Jewish problem’ in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee. To the outside world, this was presented as a huge program to resettle Jews for labour in Eastern Europe. (Poland had already had an estimated 10 percent of the population or 3.5 million Jews before the war).<sup>19</sup>

Presser’s later authoritative overview on the persecution of the Dutch Jews describes two of the earliest ‘regular’ *razzias* or raids in the South of Amsterdam on 14 July and 6 August 1942. Presser was arrested in both of

<sup>18</sup> ‘Heel genoeglijk, heel gezellig’. Video itw., min. 51 ff.

<sup>19</sup> See ‘History of the Jews in Poland’ from the English Wikipedia.

them; Baschwitz only in the second, the so-called 'raid of the two-thousand', on 'Black Thursday'.

They were herded into the open courtyard of the *Zentralstelle* of the main location of the Amsterdam police. Meanwhile, the first *Hollandse* (later *Joodse*) *Schouwburg* (first 'Dutch' then 'Jewish') theatre was being turned into a special collection centre for such purposes; it even made use of a pre-existing 'nursery' across the street, next to a teacher training college. These locations have now been turned into memorials and museums within the framework of the 'Jewish Cultural Quarter'.

Verifications often took a long time; people had to sleep overnight on the pavement or on the floor. Baschwitz could not show proper papers, so he was transported to the wind-swept Westerbork transit camp in the northeast of the country, probably on the next day. The Germans had taken over the pre-war refugee camp there, and turned it into an internment and transit camp. They greatly expanded it, further surrounding it with barbed wire and sinister watch towers.

Misleadingly, the camp also had a large and relatively well-equipped hospital. Soon after Baschwitz, the journalist Philip Mechanicus also landed there and was able to stay on as an orderly. In the end, he did not survive – but his diary did, providing harrowing descriptions of everyday life in the camp. The departure of people to an uncertain destiny. Some thousand at a time. Once or twice a week, mostly on Tuesdays.

The train: a long dilapidated snake made up of filthy old wagons that divides the camp in two. The 'Boulevard': a desolate area, lined with O.D. men [*orde dienst* or camp police] to keep out overly interested onlookers. The deportees: loaded with a bread bag strung from one shoulder, resting on a hip, and a rolled-up blanket with a rope to the other shoulder, knocking about on their backs. Shabby immigrants who own nothing but what they wear and what they carry. Men, quiet, stone-faced; women, often in tears. The elderly: stumbling, faltering under their burden, tripping on the bad road, sometimes into pools of mud. The sick on stretchers borne by O.D. men.

Harrowing scenes, some of it captured on a surviving piece of film.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Tuesday 1 June 1943; p. 11-12 in the English edition; 21-22 in the Dutch. The piece of film is shown at the memorial sites in Amsterdam and Westerbork.

**Figure 13**

Picture of Baschwitz's eldest daughter Gisela/ Isa, a slightly older friend of Margot and Anne Frank, around the beginning of the war. She later helped free Baschwitz from the notorious Westerbork transit camp, and then joined the Dutch resistance.

### **Isa Baschwitz's rescue operation**

There had been panicked phone call. Kurt's landlady had called his full-German ex-wife, who had called her eldest daughter. 'My father had once said: "If I ever get arrested, you must go to my house to fetch my papers – if I did not have them on me". She was to pretend that the couple had not divorced, and still had children to take care of. She later recounted how she had put on her nurse's uniform, as it might help. She brought her German passport, stamped with a Nazi swastika. Travelled all the way to the little train station in the distant countryside of the northeast of the country, close to the camp.

The guard alternated between a Dutch SS-man and a Dutch military policeman [the former supposedly more fanatical than the latter]. I waited for the turn of the last one, went to say I wanted to speak to my

father, at the gate. He had him called up repeatedly [possibly over some kind of speaker system], but he did not turn up.

I slept at a farmhouse [a bit further down, employing camp labourers]. I stayed two days there, went to the gate three or four times. There had been a transport [to the east]. I was afraid he might have been included – in that case there was nothing I could do anymore. There was going to be another transport. The only thing I could do was go and see if he was there [...] But in the end, people were able to get hold of him. He was scared, and ashen-faced.

She handed over the papers. He said: ‘Thank God. Now I will probably be able to get out’. Isa: ‘One would say: he would prove extremely grateful to his daughter. But it was never mentioned. Never’. She bit her lip during the video interview, tears welling up in her eyes – more than forty years later. ‘But it was typical. Not only for him, but for others as well – Jacques [Presser] too’. The interviewer asked: How come? ‘I think it was shame, about his dependence. He was already old; I was 19’. (In fact, she was 20 at that point).<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, Baschwitz went to present his papers to the camp registration office. They were probably judged not entirely satisfactory and in order, but enough. He was told to immediately regularize his situation upon his return. He then got a release document, dated Sunday 9 August. Although it is missing from one microfilm overview file at the war documentation institute, it is still in a paper file. Anschlag found it and reproduced it in his master’s thesis, and I have seen it as well.<sup>22</sup>

The release document notes that he had been married to an Aryan woman (although it mentioned the wrong year 1915 rather than the correct year 1919), and had three children with her. The passport of the mother and the eldest daughter confirmed this. Although it does add that he had meanwhile divorced. The release document also notes that they had all been baptized Evangelical-Lutheran – an excerpt from the church register and a letter by a pastor apparently confirmed this. (The number of Jews married to gentiles, with children, was put at 6,008 that autumn; the number of ‘protestant Jews’ at only 1,156).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> So he was kept a few days, not a few months. Ebels-Dolanová (p. 169, n. 57), and her source Rody, apparently misunderstood.

<sup>22</sup> Reproduced in Anschlag, opposite p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> Schellenberg may have had a central function at the church; Presser (p. 208) mentions a former pastor of that name as later directly placed at Calmeyer’s department. Numbers:

The daughters later said some of the papers she brought had been falsified, and this claim is also mentioned in the master's theses of both Anschlag and Ebels. But this leaves two unsolved problems. On the one hand, the papers mentioned here were probably more or less genuine, *not* blatantly falsified. On the other hand, I have consulted with experts who said they might not have been enough to let him go at that point. Although it is true that the 'routine' deportations had only just begun: the rules and regulations had not yet entirely crystallized, and there apparently still was some leeway for interpretation. So why the mystery?

### Through the meshes of the net

Only in her belated 1995 video interview (available at the Jewish History Museum), did Isa finally reveal a secret that she had kept that far. Baschwitz had never mentioned it after the war, nor had most of the others in a similar situation. In his memoirs (p. 15), his lawyer Benno Stokvis calls it 'an uncomfortable and neglected chapter in the historiography of the [anti-]Jewish measures in the occupied Netherlands'. Isa had also brought a confidential affidavit that her father was sterile or had been sterilized. This had apparently been shown, but was discreetly not mentioned on the release form itself.

It had most probably been Baschwitz's lawyer who had advised him to take this additional precaution. Out of 8,610 Jews in mixed marriages, with or without children, 2,562 had apparently chosen this road. Like Baschwitz, many already had children. For the 1,416 women, it could simply be a question of age. The 1,146 men sometimes claimed an earlier venereal disease, or a specially performed recent surgical operation.<sup>24</sup>

Stokvis says he has reason to believe that no more than ten women and a hundred men actually had operations – including fake ones (as some Dutch doctors cooperated). And that none of the thirty clients he himself had advised (including Baschwitz), had been turned down. Jews considered sterile got a special 'open' and red (rather than a solid and black) stamp of

p. 313-314. (By pure coincidence, the main and oldest Lutheran Church in Amsterdam later became the university auditorium, for official functions on weekdays).

<sup>24</sup> Presser, p. 202; Stokvis, p. 17. Stokvis had earlier published a related article in the Dutch law journal *Nederlands Juristen Blad NJB* on 29 June 1959. Three-and-a-half months later, Baschwitz sent a rather bland postcard, thanking Stokvis for having drawn his attention to it. According to the address, the latter's office was then on the same Oosteinde, number 25.

the letter 'J' on their ID papers. Mixed marriage Jews considered sterile were then *excused* from wearing the yellow star in public.<sup>25</sup>

But in the same video interview, Isa also said there was still 'something else' that helped get him out, but for some reason refrains from specifying it. A letter in the surviving administration of Westerbork with the mention *Eilboten* (Courier or Express) may throw further light on this. It was addressed to Mrs. Dr. R. Pool: an earlier advisor of the Oosteinde support centre for refugees, then made a liaison person for the Jewish Council at the Westerbork transit camp.

The letter had the letterhead of the support centre, mentioning its link to the overall council. It was signed by its director Mr. Hermann Bier (himself a German refugee), and concerned five people recently arrested and brought to Westerbork. It says: 'You can imagine that we are worried about our collaborators. I know you will do everything within your power'.

With regard to Baschwitz, it said: 'He is over 50 years old [in fact he was 56], probably a [First World] War participant [he was not]. It mentioned he had been a regular lecturer there since 1937, for a fee. It added: 'He has nothing with him. We try to fill a rucksack for him. But I warmly hope he will not need it'. Meaning: I hope he will not be sent to the east right away.<sup>26</sup>

In retrospect, Baschwitz himself and his daughter Isa may have felt it somewhat embarrassing that the Jewish council (which was soon considered discredited) had intervened on his behalf. Yet Presser, who later wrote the most authoritative overview of the entire persecution and the increasingly questionable role of the council, had also twice been arrested in a street raid. He had also been liberated on both occasions. As a lecturer and teacher he, too, was probably on a list of people to be spared at that point.

### Going into hiding at his daughters' place

According to notes in the surviving population register, kept at the central genealogy bureau, Baschwitz spent until late September having the provisional release reconfirmed by various relevant authorities – probably again guided by Stokvis. Only a week later, the Nazis suddenly sent a huge number of Jews from work camps to Westerbork, however, overburdening

<sup>25</sup> Stokvis also refers to the first post-war report about this: M.N. Roegholt, *Ned. Tijdschrift v. Geneeskunde*, 6 October 1945, p. 318-9. Stokvis's book seems to belittle the question somewhat; Presser's overview study gives a much more dramatic account (p. 195 ff.).

<sup>26</sup> Netherlands Institute of War Documentation, Westerbork archive, nr. 250 i, file 41.

it – with thousands sleeping on the floors. They arrested even more, and sent a huge wave of 13-14,000 for transport to the east.<sup>27</sup>

Thus after the tentative first few months during the summer, the pace of deportations suddenly accelerated during that same autumn. The number of exemptions was also reduced by no less than 15,000 over the next half-year. Ultimately, there were even special arrest raids to again round up those who had been liberated earlier: Protestant Jews, or those divorced after a mixed marriage – as in Baschwitz's case.<sup>28</sup>

Toward the end of 1942, earlier rumours about the systematic extermination of those deemed unfit for forced labour had been succeeded by isolated reports from chance eyewitnesses to mass killings immediately upon arrival in the east. They had begun to seep back to the west, were brought to the attention of the Allied authorities, and reported by some major Allied media. But many continued to doubt them, and likened them to the hoax atrocity stories about German 'corpse factories' during the First World War. At first, Baschwitz himself was reportedly among them.<sup>29</sup>

Baschwitz's mother now lived in a pension/guesthouse with a number of other Jews. Held by Mrs. Blog-Heilbron, on the Plantage Middenlaan 40. Just a few houses away from the *Hollandse Schouwburg* centre at number 24, where Jews were now held after raids. She, and many of the other tenants, were soon arrested as well. They were sent to Westerbork, where – at age 76 – Hedwig soon died from illness. Her urn was later buried at a Jewish cemetery in the outskirts of Amsterdam.<sup>30</sup>

### **Isa as a courier for people in hiding**

Like Baschwitz, Presser had tried to set his mind to writing. Like Baschwitz and others, he dealt with historical subjects that had an obvious resonance with the tragedy of their day, but without openly saying so. When the invasion took place, he had just completed a study on Napoleon, the other

<sup>27</sup> Presser, p. 169-172.

<sup>28</sup> Exemptions fell from 45,000 in late 1942 to 30,000 in spring 1943, according to a 2008 doctoral dissertation by Jan Willem Griffioen & Ron Zeller. Quoted by Van den Boomgaard, p. 4, n. 4. Specific categories are mentioned in Presser (English), p. 313 and elsewhere.

<sup>29</sup> Rumours and eyewitness reports: Presser, p. 321-334; Van Liempt (2010), p. 257-260. Jewish expectations: Vastenhout, part IV, p. 45-64. Baschwitz's own disbelief: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 171.

<sup>30</sup> The whole area is now part of the larger Jewish Cultural Quarter, with synagogues and museums and remembrance sites. For both Hedwig Bikard and the guesthouse, see: [www.joodsmonument.nl](http://www.joodsmonument.nl).

hubristic leader who had wanted to rule the whole of continental Europe. It could not be published.

Thereafter, the big publisher Elsevier had asked him to write a book about the earlier Dutch independence war. Like Baschwitz, he published it under an alias (the name of a Dutch colleague), but a reprint was soon forbidden as well. The same publisher then asked him for a history of the U.S., but this *too* could only be published after the war.

Isa said about the Pressers:

there was someone who offered to bring them to Switzerland [for a fee]. But I felt he made an untrustworthy impression. They would go with four people: together with Sal de Jong [the twin brother of Loe de Jong, who was already in London and worked for 'Radio Orange' there]. They were irritated when Jacques and Dee decided not to do it, because of misgivings inspired by a young rascal, a 19-year old [in fact 20 ...] But the couple were betrayed and never came back. They had two boys, who became orphans.

In March 1943, Baschwitz's eldest daughter Isa was to turn 21. The Pressers had insisted: Celebrate it at our place! 'Dee'tje had saved ration coupons. So I could invite some friends. I had a wonderful birthday. Four days later, I went back to thank them. There was a desperate Jacques – alone'. It turned out Dee'tje had removed her yellow star, braved the travel ban, and had gone to take the train, to go congratulate her stepmother on her anniversary.

She had brought false ID papers, very poorly made. He had not stopped her. He had not wanted to tell her what to do and what not, probably also because of their great age difference. It gradually dawned on him, however, that she had probably been caught. Isa said she could not keep herself from blurting out: 'How could you have let her go, for God's sake?' Adding remorsefully, in retrospect: 'I did not realize what I had just said'. According to several of his later memoirs, the fateful phrase kept echoing through Jacques' head, for the rest of his life.

'A little later, someone dropped me a little note from her, written in pencil'. Probably handed to an outsider at Westerbork, in haste. Dee joked she was a typical *Schlemiyl* (Yiddish for someone bringing bad luck upon himself). She said she had tried to escape, which had made her a prisoner with a special (and even worse) "S" status (for *straf* or supplementary punishment). That she was treated badly, expected to be deported, and not to return. 'She wrote: "Take care of Jacques, as I cannot any more. See to it that he never ends up here, he would not survive it". Isa added: 'It was a kind of last will, from someone who was very dear to me'.

She continued: 'But Jacques would not leave the house, thinking that she might still come back'. He wrote poems for her. (It was only several years after the war that he received final confirmation that she had been gassed upon arrival at Sobibor). Only ten weeks later did he himself finally go into hiding'. First in Lunteren (on the Veluwe, a thinly populated wooded area close to the centre of the country). Although he would be forced to flee further, after betrayal and in fear of discovery.

Isa: 'He still received a lot of mail, at his old address. I would go fetch it, and bring it to him. He prepared replies, which I would then post. He also needed ration coupons and papers, falsified as well as possible. He wrote to me, almost every [other] day'. His post-war overview book quoted calculations that for Aryans, it had proven five-and-half times easier to find such hiding places, and sixteen times easier to survive arrest after discovery, than for Jews. A difference of eighty-eight to one. Social class and education of course also played a role.<sup>31</sup>

Isa gradually went to act as a courier for more people. This was how she got ever deeper into resistance work. Whereas Kurt had shown moral courage, Isa also had physical courage. He was of course worried sick about the risks she took, time and again. With a broad laugh, Isa later recalled how he had told her: 'That you are so reckless must be blamed on your stupidity'.<sup>32</sup> But intergenerational psychology teaches us, that children (or even grandchildren) often somehow act out the unspoken dreams and forbidden fantasies of their parents – in their choice of activity.

Kurt Baschwitz had been labelled full-Jewish by the Nazis; his exemption from deportation was very fragile and provisional. There was little he could do about it. Through Jacques Presser, Isa had grown closer to the Jewish culture and community, but she still had full-German papers, with the Nazi swastika and all. Her long illness during adolescence had strengthened her character and her obstinacy. In a sense, she became her father's proxy by joining the resistance. For better and for worse.

<sup>31</sup> J.J. van Bolhuis e.a., *Onderdrukking en verzet* (*Repression and resistance*). Quoted in Presser, p. 382.

<sup>32</sup> 'Das Du so rücksichtlos bist, das halt Ich deine Dummheit zu gute'. She adds, 'That was how he was with me'. (Video interview, JHM. Appr. 2 hrs. 39 min.).

## Isa gets involved with the armed resistance

After his liberation from the Westerbork transit camp, Baschwitz had initially gone back to the boarding house in the Niersstraat. According to files in the population register, the authorities verified and approved his papers by the end of the same month. In theory, he could now move around freely, without a yellow star. In practice, however, the risks remained great. The rules on 'exemptions' like his were forever shifting and gradually being further restricted; their interpretation very much depended on arbitrary *ad hoc* decisions made by police officials.

Whenever house raids were feared in the increasingly 'Jewish' Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood, he often stayed with his ex-wife or youngest daughter Rody for one or more days, just to be sure. Later, he may have stayed a few months as a paying guest of acquaintances of the afore-mentioned Stokvis brothers.<sup>33</sup>

But in the summer of 1943, someone asked Rody to bring a little package to an address in the Corellistraat. It is not clear who did and why, but she walked right into a trap laid out by the police. It turned out that number 6 was the home base of a group dubbed 'CS6' – linked to recent assassinations, acts of sabotage, and the communist underground.

One of their leaders was Leo Frijda: son of the economics professor Herman. (He was also the brother of Nico – a later psychology professor of mine). A hundred people were arrested on that day. Leo was soon killed, with 17 others, at the notorious execution grounds in the dunes near Overveen. Meanwhile, Baschwitz was afraid that his daughter's arrest might lead to him, so he hid for two weeks in an empty house in the Deurloostraat, sleeping on a mattress on the bare floor.

Isa: 'I could not stay at that hospital. I had left just like that during my watch, and had stayed away for several days. So it was clear to me: I needed an ordinary job' [where she would not be obliged to live as an intern]. She found one in a chemical laboratory. 'So I rented at the Parnassusweg, where my father could also hide. I claimed he had been ill, [and] was staying over to get better. The landlady did not know he was Jewish. The fact that he never went out, she felt that was characteristic of such a bookish person, a recluse'. He never registered his new address, and was really in hiding now.

<sup>33</sup> With the Schut family. One source (Rody/Ebels-Dolanová, p. 170-1) places this stay at this point, after the Niersstraat boarding house episode. Another source (Isa/Anschlag, p. 57) places it much earlier, before the Niersstraat episode.

Note that meanwhile the deportations had continued apace, and after merely fifteen months (!) were considered 'ninety percent complete'. Amsterdam was declared *Judenrein*. The Jewish Council was dissolved, the Oosteinde support centre closed, most of their staff also sent to the east. Their efforts had mostly proven vain, or even counterproductive – as they had unwittingly facilitated the whole process. Similar things had happened in other countries.

### Family repercussions

After some time, Baschwitz's lawyer friend Benno Stokvis got the youngest daughter Rody out of jail. But she had contracted scurvy (linked to a lack of vitamin C) due to the poor food, and lack of fresh fruit and vegetables, in prison. So she reportedly spent three months in the countryside, on the farm of her elder brother Hans in Usselo, to get more varied nutrition before coming back to Amsterdam.

She then also moved into the Parnassusweg. But three people in a cramped space there was too crowded, and tensions soon arose. Isa:

I took care of a growing number of people, for [falsified] papers and ration cards. At one point, there even was a civil servant in Enschede [close to where her brother lived and worked] who was able and willing to procure a whole batch of genuine, new, blank passports.

But then, someone had left a bag somewhere, with my address in it. So they [father and sister] urged me to get my stuff out of there. I brought the stuff to my mother's place. Father said: 'She endangers us'. Mother said: 'This is my house. She will not move it again. It stays here'. She was much braver. But O.K., my father was persecuted, she was not. That was the difference.

So in March 1944 Rody became the official tenant at the Parnassusweg.<sup>34</sup>

Isa said she did not adhere to any resistance group in particular, but smuggled all kinds of genuine and false papers. She was in regular touch with a man at an Amsterdam distribution office who could get hold of ration cards. And with another who was good at copying all kinds of official stamps. To help people in hiding and/or in the resistance.

<sup>34</sup> Again, Rotraut's story as related by Ebels, and Isa's story as related by Anschlag, do not entirely run parallel. I have mostly followed the latter, as it seems to be more detailed.

Isa said Hans had continued to work at the farm. Yet finally,

my brother was called up for military service, in the German *Wehrmacht*. But they were [to be] sent straight to the Eastern front. Without training, as cannon fodder, for Russia. So he let himself fall out of a tree, on purpose. He broke his arm, was brought to the hospital. By the time it had been treated, his unit had already left. Later he simply bolted, came to me. I immediately put him to work, for my activities. The first job was the card tray [which was stolen from the population register and thrown into the canal].<sup>35</sup>

The course of events seemed to accelerate after D-Day and the allied liberation of Paris, Brussels, and then the outskirts of Antwerp. In early September 1944, there were rumours they had already crossed the border to Breda in The Netherlands. The Dutch PM even made the mistake of confirming this over the London radio. People gathered close to a major roundabout near The Hague to welcome the Allied troops, some already raising the national flag. Collaborators began to flee, and the occupiers began to regroup closer to Germany, in the east. But this notorious 'Mad Tuesday' proved entirely premature. The southern provinces may have been liberated, but the western provinces were in for the harshest winter ever, and even a famine that killed 20,000.<sup>36</sup>

Isa and Hans heard through their resistance contacts that collaborators had fled an apartment on the Zuider Amstellaan (after Liberation renamed the Rooseveltlaan): Number 260, close to the present-day RAI conference centre. The owners, or the intermediary, preferred to have Germans. Isa:

We thought: You never know. My mother and brother went there, speaking their best German, to rent it. My mother officially registered there, not my brother. She even stayed there after the war, until her death.

So we told father: 'You will now go into hiding at your [former] wife's place.' She preferred it that way, she was such a darling, a fantastic woman. She was fond of him, in spite of everything. Then my father said that a

35 This paragraph is based on half a dozen pages of notes, on half an hour from the three hour video interview (from 1 hour 35 minutes to 2 hours 5 minutes), summarized and/or paraphrased by me.

36 Barnouw, *De Hongerwinter*.

female friend with two daughters had been put onto the street overnight. So she also took them in, until the end of the war.<sup>37</sup>

They reportedly survived the scarcity of the last, 'hunger' winter of the war because Hans could still arrange extra supplies from his former farm.<sup>38</sup>

### The final confrontation

In early May 1945, the Germans began to capitulate in one country after another. The Dutch government-in-exile in London had told the various resistance movements to merge into the *Nederlandse Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten* or 'interior forces', initially abbreviated as NBS. But they had not realized that the acronym closely resembled that of the fascist party NSB. So they dropped the 'N' again, and made the interior forces the BS. They were nominally put under the command of Bernhard – the son-in-law of the Queen. Now they began to manifest themselves in the streets of the capital.<sup>39</sup>

Kurt was worried that his children took too many risks. In the end, Hans Baschwitz reportedly came to command a BS unit in Amsterdam, and Isa was still a courier. But since they were poorly trained and equipped, and sometimes undisciplined, they were told not to stage an armed uprising or carry out arrests themselves, and to wait instead until the regular troops arrived. This was to prevent a bloody *Bijltjesdag* day of reckoning and personal revenge, maltreatment of collaborators or even lynchings.

Yet in the chaos, things soon got out of control on 7 May. Celebrating crowds prematurely streamed onto the central Dam Square in the heart of Amsterdam. In the afternoon, skirmishes broke out with German troops who had entrenched themselves on the first floor of the nearby 'Grand Industrial Club', who then fired into the crowd, leaving twenty dead there – and more elsewhere.

Similar confusion occurred down the road at the key 'CS' square, in front of the Central Railway station. Shooting Germans retreated in that direction to evacuate the grounds, whereas armed SS-men had holed up next to the Victoria Hotel opposite the station. Part of the large station had already

<sup>37</sup> Video itw, JHM, min. 2:07 a.f.

<sup>38</sup> More in Barnouw, *De hongerwinter*.

<sup>39</sup> According to the Wikipedia article on the BS, the number of active resistance fighters in 1943 was estimated at 25,000. In 1944-45 it had grown to 45,000, and with Liberation in view in May 1945 it had exploded to 150,000-200,000.

been taken over by the BS 'interior forces', while another part was still in the hands of the occupiers. The prolonged shoot-out killed two BS fighters and 17 Germans on that day.

Communication was difficult as the phone lines were down, and messages had to be carried in person across the firing lines. A BS commander at the station tried to send a courier to the Germans to tell them that a cease-fire had been reached, and that they would not be harmed if they gave up. But the messenger was killed in the crossfire. The BS commander then tried to summon a second courageous courier: Isa Baschwitz, in her nurse's uniform, speaking German without any accent. She succeeded, and many lives were saved. She was later officially cited for her bravery.<sup>40</sup>

The next day, Canadian troops finally entered the city, and then British ones. On May 9, they were officially welcomed on the same central Dam Square in Amsterdam by the prime minister and a resistance hero – who dramatically proclaimed: 'Dutchmen, you are free!' 500 people fainted in the dense crowd.<sup>41</sup>

Baschwitz was happy to finally come out of hiding, go out into the streets again, and try to re-establish contact with old friends and acquaintances. But many proved to be missing.

## Liberation of the press

Throughout these five years, Baschwitz had never stopped being a press historian and a press scientist. His personal archives are littered with unique newspapers, and there is even a special file with 'historical copies'. Starting with his own preferred liberal Amsterdam daily *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 10 May 1940, with the front-page headline: 'Netherlands at war', followed by an early copy of the *Deutsche Zeitung* which the occupier soon imposed.

It also includes the newsheet *De Vliegende Hollander* (*The Flying Dutchman*) dropped by the Allied air forces toward the end, and the review *Buitenlandse Stemmen* (*Foreign Voices*) distributed by the Information Service of the provisional Dutch Military Authority. There are also copies

<sup>40</sup> BS commander G.C. Rutteman later submitted a report on these skirmishes, in which the role of Isa is described. After this manuscript was completed, a detailed reconstruction of the Dam events was published in a book by Norbert-Jan Nuij and Ludmilla van Santen, *Drama op de Dam*.

<sup>41</sup> van Liempt (2010), p. 314.

of most major Amsterdam newspapers on 8 May 1945, including the Catholic *de Volkskrant* with a large front page headline in English, welcoming the British and Canadian ground troops: 'Liberated Amsterdam Greets You!'

From the outset, the Germans had imposed a *Gleichschaltung* to bring the Dutch newspapers 'into line'. They had immediately taken over the national press agency and issued 'general instructions' and held daily press briefings with 'do's and don'ts' for editors. The Germans evicted Jews from the journalists' association and the newspaper publishers' association. They even introduced a first experiment with training for collaborationist journalists.<sup>42</sup> Writers, artists, and broadcasters who refused to join the Nazi *Kulturmänner* or 'culture chamber' were fired, became unemployed, and thus risked being sent to Germany for *Arbeitsdienst* 'labour service'.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most noteworthy radio voices for the occupier was Max Blokzijl, whom Baschwitz had known in the early 1930s as the Berlin correspondent of the *Algemeen Handelsblad*. He had later developed into a Nazi sympathizer. He was made a head of the press department at the propaganda ministry during the occupation, and was notorious for his virulent weekly radio talks. On 11 September 1945, his former newspaper now reported he had been sentenced to death, and he became the first collaborationist to be executed half a year later.

But from the outset, there had been a resistance press as well: with 40 titles in 1940, 400 by 1944, and then doubling again to 800 over the last year (when electricity failures paralyzed short-wave radio sets that had received news from London). One of the first regular pamphlets had been *De Geus*; named after the famous privateers who had fought the Dutch independence war. It was initially copied by hand, then stencilled/mimeographed. But the actions of this resistance press had been improvised: soon hundreds of associated people had been caught, and fifteen shot at the Waalsdorpervlakte execution ground in the dunes.

The Amsterdam Press Museum was revitalized upon Liberation and soon began to prepare a special overview exhibition on the courageous underground press, which opened at the outset of the following year. Baschwitz joined its board, and devoted an additional chapter of the upcoming re-edition of *De krant door alle tijden* to these heroic feats, claiming there

<sup>42</sup> Consisting of lectures and weekends at the De Cannenburgh estate in Vaassen, Gelderland province.

<sup>43</sup> My father was fired as a classical music expert from Dutch radio and ultimately went into hiding (even from his own young children) between the floors in our home, to escape from being sent to Germany.

had been more underground papers in The Netherlands than in any other comparable country.<sup>44</sup>

Toward the very end of the occupation, the top twenty underground newspapers were printing and distributing an estimated 100,000 copies *per day*. They now turned into some of the largest and most influential post-war dailies: the protestant *Trouw (Fidelity)*, the social-democratic *Het Parool (The Watchword or Motto)*, the communist *De Waarheid (The Truth)*. *Vrij Nederland (Free Netherlands)* in turn became an influential leftist weekly.

The social democratic *Het Volk*, which had been taken over by the occupier during the war, now re-appeared as *Het Vrije Volk (The Free People)*. In the autumn of 1945, Baschwitz took his students to visit their headquarters. A group picture was taken when they entered the building, and a dummy newspaper with the photo had already been printed by the time they came out again. It also featured a front-page editorial by Baschwitz himself, emphasizing that a free press was 'As vital as daily bread'.<sup>45</sup>

When still in hiding, Baschwitz had already addressed a report on the need for an imperative post-war newspaper reform to his former colleague Anton Lievegoed, whom he expected to be re-installed as head of the Government Press Service (but who turned out to have become ill as a hostage in the Buchenwald concentration camp, and was soon to pass away).<sup>46</sup>

Before the war, they had already participated in discussions about the 'do's and don'ts' for official government information.<sup>47</sup> Baschwitz now proposed to have paper and other scarce materials assigned upon Liberation to legitimate book and newspaper publishers by two separate commissions, with representatives of eight stakeholder groups each (including writers and journalists).<sup>48</sup>

The post-war revelations about the unspeakable horrors of the massive persecutions and extermination seemed hard to fathom. But one book Baschwitz immediately favoured captured the individual tragedies behind it in a uniquely gripping and resonating way. That was *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

44 *De krant door alle tijden*, p. 269.

45 Dated 9 November 1945, printed over the previous last 'free' dateline of 22 July 1940. (Copy in the Baschwitz archives, file 48). Other groups also paid such visits and received a similar royal treatment, as the newspaper was trying to recruit both new collaborators and readers.

46 Details in the article on him that Joan Hemels contributed to the *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*.

47 Participants in the 8th Dutch Advertising Congress in Maastricht discussed a 'pre-advice' of Prof. Veraart on the matter, on the British, and other examples. See: coverage in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16, 17, & 18 June 1939. (File 107 in Baschwitz's archives).

48 Twelve page note 'Een poging tot "planning" van het eigen vak'. In the Lievegoed Archives, Press Museum.

## Baschwitz and the first publication of Anne Frank's *Diary*

Isa later recounted how her father had asked her to come and see him and Otto Frank. 'That was the first time after the war I met him [again]. He cried when he saw me, and said that at least I was still there'. Unlike his own daughters and wife, who had been sent to concentration camps after they had all been put on the very last train from Westerbork to Auschwitz.

'He had a little suitcase with him, in which he kept the diary, notebooks and separate pages from Anne'. They had been found by his Dutch assistant, after the family had been taken away. During the four months between October 1945 and January 1946, he had tried to organize these into a manuscript. With the help of a secretary who was married to a radio journalist, who also got involved.

Frank had come to Baschwitz for advice on their possible publication. Isa: 'He came from a business environment. For him, my father was one of his few intellectual friends, who also wrote books. From me, he especially wanted to hear whether it would resonate with youngsters'. Her father had warned against commercial exploitation. She (later) expressed fear, that Otto Frank might have 'abbreviated it too much, had entered elements of his own, and even fragments of the diary of [elder sister] Margot'.<sup>49</sup> This later proved not to be the case.

Baschwitz also wrote a letter to his younger daughter Rotraut, with the date 10 February 1946. It said:

I have just been reading the diary of Anne Frank, the younger daughter of our friend Frank. You must have known her. They were, as you know, in hiding for 2 years. The girl, 14 and then 15 years old, kept a diary which got past the Germans as if by miracle. It is the most moving document about that time that I know, and a literary masterpiece as well. It reveals the inner experiences of a maturing girl, her impressions in close confinement with her father – whom she loved very dearly, her mother – with whom she clashed, her sister – whom she discovered to be a friend, and the other family that shared their hiding place, and with their son, with whom she began to fall in love. I think it ought to appear in print.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Typewritten report of a conversation on 12 January 1981 with David Barnouw and Gerrold van der Stroom of the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation, kept there.

<sup>50</sup> Typewritten report of a conversation on 23 February 1981 with David Barnouw and Gerrold van der Stroom of the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation. Kept there, as well as the letter in question. English from their critical edition of the diary, p. 64.

Yet three major publishers refused the manuscript, feeling that there were too many such testimonies around, and that the public did not want to look backwards anymore, but forwards instead. A fourth minor one offered to bring it out – after Baschwitz's friend Jan Romein had drawn attention to it in the former resistance paper *Het Parool*, now a major Amsterdam daily. The article 'A child's voice' was published on 3 April 1947.

It mentioned that the Institute for War Documentation had already collected two hundred such diaries, but he doubted there was another one 'so pure, so intelligent, and yet so human as this one' that also summed up the repulsiveness of fascism.<sup>51</sup> After its publication, in mid-June 1947, one review was written by Baschwitz's friend Jacques Presser. He wrote that he had read little after Liberation that was as 'pure' and 'poignant'. The modest first print was gradually followed by others.<sup>52</sup>

### Kurt & Isa's reservations, and the further fate of the diary

The first foreign publishers also turned the diary down, but successful translations came out from 1950 onwards. In German, French, and finally in English: with a preface by the U.S. wartime president's widow Eleanor Roosevelt, and enthusiastically reviewed in the *New York Times*. This stirred further interest in it. Ultimately it came out in some sixty-five languages – with a total worldwide circulation estimated at seventy million copies to this day.

These translations were followed by the first adaptations for radio and later television, for a play and a musical, a feature film and a film documentary – which both won the Academy Awards.<sup>53</sup> Loe de Jong, former spokesman for the Dutch government-in-exile and now director of the War Documentation Institute, gave its publicity a further push with an article in the Western World's largest magazine: the American *Readers Digest*, with an estimated fifty million readers.

Foreign tourists later flocked to the original Amsterdam house, which was turned into a museum in 1960. After his death, Otto bequeathed the legal ownership of the diary to the Dutch state, but the royalties continued

<sup>51</sup> Quoted from Barnouw, *Het Fenomeen*, p. 37-38; also in Van Liempt (2010), p. 421.

<sup>52</sup> See Kuitert.

<sup>53</sup> Otto had been a businessman with some marketing experience, who closely supervised deals. He had initially refused to sign the first contract, because the publishing house wanted to claim possible 'derived' rights for itself.

to stream into a charitable fund he had established for that purpose in Basel, Switzerland. So over the years, Anne grew into a forceful global symbol and even a kind of secular saint.

But some of the reservations initially expressed by both Isa and Kurt Baschwitz proved to be prescient. Isa had observed that the published version of the typewritten manuscript contained notably few grammatical errors and Germanicisms. When doubts about its full authenticity were first voiced in Germany, Baschwitz's journalist nephew (who had recently visited him together with his mother) published an elaborate piece about the whole question in the most important newsweekly of the country, *Der Spiegel*. It quoted those who had seen and handled the original version(s) – including Baschwitz himself – who now pleaded for 'the speedy publication of a bibliophilic edition'.<sup>54</sup>

Only when the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation brought out a scholarly edition in 1986, did the outside world become aware that first Otto and then others had repeatedly redacted the language and had scrapped supposedly embarrassing passages referring to menstruation, sex, and romance – as well as commentaries about the parents' marriage. This then led to 'extended editions' that included some of such material previously left out.<sup>55</sup>

Kurt had in turn expressed unease that this very unique and intimate diary would inevitably have to become a commercial product. His fears proved justified by a succession of extremely unsavoury court cases about the possession of diary-related materials, about the various adaptation rights, and ultimately even about the royalties themselves.<sup>56</sup>

54 Peter Thelen, 'Anne Frank – Was schrieb dat Kind?' in *Der Spiegel*, 1 April 1959 (issue 14). Some in Holland interpreted the article itself as a substantial challenge to the authenticity of the diary, which it was not.

55 About the various successive versions and interventions, see Barnouw and van der Stroom. They suggest there may have been a number 'o' typescript, before the number 'i' typescript. During the various revisions, some incongruities had even crept in. (More in Barnouw, *Het Fenomeen*).

56 Kurt's unease: Kuitert. Court cases: see the overview book on the 'phenomenon' of Anne Frank, by the foremost world expert Barnouw, *Het fenomeen Anne Frank*. Vera Ebels-Dolanová (who worked at the Amsterdam Anne Frank foundation for a number of years) reported about the first skirmishes with Basel in the daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 1 October 1999. When the diary was going to fall into the public domain seventy years after Anne's death, the Swiss fund came up with a trick to try to extend copyright for another seventy plus years. They tried to make Miriam Pressler, the editor of the extended edition of 1991, the 'author'. See Doreen Carvajal, 'Another twist for Anne's legacy', *INYT*, 14-15 November 2015.

## **10    Fourth and Later Books: On Mass Persecution and Extermination**

Baschwitz's last books for a larger audience were all about mass persecution and extermination. They were of course inspired by the mass persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, which later turned out to have indeed led to extermination. But Baschwitz's first monograph on persecution was published (under a pen name) at the beginning of the occupation, in the spring of 1941. Like his friend Presser and other historians, he chose at the time to focus on a comparable but slightly different set of historical events, as it was too risky to deal with the persecution of Jews and the rise of the Nazis directly.

In his earlier works, Baschwitz had already discussed the mass psychology of witch-hunts as an example of a completely irrational mass delusion. He now further dug into that phenomenon, and gradually developed into an internationally recognized expert on the matter. This chapter covers all of his books on this subject, including those published after the war.

### **The historiography of witch-hunts**

As the West European nation-states consolidated during the 19th century, historiographers had wrestled with themes of alternating progress and regression, rationality and irrationality. One of two recurring storylines was that of gradual enlightenment, growth, and expansion. But the other recurring storyline was that of the periodic regressions into the Dark Ages of superstition – with witchcraft and witch-hunts, for example. Isaac Newton, the key founder of modern science, had already noted: 'I can calculate the motions of erratic heavenly bodies, but not the madness of multitudes'.<sup>1</sup>

The mid-19th century saw the publication of a hundred pages devoted to witchcraft and witch-hunts in the famous early mass psychology casebook in English, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* by Scottish journalist Charles Mackay. During those same decades, however,

<sup>1</sup>   Reportedly after he lost considerable amounts of money, when the speculative 'South Sea bubble' burst.

major historiographies of witchcraft and witch-hunts also came out in German and French. A 1900 bibliography reportedly listed 1,700 publications in the Francophone world alone.<sup>2</sup>

But the big question of how to explain such strange collective phenomena remained. From the early 20th century onwards, the new social sciences provided new approaches, particularly the fields of social and mass psychology. From his earliest work onwards, Baschwitz had felt that witch-hunts provided a kind of convenient *arch-template* that could be compared with all other kinds of mass delusions.

As he explained in a later interview: 'I needed a mass phenomenon that provided a clear example of irrational behaviour. About which there was no difference of opinion anymore, no conflict – not even within myself. Witch-hunts were really appropriate'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Baschwitz's early interest in the subject**

Early in his life, Baschwitz had learned that even his own peaceful birthplace of Offenburg, in the supposedly liberal state of Baden, had earlier been ravaged for three decades (from 1601 to 1631) by a most gruesome series of witch-hunts. As a journalist, he had also returned to the subject, for instance in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*. His own first three books (on press, politics, and propaganda) had *all* devoted at least a section or chapter to the relationship between their subject and witch-hunts; and his final three books were *entirely* devoted to this theme alone.<sup>4</sup>

It was his experience with propaganda as a foreign correspondent in neutral Dutch Rotterdam, during the latter half of the First World War, that first made him delve deeper into the subject. We have seen that these experiences helped inspire his book on mass delusions, *Der Massenwahn*. In the first editions of this text, and even more in the completely revised last edition, he used the phenomenon of witch-hunts to establish that irrational beliefs could indeed become very widespread and could have great consequences in the real world.

<sup>2</sup> Overviews by Wilhelm Gottfried Soldan (1843) and Jules Michelet (1862). 1900 bibliography: Robert Yve-Plessis. See Monter.

<sup>3</sup> Interview by Bas Roodnat, in the Amsterdam daily *Het Parool*, 25 April 1964, upon the publication of the Dutch translation of Baschwitz's last and most important book on witches.

<sup>4</sup> See *De strijd met de duivel*, p. 392-397; as well as *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, Part 6, first section (p. 248-253 in the 1981 Dutch translation).

Witch-hunts seemed to illustrate a profound human tendency to blame mishaps on the evil doings of hostile individuals or groups of deviant or Other people – rather than on ill fortune or anonymous forces in nature or society. Religious and secular authorities tended to look for scapegoats just as much as the uneducated ‘masses’ did, Baschwitz said. Once the process got under way, it could easily become self-reinforcing and hard to stop.

After epidemics, a failed harvest, or other disasters, for instance, certain people would suddenly attract suspicion for their ‘strange’ behaviour or appearance. They might be tortured into confessing that they were witches or had a pact with the devil, and then to name their co-conspirators. Anyone who spoke out against such proceedings risked becoming a suspect themselves. Psychologically, this whole chain of events would lead to ‘blaming the victims’.

The thought that the ‘witches’ might have been innocent after all would soon become unbearable. How could so many well-thinking people, including authorities and scholars, possibly be so wrong? Baschwitz also applied this reasoning to the grave atrocities, and the sometimes even graver atrocity *stories*, of the religious wars. It could also apply to the fear and hatred of ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities, or of entire other nations. The heathens or Others are dehumanized, before being subjected to inhumane treatment.

Baschwitz emphasized that witch-hunts had *not* been a purely *medieval* phenomenon, as was often repeated, but that they had instead developed during the *transition* to modern times – when sciences and universities had already begun to flourish. He also added that it could happen again. ‘When I claimed that [in 1923], I was ridiculed’, he said later. ‘Nobody had yet heard of Hitler, and neither had I. [But] a few years later, he came to power’.<sup>5</sup> Baschwitz also wrote newspaper articles about witch-hunts at the time, and gave public lectures about them, including through the modern medium of radio.<sup>6</sup>

5 Interview with Roodnat, *Het Parool*, 25 April 1964. The relevant files of the Baschwitz archives contain several references to talks on the subject. File 156 has material on the November 1925 lecture series on mass delusions (together with B. Malina) in the Philharmonic in Berlin, which included one on witches and witch-hunts.

6 ‘Geheime Wissenschaften’, *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 22 June 1913 (also quoted by Ebels-Dolanová, p. 191, n. 1); much later article ‘Der mörderische Aberglaube’, *H.F.*, 21 April 1931. The latter was originally meant to be a radio talk for the ‘Deutsche Welle’, but it is not clear whether it was actually broadcast in that form. A radio talk on ‘Das Rätsel des Hexenwahns’ was apparently broadcast: according to a note on the typescript, on 11 June 1931 (file 157); according to Anschlag, on 11 July (p. 154–155).

**Figure 14**

Illustration from a 1554 Flemish manual on criminal law by Joost de Damhouder, which also paid attention to the persecution of witches.

In a 1929 article in the daily *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, Baschwitz even implicitly made a connection between witch-hunts and the persecution of an entire people:

The idea that a people as such can be found guilty of a war, and must be punished – including its children and later-born generations – is a superstition of modern times, but dark [obscurantist] nonetheless. When there is a break with judicial traditions, the tyranny of prejudice easily affects those most impressionable, those without inhibitions, the lowest. And the majority of the smarter and humane contemporaries is exposed to the indignity of *allowing* the fury of the brutes – and later somehow to cover it up and smooth it over for oneself.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> D.N.N., 28 April 1929 (i.e., before the great breakthrough of the Nazis). Quoted and highlighted by Ebels-Dolanová, p. 122-3.

## The role of the printing press

Baschwitz again touched upon the subject of the witch scares in his second book, *De krant door alle tijden*. After the invention of printing around the mid-15th century, the first great bestseller had of course been the Bible, particularly after the Reformation. According to one later appraisal, Martin Luther's small town of Wittenberg turned into an explosive and innovative communication hub, the 'Silicon Valley' of those days, with half a dozen newly founded printing houses. The area produced three million books, soon including ones *illustrated* by Lucas Cranach the Elder and others, over the next thirty years alone. It also created a 'public' and 'a public sphere'.<sup>8</sup>

But the Bible was soon followed by the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum* or *The Hammer of Witches*: a manual on how to identify, question, prosecute, punish, and exterminate them – which Baschwitz labelled 'the most horrible book' in world literature (thus far). Both books first appeared in Latin, but were then successively translated into all of the major European languages.<sup>9</sup>

Such books were still very expensive, and libraries were few and not freely accessible. So Baschwitz emphasized that the first prints that could really reach mass audiences were single-page pamphlets – increasingly in vernacular languages, with ever starker illustrations, and finally even with some colour added. These pamphlets were mostly produced in countries and cities with tolerant publication regimes such as the Low Countries, and then exported to the neighbouring regions of Germany and France. They were sold for nickels and dimes at fairs and markets there, and were shown to others and quickly passed around on a large scale – hence the term 'flyers'. Magic and horror soon became favourite subjects: demonology, devil-worship, and therefore witchcraft as well.

The widespread circulation and translation of the Bible had gradually put quasi-theological debate about good and evil into everyone's reach,

8 Article series '500 Jahre Reformation', *Der Spiegel*. Instalment by Ulrike Knöfel, 2016, No. 46. She also observes that – ironically – Cranach's portraits turned Luther into an 'idol' – he who meant to ban all idols.

9 The first Latin bible was printed by Gutenberg in the 1450s; the first translations into modern languages began to appear from the 1520s onwards.

The Dominican order had played a large role in the Inquisition. Dominican priest Heinrich Kramer (a.k.a. Institoris) wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum* on his own initiative, and his hierarchy was split about it. He therefore later added the name of his more prestigious colleague Jacob Sprenger as a co-author, and used a 1484 papal bull on the subject as a preface/introduction to lend it more 'official' weight. The Latin edition came out in 1487. Vernacular editions also followed decades later: it had thirty or more editions by 1669.

where it merged with older folk beliefs about miracles and magic. Including how some (particularly visibly weak) people made a 'pact with the devil' to acquire extraordinary powers in compensation for their weakness, and for acquiring the power to put a spell on others.

An entire iconology developed: old women flying on broomsticks through the night, on their way to a witches' Sabbath in the faraway woods or mountains. Cooking up mischief in pots stewing over woodstoves or fires back home, and often accompanied by black animals like cats, dogs, or goats – considered to be Satan incarnate. Baschwitz further elaborated upon these themes in his later works.

Since Baschwitz's day, the historiography of witch-hunts has developed into a separate field of study, with an ever-growing body of detailed empirical studies and grand new theories. For example, a 2011 Dutch doctoral dissertation looked at how a successful Antwerp printer of pamphlets had commissioned *the arch images of witches* from the painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, which then spread all over Europe and were endlessly copied and paraphrased.<sup>10</sup> A special 2015-16 exhibition in both Flemish Bruges and Dutch Utrecht further demonstrated this influence.<sup>11</sup>

Another forthcoming Dutch doctoral dissertation even plans to apply the wholly new approach developed to understand the competitive evolution of 'memes' (minor textual or visual elements subject to near-automatic copying by people) to the spread of the language and imagery of witchcraft in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

### The connection with contemporary events

Baschwitz returned to the subject of witch-hunts in his third book *Du und die Masse*, which was devoted to mass psychology in modern society. One chapter was entirely devoted to mass crimes against 'outlawed' groups, such as those of a different race, ethnicity, or culture. It referred to the lynchings of blacks in the Southern United States; to the genocide of Armenians as a potential Christian 'fifth column' in Muslim Ottoman Turkey (during the First World War confrontation with orthodox Russia); and of course to the earlier pogroms and persecution of Jews in Eastern and Central Europe.

<sup>10</sup> 2011 Nijmegen dissertation: Renilde Vervoort, also available online.

<sup>11</sup> Vervoort, *Bruegel's witches*.

<sup>12</sup> Steije Hofhuis.

According to Baschwitz, these crimes fed on the ‘differential affect’ between people who belong to dominant in-groups or repressed out-groups. Jews had often been blamed for all kinds of real and imaginary ills. Such prejudice also led to exaggerated enemy images of how such Others could pose a threat. But again, during these present-day variations of witch-hunts, Baschwitz said, it was too easy to simply blame ‘the masses’. The persecutions mostly thrived on intimidation by an active minority, condoned by a passive majority, while the authorities failed to uphold the rule of law.

Another seed for Baschwitz’s identification of witch-hunts with the Nazi persecution of Jews may have been planted in his mind by a series of incidents in The Netherlands in 1935. The country had little sharp political satire at the time. It was imported by the German exile theatre company ‘The Pepper Mill’, run by Erika Mann (the daughter of the famous writer), and enthusiastically acclaimed by the entire exile community – mostly consisting of Jews and other antifascists, and possibly including Baschwitz on one occasion or another.

In one program, the main actress spoke a song text about ‘The Witch’. In the last line, she sarcastically expressed her ‘relief’ that her role as the scapegoat had now been passed on to ... the Jews. Police demanded that the sentence be scrapped, as it was considered ‘too incendiary’ (against the new Nazi regime in the much larger and increasingly threatening neighbouring country). But reports say that the sentence was often sung anyway.

When Baschwitz finally embarked on the first of his three elaborate studies of witch-hunts, the parallel with the persecution of the Jews thus was already clearly present in his mind.<sup>13</sup>

### The Oudewater ‘Witches’ weighing house’

Just before the war, major Dutch national newspapers carried an article about the restoration of one very small house in one very small town. It had been completely rundown, and had been used as a warehouse and the garage for the fire engine. But it was now to be turned into a local museum of antiquities, backed by its supposed former ‘claim to fame’ as ... a witches’ weighing house. Not one to indict people, but instead to exonerate them.

<sup>13</sup> This incident is related in a chapter by Alexandra Pfaffen on Erika and Klaus Mann’s stay in Amsterdam, for a Dutch collection of papers about *The Netherlands and Germany during the Interbellum*, edited by Boterman & Vogel (2013).

Ever since the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi (a few thousand years before Christ), it had been said that flying witches could easily be identified by their abnormally light weight, which would make them float if one attempted to drown them in water (such as by lowering a ‘witches’ stool’ – later specially designed for the purpose – into a river or canal). The Holy Books of all three monotheistic religions contained similar references to such tell-tale signs of sorcery.

So the weighing of people suspected of witchcraft might clarify these matters – or so it was thought. Baschwitz went to visit the town of Oude-water and got in touch with the local authorities and a municipal secretary to find out more about this. His last two books had just come out, and he was thinking about a possible new project. So the plan arose to write a monograph about the ‘witches’ weighing house’: *Van de heksenwaag*, his fourth book aimed at a larger public.<sup>14</sup>

His preparations probably picked up after the German invasion and occupation, when Baschwitz and other Jews were fired from the university and the Institute of Social History, but there was still some freedom of movement. His family split up, and he went to live in a nearby pension alone, as a scholarly recluse. Some of his library moved with him, and others probably helped him scour public libraries and second-hand bookshops for additional material. The subject was both innocuous and pertinent. On the one hand, witch-hunts seemed to have long disappeared, and the project could not be seen as subversive in any way – at least at first glance. On the other hand, it was clear to both Baschwitz and others that it resonated with the mass persecutions of the day. So what was its starting point and focus?

Earlier, other writers had noted that witch-hunts seemed to have stopped a century earlier in The Netherlands than in its neighbouring countries and elsewhere in Western Europe. Specifically, they seemed to have ended halfway through the Eighty-Year War, in which the mostly protestant North declared itself to be an independent Republic, and seceded from the mostly Catholic South (which later became Belgium) – that remained under the control of the Spanish-Habsburg emperors for the time being.

<sup>14</sup> The largest newspaper of the country, *De Telegraaf*, devoted an elaborate article to the restoration on 30 June 1938, and to the planned opening in early September – on the occasion of the 40th jubilee of the Queen. (This article repeated the myth that Charles V himself had invented the entire witches’ weighing scheme). The architect was J.C. Hogendoorn; the municipal secretary who probably encouraged and helped Baschwitz with both research and promotion was A.W. den Boer. After his retirement, the latter published a book on the history of the old town, illustrated with paintings by Johan Schouten (1965).

At this time, scholars in The Netherlands had begun to speak out. Not against belief in the devil as such – which would still have been considered heresy – but against the excessive preoccupation with witches, who were tried in phoney procedures based on unreliable confessions obtained through systematic torture. The first of these scholars had been Johann(es) Wier/us, also spelled Weir or Weyer, a medical man originating from the province of Brabant, who rose to become the personal physician of the Dukes of the nearby German Cleves. His 1562 study in Latin *On the illusions of the demons* was even prefaced and recommended by Ferdinand I, who had in the meantime succeeded his brother Charles V as Emperor.<sup>15</sup>

The Habsburg emperors had bestowed certain privileges on towns in the province of South Holland, such as the right to have an official weighing house for agricultural products. Charles, fascinated by the progress of science, technology, and measurement, had even told Gouda (of cheese-making fame) to calibrate its weights and measures with those of nearby Oudewater (reputable for its rope production – which further took off when the small Republic began building the largest fleet in the entire world of those days).

In *Van de heksenwaag*, Baschwitz related how Oudewater had begun to use its weighing privilege for a slightly different, but truly revolutionary use. Its aldermen and sheriffs had agreed to weigh people (mostly women) who were accused of witchcraft, for a fee – enough to pay all of the municipal officials involved in the elaborate process. For instance, the local midwife would undress the women and loosen their hair to verify that they did not carry hidden weights so as to appear heavier than they were.

In the end, the potential victims received certificates, with seals and signatures, testifying that they had a perfectly normal weight. Many of these people had also come for help from the Catholic areas on the German side of the border. Upon their return, they could show these official papers to the local authorities, Baschwitz wrote, who would then accept them as validated proof that they *could not possibly* be witches. They were thus able to stave off prosecution and certain death.

Baschwitz summarized (p. 115): 'So this is how the simple citizens of an insignificant Holland town provided welcome services to the most scholarly men of their time in their hard struggle against raging stupidity. By means of an in itself backward and superstitious weighing test'. He suggested that

<sup>15</sup> Baschwitz may have felt encouraged by the fact that Leonard Dooren had defended an elaborate Ph.D. thesis about the life and work of medical man Wier at the Medical Faculty of the Dutch University of Utrecht in 1940. A more recent study on Wier is the 2011 Dutch book by Vera Hoorens (today professor of social psychology at the Flemish university of Leuven).

**Figure 15**

Snapshot of the Oudewater 'Witches weighing house', taken just after the war, probably by Baschwitz himself

this simple procedure had helped break the spell: first in The Netherlands itself, and then also in some neighbouring areas.

Three medical professors, and then a law professor, at the prestigious University of Leiden (close to both Gouda and Oudewater) denounced the drowning test to establish abnormally light weight, and the mass delusions about witches as well.

Baschwitz's story was derived from several earlier versions. The first was dated to the 1620s, when the Catholic areas on the other side of the German border had experienced a wave of witch trials. A Jesuit priest who had taken confessions from the victims became convinced that many were innocent. He had then written a monograph in Latin, urging caution.

A Dutch protestant reverend then translated this book and added a preface. He lived in Oudewater and praised the good work of the witches' weighing house there. This version was then used by another Dutch protestant reverend, whose later denunciation of witch trials was in turn translated into many other languages and helped put an end to them in large parts of Europe. After the Napoleonic occupation and the Dutch return to independence (now as a monarchy), a local historian had then published

a history of the witch trials and their early ending as ‘a contribution to the fame of the fatherland’.<sup>16</sup>

The problem was that, in the process, the Oudewater story had gradually become embellished and exaggerated through one-sided religious and patriotic pride. Baschwitz had in turn been too eager to embrace this version, and to see his new homeland in a complimentary light.

### **Baschwitz’s 1941 monograph *Van de heksenwaag***

Baschwitz probably completed the monograph *Van de heksenwaag in Oudewater en andere te weinig bekende zaken* (*On the witches’ weighing house in Oudewater and other little-known facts*) toward the end of 1940; it was published in early March 1941 at the latest (that is, a full year earlier than reported in the master’s theses of Ebels and Anschlag).

While Baschwitz had written it in German, it was translated into Dutch by his Jewish friend, the poet and writer Mozes (later Maurits) Mok, whose father-in-law was even said to have offered to claim authorship if it proved necessary. But in view of the growing risks, it was published under the pseudonym ‘Casimir Visser’, with the added initial ‘K.’, for Kurt – possibly as a silent wink to insiders.

Baschwitz’s younger friend, Amsterdam’s brand-new history professor Jan Romein, recommended the book through an introduction. He said it had consoled him, about much that had recently aggrieved him (implicitly: the occupation, repression, and persecutions). He also said that ‘it had been Dutchmen, whose in-eradicable common sense and indomitable reasonability had triumphed’ – suggestively adding, ‘at least in this case’.<sup>17</sup>

The book was widely noted. A close reading of the reviews reveals that Baschwitz’s and Romein’s hints at the disquieting present were not lost on the readers. The first review in the liberal Amsterdam *Algemeen Handelsblad* began by quoting Huizinga’s study on the late Middle Ages, with its vivid contrasts between the evil and kind-heartedness of its people. Already in the second paragraph this review asked the key question:

<sup>16</sup> Respectively: Friedrich Spee, *Cautio criminalis* (1631). Nicolaas Borremans, ‘Introductory speech on the weighing of the witches in Oudewater’ (1657). Balthasar Bekker, *De Betooverde Wereld* (1691), translated as *The World Bewitched* (1695). Jacobus Scheltema, *Geschiedenis der heksenprocessen* (1828).

<sup>17</sup> Romein was soon also dismissed as a professor and temporarily taken hostage by the Germans. Thereafter, he joined the resistance and also hid a Jew in his house.

'Would it be different in the gruesome years that we are currently going through?'

The largest daily *De Telegraaf* concluded: 'This is how the weighing house in Oudewater became a symbol for what is and should remain the greatness of our country: a haven for the oppressed and persecuted, a Seat of Justice'. But this sentence provoked the outrage of the collaborationist *Het Nationale Dagblad*, which said that the Dutch NSB national socialists had been oppressed and persecuted in The Netherlands before the German take-over had finally brought them to power. So the highly topical political implications of Baschwitz's monograph were lost on few.<sup>18</sup>

Twenty-five years later, the former municipal secretary of Oudewater testified in a local paper that Baschwitz's wartime book had done the town a great service. Previously, only individuals took a peek. Now, thousands visit the [witches'] weighing house'. After the Queen had herself weighed in 1952 to get an official declaration that she was no witch, it turned into a major tourist attraction.<sup>19</sup>

### **Further book, on *De strijd met de duivel* (*The struggle with the devil*)**

Baschwitz went into hiding soon after his narrow 1942 escape from the Westerbork transit camp and from deportation. But family and friends probably helped him collect more books on the wider subject of witch-hunts in other countries, and through the ages. He thus began to prepare a larger, less localized and wider ranging study.

He was only able to complete this work after Liberation, though. It came out in 1948. Its title was *De strijd met de duivel* (*The struggle with the devil*), and its subtitle *De heksenprocessen in het licht van de massapsychologie* (*The witch hunts in the light of mass psychology*). It was again written in German, and then translated into Dutch. He tried to get it published in Switzerland, but to no avail.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 March; *De Telegraaf*, 13 April; *Het Nationale Dagblad*, journalism section, 19 April 1941. The *ND* review, five days later, objected to the fact that Romein had written the introduction, but was otherwise 'matter of fact'. There were also reviews in half a dozen other papers.

<sup>19</sup> *Goudsche Courant*, 10 June 1966.

<sup>20</sup> According to a letter (15 November 1948) in his papers (file 6), the German version *Kampf mit dem Teufel* was offered to Europa Verlag in Zürich, but they answered that it did not 'fit' into their program.

The thick, 500-plus-page book was a clear attempt to make a complete inventory of the facts and literature about this historical phenomenon in Western Europe. But it also tried to develop more of a psycho-social approach, and to distil the wider significance for similar present-day phenomena of persecution. A much younger colleague, a professor of Dutch history, 're-discovered' the book much later, and admiringly noted that Baschwitz had been searching for the eternal 'mechanisms of evil'.<sup>21</sup>

The book had seven chapters, each with three to five sections. It did of course begin with a chapter about how 'common sense' had first come to prevail in The Netherlands – a recapitulation of his previous monograph. But the next worthwhile five chapters centred on the evolution of different categories of actors and their roles related to witch-hunts.

The second chapter thus focused on the earlier emergence of magicians and sorcerers; the third on the notion of ghosts, Faustian pacts with the devil, and how they induced mass suggestion and 'mass hypnosis'. The fourth chapter described the idea that there was a worldwide plot of devil-worshippers, which resulted in a 'war' against elder women. The fifth chapter then looked at the persecutors, how malevolent people tended to take the lead and organize terror. The sixth, by contrast, looked at the saviours, and how they succeeded in breaking the spell and curing the social ill.

The final chapter returned to the conceptual framework that Baschwitz had elaborated in his very first book *Der Massenwahn* (without explicitly mentioning it, however). Terror often led to a 'silent panic', he wrote: a kind of paralysis of both bystanders and authorities. Being forced to go along made them also *want to* believe the accusations – by triggering feelings of guilt and the aforementioned psychological process of 'evening out'. This process motivates one to cede to the disinformation and to reject any observations that contradict it, so as to be able to re-align one's perceptions and thoughts and feelings – to make them correspond to one's (in)actions.

In an added epilogue, Baschwitz stressed that we tend to refuse to learn from this history. By relegating it to the distant past of the dark Middle Ages, by linking it to mere superstition, by ascribing it to the actions of the rabble. We are fooling ourselves, he says: it can happen again, and to any one of us. The only way to prevent the emergence of such delusions, he adds, is by upholding the freedom of expression and of the press. This will allow contradiction and debunking, and make common sense prevail in the end.

<sup>21</sup> Piet de Rooy, in the newsletter of his Amsterdam faculty 'voor Geesteswetenschappen', Nr. 119, appr. May/June 2009.

Dutch reviews of the book were generally positive. One Amsterdam weekly hailed it as 'clever, an interesting and captivating book [...] furthermore very topical'. The weekly of a liberal protestant broadcaster said it confirmed that 'Evil really exists'. But on this score his friend Romein wondered in a monthly whether 'the sexual-pathological aspect' had not 'too much been left in the dark'. This was one criticism that was to return later.<sup>22</sup>

To Baschwitz's great frustration, however, this bigger Dutch book about witch-hunts still only had a very limited impact. During the next ten years, he was entirely absorbed by his job at the University of Amsterdam and getting the new discipline of 'press studies' off the ground. So the subject was temporarily laid to rest, although he continued to collect further information.

### **Final major book, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse (Witches and witch trials)***

It was only after he had finally retired and gradually stopped lecturing that he again took up the subject. In early 1958 he embarked on a preface and outline for a German publisher in Munich, but feared that they might prove reticent as 'there is too much [to be read] between the lines' (meaning: about the much more recent Nazi persecution of Jews, which people had tried to get off their minds).<sup>23</sup>

Thus his third and final book *Hexen und Hexenprozesse (Witches and witch trials: The history of a mass delusion and the fight against it)* only came out in its German original in 1963, and in Dutch translation the next year. Basically a further elaboration and reworking of the material in his previous book *De strijd met de duivel*, it also had almost 500 pages, but it was organized differently.

The interesting attempt to proceed from a more or less analytical framework, based on the historical emergence of the various categories and roles involved in witch-hunts, was largely given up. Instead, after a few introductory 'parts' (chapters) on these central elements, the majority of the ten chapters had a purely geographical and chronological focus – which resulted in making

<sup>22</sup> Respectively: Y.F., *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 22 January 1949. Prof. Dr. J. Lindeboom, *Vrije Geluiden*, 24 February 1951. *De Nieuwe Stem*, April 1949 (file 150).

<sup>23</sup> Letter, 9 February 1958, in his courtship correspondence with Ilse Scholz, who became his second wife. More about this in the later section on his retirement years.

it more transparent for readers, but lost some of the earlier psycho-social focus.

*Hexen und Hexenprozesse* had chapters on The Netherlands, England, and France, two on Germany, and one covering both Switzerland and Sweden. It also had a chapter on the United States. The belated witch-hunts of the late 1680s and early 1690s in Salem near Boston had provided a kind of ultimate paradigmatic case – as this was by far the most sophisticated area of that entire young nation.

Baschwitz noted that an earlier study had emphasized that, of the 120 clergymen in Massachusetts and Connecticut at the time, no less than 107 had been educated at Harvard University – later considered the best in the world. Yet many went along with the ebb and flow of the delusion that saw hundreds of citizens accused of witchcraft on this occasion alone, 150 arrests, 50 confessions, and no less than 19 hangings.<sup>24</sup>

The driving force was a single fanatical clergyman who tolerated no doubts or opposition. At various times, secular legal and political authorities had tried to stem the tide, but were swept away. Only when the governor himself intervened decidedly after several years, was the wave finally brought to a halt. The next year, there even was an officially proclaimed day of collective *contrition* for the harm that had been done.

More than a mere historical episode, then, ‘Salem’ became a modern morality tale, which later inspired a long series of stories and novels, plays and movies about the recurring phenomenon (such as Arthur Miller’s famous 1953 play *The Crucible*, which hinted at the contemporary McCarthy ‘witch-hunts’ on supposedly hidden ‘Reds’ in the U.S.).

## Failing health

Baschwitz was set on quickly completing what he considered his ‘magnum opus’, at all costs. He worked hard, but his health was slowly fading. His younger second wife Ilse helped him with the manuscript, but she was not an academic. Then, at age 77, he had a serious stroke. It is not entirely clear whether or how this tragedy affected the final version of the book: they may have been forced to skip final research and checks, details, or even versions.<sup>25</sup>

24 *De strijd met de duivel*, p. 494–509; *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, Part 9.

25 The August 1987 letter of eldest daughter Isa to biographer Anschlag mentions that he had the stroke in (early?) 1963 (p. 100, 148, n. 79). According to notes kept with his will, he was treated by neurologist Prof. Biemond.

The original German version of the book came out in the autumn of 1963. It was widely reviewed in the press and on the radio in his country of origin, mostly positively. Some were small items, but others were larger articles in such serious dailies as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Welt*. The latter reviewer wrote that the book was 'rather readable and useful. To my knowledge there is no similar modern, elaborate and all-embracing history of the witch persecutions in German, produced with scientific thoroughness'.<sup>26</sup> This must have given the ailing author and his wife some comfort, as they kept many such clippings in separate files.

The translated Dutch version came out a year later. It was also widely reviewed in the press and on the radio of his country of adoption, again mostly positively. Some celebrated it as 'a work of reference': one daily carried a full-page interview with him as a confirmed authority. But others also regretted that it was rather 'cerebral' (!), with 'too many collected facts' and 'too little explanation' (as this had already been provided in his earlier publications). That it was 'somewhat schoolmasterly', lacking in 'an individual style' and 'personal commentary'. As a former journalist, such observations must have pained him.<sup>27</sup> Although all his previous studies had been largely socio-historical, he had had no formal training as a professional historian.

One review thus concluded: 'Unfortunately, Baschwitz's book is of less scientific use than one would expect with such a form and size. References to sources are very rare, and unfortunately we found many inaccuracies in names and years. Furthermore, the newest and best works have often not been consulted – for instance on the Inquisition'. The reviewer, himself a Jesuit expert on the historiography of witch-hunts, surmised that the final fine-tuning might have become difficult after his stroke. But this cannot be verified.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> By historian Friedrich Andrae, *Die Welt*, 22 November 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Reference work: *Prisma Literatuur Voorlichting* (a general information bulletin on newly published books), February 1965. Itw.: *Het Parool*, 25 April 1964. Cerebral: *Tijdschr. v. Parapsychologie* 1965. Facts/explanation: *Het Parool*, 10 June 1965. Schoolmasterly: *Leidsch Dagblad*, 13 February 1965. (Compare his own similarly dismissive wording, in his aforementioned 1930 Z.V. review of Groth's reference work on *Die Zeitung*).

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Hugo Zwetsloot, an expert on German literature, who had done a Ph.D. dissertation on Friedrich (von) Spee – an early Jesuit opponent of the witch-hunts in Germany. The unidentified clipping (in file 152) apparently came from a paper in Nijmegen (as it has local ads on its back). This was the seat of the main Catholic university (today's Radboud University), and of related institutions and orders.

## International praise and critique

Baschwitz's earlier studies about witch-hunts had only been published in Dutch, and had reached just a limited audience. This last book, by contrast, temporarily gained the status of an international 'reference work' for some. It was not only published (and repeatedly reprinted) in German and Dutch, but also translated into Serbo-Croatian (1966), Japanese (1968), and French (1973).

In France, and in the 'Latin' world in general, it joined a growing literature focused on the evolution of mentalities and 'historical psychology', partly inspired by the *Annales* school of historiography (named after its main journal).<sup>29</sup> Yet some commentators regretted that he could have done more to elaborate the links between witch-hunts and other phenomena like anti-Semitism and misogyny.

One particularly appropriate review appeared in a German-language journal for the promotion of understanding between Christians and Jews. It hailed the 'uncommonly lively' book, as well as the obvious 'parallels with the persecutions of Jews'. It also noted that 'Psychologists and sociologists have long demanded that the persecutions of Jews through the ages *not* be considered *in isolation*, but in their relations to other phenomena of mass delusion'. A footnote therefore regretted that Baschwitz had apparently not been aware of two related American studies, published just before and during the war, about the links between Medieval superstition, Jewish magic, and subsequent accusations of devil-worship and witchcraft.<sup>30</sup>

Then there was the rising preoccupation with women as victims. Of course Baschwitz had noted that the vast majority of the accused were women. At one point, he said that the hunts represented a 'war against old women'. But many of the women had also been middle-aged or young – even adolescent virgins and/or in the fertile, young-adult age. He had noted that the witch-hunters were obvious misogynists, some with 'perverted obsessions'. But he had not delved very deeply into the role of unconscious sexual fantasies,

29 Caro Barojas on witches in the Spanish *Las Brujas* (1961, transl. 1964); Carlo Ginzburg in *I Benandanti* (1966); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie on related subjects in *Paysans de Languedoc* (1966) and *Montaillou* (1975); Jean Delumeau on irrational fears in *La Peur en Occident* (1978) and various studies by Robert Muchembled. The most pertinent one together with his colleague Marie-Sylvie Dupont-Bouchat and Dutch expert Willem Frijhoff, *Prophètes et Sorciers dans les Pays Bas, XVe-XVIIIe siècle* (1978).

30 *Christlich-Jüdisches Forum* (published in Basel, Switzerland), March 1964. Referring to American studies by Joshua Trachtenberg: *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (1939), and *The Devil and the Jews* (1943).

their denial and repression – although his earlier work on war propaganda had shown that he was familiar with some of Freud's psychodynamics on this score. Had he remained a prude Victorian at heart?

An early Dutch review by a female author carried a title referring to witches as 'Mistresses of the devil', but also regretted Baschwitz's lack of psychological explanations. From the late 1960s onwards, feminist-inspired views of witch-hunts became a louder voice. Some activists claimed the label of benevolent 'white witches' for themselves (tongue-in-cheek) as opposed to the accusations of malevolent 'black magic'.

An article on the subject in a major Amsterdam morning paper reported that feminists had 'almost literally devoured' the copy of Baschwitz's book in the public library. 'It teems with added lines in pencil, pen and ball-pen, exclamation marks and hand-written observations. Almost all illustrations have been torn out'.

It added that 'radical feminists carry the label "witch" as a proud nickname'. Cafés, libraries, and publishing houses for women were named The Shrew, The Hell-cat, or Witches' Press. Women's demonstrations paraded through the Rijksmuseum underpass with its hollow acoustics, and yelled: 'The witches are back, with flaming hair'. There were T-shirts and bags with three witches on a broomstick.

These were for sale in Utrecht on Saturday 25 September 1982, at a thematic day of the national 'consultation conferences' of 'women's history' studies. There was also a new master's and a Ph.D. thesis on the subject. The latter had a few Dutch case studies, but the references to Baschwitz were mostly critical.<sup>31</sup>

As the decades had passed, Baschwitz's studies had gradually lost ground as an authoritative reference, even in his own Germany and The Netherlands. He had begun to write about the subject immediately after the First World War. But historiography had evolved greatly since then. It was no longer enough to do a study of the literature. Immediately after his last and most comprehensive work had appeared, one professional historian had already called it 'disappointing'; upon a re-edition almost two decades later, another said he had weighed it and found it 'too light'.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> In the preface of her master's thesis, Ebels-Dolanová noted the feminist surge of interest in the subject. Earlier review: Clara Eggink, *Leidsch Dagblad*, 13 February 1965. Later event: Lisette Lewin, daily *De Volkskrant*, 27 September 1982. Master's thesis: Renée Geurts. Ph.D. thesis: Lène Dresen-Coenders (1983).

<sup>32</sup> H. von der Dunk, *Vrij Nederland*, 27 March 1965. Gerrit Jan Zwier, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 15 May 1982.

One was now supposed to visit archives and patiently sift through reams of original documents, deciphering them, with an eye for telling details. To make qualitative analyses of implicit 'discourses' and 'the social construction of meaning'. Or even to make quantitative analyses about the specific characteristics of the accusers, the accused, the accusations: how did they vary through time and space? The founding of a Dutch academic 'study group' on the subject in the early 1980s had produced a great leap forward. The members produced one collection of papers after the other, concerning precise research questions.<sup>33</sup>

One member took another close look at the case of Oudewater, for instance, and Baschwitz's earliest monograph on the witches' weighing house there. He concluded that the Dutch protestants and patriots had created 'a historical myth' about its heroic role, and that Baschwitz had bought into it and had even added further embellishments here and there himself. They had exaggerated the numbers of people seeking protection, where they came from, the benefits the weighing and certification gave them, and the date at which it had all started. Another researcher felt that the criticism on these scores was slightly exaggerated, but basically correct.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, however, Baschwitz's reflections on the social and psychological processes often remain valid – even in our own day and age.

### The scale and persistence of witch-hunts

Another major problem was posed by the estimates of the number of victims invoked in Baschwitz's texts. He had quoted a total of as much as one million victims, over a few centuries, in Western Europe. But it later turned out that this figure was probably much too high, even including some of the previous Inquisition and other kinds of related violence.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, he

33 Marijke Gijsbert Hofstra & Willem Frijhoff (eds.), *Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers 1991), and subsequent collections (Dutch version published in 1987).

34 De Waardt; Löwensteyn.

35 The number of one million 'burnt at the stake' is repeated in the sensational headline for his 1964 interview with the Dutch daily *Het Parool*, cited above. A table compilation of estimates in the Wikipedia article 'Witch-hunt' comes to approximately 80,000 trials and 35,000 executions in Western Europe, over the three centuries between 1450 and 1750. Other estimates are slightly higher. But some of the related papers may have been lost, and many killings may also have been extra-judicial.

had referred to sporadic cases in the contemporary Western World, but had seemed unaware that the problem persisted elsewhere (and continues to this very day).<sup>36</sup>

From the 1930s onwards, the term ‘witch-hunts’ had also acquired a wider figurative meaning beyond the historical phenomenon. Ebels already noted that it was widely applied to the repeated political purges in the Soviet Union, later its satellite states in Eastern Europe, the Chinese People’s Republic, and the other Asian communist states – which killed many millions. The ‘Red scares’ in the U.S. and the Western World after the First and Second World Wars, meant to ‘root out’ communists and fellow travellers in key professions, by contrast, ‘only’ cost a number of left-leaning people their jobs and reputations.

One final word. According to many observers, the present-day Western World continues to be characterized by a rapid succession of scares, and a widespread ‘culture of fear’ about relatively limited risks to health and security. Jihadi terrorism has further aggravated this. But there is also the category of ‘moral panic’ or paranoid outrage over the behaviour of deviants like GLTB’s (Gay, Lesbian, Transgender, and Bisexual people). There have also been numerous scares over abuse of children by caregivers or teachers: sometimes real, sometimes completely imagined.

So Baschwitz’s reflections on the mass psychology of witch-hunts still retain some of their relevance.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Recent UN reports estimate that thousands of supposed witches are still killed every year, and many more are beaten or banned: throughout Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and within related immigrant communities. In Gambia, the previous Islamic president himself launched a witch-hunt. In the Central African Republic, the female vice-president turned out to be a believer, and 60 percent of all female prisoners were accused of witchcraft. Most of the 25,000 to 50,000 children living on the streets of the capital Kinshasa of Zaire/Congo had reportedly been suspected of some kind of demonic possession or witchcraft and then abandoned. See: Graeme Wood, ‘Sorcery at war’ and Mitch Horowitz, ‘Witch-hunting, 21st century style’, *INYT*, 19 May 2014. More: 5-6 July 2014; 16, 23, & 30 October 2015. Gambia: 2 December 2016.

<sup>37</sup> More about exaggerated risk perception in present-day western societies in my 2013 English book *Stranger Danger and the Epidemic of Fear* (which also discussed the relevant works of Joanna Bourke, Frank Furedi, Daniel Gardner, Barry Glassner, Dominique Moïsi, Elaine Showalter, and others). More about sometimes imaginary child abuse, ‘repressed memories’, and ‘satanic rituals’ in my 2013 Dutch book on controversies related to psychological practice, *Van Big Brother tot Hersenhypse* (also refer to the earlier books about ‘moral panics’ by Stanley Cohen, Erich Goode, and Nachman Ben-Yehuda).

**Excerpt from *Hexen und Hexenprozesse* (Final part of the epilogue; almost identical to the conclusion of the previous *De strijd met de duivel*)<sup>38</sup>**

*I have replaced the word 'witch' with an asterisk in the following excerpt. This is meant to illustrate that the whole argument (originally developed while Baschwitz was 'in hiding' during the Second World War, and immediately thereafter) was also inspired by, and partially meant to apply to, the persecution of all other kinds of groups – such as Jews.*

We are too afraid of those who appeal to mass instincts and who exploit them, and put our hope too little on an appeal to common sense. That also has to do with mass instincts, but with those aimed at humanity.

At the beginning of a book about the \* trials, such a thesis would have sounded excessively optimistic. But after so many chapters have demonstrated that even this persecution of people did not arise spontaneously out of the blind passions of the mass, and could not persist because of the [supposed] stupidity and maliciousness of the majority, one may dare to draw such an encouraging conclusion.

Numerous examples have shown how much effort and application of unusual means it has cost – even though the population was scared enough – to get and keep the mass murder and hunting of people going. What iron authority with the help of merciless, intimidating violence had to be mobilized. Nowhere would the persecutors have succeeded in mounting lasting and extensive massacres, if the road had not been paved by the cruelty or personal foolishness of political power holders, or by the weakness of a shaky government. The other way around: where and whenever the authorities came to their senses, and reined in the persecution mania, the 'mass' never revolted against it, and on the contrary its fears subsided.

The \* persecutions have been the work of terror, to which people were exposed without any right or defence. The activity of fanatical persecutors was primarily made possible by the breaching of the existing rule of law, and the elimination of the already weak legal protection of the individual by the introduction of emergency laws.

38 Literal translation from the 1964 Dutch edition, last pages, p. 474-6.

In order to exert their terror, the \* hunters depended on intimidation by physical violence and death threats. The natural feelings of fear and hate among the population – with all the blindness resulting from it – in themselves did not suffice for reaching the goal. That is why they [the hunters] never dared to rely on voluntary cooperation or passivity alone.

Yet we may not overlook that the effect of their violence and force was heightened by purely psychological means of terror. The mental state of the people of their time, with all resulting inclinations and inhibitions, suited them well. They knew how to abuse it to morally intimidate the majority of the people, and to have them willingly bow to their power.

It turned out that the most effective means against the delusion was freedom of the word. Experience has repeatedly shown that wherever this freedom existed, the \* murderers could irrevocably be driven back – so, wherever differences of opinion could be fought out, and where a public opinion could develop.

Without exception, the excesses of each mass delusion are the result of intimidation and violation of laws. This allows a minority of brutes to impose their will on a reasonably sensible and reasonably upright majority.

## **11 1946-1957: Founder of Institutions**

After Liberation, the reopening of the university and the founding of a new political faculty took time. So it was only fifteen years after he had arrived in Amsterdam as an exile, that Baschwitz's dream of becoming a full professor finally came true. He started a press institute, a press library, and a rejuvenated press museum – the first nucleus of modern mass communication studies in the country. He also introduced the studies of persuasion and media effects, public opinion and polling.

At this point, it is worthwhile to note that the Dutch and continental university systems were slightly different from the U.K. and U.S. ones.<sup>1</sup>

### **The wider historical context: Peace, and the new Cold War**

After the Second World War, it soon became clear that the world was going to be dominated by two major blocs. The United States reconfirmed its status as the foremost power in the West. It facilitated the return of the Western European states to free markets and mutual cooperation, ultimately resulting in the founding of successive forerunners to the European Union. The huge Marshall Plan program in turn supported their reconstruction. This also stimulated trade, exchange, and the rapid adoption of American science and technology, including new social management techniques based on the use of new 'empirical-quantitative' methods of investigation. Also within Baschwitz's own circle of social scientists.

<sup>1</sup> After Kindergarten, there was six years of primary schooling, and then five or six years of secondary schooling ('HBS' or 'Gymnasium') in The Netherlands. Most university studies officially also had a five to six years curriculum, although it was quite usual to take more time. At one point a curriculum often had a 'propaedeuse' degree more or less a quarter of the way, and/or a 'candidate' degree more or less halfway. In the end, it often had an internship and then a 'scriptie' (thesis). This resulted in a 'doctoraal' (not doctorate) degree slightly more advanced than the current masters/graduate degree. It was (confusingly) called the 'doctorandus' degree (abbreviated as Drs.). This meant that it gave one the right to pursue a Dr. doctor's degree thereafter (slightly more advanced than a Ph.D.). But this was a completely separate exercise, undertaken at an individual level, only loosely supervised by a 'promotor' (responsible professor). This exercise had no fixed curriculum, usually no classes of any kind, and had to be built around a single 'original' scientific research project resulting in a substantial book publication, to be accepted by an independent commission. Theoretically this was meant to take four years, but in practice it often took six or more.

It soon became clear, however, that the Soviet Union would not evacuate the Eastern European countries it had conquered during the last stages of the war, and would not allow free elections there either. Churchill said in a famous speech that an 'Iron Curtain' had descended between Eastern and Western Europe. The 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia further confirmed this. This dynamic also translated into the interior and party politics of all Western countries: communists, 'fellow travellers', and leftists were regarded with growing suspicion and became increasingly isolated.

Upon the capitulation of Japan, nationalist leaders in Asia had tried to declare independence, but the Europeans were initially set on restoring their colonial empires. The Dutch soon reintroduced military service and sent a huge army to the vast colony of Indonesia to 'restore order' through so-called 'police actions' with large-scale bloodshed and excesses. It took them four years to recognize the new realities on the ground. A significant part of the Dutch economy had been geared to colonial trade. It had created imbalances in the development on both sides, which took time to correct.

The Netherlands themselves had been devastated by the war. It was initially claimed that 90 complete factories had been transferred to Germany, 30,000 machines, and that productive capacity had dropped by 40 percent. Damage was initially estimated at some 15 to 25 billion pre-war guilders, or half of the country's pre-war wealth. Some of these estimates were later revised considerably downward. Some 230,000 people had been killed, of which at least 100,000 were Jews. Post-war policies aimed at rapid industrialization and re-industrialization, away from colonial trade and more toward technology and services. But this was easier said than done.<sup>2</sup>

Many had expected there to be great political changes, but there were only minor reshuffles and then a return to 'normal': with a resumption of the pre-war 'Rome and Red' coalitions, dominated by the two major centrist parties of Catholics and Social Democrats. The former gained 31 percent of the parliamentary elections of 1946 and 1948, the latter 27-28 percent. The protestant vote was divided between two larger and two smaller parties, for a total of 23-24 percent, and the liberal-conservatives also gained a new foothold. The communists had played a significant role in the resistance, and got a surprising 10.6 percent in the first vote. But this soon withered to 7.7 percent in the second vote, and then further decreased as the Cold War got under way.

<sup>2</sup> De Liagre Böhl a.o. (eds.), *Luiten van Zanden*. Also see: De Vries, Messing.

The ‘Randstad’ circle of major cities in the west, however, was considerably more left-leaning than the smaller towns and countryside in The Netherlands’ north, east, and south. In Amsterdam, the communists had triggered the heroic ‘February strike’ at the beginning of the war: a mass action of solidarity with the Jews, unique in occupied continental Europe. During the first municipal elections after Liberation, their party thus became the largest of the council with almost a third of all votes – although the next time they were reduced to the second largest, with only a quarter. The Social Democrats had slightly over 30 percent on both occasions. These shifting political realities had a major impact on Baschwitz’s immediate prospects at the ‘municipal’ university, as we will see below.

### 1946: ‘The future of Dutch civilization’

One of the most noteworthy figures during and after the war was Bernhard: the prince consort of (then still) Crown Princess Juliana. He was portrayed as having played a key military role in London and immediately thereafter; the ‘Prince Bernhard Fund’ had collected private money overseas to buy arms. After the war, this fund changed its focus to a restoration of ‘national values and norms’, and a revival of ‘Dutch civilization’ (as opposed to the past German, and possible future American, cultural influence).<sup>3</sup>

During the late summer of 1946, the Fund organized a major national conference, where mainstream opinion leaders met to discuss the overall situation after the war. The conference was held in Nijmegen near Arnhem: the eastern river-crossing points near Germany where some of the heaviest fighting and bombing had recently taken place. It was held in the auditorium of the Catholic university – one of the few major buildings left standing in the devastated centre.

The first day of the conference was devoted to the past, the second to the present, and the third to the future. Various social problems were addressed, which already included the newly emerging youth and media culture: the

<sup>3</sup> More in Van Ginkel. The national institute was soon forced to close again, as it had been overly ambitious and spendthrift. Some of its self-assigned tasks were later revived in the Prins Bernhard Culture Fund or *Anjerfonds* (carnation fund, after his favourite flower and symbol). Bernhard later became controversial, for having considered pushing out his wife as head of state and becoming a caretaker himself, for numerous affairs and extramarital children, and for taking more than a million dollars in bribes from Lockheed.

influence of American movies, the dance craze, the dangers of advertising, and also of excessive leisure and criminality.<sup>4</sup>

At this conference, Baschwitz was invited to give a major lecture on 'The Aftermath' of the occupation for the press. He again reminded his audience that the country had been one of the first major centres of European newsgathering and distribution. Freedom of the press in The Netherlands was thus built on 'a proud old tradition', but had sometimes been overly taken for granted. He repeated that the best period for the free press in Europe had been between 1880 and 1914. But the world wars and the rise of authoritarian regimes had brought censorship and propaganda.

This had led to mutual suspicion between the authorities, the press, and the public, he said. He therefore called for a restoration of confidence in the critical capacities of the public, the famous sober 'common sense' of the Dutch. The recent past and the underground press had proven, he said, that 'the enemy could control the newspapers, but not the readers'. This speech further positioned him as the inevitable first future professor of press studies in the country. It was about time that this new career would finally take off, as he was more than sixty years old.<sup>5</sup>

Brouwer, his later successor as mass psychology professor, later claimed that Baschwitz had participated at least once in another power-broker initiative of the same Prince Bernhard, and attended one of his so-called Bilderberg conferences (named after the Dutch hotel where the first one took place). After his wife Juliana had acceded to the throne, the prince-consort was made the figurehead for regular confidential international meetings of the military, political, social, and economic elites of the Atlantic alliance, which were held under this Bilderberg name from the mid-1950s onwards. These meetings were comparable to the later Trilateral Commission and the current Davos Forum. I have not been able to confirm Baschwitz's attendance, however.<sup>6</sup>

4 Quoted in Brouwer, *De Fakkel van Baschwitz*, p. 4.

5 'Naweeën van de doorstane gelijkschakeling – Pers, propaganda, openbare mening en de psychische depressie'. In Algra et al. Manuscript version of his contribution and notes in File 65 of the Baschwitz archives.

6 In the printed text of Brouwer's 1994 farewell lecture, *De fakkel van Baschwitz*, p. 6.

## German enemy subject?

In an elaborate letter to his eldest daughter, typewritten soon after Liberation, Baschwitz suddenly proved confident (even overconfident) about his immediate outlook and finances.<sup>7</sup> In the autumn of 1945, Baschwitz had already been reinstated as ‘private lecturer’ in ‘press studies’ at the University, although he was still not directly paid by it. He had good prospects to be hired for the near future, but no money to wait it out. So the Amsterdam University Association (AUV) gave him a thousand guilders to help bridge this difficult period. But it added that this was ‘very exceptional’, and should not be seen as a precedent by others.<sup>8</sup>

During the next summer, there was a proposal to promote him to paid ‘lecturer’ by the autumn of 1946, but the decision was only officially taken in early 1947 and applied retroactively.<sup>9</sup> One might have expected him to be elated at this point, but he was disappointed and angry instead, as he apparently told his friend Romein. After a dozen years of waiting and hoping, he had still not been made a full professor. He even told people he had considered looking for a similar position elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of all reassurances from his colleagues, he had the desperate feeling that appointment to a chair might still be put off for years. Particularly because all kinds of new objections were now emerging against various groups of people: against Germans, against collaborators, but even against former members of the resistance.

The measures were imposed in a rather rigid style. When he asked for permission to publish a scientific information bulletin, for instance, the head of the criminal investigation bureau high-handedly demanded to know: ‘Primo: whether you are still subject of an enemy state. Secundo: whether in that case you are in possession of’ an official ‘non-enemy’ declaration.<sup>11</sup>

As a former journalist and new press scientist, he apparently needed official permission to act as the ‘final editor’ for the publication. So he dutifully sent an elaborate letter to the ‘Press Purge’ Commission, pleading

<sup>7</sup> Isa letter: 1 August 1945, at the IISH.

<sup>8</sup> Overman, p. 188-189.

<sup>9</sup> Nomination: Notification by the Mayor and Aldermen, dated 26 February 1947, with regard to a Council decision of 15 January 1947, concerning his nomination starting 1 October 1946, ‘with an annual salary and pension base of 4,000 guilders per year’.

<sup>10</sup> Angry: 5 July 1946, Consultation notebook No. 298, Romein archives (IISH).

<sup>11</sup> Letter signed by ‘Het Hoofd der Recherche’ A.J. van der Leeuw, 2 May 1947. In reply to an earlier letter by Baschwitz to the appropriate ‘Commissie voor Perszuivering’ (Press Purge Commission) in The Hague, 16 April 1947. Both in the Baschwitz archives.

his political trustworthiness. In his desperation, however, he had not been able to keep himself from embellishing his C.V. somewhat. Several of these slightly exaggerated claims then also seeped into the C.V.'s he later submitted to the Amsterdam and Hague authorities for nomination as a full professor.<sup>12</sup>

In the wake of the war, many Dutch leaders and citizens had called for revenge. Some simply demanded the entire Ruhr area, the prime mining and industrial area of Germany. The Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs proposed that 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> be taken from Germany, preferably cleared of its inhabitants. The old Queen is said to have silently agreed. Later the claim was reduced by half, and then to only a few minor border corrections. But the Allies put their foot down. In the end, a payment of 125 million guilders in *Wiedergutmachung* reparations solved the issue.

But the Dutch Minister of Justice proposed that all 25,000 remaining Germans be expelled, a number later reduced to 17,000. Not only those that had come after 1940, but also those that had come after 1933 – like Baschwitz. Many of them had married Dutch, and had children with them. In the autumn of 1946, there were even night time raids (!) to round them up, and whole families were put in camps for months until their ultimate fate was decided. In the end, only 3,500 were effectively expelled.<sup>13</sup>

Baschwitz's own nationality and status, and that of his close family, remained somewhat unclear. A small pressure group of non-tainted (ex-) Germans in limbo emerged, with a stencilled magazine and some noteworthy experts defending such intermediary cases. The Nazis had earlier declared the German nationality of Jewish refugees like Baschwitz to be null and void. That technically made them stateless. As more or less a Dutch civil servant at the institute and the university before and after the war, Baschwitz expected to automatically get Dutch nationality. But he did not. Only after a further *ten* full years of loyal service to the (public) university and the Dutch state, on the very eve of his retirement at the advanced age of seventy, did parliament adopt a proposal to naturalize him – along with 230 others.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> His letter mentioned Offenbrück rather than Offenburg as his birthplace. It said he had been an editor at the *Frankfurter Zeitung* for a year, and that he had officially been called as professor in Heidelberg in 1932 – but neither claim has so far been confirmed from other sources. It further underlined his credentials by adding that he had 'personally been sought' by the Gestapo in 1933 because of his 'uninterrupted struggle in press and radio against Nazism', and that he had 'clandestinely continued to give lessons to advanced students, and to take exams' while in hiding. The latter claims are probably slightly exaggerated, but true to some extent.

<sup>13</sup> Van Liempt, *De Oorlog*, p. 457-462, *Na de Bevrijding*, p. 68-71.

<sup>14</sup> *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 29 June 1955.

## 1947: Moving out again, the fate of his family

The situation was even more complicated for Baschwitz's close family. His wife had been considered *Reichsdeutsch* all along, and had a German passport. She had loyally continued to help him and others in hiding, however, in spite of her extremely modest and difficult circumstances. Yet, as soon as he had a paid university position and salary, Baschwitz moved out to live on his own again (although he apparently paid her some alimony thereafter). This reportedly alienated several common friends and acquaintances at first.

But he now decided to cross a major threshold to his new life as an academic. He left the Rivierenbuurt neighbourhood in the south of the city, where he had lived for 14 years altogether, at different addresses. He had good memories there, mostly about the early pre-war years. But also bad memories, of course, from the later pre-war years and the Occupation. Of the 17,000 Jews who had lived in the neighbourhood, 13,000 had been deported and most had not returned. It felt as if their shadows and ghosts were still around.

He now moved to the old city centre instead, to the fancy *grachtengordel* or canal belt, where most of the elite and many university professors lived. Albeit his new lodging was only on the outer/lesser Prinsengracht, at number 644: the upper half of a small but picturesque canal house, with a large balcony on the other side, on a piece of flat roof.

On one side was the large *Maison Descartes* on the Vijzelgracht, named after the famous French philosopher who had lived in The Netherlands in exile – later turned into the French consulate and cultural centre. On the other side, it was only a few houses away from the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat with its antique shops leading to the *Rijksmuseum*. But, most conveniently, it was also within easy walking distance of where his Press Institute was to settle. This made it easy to take lunch at home, prepared by his housekeeper.

Some people felt alienated and contemplated emigration. The war had left deep emotional scars in many neighbourhoods and families, and the Baschwitzes were no exception. Things had been done or said, or had not been done or said. The children felt that the separation of their parents was a very sad thing, especially after their mother's continued loyalty during the war.

But they were adults now, in charge of their own lives. During the year of Liberation, the children had turned 25, 23, and 22 years of age, respectively. They had been considered half-Jewish and half-Aryan by the occupiers.

But now they were initially classified as full-German, and therefore as *unwelcome foreigners*, by the new 'free' administration.

During the last stage of the war, Baschwitz's eldest son Hans had reportedly commanded a unit of the 'Interior Forces', the former resistance, and had risked his life. He was probably appalled to discover that after the war he might have trouble even getting an appropriate residence or work permit. He had not been particularly close with his father, and soon decided to leave. For a long time, I was unable to find out where he had gone, but was finally able to find traces ... on the other side of the world.

He had probably heard that there were opportunities aplenty in the Dutch colonies. Not in the east – as a bloody war for independence had meanwhile broken out in Indonesia. But in the west, in the scattered small colonies of the Caribbean. It turned out that he was on the lists of ship passengers to and from Curaçao in the Dutch Antilles, which I found reproduced in the small local papers.

In the spring of 1947, he had left for Surinam or Dutch Guyana (on the Northern coast of South America), and briefly worked in gold mining. At the end of the next year, he left for Puerto Rico, and from there to the United States. When problems arose, his father Kurt may have had a close acquaintance intervene with the American consulate.<sup>15</sup> Hans ended up in Massachusetts, where he ultimately became an insurance salesman (just like his grandfather), married and had two children.<sup>16</sup>

Isa in turn found work at the *Kriterion* cinema theatre, which was set up in Amsterdam to employ and house youngsters emerging from the resistance, and to allow them to take up or return to their studies. But she was called in by the authorities, because she did not have a work permit. She later said that she had put on her BS 'interior forces' uniform, to tell the civil servant that they should make a distinction between good Germans and bad Germans. With her usual bravura, she later even claimed to have said: 'I worked for the resistance. What did you do during the war? Carry out orders?' In the end, she was permitted to stay.

When she was later asked how she looked back on the resistance years, she had several answers. First of all, it stirred frightful memories: 'The Central Station is not a place where I want to be, not even now'. But, on the

<sup>15</sup> As suggested by Baschwitz's letter of 28 February 1949 to thank Maarten Rooij (editor-in-chief of the authoritative daily *NRC*, later his press studies successor), for clearing up a 'misunderstanding', in file 6.

<sup>16</sup> Hans married Hazel Williams and lived in Longmeadow, Massachusetts. He died in 1993. They had a son Kent, and a daughter Carol, who married the Reverend Peter Smith.

other hand, 'We had very close friendships, [it was] a very warm time. We knew each other, trusted each other'. Still, 'I would never do it again. I am so terribly disappointed about what developed in The Netherlands. We had thought everything would change, but it didn't'.<sup>17</sup>

Her complicated post-war life reflected these contradictory feelings. She first took up the study of law, dropped it, and much later took it up again and finally went to work in a notary's office. She got into a relationship and later said that when she wanted to marry, she bumped into the nationality issue again. She had her first son. Later she got into a second relationship and had a second son, but he soon died in an accident. At one point, her old illness played up again, and she had to have yet another operation. Finally she got into a third relationship, which remained stable.

But she had never been an easy person, and her wartime experiences had not made things any better. She was sometimes close to her father and sometimes remote again, becoming embroiled with her younger sister for long periods. In later life she gave a number of interviews that shed light on the early life of both her father and herself – as we have already seen.<sup>18</sup>

Baschwitz's youngest daughter had a different character, and different experiences. After Liberation, as a child nurse, she apparently accompanied a group of Jewish children sent to Denmark to restore their health, and apparently stayed there for some time. She later married a psychiatrist teaching at the University of Leiden. She proved helpful in briefing Baschwitz's first biographer Ebels-Dolanová and provided materials to the university library's Baschwitz archives. In later years, she and her sons have provided even more.<sup>19</sup>

### The founding of a 'seventh' faculty in Amsterdam

Even before the war, there had been a broad feeling that academic life should make room for the new social and political sciences. This was particularly true for the professors of the History Department within the Faculty for Literature and Philosophy at the (municipal) University of Amsterdam.

<sup>17</sup> Video itw., at the Jewish Historical Museum, 2 hrs., 20 minutes, a.f.

<sup>18</sup> The son from her first relationship is Bubo Damen, born in 1951, currently a film and theatre director in Amsterdam. Her second relationship was with A.J. Gundelach, who worked in the architectural office of Groenewegen & Mieras, and was close with Baschwitz for some time. Her third relationship was with economist David Teske. She died in 2002, in Amstelveen.

<sup>19</sup> They married in 1955. Her husband was A.E.H.M. Bloklander, who was appointed as a scientific assistant in Leiden in the spring of 1959. They lived in nearby Oegstgeest. She died in 1992, he in 1995. Their sons' names are Erik and Joris.

**Figure 16**

When he was finally to receive a university salary and become a professor, Baschwitz moved into a canal house on the Prinsengracht (second from left, upper half) – close to where his Press Institute was to land. (Snapshot probably taken by himself). Further to the left the Maison Descartes; somewhat further to the right the Nieuwe Spiegelstraat with its antique shops, leading to the Rijksmuseum.

Baschwitz's friends and colleagues Posthumus and Romein, as well as educationalist Philip Kohnstamm, were prominent early advocates there; but they had the broad support of a much larger group. This support particularly came from those who sympathized with the anti-fascist Vigilance Committee, who felt the university should finally step out of its 'ivory tower'. All felt that many national politicians had proven unprofessional and amateurish in the run-up to the war. They also noted that London, Paris, and Berlin had long had advanced schools of political science.<sup>20</sup>

During the war itself, several of these professors were interned together with other prominent compatriots as 'hostages' by the Germans, giving them ample time to further discuss these ideas. Small groups also met in private to develop them, or proponents knew each other from being in the

<sup>20</sup> The origins of the faculty are discussed in greater detail in de Rooy's introductory chapter in Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten; in the second introductory chapter by Knegtmans & Keman in Gevers; and in an introduction by Alex Geelhoed in the brochure published by the 'Werkgroep Andere Tijden'. All were issued on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the PSF, in 1997-98.

resistance together. So as soon as the country and capital had been liberated, they began to push for the implementation of their ideas.

In mid-August 1945, the Military Authority allowed the re-opening of the university. The Academic Senate first met two days later. It demanded that representatives from all six existing faculties consider the possible founding of a seventh faculty. The proposal was finally accepted, in principle, in the spring of 1946. In the spring of 1947, a preparatory commission took up practical preparations, with Posthumus as its chairman, Romein as a key member, along with some ten others. Lecturers Presser (history) and Baschwitz (press) sat on this commission as well.

It was determined that the new faculty would have three sections. Section A would cover 'Political Science' and related subjects. Note that the *English term* was consistently used, rather than its Dutch equivalent *Politieke wetenschap*. American and English examples were explicitly recommended – no continental European ones. Section B would cover Sociology and related subjects. Section C would cover Social Psychology and Social Education. This latter section was (and remained) a bit ill defined, since a separate Psychology department was already under construction elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore there would be separate institutes devoted to the two new major world powers America (U.S.) and Russia (U.S.S.R.), regrouping country and regional expertise. The first later official printed 'guide' for the Political and Social Faculty PSF (p. 2) explicitly added, however, that students should not misinterpret this faculty as a mere 'candy store' where they could sample appealing subjects that really belonged in other faculties. Many subjects were to be covered by reassigning personnel. But at least two new 'ordinary' and two new 'extraordinary' professors should be added to the existing roll. The total extra cost to the university for offering a basic (half-way) 'candidate' degree was initially estimated at 41,000 guilders – a considerable sum during those lean years.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Later incarnations of the C section used the terms like 'Andragology' and 'Andragogics'. To indicate the education of, and help provided to, adults (comparable to *éducation permanente* and social work).

<sup>22</sup> Appendices to the Minutes of the 9th meeting of the Preparatory Commission, 11 February 1946 (PSF archives). The Dutch *doctoraal* exam was more or less equivalent to a current masters degree, although it took at least a year more. In those days, the 'candidate' exam was often more or less half-way. Later, a *propedeuse* exam was introduced, more or less a quarter of the way, to have an earlier selection point.

## How political must ‘Political Science’ be?

From the very start, the plan for the Political Science section (where Baschwitz’s ‘Press Science’ was to be primarily located) proved the most controversial. To many, it was unclear whether it would be based on an objective, down-to-earth, empirical approach to the science of politics, or on a normative, ‘engaged’, idealistic approach. Catholic and protestant, liberal-conservative and right-wing social democrats suspected the latter – in view of the section’s most outspoken advocates. They considered Posthumus a radical socialist and Romein a ‘fellow traveller’ and former communist. (Remember, however, that almost one in three of Amsterdam’s citizens voted communist at the time, partly due to the party’s role in the resistance).<sup>23</sup>

The University of the capital Amsterdam had always been considered a leftist bulwark; the primarily social-democratic municipal aldermen and council had a considerable influence over it at the time, favoured a progressive staff and programs. The country’s oldest university in Leyden was both literally and figuratively closer to the seat of government in The Hague, its traditional elites, and particularly the liberal conservatives, by contrast. Protestants had their own university in the other, so-called ‘Free’ university of Amsterdam; Catholics had their own university in Nijmegen. (To be sure, they would all soon start their own ‘Political Science’ departments, with their own prime preoccupations).

Complications arose over the four possible chair-holders for the new PSF. The procedure, from first proposals to final appointments, was drawn out over several years. It began in 1946, when everybody was still ‘all united’ in post-Liberation euphoria: the Soviet Union had been an ally; the communists had played a major role in the resistance. The atmosphere shifted between mid-1947 and mid-1948, however, as the Cold War took off, the communist coup took place in Czechoslovakia, and the Dutch ‘police actions’ in Indonesia escalated, splitting the mainstream parties. By 1949,

<sup>23</sup> In the spring of 1992, there was a retrospective exhibition on ‘The little Cold War’ and the founding of the PSF, at the *Agnietenkapel* university museum. The second Mrs. Baschwitz provided some of the materials. In 1998, upon the 50th anniversary of the faculty, there was a retrospective ‘golden jubilee’ conference, accompanied by two edited books (Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten; Gevers). The press also gave attention to the event. A typical article based on interviews with former students: Eveline Brandt, ‘The Red Myth’, *De Groene Amsterdamer*, 7 January 1998.

then, the atmosphere had completely changed. The slightest hint of a ‘pink past’ now triggered suspicion of ‘covert infiltration’ or a ‘hidden agenda’.<sup>24</sup>

It is true that the first candidates for the four new chairs were all long-time associates of both Posthumus and Romein. Three had just come out of hiding as Jews, and three could also well be seen as radical leftists if not ‘fellow travellers’. First in line for the political science chair proper was Romein’s old comrade Jef Suys. He was soon attacked by Jan Barents, a former member of the protestant Christian Historical Union who had gone over to the social-democratic party, and had then been made the head of its ‘scientific bureau’ think tank.<sup>25</sup>

The PSF procedure was then criticized: it was said that the proposal should have mentioned two candidates for each chair rather than one. So it was started all over again, but in the end a third candidate was appointed: Suys was replaced by his most vocal critic, Barents. According to some, Barents proved reasonably competent. Others, however, point out that at the height of the Cold War, he reportedly sent a private letter to the prime minister, suggesting the *preventive deportation* of a potential ‘fifth column’ of 500-1,000 leading communists.<sup>26</sup>

This ‘parachuting’ of the right-wing social democrat Barents into the faculty caused some thirty leftist students to ostentatiously leave his first lecture. Posthumus and Romein, in turn, were outraged about the course of affairs and ultimately retired from the entire PSF effort in disgust.<sup>27</sup> The candidate for the economy chair, Salomon Kleerekoper, and for the history chair, Presser, were also widely attacked as radical leftists, ‘fellow travellers’, hidden Marxists, and crypto-Communists.

## Delay through the Red Scare

Curiously enough, Baschwitz was considered the only more-or-less non-controversial and unanimous candidate for the section. He kept a low

<sup>24</sup> The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and senator Joseph McCarthy were driving forces in the U.S. at the time, and the mood soon spread to Western Europe and elsewhere.

<sup>25</sup> See the chapters on Barents, Baschwitz, and Presser, in Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten. This edited volume has chapters about all 13 of the first batch of professors in the new faculty, and the initial quarrels.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, 22 May 1951. (General state archives, Willem Drees/Correspondence). Unearthed by Alex Geelhoed. Quoted in Werkgroep Andere Tijden, p. 27, n. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten p. 4, 7.

political profile, and tried to get along with all of the other candidates. Apparently, he once again submitted a slightly embellished C.V. since he was increasingly insecure about the eternal delays.

No one seemed to be aware of his overly patriotic (post-) WWI articles in German, or of his somewhat problematic book *Der Massenwahn* – either its first editions (in Gothic script, so somewhat harder to read for foreigners), or its last and revised edition (in modern script, but hardly distributed or even noticed abroad at the time).<sup>28</sup>

Even more surprising was that some suspected Baschwitz of also somehow being a hidden leftist or a leftist tool. Before WWI, in Germany, he had been a progressive liberal. During the thirties, in The Netherlands, he had been close to several representatives of the similar *Vrijzinnig Democratische Bond*, which had merged with the social democratic party after the war. But now there was suddenly more.

In a private letter to a close colleague about the new faculty, the social-democrat right-winger Wim Thomassen branded all candidates as Crypto-communists – except for Baschwitz. But Thomassen took great care to note that Baschwitz's first secretary Lie Heynen seemed to be a mole within the new faculty, as she occupied 'a dangerously advanced communist position, trying to penetrate everywhere'. She was the editor of an anti-Franco information bulletin about Spain, was married to the noteworthy communist artist Peter Alma, and later became a peace activist.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The C.V. was paraphrased in the official letter on the proposed nominations, which the Amsterdam mayor and aldermen sent to the Minister of Education and Sciences, dated 19 November 1947. (Ministry Archives, Box 30, file 51.141, unearthed by Alex Geelhoed). It said that his Ph. D. doctoral dissertation had received a 'magna cum laude' and repeated that he had worked for the well-considered *Frankfurter Zeitung* (which had had many Jews on its staff). It also said that he had actually been asked for the press chair in Heidelberg in 1932. None of these claims have been documented by other sources so far. Baschwitz also added that as the *H.F.* correspondent he had 'collaborated' with the (well-considered) Dutch *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* during the First World War, and emphasized that he had only worked for the *D.A.Z.* during the (liberal-conservative) 'Stresemann era' of the Weimar Republic. His publications did not mention his problematic *Der Massenwahn*. It also said that an English translation of *Du und die Masse* had already appeared (it had not, and never would) and announced two books 'in preparation' that were never completed.

<sup>29</sup> More in the article on Heynen in the *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* BWSA. For the accusations against her, see Wim Thomassen's letter to Nico Donkersloot, dated 29 October 1947. Both had been university professors of Dutch language and literature, and were social-democratic colleagues in parliament at this point. (Thomassen went on to become mayor of ever-larger cities, ultimately Rotterdam. Donkersloot later left, and joined the small 'third way' leftist Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP)). Donkersloot archive at the Netherlands Literary Museum, file D 6441, B2. Unearthed by Alex Geelhoed.

In the end, three of the four proposed appointments were made temporary and lower-level, for the time being. Only Baschwitz was approved right away, while feverish checks of the other three candidates' deeper backgrounds were carried out by a wide range of investigators: from Jesuit priests to the intelligence agencies.<sup>30</sup>

The whole affair appeared to be unique in the annals of post-war Dutch education, science, and politics. This is the first time the political executive and elected representatives (both nationally and municipally) held up academic appointments for such ideological reasons. The social democratic party was profoundly divided over doing so, and the university senate and PSF preparation commission called the interventions a *détournement de pouvoir* or abuse of power.

In the end, the long standoff was finally resolved in early 1949, after new elections and a new cabinet replaced the conservative Catholic minister of education with a more liberal Catholic minister.<sup>31</sup> But the birth pains of the new political and social sciences faculty long left their mark.

A number of young people had been in the resistance during the war, or were called up for the 'police actions' in Indonesia thereafter. Thus, many were unable to complete their secondary schooling, but were admitted to the university anyway – with certain conditions. Because of the earlier controversies, however, several professors now felt obliged to overburden their students, and to be overly strict in tests and exams.

The number of PSF students doubled during the first ten years, from nearly 300 to nearly 600: half of those studying in the A section of the new faculty. But these were also years of re-found freedom. Youngsters were not entirely focused on their formal obligations. According to some reports, only 9 percent of the very first generation got their masters degree in Political Science, taking an average of nine (!) rather than the foreseen five years.<sup>32</sup>

After the republication of his pre-war book *Du und die Masse* in both German and Dutch, the authorities finally recognized Baschwitz as the anti-communist that he had always been. At the height of the Cold War, around the mid-1950s, the chief of the Binnenlandse Veiligheids Dienst BVD (internal security service) asked him to give a lecture on riots and

<sup>30</sup> A commemorative article by Arjen Fortuin in the university weekly *Folia* (3 September 1999) claimed that Baschwitz had fired its whole initial editorial staff after only nine issues, for 'communist propaganda'.

<sup>31</sup> This was Theo Rutten, later the main psychology professor during my own first two years in Nijmegen. More about him in a profile by Ruud Abma in Busato.

<sup>32</sup> Daalder. More in Goudsblom, de Rooy and Wieten, p. 6.

revolutions, linking the subject to events in Russia, China, and their vassal states. The ‘recreational society’ of the Interior Ministry served as a cover. When as many as two hundred people announced their attendance, however, the meeting had to be hastily moved from the Ministry to the larger Parliament buildings at the *Binnenhof*.<sup>33</sup>

### **Baschwitz, Presser, and War documentation**

The denominational press had widely participated in the McCarthyist witch-hunt of the other PSF candidates: ‘The Roman catholic weekly *De Nieuwe Eeuw* [The New Century] thought it best the three appointed professors would move to Eastern Europe right away. [Protestant daily] *Trouw* wrote: “The communists remain set on the student youths of Amsterdam’s seventh faculty. Under the breakthrough motto: Rather Russian than Popish!” Note that *none* of the three candidates were actually communist party fans at this point in time, nor were any of them uncritically pro-Russian.<sup>34</sup>

Presser’s biographer added: ‘All this weighed heavily on Jacques. In spite of the support of the student protests [...] There even was a “Committee 23 February 1948” to defend the professors. He felt hurt [...] His sensitivity was heightened, because it was during these same days that he finally learned, that [his beloved young wife] Dé had perished in Sobibor – she had been sent to the gas chamber upon arrival. Kurt Baschwitz and his eldest daughter Isa felt dearly for him.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Presser was invited to write the official history of the persecution of the Dutch Jews. The Institute for War Documentation had been founded immediately on Liberation Day, to collect information and testimonies about the occupation years – like those already quoted from Anne Frank. Today, the Institute has 16 million pages, with all kinds of war-time documents and files ordered in 18,000 boxes, covering 2.35 kilometres of shelves.

The new Institute was headed by Dr. Loe de Jong, who had worked for the information and radio services of the Dutch government in London. I have already mentioned that de Jong’s twin brother and the latter’s wife had been caught during an escape attempt and never returned. De Jong then developed

33 The chief was L. Einthoven. The event took place on 17 October 1955. The four pages of Baschwitz’s notes, with thirteen related questions to be treated, marked ‘Den Haag’, are in file 159.

34 More in the master’s thesis *Ga dan zelf naar Siberië* written jointly by Max van Weezel and Annet Bleich (both earlier political science students, later noteworthy journalists), published by SUA in Amsterdam in 1978.

35 van der Zee, p. 210-11.

into *the authority* on the war and related issues throughout the 1950s and 1960s. He published an encyclopaedic book series, in 14 parts and 29 volumes, and created a long series of television documentaries with 21 instalments.

The persecution of the Jews, which both Baschwitz and Presser had experienced first-hand, had been particularly horrifying. Estimates are that some 20,000-30,000 had gone into hiding, but that only half of those survived. Some 107,000 had been deported, of whom only 5,000 had returned. The returnees were often emotionally crippled, spoke little about their experiences, and were given little room to relate their stories. *Everyone* had supposedly suffered, so strangely the Holocaust did not stand out so very much yet.

There were also feelings of guilt. Why had so many been deported from The Netherlands (75 percent), as opposed to Belgium (40 percent) or France (25 percent)? Was it the population density and urbanization, the well-organized nature of the civic registers, the relative perfection of the original I.D. papers, even before the war? Or was it the fact that so many Dutch officials had obediently carried out orders and so many citizens had looked away? In time, these became controversial issues.<sup>36</sup>

Presser received his assignment for this study on the persecution of the Jews in January 1950, on top of his other work, but was still initially expected to complete it by 1952. He began to collect testimonies and documents, but could not get beyond the very first paragraph and page of the book. He kept thinking about his adored young wife, who had simply been deported and gassed. It was only after he had published a partly fictional small account about the Westerbork transit camp that his writer's block lifted.

From then on, he set himself the task of writing at least one page a day. Kurt and Isa Baschwitz were both alluded to in this book, but not mentioned by name.<sup>37</sup> Kurt's archives have a copy, with a personal dedication 'with affection' inscribed by the author, to Isa and her then-husband. The monumental two-volume book only came out in the mid-1960s; a one-volume, abbreviated translation into English in 1968. It was praised as well as criticized for its sometimes highly emotional tone.

Starting with its famously resounding first paragraph.

This is the story of murder – of murder on a scale never known before, with malice aforethought and in cold blood. The murderers were Germans, their victims Jews – in the Netherlands they mounted up to a hundred

36 According to a recent comparative study by Pim Griffioen & Ron Zeller, quoted in Vastenhout, p. 6, n. 3.

37 p. 378 in the English edition.

thousand, less than 2 percent of the total of those killed by the Nazis in the course of their final solution of the Jewish problem [...] Many of the murderers were mere thugs and illiterates, but others were educated men with an undeniable love of literature, art and music; many were good family men, not without sensibility; most of them celebrated Christmas.<sup>38</sup>

Only after closely reading the book did the full scale and depth of the horror finally sink in completely for the general public. The giant killing machine that had held the whole of Europe in its grip twenty years earlier. It was only after reading it that Baschwitz was further confronted with the fact that he had indeed only very narrowly escaped certain death at that time.

### At last: Professor of press studies

Amsterdam was the largest city in the country and also the formal capital, although The Hague was the seat of government and of parliament. Cosmopolitan Amsterdam was also the cultural and the press capital. Most major newspapers had their national headquarters along its own 'Fleet Street': the former canal of the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, right behind the Royal Palace – with the central Dam square on the other side.

Even before the war, private press lecturers Lievegoed (Leiden) and Baschwitz (Amsterdam) had begun to lobby the major newspapers, the organization of newspaper publishers, and the association of journalists to support a common initiative for an institute and/or house of press studies. Now, at last, this dream slowly began to turn into a reality.

When Baschwitz was finally able to hold his inaugural lecture as professor in 1948, on 'The intelligence of the newspaper-reading public', he once again defended ordinary citizens against disparaging views. This was the central theme of his entire life's work. The broadening of literacy and universal suffrage also helped lead to more informed choices, he said.<sup>39</sup>

He conceded that the sensationalist tabloids had become much bigger than the serious broadsheet papers, for instance in Great Britain, but added that the latter had nevertheless *expanded* their circulation in comparison to earlier times. Education and book production had also progressed. He mentioned that the media now extended to radio and movies. With mass

38 Presser, *Ashes*, opening page.

39 Files 111-112 show he collected facts and figures on these scores.

communication and audience research taking off in the United States, there was now a more nuanced and differentiated view of the public.

A major figure of the Dutch press was later to recall Baschwitz's steadfast defence of media audiences, too often dismissed as uneducated, uninterested, and purely entertainment-oriented.<sup>40</sup> At the end of his lecture, Baschwitz thanked the many colleagues who had been important to him. Including his Jewish colleagues Cohen and Van den Bergh, who had helped him as an exile in the 1930s, and Presser, who had been a close friend. He also included Bonger, who had committed suicide upon the invasion, and Frijda, who had been deported and killed. The war still loomed large.<sup>41</sup>

Ten months later, the Mayor and a hundred distinguished guests came to open his ambitious 'House of the Press' in a spacious three-century-old building at Keizersgracht number 604: halfway along the fancy second canal of the three or four that formed the iconic semi-circle around the centre of town. The location was also halfway between the aforementioned 'Fleet Street' of Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal and Baschwitz's new home on the Prinsengracht. The 'House of the Press' succeeded *Vrij Nederland* in that building: the underground paper had turned into a post-war weekly.

### The founding of a cluster of press-related institutions

The Press House hosted a whole cluster of press-related institutions with both public and private funding, brought together under one umbrella by Baschwitz's quiet diplomacy. The first and foremost of these was the new Institute for Press Studies. Baschwitz boasted that it attracted no less than an estimated 250 outside visitors every week. One-third of its outside financing came from the Municipality of Amsterdam, egged on by the head of its new press and promotion department, Piet Mijksenaar, who wanted to emphasize the role of the city as the prime press centre of The Netherlands.

The other two-thirds of the financing came from the organization of newspaper publishers. Another outside supporter was the Federation of Dutch Journalists (associations), through its chairman Maarten Rooij – the pre- and post-war editor-in-chief of the quality Rotterdam liberal

<sup>40</sup> Henk Jan Schoo, who had studied education in the U.S. He first became a key figure in the founding of parenting and psychology magazines. Then he worked for a major press publisher (*Weekbladpers*), a monthly (*Intermagazine*), a weekly (*Elsevier*), and a daily (*de Volkskrant*). See his column of 15 November 2003, reprinted in Schoo.

<sup>41</sup> Also see Ebels-Dolanová, p. 151.

daily *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (and later the immediate successor of Baschwitz as professor of press studies).

Rooij had also inaugurated a second institution, a central national Press Library, a little earlier. We have already seen that immediately after the war, Baschwitz had sought to re-establish relations with Anton Lievegoed, his pre-war colleague as private lecturer on the press in Leiden, and thereafter the head of the Government Press Service. However, he had died in mid-1946. His widow donated his private library about press studies to Baschwitz's new cluster. The library initially had only 700 volumes, but within 15 years it had expanded to some 10,000 volumes on all of the new, interrelated fields.<sup>42</sup>

The House also came to host the Press Museum, which had earlier been located in the nearby antique *Korenetershuisje* (Corn Measuring House) – also on the aforementioned Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal. The museum had emerged from the private collections of newspapermen before the war and covered some 10,000 newspaper files at the time, including precious copies of the very earliest publications from the 17th century.

Baschwitz now acceded to its board, and helped it obtain further subsidies and support. Today, its collection and catalogue has been merged with that of the International Institute of Social History, which had employed Baschwitz before the war as a newspaper expert.

One student from the earliest days was Hans Daalder. In his memoirs, he wrote that Baschwitz 'lectured in a very human way, but not very systematically. Only later did people become aware of the important insights he had offered'.

He reported how Baschwitz had quickly interrupted his own first student presentation, after he had begun by explaining what he would unfortunately *not* be able to discuss – rather than what he would. 'In the German-accented Dutch that characterized him, he said: "Herr Dalder, Schtopp! Don't excuse yourself! That only demoralises [demotivates] the audience"'.

Baschwitz later invited him to his home for the oral exam, sitting him in a chair while warning that it was not very solid. Indeed, the armrest soon fell off. The probably slightly embarrassed Baschwitz concluded with: 'Well, you know everything, I will give you the mark'.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Hemels adds that the national press library was a collaborative project with Nijmegen (*De Journalistieke Eierdans*, p. 135-136); also see Anschlag, p. 75-76.

<sup>43</sup> Daalder, p. 20-21, 35. Daalder did a master's thesis with Baschwitz about newspaper coverage of the Korean conflict.

Daalder recommended the study to Johan Goudsblom, later a professor of sociology in Amsterdam. His recent memoirs report a mass psychology exam with ‘the amiable émigré’ Baschwitz around the mid-1950s. It did not go very well; he passed with a meagre six minus (out of ten). However, Baschwitz’s assistant Brouwer revealed the reason to Baschwitz: Goudsblom’s mother had just had a serious operation (she died a few days later). A while later, Goudsblom was offered another chance, and passed with an eight or nine. ‘And the good Baschwitz seemed even more delighted [with that] than myself’.<sup>44</sup>

The provisional first staff of the institute consisted of a very small group. Since sugar products were no longer rationed, Baschwitz used every pretext to bring or order cakes, pastries, and other sweets as a kind of belated revenge for the earlier lean times. The library itself was managed by Dick H. Couvée, who wore a dustcoat because of all the old newspapers in the attic. His wife Lili Jampoller ran the secretariat. Daalder himself became one of the first two student assistants. But he soon moved on to assist Barents at the political science chair instead (and later became a professor in that field himself, at Leiden University).

Baschwitz’s earliest scientific assistant at the Press Institute was Ms. Jacoba de Boer. She had just completed a Ph.D. thesis/ Doctoral dissertation about ‘The place of the broadcasting organization(s) in public life in The Netherlands until 1940’, which had been accepted the year after Liberation, in 1946. The formal supervisor was Baschwitz’s faculty ‘mentor’ Posthumus, who may have acted as a proxy for him. In it, she thanks Baschwitz for his special ‘interest’: strangely between somewhat mysterious and suggestive quotation marks. The commercial book edition was then defined as a ‘first volume’; it announced a second volume sequel that never came about. She stayed at the Press Institute for a limited number of years, and in the end migrated all the way to the (then still rather primitive) French Mediterranean island of Corsica. She told other staff members she had at one time had a romance or fling with Baschwitz.<sup>45</sup>

44 Goudsblom, *Geleerd*, p. 226-227.

45 Decades later, during the 1970s, staff member Ben Manschot also prepared a Ph.D. thesis/ Doctoral dissertation on the uniquely pluralist Dutch broadcasting system (based on audience associations). He went looking for the missing second volume, the materials possibly already collected for it, and the author herself. During a trip to the French island with his friends and colleagues Ms. Conny van der Maesen and Ms. Adje Kaiser, he then checked with the authorities about the whereabouts of a Dutch citizen named Jacoba de Boer. His pronunciation of the dual middle sound did not immediately ring a bell, but then they reportedly exclaimed: ‘Ah, Djacobaa

## Saturday courses for practicing journalists

After a tentative first academic year, less improvised coursework for both practising journalists and university students finally started in earnest in September 1948. The next year, scouts travelled to journalism schools in Great Britain and the United States, and reported about their curricula. It would take almost two further decades, however, before The Netherlands could provide a real full-time education to aspiring journalists: first a curriculum of several years in Utrecht and other professional schools, and then one-year post-graduate university programs in Rotterdam and Groningen.<sup>46</sup>

By contrast, Baschwitz's early journalism courses were only part-time, given during a single five-hour stretch on Saturday afternoons to suit the schedule of those who worked the rest of the week and/or came from elsewhere. The numbers of participants proved far larger than expected. He proudly pointed out that 'no less than fifteen editors and reporters came from Amsterdam, but three times as many from elsewhere – alone or in small groups. During those days, the canal displayed cars with number plates from all parts of the country – Rotterdam, Arnhem, Leeuwarden'. Further, the 60 participants were varied and represented all (ideological) currents, he added proudly.<sup>47</sup>

At some point, Baschwitz and his colleagues even contributed to attempts to develop similar initiatives elsewhere, such as in the Northern university city of Groningen. But he emphasized time and again that journalism could *not* be learned in the school benches, but only in the workplace. The profession had seen a rapid influx of new collaborators during these years: both the young and the not-so-young.

de Boweer' and pointed them to an address somewhere on the Southern coast. It turned out she was now making jewelry. At first she refused to receive them, but then relented and said the materials collected for the second volume had long remained stored, but had by then been thrown away.

She proved initially reticent to say much more about the reasons for her ultimate departure from Amsterdam, but in the end revealed the romance or fling. Later staff member Jo Bardoel heard the story at the time, but shared it with me only very much later – when I met him by pure coincidence and told him I was about to complete this biography. Unfortunately, both Dr. Manschot and Dr. van der Maesen had meanwhile died, whereas Dr. Kaiser was in a revalidation centre and hard to reach for me (from France). But Prof. Bardoel was kind enough to go check with her, whether our understanding of the original story had been correct. She confirmed it was. (E-mail correspondence with the author, late June/ early July 2017)

<sup>46</sup> Baschwitz's archives have copies of such 'scouting' reports by R.F. de Fremery (in files 42-44). Hemels has provided complete histories of the takeoff of the later initiatives, from 1966 onwards (see *De journalistieke eierdans*; 'Kommunikationswissenschaft', etc.).

<sup>47</sup> Opening lecture, Press institute, p. 6. Different versions in the Baschwitz archives.

**Figure 17 Baschwitz behind piles of old newspapers, in the attic of the Press Museum**



Many came from the former underground press, or from its post-war incarnations. Many had therefore not had a chance to acquire the relevant diplomas. The course provided them with basic knowledge: about the press itself, and about related fields in social and political science. Colleagues like the historian Presser contributed as well, as did experienced journalists like Henri Knap. The typewritten notes of some diligent students from those days have been conserved.<sup>48</sup>

Most students were happy with the courses, and went on to become serious journalists. But there were a few exceptions. One reminisced:

I got a terrible damper at the Institute of Press Science in Amsterdam. It had professor Baskowitz [sic] and Henri Knap of *Het Parool*, who could review a piece [...] A class of some hundred people was listening, and

48 File 23 has a typescript produced by A.L. de Muynck for 1947-1948.

those two said: 'There is a guy who dared write about some movie missy.  
[...] That seems to be unfit for a decent newspaper!'<sup>49</sup>

I stood up and said: 'I am Henk van der Meijden, and Audrey Hepburn is the most successful Dutch actress in the whole world. You may think it is unfit for a newspaper, but I will continue!' Then I walked out.

He did indeed go on to build a huge career on showbiz, with a full daily gossip page in the largest daily *De Telegraaf*, his own weekly celebrity magazine, a club, and finally an entire theatrical production company of his own.<sup>50</sup>

### **University students of political and press science**

Baschwitz's courses for the students of the new political and social sciences faculty of the university took place during the rest of the week; on Wednesday evenings, there were also lectures open to public. Baschwitz invited noteworthy practitioners, such as Robert Peereboom who had just published an introductory book, *The Daily*. Peereboom had succeeded his father as the director and chief editor of the *Haarlems Dagblad*, which claimed to be the descendant of one of the oldest newspapers in the entire world.

'Press, propaganda and public opinion' was an optional subject for the 'candidate' degree (halfway to graduate) in the entire faculty, and was also taught by Baschwitz in various separate parts. The first trimester had weekly courses on both the former and the latter elements. The literature lists provided in the first printed PSF 'study guide' (1949–50), and in Baschwitz's 'annual reports', provide an idea of the orientation of the faculty in those days.<sup>51</sup>

The obligatory readings in Dutch covered the newspaper, its history, and radio (by Baschwitz, Schneider, and Jacoba De Boer, respectively). Recommended reading in English involved then-current standard literature from the U.S. and the U.K. From the second trimester onwards, there was a weekly two-hour 'colloquium'. For the final '*doctoraal*' (masters) exam,

49 The name slip may be partly Freudian, identifying him as 'some kind of arch German'. Blaskowitz was the name of the general who had finally signed the German capitulation in The Netherlands, on 6 May 1945 in Wageningen, after demanding a day's delay 'to think about it' (Van Liempt, *De oorlog*, p. 311).

50 Interview in the 'PS' weekend supplement of *Het Parool*, 29 August 2015, p. 14. (Audrey Hepburn made her successful film debut with the 1953 movie *Roman Holiday*. She had been born in Belgium, daughter of a Dutch baroness and a British banker).

51 Anschlag (p. 77) has an overview of Baschwitz' courses, 1948–1957.

'press institutions' was an obligatory subject. Its literature included the post-war reports of both the American and British press commissions.<sup>52</sup>

An early poll about their professional aspirations established that many of the students in the A section wanted to become journalists, rather than politicians or civil servants.<sup>53</sup> One PSF student was Rob Wout: later a famous political cartoonist under the pseudonym Opland for the daily *de Volkskrant* and the weekly *De Groene*. Wout used a very thick black pen, and a characteristically simple and naïve style, to skewer The Hague politicians.

For the fifth anniversary of the PSF, Baschwitz reportedly arranged an invited lecture about 'the psychology of the audience' by Wim Kan. Kan later evolved into the main stand-up comedian of those days, performing in major theatres, and was later famous for his annual radio conferences about current affairs on New Year's Eve – which also ridiculed many an almighty politician in The Hague.

However, some students of political science (and of press studies) did indeed go on to become leading politicians. Two of them, on opposite sides of the political spectrum, became members of both the second and first chamber of parliament, later floor leaders, and ultimately influential ministers.

One was Ed van Thijn (b. 1934), who had been in hiding as a Jewish child during the war and narrowly survived the Westerbork transit camp at the end. He was to become part of the Labour party during its leftist days, later also the Mayor of Amsterdam, and was the keynote speaker during a later Baschwitz commemoration.<sup>54</sup>

The other was Hans Wiegel (b. 1941), who did not complete his degree. Instead, he built the youth league of the liberal-conservative party and helped to make it a major factor on the right. He then became the youngest MP, later a key government figure, and ultimately the Royal Commissioner for the province of Friesland in the north. Both Van Tijn and Wiegel later fondly remembered their early PSF days.

In his inaugural lecture for the Press Institute, Baschwitz had shown a gift of foresight, saying: 'If one of our students would even rise to minister, this

<sup>52</sup> PSF Study guide & Stencilled/mimeographed annual report. Stadsarchief, Archief 281, Inv. Nr. 128, L 17/5.

<sup>53</sup> One poll about the students' professional aspirations was taken by Baschwitz's first assistant Hans Schravendijk. The raw data are still available in files 40 and 41 of the archives.

<sup>54</sup> Ed van Thijn, 'Amsterdam Communicatiestad', first 'Baschwitz lecture'. 1987 Meeting at the Stadsschouwburg (Municipal theatre), 40 years after B. officially began. Typescript in the Archief 30004, Archief van de Secretarie, Afd. Kabinet van de Burgemeester, Speeches – Inv. Nr. 290-293. Unearthed by Han Quast.

[university preparation] would spare the chief of the information service at his department many irritations and many vain efforts'. And it did.<sup>55</sup>

### Advanced students and later staff

Baschwitz's later students and assistants quickly familiarized themselves with the new empirical-quantitative methods of investigation that had further developed in the U.S. around the war-years. These included readability tests, content analyses of newspaper coverage on topical issues, and statistical techniques in general. The surviving attendance lists for Baschwitz's colloquia include many familiar names, of people who later became noteworthy journalists or academics.<sup>56</sup>

I already mentioned that 'press studies' was a minor, and could not be done as a major (for the final graduate or masters exam). The first student who managed to become an exception was Marten Brouwer. He had begun in the Political Science A section, had then switched to the Social Psychology C section, but had finally approached the supervisory commission for special permission to do a 'free program' built around Baschwitz's press studies.<sup>57</sup>

Baschwitz was soon able to hire another 'scientific assistant'. This was Hans van Schravendijk, who also came from the Social Psychology C section and had undertaken the first student polling. He but was soon lured away, however, by one of the first Dutch polling agencies: Gallup-affiliate Nipo. He was then succeeded by the aforementioned Marten Brouwer (1929-2001). The latter was later to assure the succession for one half of Baschwitz's dual task within the 7th or PSF faculty, in a separate 'mass psychology' chair (more below).

<sup>55</sup> Typescript, p. 3. (Note that there are several versions).

<sup>56</sup> Journalists: John Jansen van Galen, who went to work at the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, and then at a wide range of other outlets. Rita Beeuwkes, later Kohnstamm, who became a noted developmental psychologist, and also the main force behind The Netherlands' major parenting and psychology magazines (*Ouders van nu; Psychologie Magazine*). Academics: apart from his assistants and students discussed here, Rob Kroes, who became a professor of American Studies in Amsterdam, and Rob Mokken, who became a professor of political science. As well as Sybren Piersma, who became a major university administrator.

<sup>57</sup> File 8 has the first job application notes he sent immediately after a personal visit, just before his graduate exam in mid-1950. He was the son of an author and professor of the Frisian regional language at Groningen University, and had himself briefly been on the Amsterdam editorial staff of *Je Maintiendrai/De Stem van Nederland* after the war. It soon folded into the other and larger former illegal paper *Vrij Nederland*. He was called up for military service, but soon rejected. This permitted him to return to Baschwitz after Van Schravendijk had left. (Brouwer in Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wieten, p. 25-36).

Another early assistant was Hans Daudt (1925-2008), who went on to succeed Barents as the main professor of Political Science within the PSF. He remembered that in everyday interactions, Baschwitz ‘made a great impression on his collaborators of those years for his sober and wise judgment. His example taught them a critical attitude toward the delusions of the moment [“waan van de dag”]. He stimulated them to do empirical research to check – if things were really as everyone thought they were’.<sup>58</sup>

Baschwitz, Brouwer and Daudt were close at the time. Isa Baschwitz’s son Bubo told me that at the end of the day he often played pool with the assistants in a café on the nearby Rokin avenue. Brouwer quoted Daudt as joking about press science: ‘This is the only academic institute where one is at work, when one just reads the newspaper in the morning’.<sup>59</sup> Brouwer and Daudt both eagerly studied and adopted the vocabulary and new quantitative empirical techniques of social research in the United States.

### Media effects and audiences: UFOs and charity campaigns

As a professor of mass psychology, Baschwitz was regularly approached by both Dutch and foreign media to comment on media hypes and scares – or even hoaxes. One example was an ‘encounter of the third kind’, which a film projectionist had reported to the West German police. He said that he had suddenly noticed a bluish light in the sky, in the middle of the night. An ‘unidentified flying object’ (UFO) or ‘flying saucer’ had hovered above the ground for six minutes before landing, he claimed. He had allegedly seen, from only sixty meters away, that four dwarf-like extra-terrestrials (or aliens) had clambered out.<sup>60</sup>

Such sensationalist reports changed dimensions in the audio-visual age, with instant reporting and the further spread of the electronic media – first of radio, then of television. ‘Press science’ thus expanded to include broadcasting and movies as new forms of mass communication. Just before the war, ‘private lecturer’ Baschwitz had apparently already followed the discussions about possible ‘radio research’ between representatives of the different broadcasting organizations, then sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior and others.

58 Obituary, *Het Parool*, 9 January 1968 (File 2).

59 From Brouwer in Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Weiten, p. 31.

60 ‘Fliegende Untertassen’, *Westfälische Nachrichten*, 12 October 1954. Half-page article with comments by Baschwitz, about the reports from Rinkerode/Abersloh.

After the war, charity events accompanied by huge broadcast campaigns provided highly appropriate subjects for his studies of both mass communication and mass psychology. Baschwitz apparently wrote a small report about the 1951 'Haak in' (Link up) mass campaign by the protestant NCRV radio association, which was meant to benefit the newly founded 'Queen Wilhelmina Fund' for cancer research. Some 50,000 people visited on the last day of the event alone, and the campaign raised 2.5 million guilders – a huge sum for those days.<sup>61</sup>

Then television came along. Before the war, the Philips electrical company in Eindhoven had already experimented with the new medium. But when national broadcasts finally started in 1951, there were only 3,000 receivers throughout the country. After news broadcasts started (on alternate days!) in 1956, there were only an estimated 30,000. But when the first '*actualiteiten-rubrieken*' or news background programs followed around 1960, the threshold of a million receivers had already been crossed.

Baschwitz's staff and students increasingly delved into these new forms of media and their audiences. His assistant Brouwer prepared an early report on the social effects of television advertising; his students Johan Goudsblom and Rob Mokken looked into the published qualitative and quantitative research on the question from the U.S. (Mokken had a talent for numbers and became involved in the math centre, then the Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as becoming a professor of research methodology in political science).

Brouwer's later team did an elaborate study about the 1962 'Open het Dorp' (Open the Village) campaign by the liberal AVRO broadcasting association. This campaign meant to build a special village near the city of Arnhem that would accommodate handicapped people. Some 400 national artists participated in the unprecedented 24-hour telethon broadcast, which raised more than 12 million guilders. Social and mass psychology obviously played a role in all such cases.

## Links to social and mass psychology

From the very first post-war plans for a PSF faculty onwards, there were differences of opinion concerning the C section, which was supposed to be devoted to social psychology and social education. At that point it had still

<sup>61</sup> *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 25 & 26 May; the medical journal *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde NTvG*, 9 June 1951. Twelve page typescript report in German, Baschwitz archives, File 130.

**Figure 18**

Baschwitz working behind his desk in later life, when he had finally become full professor, head of a cluster of press-related institutes, and a key figure in the newly emerging European networks of communication studies.

been unclear how ‘social psychology’ ought to be defined and delineated; the newer Anglo-American literature was only just arriving and beginning to sink in, so the pre-war continental approach still prevailed initially. The same held for ‘mass psychology’, as a subsumed or separate subject.<sup>62</sup>

During the pre-war years, the newly emerging fields of press studies and psychology had provisionally been placed under the large umbrella of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy in Amsterdam. But after the war, they evolved into separate departments that were organizationally far apart. Yet they were also both meant to contribute to the PSF C section.

Psychology pioneer Géza Révész had come from Hungary (where he had been the Ph.D. dissertation supervisor of the aforementioned Karl Mannheim’s wife). Through the heritage of the partially Germanophone Austrian-Hungarian dual monarchy, Révész was very much oriented towards German experimental psychology. He maintained that social

62 One interesting broad overview of mass psychology was provided in a post-war book by Paul Reiwald, who had fled from Germany to Switzerland. It was translated into Dutch in 1952. For the history of social psychology in general, see Sahakian.

psychology should be taught by a proper psychologist (i.e., not by an economist like Baschwitz), and seen as an intermediary domain between individual psychology and sociology.

Baschwitz, by contrast, claimed that his pre-war book *Du und die Masse*, which was soon to be republished with only minor changes, covered both social and mass psychology. He said its 'historical starting points' lay in 'the study of mass crime' (i.e. the aforementioned Italo-French or 'Roman' school of the 1890s). This study of mass crime had led to 'suggestion as the key problem', he said.

Its further subjects were, according to him: 'rebellion, revolt, mass persuasion, propaganda, newspapers, radio and movies, origins of the power of the state, the leader, the union, the political party, public opinion, [and] advertising' in all their forms. Its method was primarily historical, he said. It 'employed psychology and sociology' but differed fundamentally from experimental psychology (i.e., the domain of Révész).<sup>63</sup>

But meanwhile Révész had been succeeded by his pupil Hubert Duijker, who veered toward the very latest in American and experimental approaches. He then also became the prime social psychology lecturer in the PSF C section (alongside a 'group psychologist'). He assigned literature by such luminaries as Kurt Lewin, Gardner Murphy and Theodore Newcomb, and Muzafer Sherif.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile, Baschwitz's press chair and teaching commitment were first extended to include 'propaganda and public opinion' and then 'mass psychology' as well.<sup>65</sup> The latter three elements later got a separate chair and institute, under Baschwitz's former assistant Marten Brouwer, who had meanwhile done a Ph.D. dissertation on stereotypes.<sup>66</sup> Brouwer also briefly went to the U.S., and proposed a 'mycelium model': a metaphor for interconnected audience reactions and the resulting media effects.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of the Preparatory commission, 10 and 17 December 1945.

<sup>64</sup> See the chapter about him in Busato.

<sup>65</sup> Anschlag (p. 77) made an overview schedule of the different regular courses that Baschwitz gave from 1948-1957, on the basis of the successive University Yearbooks.

<sup>66</sup> Duijker and Brouwer became my own M.A. supervisors in later years. I myself came to Amsterdam in 1965-1966, after completing a half-way 'candidates' degree in Nijmegen. I did my graduate in social psychology with Duijker (although he called it 'behavioural psychology' at the time). But for me a large part was in fact mass psychology, public opinion, and propaganda, which I studied with Brouwer, with press science as a further optional subject, then given by Rooij.

## The post-war emergence of public opinion research

Meanwhile, public opinion research and polls had become the most revolutionary new subjects. They entailed an entirely new social technology, ranging from sample surveys to attitude 'measurement' and scaling. They supposedly permitted the 'exact' comparison of the orientations of different groups, at different times, before and after a communication effort – whether commercial or political. And therefore they allowed the testing and fine-tuning of messages within the wider framework of an emerging multi-media society.

Before the Second World War, Baschwitz had already spoken and written about 'public opinion'. But, for him (as for most other experts) this had in practice meant 'press opinion'. It was only in the press, that the volatile opinion of the mass public seemed to condensate, to become material and 'objectively' observable.

Where were they observable? First in the professional journalists' part of the newspaper: the editorial comments, statements by authorities, and news articles and their headings – particularly on the front pages. Second, in the readers' letters, to some extent, though these were often heavily truncated and redacted. 'Monitoring' public opinion thus primarily meant studying files of press clippings; 'influencing' public opinion primarily meant producing press releases, giving press conferences, and maintaining ongoing relations with journalists. So the emerging 'press studies' had indeed already included 'public opinion' – but mostly in this limited form.

Industrialization and urbanization had meanwhile led to entirely new needs for information about individuals' constantly shifting psycho-social orientations. First in immigrant North America, then also in the more traditional Western Europe. Information was needed about economic markets, social categories, political electorates, military morale, and media audiences. In two detailed earlier studies, I have explored why and how this gradually gave rise to more elaborate social surveys and then opinion polls, first in the U.S. before the war, and in The Netherlands thereafter.<sup>67</sup> Baschwitz's personal files contain Dutch press clippings about the earliest American initiatives by Gallup, Roper, and company from just before the

67 See my 'Social orientations', p. 220-244, in Jansz & Van Drunen (eds., 2004), and my *De Uitvinding*, p. 53-96.

war, but the occupation had largely interrupted further news and developments on the European continent.<sup>68</sup>

So Baschwitz was vaguely aware that something was brewing in the field. Immediately after Liberation, in late 1946, he and a colleague gave lectures on 'public opinion' for the Dutch Sociologists Association, which were also published in the first volume of their brand-new yearbook. The lectures were attended by a significant number of post-war Dutch social science pioneers from Amsterdam and elsewhere, and gave rise to a lively discussion on the manifestation of 'the invisible mass'. Baschwitz even included a reference to the pivotal collection of essays *L'Opinion et la Foule* by French 'mass psychologist' Gabriel Tarde, which he had previously overlooked.<sup>69</sup>

In his lecture, he reviewed the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers and politicians, as well as some pre-war sociologists and social psychologists, including English-language authors like Ellwood and McDougall. His literature mentioned the more recent books by William Albig and Hadley Cantril. But apparently he had not yet been able to actually see, read, and digest these works, as he failed to explicitly identify the two major technical breakthroughs that had arisen in the U.S. Namely, the improvement of population 'sampling' methods by Gallup et al, and attitude 'scaling' techniques by Louis Leon Thurstone et al.<sup>70</sup>

## Collaboration with the first polling agencies

At this point, there were only two embryonic polling agencies in the country – and Baschwitz got in touch with them immediately. One published a brochure about the state of affairs with regard to polls in The Netherlands, the other a periodical bulletin – first bi-weekly, then monthly.

The first, the Netherlands Statistics Foundation (NSS), was initially more oriented towards governmental research. Baschwitz was even invited to join its board; he sent his first graduate student to do an internship and then get a job there. The NSS had originally emerged out of a collaboration

<sup>68</sup> Daily *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 2 September 1938; Daily *De Telegraaf*, 15 March 1939; weekly *Haagsche Post*, 12 August 1939 (File 104).

<sup>69</sup> He referred to the 4th edition, about the visible and the invisible mass. More about the significance of Tarde in the last chapter of my study *Crowds, psychology and politics*. Tarde's son was one of the first to organize an opinion poll in France, although it was rather tentative and unscientific.

<sup>70</sup> Lecture 21 December 1946, *Sociologisch Jaarboek* (Leiden: Brill 1947), Vol. 1, p. 21-36. The other lecturer was Prof. A.J.R. Tammes.

between the Central Bureau of Statistics and the innovative Mundaneum Institute for graphic design run by Germanophone exiles.<sup>71</sup>

During the summer of 1945, Baschwitz had already been asked to advise on an NSS 'Liberation poll', which had asked the Dutch how they now felt about the former occupiers, the Germans, but also about their sympathies for the respective later liberators – for the U.S. and the U.K., as opposed to the Soviet Union. Many such investigations were inspired and/or paid for by American and/or embryonic common defence initiatives during these years – for obvious strategic reasons. The NSS later joined another international network, while its Dutch results were published by the large newsweekly *Elseviers*.<sup>72</sup>

The second polling agency, the Netherlands Institute of Public Opinion (NIPO), had emerged out of tentative market research for a cookie producer. NIPO soon joined the international network of the Gallup agencies; its Dutch results were first published by the daily *Het Parool*, and then by a range of others. Baschwitz invited the NIPO director to give a lecture at the university. The largest Dutch corporations, such as Unilever and Philips, had also gradually begun to do more sophisticated consumer research.

The interested academics founded the *Vereniging voor Opinie-onderzoek*, a national association for opinion research, which had its first meeting in mid-November 1945. It also published an eight-page brochure titled 'What is opinion research?', and organized a series of three radio broadcasts on the subject in January 1946.

On the one hand, the association tried to mobilize support from institutions and corporations (both public and private) that were hungry for updated and reliable information, especially after the great disruptions of the war. On the other hand, it tried to introduce the new techniques at universities – again, first in Amsterdam. It even offered Baschwitz to hold a poll about opinions concerning the controversial PSF in Amsterdam.<sup>73</sup>

The new dean of the municipal university was made chairman of the association; another Amsterdam professor was his deputy, and still others were made members of the board. The association soon published an Information bulletin (*Medelingenblad*), that was meant to evolve into a regular publication with ever new findings on *Mensen en Meningen* ('People and Opinions').

<sup>71</sup> It originally specialized in new elementary iconic visual representations called 'Isotypes' – today overly familiar worldwide. It was originally run by three German-speaking exiles, but two of them had been able to flee onwards to Great Britain before the occupation.

<sup>72</sup> See the brochure by B.M. Sweers, *Vrije Meeningen in een Vrij Land* (Amsterdam-Brussels: Elsevier 1946). More about this in my book *De Uitvinding*; and in Brouwer, *Defakkel van Baschwitz*.

<sup>73</sup> Letter, 13 March 1946 (File 104).

Interestingly enough, others soon voiced scepticism about ‘the shadow side’ of the new techniques and their social impact. The front page of the influential weekly *Vrij Nederland* carried the large headline ‘The tyranny of King Gallup – Oracle of Delphi’ over an article that discussed the so-called ‘bandwagon’ effect (that people tend to be drawn to an announced winner). In the end, it claimed, this might lead to the prevalence of only one candidate.<sup>74</sup>

### The first links across borders

But even more important were the overseas connections that were being built. According to a floor plan from the spring of 1948, Baschwitz’s assistants were sharing the available rooms in the department with colleagues that had popped up out of the blue: international public opinion researchers assigned there.

The newly founded United Nations in New York had set up UNESCO, its branch for education, science, and culture, in Paris. It also promoted the adoption of the new American social science techniques in Europe. The newly founded World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) was looking for a foothold in Western Europe – and landed in Baschwitz’s department.<sup>75</sup>

‘Forecasts’ of electoral outcomes were somewhat problematic (and still are today, for a number of reasons). Before the war, large-circulation press publications had begun to ask their subscribers about their political preferences – but had failed to ‘correct’ for their specific demographic profiles (so-called ‘weighing’ or re-calibration of a sample).

In the mid-1930s, Baschwitz had read about a primitive French poll that named Marshall Pétain (the supposed WWI victor) as the preferred leader.<sup>76</sup> In 1936, the American *Literary Digest* magazine had incorrectly predicted the victory of Alf Landon over Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And now, in 1948, many pollsters using the new more ‘scientific’ methods of sampling

<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, there is also an opposite ‘underdog’ effect, however. Paul Stern, *Vrij Nederland*, 3 April 1948.

<sup>75</sup> More in two articles in the Spring 1957 issue of *The Public Opinion Quarterly*.

<sup>76</sup> WWI hero and subsequent WW II ‘Vichy’ traitor. (His lieutenant, later general, Charles de Gaulle did not figure in the list at all). *Le Petit Journal*, quoted by the Paris correspondent of Baschwitz’s preferred daily *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 January 1935. (Clipping in his personal archives, file 129).

were wrong again: they predicted a Thomas E. Dewey victory over Harry S. Truman.

Only a few days later, Baschwitz used his Saturday lecture for journalists to discuss the probable technical reasons for this failure. One was that the 'quota system' of sampling had probably contributed to excessive 'interviewer bias'. The reasons laid out by Baschwitz did indeed correspond to the findings of the later investigatory committee and discussed by a subsequent conference of experts.<sup>77</sup>

In 1951-52, Baschwitz undertook a major social survey and opinion research project himself, together with a newly appointed Amsterdam professor of geography and ethnology.

At the end of the war, Germany had had eleven million displaced persons, who needed to be resettled – and to fit in. Many fled the hostile northeast (Russian-occupied zone) or even the southwest (French zone), to the less hostile northwest (British zone) – in particular, to the states of Schleswig Holstein and Niedersachsen. The study by the two scholars was meant to help by investigating the outlook and acceptance of refugees in the rural area of Fallingbostel (in the triangle between the major Northern cities of Hannover, Bremen, and Hamburg).<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, the press library ordered all of the new American books that it could lay its hands on, in all related fields. Students or outsiders sometimes produced abstracts that helped Baschwitz, whose English was still poor.<sup>79</sup> His assistants further exploited this literature to produce a 'state of the art' inventory of recent major U.S. studies on public opinion and attitude measurement, mass communication and media effects.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Furthermore De Jonge of the NSS and Baschwitz said in the Dutch press that eight factors might have played a role (Daily *De Tijd*, 9 November 1948). Compare: Mosteller et al. (Committee), *The Pre-election Polls of 1948* (New York: SSRC 1949). The latter quoted by Brouwer in Goudsblom, de Rooy, and Wielen, p. 28-29.

<sup>78</sup> K. Baschwitz & H.D. de Vries Reilingh, *Menschen ohne Heimat*. Partly subsidized by the Prince Bernhard Fund, also within the framework of the renewed cultural relations between the two countries. Offered to the German federal minister for 'Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte' (and published by A.W.R. & Pax in The Hague, 1955). Also see Ebels-Dolanová, p. 185, 219-220.

<sup>79</sup> His personal archives contain August 1945 typescript summaries of a guide by Gallup and a brochure of the American Institute of Public Opinion AIPO by history graduate J. Visser and a 30-page summary of Cantril's *Gauging Public Opinion* by Ms. M.J.C. Beijen (who apparently also served as a pollster for one of the agencies) (File 104).

<sup>80</sup> M. Brouwer & H. Daudt, fifty-plus item reference list, with their chapter in the 1956 *liber amicorum* for Baschwitz's retirement.

U.S. introductory and more advanced texts, as well as articles from the new *Public Opinion Quarterly*, became standard fare for the regular colloquia given by both Baschwitz and his assistants – who also began to experiment with newspaper readership and radio listening surveys, or even ‘media uses’ in general. Some students experimented with polls on international affairs, then went on to apply these techniques for their internships or theses.

### The Polls and Steinmetz research archives

Many students of Baschwitz, the PSF, and adjacent disciplines found their way into the booming new business of opinion and market research between the early 1950s and early 1960s. By that time, there were already well over a dozen commercial agencies in The Netherlands, with an estimated combined turnover of twenty million guilders. They did close to a thousand projects per year, and conducted well over a million interviews. But of course larger administrations and companies soon hired their own specialists as well, and managed relevant projects in-house.<sup>81</sup>

It became important not to duplicate each other’s work and to learn from others’ mistakes – so it was imperative to store and index previous results. The answers to commercial research questions usually had to remain largely confidential or hidden from competitors, but answers to additional ‘general’ and political questions were often made available for ‘secondary analysis’.

At a trade conference during the mid-1950s, Gallup announced that it would give Baschwitz’s group 5,000 guilders to make an inventory of the first decade of all results concerning international relations. (The equivalent of some 17,000 euros in 2017).<sup>82</sup> So Baschwitz’s assistant Brouwer dutifully built an archive of such results from all over the world, for WAPOR. This led to an overview book the next year, and then to founding of the English-language *Polls* journal, which signalled the outcomes of new public opinion research on these scores.

Later, Baschwitz supported the creation of a mathematical, calculation, and computer centre for the social sciences. For some time, it was housed

<sup>81</sup> Details in my 1993 book *De Uitvinding*, p. 76-77, referring back to Brouwer’s report on *The 1963 production of sample surveys in continental Europe*, as well as Harm ‘t Hart, and various trade magazines.

<sup>82</sup> Daily *Het Vrije Volk*, 3 September 1955. During a trade conference at the ‘Hoge Vuursche’, also mentioned in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*.

in the same canal house on the Herengracht where the mass psychology and public opinion institute also found a home. I remember the heavy punch card sorters that were used. Previous surveys could sometimes be re-analysed or combined, in view of newly emerging and slightly different research questions.

This then also led to the founding of the *Steinmetz* archives to store data sets: named after an earlier founder of Dutch sociology. Today, this role has been transferred to the Data Archiving and Networking Services (DANS) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> The Steinmetz foundation officially started on 27 November 1964. Marten Brouwer asked his former student Harm 't Hart (later a professor in Utrecht) to be its coordinator. Today, another reason for secondary analysis or replication may be to check whether the *original* interpretations were correct after all – also in view of the controversy over scientific journals' *publication bias*. See my 2013 Dutch book *From Big Brother to the Brain Hype* about the last quarter century of psychological practice, in particular p. 100-109.



## 12 International Role

For a number of reasons, some also discussed in the introduction, there is a tendency to limit Baschwitz's significance to a purely local level (Amsterdam), or a national level (The Netherlands). But he also contributed decisively to the emergence of wider networks in the new field: first on a continental level, than on a global one. This remained largely invisible, also because it played out just before his retirement, during the process itself and even after it, under his successor on the main press chair. So there is reason to spell out what really happened.

### Building European networks

At the outset, there had been one huge non-European country with which Baschwitz hoped to build 'special relations' – even though Indonesia's post-war independence struggle and its aftermath first provoked a succession of ups and downs in traditional ties with The Netherlands, and then a rupture. Some of his students were of Indonesian descent, worked as representatives for new post-colonial Indonesian institutions in The Netherlands, and/or planned to go back after completing their university and other studies.<sup>1</sup>

Baschwitz specially wrote a practical thirty-page brochure to introduce various aspects of 'the newspaper'. It was translated from German into Dutch, and then into the local Indonesian language Malay.<sup>2</sup> But plans to publish one of his bigger works did not get off the ground. Plans for the training of journalists from the Antara news agency and other exchange projects did not go very far either.<sup>3</sup>

Because of his special position, Baschwitz hardly had Ph.D. students, furthermore. One late exception was Abdus Salam Kurshid, who did a Ph.D. thesis with him titled 'Newsletters in the Orient: With special reference to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent'. He also became a founding member of the International Association for Mass Communication Research – to which we will return below. After his return home, he became head of

<sup>1</sup> *Nieuwe Courant*, 18 January 1951, a.o. Students: file 77 in the Baschwitz archives.

<sup>2</sup> Introductory brochure on newspapers: *Surat – Kaber* 1955 (file 175).

<sup>3</sup> Press agency: file 38.

the Department of Journalism at the university of the Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan.<sup>4</sup>

But how did Baschwitz and his department meanwhile fit into the newly emerging European networks concerning newspaper and press studies, mass communication and media research, opinion and attitude surveys? Since the U.S. and U.K. shared a language and many publications, new American social science innovations and applications had continued to reach Britain throughout the war. It was the European continent, by contrast, that lagged behind and needed to catch up.

Baschwitz himself was not much of a polyglot, but most of his Dutch colleagues and assistants had learned *three* major foreign languages in school at the time. The Low Lands had traditionally consisted of small countries and neutral meeting grounds between their much larger neighbours Britain, France, and Germany. So Baschwitz and his department soon began to reach out, establishing contacts and organizing exchanges with similar institutions elsewhere, such as the university at Leuven/Louvain in Belgium, or a journalism school in Lille in Northern France.

By far the most important, however, were Baschwitz's efforts to re-establish relations with pre-war newspaper colleagues and early 'press scientists' in Germany. Baschwitz had not occupied a university chair in Germany and had gone into exile – and was thus untainted by any type of contact with the Nazis. Nor was he in any way involved in the ongoing dramatic split between the capitalist German Federal Republic and the communist German Democratic Republic (officially founded in 1949).

In contrast, many others had had to make compromises during and after the war, to varying degrees. Some also felt that Germans were treated as more or less toxic by the Germanophobic post-war outside world. Baschwitz was the ideal figure to reach out to them; his soft-spoken and diplomatic demeanour helped a great deal.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In later years, many Ph.D. students from developing countries saw their doctoral dissertations supervised by a special professor of International Communication, Cees Hamelink, who also became a key figure within the IAMCR.

<sup>5</sup> Two of his closest colleagues were Walter Hagemann in Münster and Emil Dovifat in Berlin. Baschwitz was asked to replace Hagemann after a crisis in Münster, but helped send his Groningen colleague Henk Prakke instead (more in the final parts of *Anschlag*, p. 97-99). Also see: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 185-186, 203.

## From ‘publicistics’ to ‘mass communication’

In both The Netherlands and Germany, the label and definitions for the discipline were shifting. Halfway through the evolution from ‘press studies’ to ‘communication science’, a widely used label was ‘publicistics’ – which covered anything concerned with the making public of information.

Baschwitz was instrumental in convening a first international conference at the Bad Godesberg spa in the spring of 1951, then a major press centre under Allied supervision next to the provisional new West German capital Bonn. The conference had 16 participants: not only from Germany, but also from three neighbouring countries. They decided to found an ‘International Society for Publicistics’ (at first mostly with German-speakers). Among the key figures were Baschwitz from Amsterdam, Folke Dahl from Swedish Göteborg, and Karl Weber from Swiss Zürich.

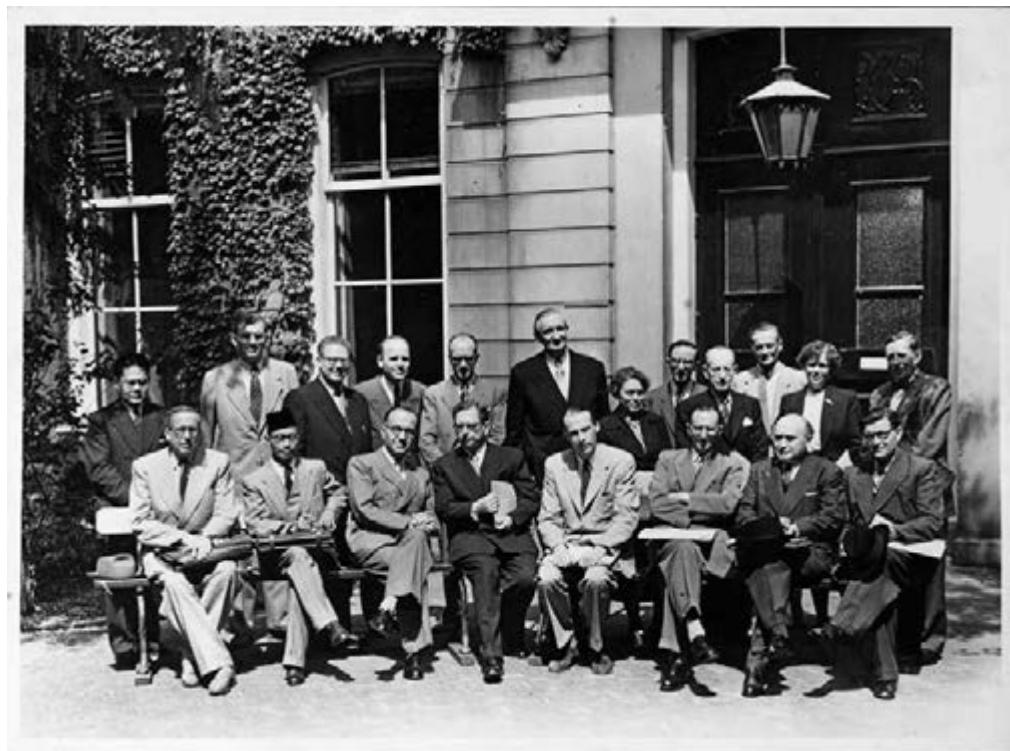
A year later, in German Münster (close to the Dutch border), there were also representatives from Britain, Belgium, Austria, and Indonesia. Yet another year later, in Amsterdam itself – the official seat of the society – there were representatives from the U.S. and France as well. There is a nice group picture of that meeting in late May 1953, taken before the central entrance at the interior square of the main university building at the Oude Manhuis Poort.

An accompanying note in the archives is apparently not entirely complete.<sup>6</sup> It says that standing, from left to right, are: Khouw Giok Po (Jakarta), William E. Porter (Univ. Iowa), Fr. Klauck (?), Wilmont Haacke (Münster), Claude Bellanger (Paris), Emil Dovifat (Berlin), Lili (Couvée-) Jampoller (Amsterdam), Robert Hennart (Lille), Edgar Stern-Rubarth (London), Jacoba De Boer (Amsterdam), and Philip F. Griffin (Univ. California).

Sitting: Leonidas Martinides (Vienna), R.F. Sujud (Jakarta), Walter Hagemann (Münster), Kurt Baschwitz (Amsterdam), Rolf Meyer (Munich), Maarten Schneider (Amsterdam), Raymond Manévy (Paris), and Theo Luyckx (Ghent). Philippe Desjardins from UNESCO (Paris) apparently came as well, to reinforce the link between the organizations.

Other participants apparently not in the picture were E. Diemer (Amsterdam), W. Hermanns (Aachen), Leo G.A. Schlichting (Nijmegen), and Nabor/Urbain De Volder (Leuven/Louvain). Folke Dahl (Göteborg) had had to cancel. Members K. d'Ester (Munich), R. Henry-Gréard (Science Po, Paris), and M. Stijns (Brussels) apparently were not able to make it

<sup>6</sup> Conference picture in the Baschwitz archives, Special collections, University Library, Amsterdam. Also reproduced in Ebels-Dolanová, between pages 175 & 176, and Anschlag, p. 86.

**Figure 19**

Participants from eight countries came to the 1953 conference, when Baschwitz's International Society for Publicistics was at its peak (further details in text). They prepared the launch of the scholarly journal *Gazette*, already called upon Unesco in Paris to take the lead in founding (what was to become) the International Association of Mass Communication Research. Its secretariat was to be hosted in Amsterdam.

either. It was a key meeting for the emergence of a European science of mass communication and media studies.

The fourth and last conference, held in West Berlin, also had an Italian representative, but the number of participants and countries dropped. At this point, the dissensions within Germany intensified; whereas plans for a purely German or at least Germanophone society of 'publicistics' got priority. Germany had really split up now, and Baschwitz was to retire within only a few years time. That seemed to be the end of the original group. (More details can be found in the last parts of Anschlag's master's thesis, which also provides neat overviews of the themes and participants of all four meetings).

Around the mid-1950s, the new field had slowly begun to emerge in almost all European countries, not only in the northwest of the continent, but also in the south and east, albeit in many different incarnations.<sup>7</sup> But there was still a lack of initiatives to weld them all together through ongoing discussions and one or more publication series. There was an urgent need for an international academic journal for the new discipline.

So, from the very first 'publicistics' meetings onwards, Baschwitz and other key participants had also been discussing the founding of such a journal for the new field. The initial proposed name was *Publica*, but the ultimate name hewed closer to the original newspaper studies. Though Baschwitz's introduction emphasized that it extended to 'public opinion, propaganda, advertising' on the one hand, and to 'other mass media such as the radio, television and film' on the other.

In 1955, then, the first issue of the quarterly *Gazette International* or simply *Gazette* (after the 17th century term for newspapers) came out – as a *Journal for the Science of the Press*. It is still in existence today, now published by Sage and devoted to the broader field of communication. Its headquarters were in Amsterdam; Baschwitz's friend Posthumus (who had meanwhile moved on to become an editor at Brill academic publishers) agreed to bring it out. In true Dutch tradition, it started out as a trilingual journal. Most articles were in English, but some were in German or French, with an added English abstract. Over the years, however, the emphasis shifted further – also to cover both broadcasting and other continents.

The new journal was meant to accelerate the take-off of the new field all around, and did so in various ways. First, its issues carried a broad bibliography of new publications in the field, as well as periodic overviews of the main literature on a specific theme. Second, it published special country issues on the occasion of the annual conferences of the International Press Institute (IPI), a newly founded organization of media executives and editors, later extended to journalists. Today, *Gazette* has a board and editors, contributors and articles, from all over the world.<sup>8</sup>

7 Vroons.

8 Wieten. It also quotes a content analysis demonstrating the gradual widening of the journal's focus to various types of media, geographical areas, etc.

## Amsterdam, *The Gazette* journal, and the worldwide IAMCR

Baschwitz had primarily built his original network from Germanophone connections. But from the mid-1950s onwards, the emphasis had begun to shift to the *other* major language area on the European continent: the Francophone one. After the war, the United Nations set up its educational, scientific, and cultural organization UNESCO in Paris. The director of the French Information Ministry had taken the lead in building a strong Francophone network of press organizations and publications, together with the Francophone Belgians and Swiss. UNESCO had also begun to foster exchanges in the field of journalism education and press studies.

Baschwitz's Amsterdam conference had already passed a resolution calling on UNESCO to take the lead in promoting further exchanges, and offering the Amsterdam Press Institute as a liaison office. The late 1956 general conference of UNESCO in New Delhi indeed called for 'the establishment of an international association' to coordinate research in mass communication. It was immediately followed by the establishment of an 'International Centre for Higher Education in Journalism' in Strasbourg. In late 1957, this centre was opened with a major conference on the subject, where Baschwitz presented a paper.

Several of the participants of the Strasbourg conference hastened back to Paris and founded the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) on Christmas Eve. Its first international conference took place in Milan, Italy, in October 1959. The official headquarters remained in Paris, but after some hesitation it took up Baschwitz's offer to host its secretariat at the Amsterdam Press Institute. Its director was thus also to edit the official IAMCR bulletin – as a supplement to the *Gazette*, which had been adopted as an IAMCR journal. These roles, however, now fell to Prof. Maarten Rooij, Baschwitz's immediate successor for the main press chair. Today, the IAMCR has flourished into *the* major global organization in the field, with some two thousand members all around the world.<sup>9</sup>

Upon his retirement, therefore, Baschwitz had every reason to feel satisfied. He had helped lay the Dutch, Western European, and world foundations for the new discipline: first in newspaper and press studies, then in 'publicistics', and finally in 'mass communication' studies. After many false

<sup>9</sup> See the overview article about the history of the IAMCR by Cees Hamelink and Kaarle Nordenstreng. Originally published in a special issue of the Spanish journal *Disertaciones* on 'Communication research' and its history, edited by Miguel Vicente and Manuel Martínez Nicolás. But with a complete English translation and further details on the IAMCR website.

starts and eternal delays, he had finally become a true founding father, and left a lasting heritage.

## Retirement

In 1956, the revered social democratic Dutch Prime Minister Willem Drees had introduced a new general retirement scheme (AOW), and the retirement age was gradually reduced to 65. But Baschwitz had not even had the opportunity to complete the minimum requirement of ten full years of paying contributions to receive a university pension. His regular employment had only officially started on 1 October 1946 (and even then only retroactively).

After his naturalization as a Dutch citizen in 1955, he turned seventy on 2 February 1956. At the time, 70 was still the regular retirement age for professors; but as the nomination of his successor lagged, he was given two more years before being 'honourably discharged'. The 'calculation base' for a university pension would later become the average of the last three annual salaries, which would have amounted to 18,129.92 guilders for his rank. He would then have received something like 70 percent of that, if he had been employed for an entire forty-year career. Or a quarter of it for a ten-year career, the minimum threshold – that is to say, some 3,161 guilders.

But his career had officially only covered 9 years, 11 months, and 16 days. So – according to his youngest daughter – he had no formal right to a substantial pension at all.<sup>10</sup> The university authorities tried to accommodate him in two ways, however. On the one hand, they allowed him to continue to teach a few courses (until he later had a stroke). On the other, they asked him to make successive evaluations of the 'possible shortcomings' of the entire press program, for a fee of 5,000 guilders per year. He may also have received some income from his various other press roles.<sup>11</sup>

On the eve of his seventieth birthday, he had demanded and gotten a meeting in Bonn with the first president of West Germany: the prominent liberal Theodor Heuss, who had been a similar-minded Ph.D. student colleague in

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Ebels-Dolanová, p. 189.

<sup>11</sup> File 'Documents', with contract letters, in a box recently added to the Baschwitz archives.

Baschwitz's Munich days almost half a century earlier.<sup>12</sup> Upon a later birthday, furthermore, he received official congratulations from the leadership of the German SPD, including Willy Brandt: later chancellor, the initiator of the *Ostpolitik* with regard to the communist East, and a world historic figure.

Baschwitz's 70th birthday was officially celebrated a year late – and his de facto retirement a year early – with a grand January 1957 reception at the 'International Cultural Centre' in Amsterdam's main Vondelpark. The gathering probably gave him great satisfaction, as it highlighted his achievements after so many decades of never-ending struggles.

The capital's alderman for education gave a major speech, and the mayor and secretary of the small town of Oudewater (of the aforementioned witches' weighing house) were also present. Luminaries from all over the Netherlands were there, as well as representatives from all the major trade organizations in his field. Some foreign colleagues had even come for the occasion, sometimes from far abroad.

At the reception, political science professor Barents offered him the first copy of a *liber amicorum* (Latin for the traditional gift of a book specially written and composed by one's academic friends and colleagues for the occasion). It had an introduction by his Nijmegen counterpart Leo Schlichting, and included some fifteen *capita selecta* (or 'chosen chapters') about various aspects of 'Press, propaganda and public opinion', contributed by other colleagues and staff. Most dealt with history; one, by his assistants Marten Brouwer and Hans Daudt, was a highly programmatic reflection on the near future of the field of mass communication.

They noted that the field had gradually expanded to cover radio, television, film, and other media as well. They repeated that the uniqueness of Baschwitz's approach had always been the study of mass communication and mass psychology *together*. Although they consented that 'visible' masses (crowds and mobs) had a logic that partially differed from that of 'invisible' masses (audiences and publics), they argued that social and psychological interaction provided the key to both. Audiences and the public were often not static, furthermore, and could occasionally even become highly dynamic (for instance in what were later labelled 'hypes and scares').

They also discussed the differences between the continental European and the American traditions, between the old qualitative and the new quantitative approaches. They tried to distinguish and redefine various relevant notions. They pleaded for more systematic (quantitative) empirical

<sup>12</sup> The meeting was on 3 December 1955, at 11.30. According to correspondence with the embassy, in the Baschwitz archives, XXXII A9, interior file 1.

research, and reviewed a wide range of newly developed methods. Their 'literature' list at the end referred to four of Baschwitz's titles, as well as some fifty others.

Of these, only around ten were in Dutch, and more than forty were in English. They included all the most famous post-war American scholars and handbooks: on opinions and attitudes, persuasion and propaganda, social and mass psychology, journalism and media. Gordon Allport, Bernard Berelson, Herbert Blumer, Clyde Coombs, Morton Deutsch, Leonard Doob, Leon Festinger, Carl Hovland and associates, Herbert Hyman, Elihu Katz, Harold Lasswell and associates, Paul Lazarsfeld, Gardner Lindzey, Gardner Murphy and associates, Wilbur Schramm, Samuel Stouffer, Norbert Wiener, and Kimball Young – the whole new package was embraced. This marked a 'sea change' in the field in The Netherlands.



## 13 1958-1968: Retirement Years

Baschwitz continued to be active during the last ten years of his life. Mostly, this time was dedicated to the completion of the study he considered his 'magnum opus': *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*, which I have already discussed. But he also spent time on all kinds of other activities, ranging from advising some major institutions to commenting on various current affairs in newspaper interviews. Some examples were provided by interviews on the supposed 'generation conflict' and shift of the 1960s.

### Ongoing activities

During his early Weimar years, Baschwitz had despised the socialist party as 'too Red' and too light-heartedly willing to flirt with revolutionary ideas. His daughter claimed, however, that in the post-war Netherlands, he had gradually come to vote for the labour party (which had absorbed the progressive liberal party to which he had probably felt close before). At one point, he had even participated in a Partij van de Arbeid PvdA (or social-democratic Labour party) 'think tank' exercise about election campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

Around the time of his retirement, Baschwitz set up a private 'Center for Mass Psychological Studies': a kind of consultancy organization that could do sponsored research and produce reports about various issues. It was a *stichting* (non-profit foundation), but was also founded as a way to procure him an additional salary of 2,400 guilders per year. It had a board with a few long-time dignitary friends, covering the entire political spectrum.

One was Harm van Riel: member of the senate for the liberal-conservative party, soon the chief of its senate group, then 'Grand Old Man' (but never a cabinet minister). Another was law professor George van den Bergh: a former prominent member as well as a parliamentarian for the social-democratic party. He descended from a family of innovators and entrepreneurs, and was himself involved in the 'invention' of such ideas as alternative time-keeping

<sup>1</sup> File 125 has duplicate texts related to a kind of round table with social-democratic/labour luminaries from the NVV trade union, the PvdA party, the VARA broadcaster, and the Arbeiderspers publishers. Baschwitz contributed a few pages with 'Some thoughts (by a theoretician) on the influencing of public opinion during an election struggle'.

and alternative book-printing methods – which, however, in the end amounted to little<sup>2</sup>

After the war and Bachwitz's final separation from his first wife, he had lived alone, hiring a cleaning lady twice a week and a housekeeper on weekdays – who apparently cooked lunch or dinner for him. His daughters, with their partners or children, also came to stay on occasion, for a variety of reasons. His son was far away in the U.S., but once visited for Christmas with his wife and children. Occasionally, Baschwitz also wined and dined with other academics. He had an informal Sunday social club with professorial colleagues, for which he once gave a talk about the Jewish Kabbalah. Ever since his younger days as a journalist, he had shown an interest in such esoteric subjects.<sup>3</sup>

Baschwitz was not really religious anymore, but had meanwhile adhered to a Freemasons lodge. For the official bicentenary of the chapter, the lodge published a memoir claiming that several Dutch royals and the founders of major political parties had secretly been members over the years. Baschwitz contributed a paper on 'Mass and personality', which praised the 'emotional community' of 'similarly minded' individuals, their common 'spirit of freedom of thought and tolerance, of fraternity and love for humanity'. The small Freemason minority of notables had indeed exerted a considerable influence throughout Europe over the centuries, such as in the promotion of social reforms.<sup>4</sup>

But his solitude began to weigh on him.

## Late life romance

Ascona used to be a small, idyllic fisherman's village on the Swiss coast of the Lago Maggiore or Great Lake. It was one of several mountain lakes that were often experienced as the sunny Southern shores of the Germanic world

<sup>2</sup> Van den Bergh's 'Euro-clock' proposed an alternative gradual transition between winter and summer time, by first adding and then subtracting 50 seconds a day. He also proposed to first print double the number of lines on a page to spare paper, then use a 'mask' to alternatingly cover even or uneven lines – as in his 1958 handbook of state law. Or use different colours and special glasses instead. See the article about him on Wikipedia.

<sup>3</sup> Ever since he reviewed a book on 'The Old Sages' for the Literary supplement of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, 2 June 1913. It was to be the first of a series on alchemy, and more. Baschwitz's personal archives also contain a separate file on magic and paranormal phenomena. In a sense, this was also a logical extension of his interest in witchcraft. (Ebels-Dolanová, p. 42-43).

<sup>4</sup> Edited by its Grand master. See Davidson.

fading into the Latin one, right on the Alpine border with Italy. Before the wars, Ascona had become a hideout for German artists and writers such as Herman Hesse, had had a notorious artist commune, and had also been visited by utopian socialists of various persuasions. It had thus become a reference for the intellectuals of Baschwitz's generation. After the wars, it slowly developed into a major tourist destination – particularly for people from the Germanic world.<sup>5</sup>

So it was in Ascona that Baschwitz decided to spend a long summer holiday in 1957, to contemplate on what to do with the 'next phase' of his life – after his retirement finally became effective, at least in part. It was here that he met Ilse Scholz, more than twenty years his junior, who had some kind of job in clothing or fashion. They romantically danced 'in a grotto', and felt attracted to each other. But she had to report back for work in West Berlin. He lingered a while, but soon decided to break off the rest of his holiday and return prematurely to Amsterdam. Each played the music they had danced to at home, recommended classical records to each other, and began to dream.

Over seventy letters of their yearlong *Brautbriefe* or courtship correspondence in German survives: hers in regular longhand writing, his mostly in the typescript that he had become accustomed to as a journalist and writer. One of his earliest letters said he was already embellishing his balcony with flowers and a sun- or windscreen, in view of her first brief shuttle to Amsterdam at the end of that very same summer. He added: 'Although I do not understand what you *junges Ding* [young thing] would get from an *alten Krauter* [old bachelor] like me [...] an old bear'. She then returned for Christmas and Easter.<sup>6</sup>

During the autumn, he proudly sent her a newspaper clipping with a picture showing the large audience for one of his public lectures. In the spring, he confessed to a near Freudian lapse of tending to write her last name as Schutz (protection) rather than Scholz. By that time, he often signed off with 'a thousand greetings and kisses'.<sup>7</sup>

She was initially careful and appropriately reticent, reluctant to give up her job, salary, and independence in Berlin. But he promised to help find her similar opportunities in Amsterdam, and she suggested that he contact

<sup>5</sup> Kieft's fascinating book on early 20th century utopianism and subsequent war enthusiasm, includes interesting sketches of bohemian life around Ascona just before and after the First World War. Among the visitors were the German socialists August Bebel and Kautsky, the Russians Kropotkin and Lenin, and the Dutch Domela Nieuwenhuis. Kieft, p. 87-103, 449-475.

<sup>6</sup> His descendants allowed me to glance at the correspondence. The quote is from 4 August 1957.

<sup>7</sup> 6 November 1957, 1 May 1958, and 26 April 1958, respectively.

the fashion houses of Max Heymans and Dick Holthaus to that effect. He also tried to find her a small apartment near the large green Vondelpark. When she repeatedly mentioned fatigue, stress, and tensions with her boss, he gleefully answered that he was pleased ... as this might finally make her decide to make the leap into the unknown. With the blessing of her Berlin-based mother Charlotte Kreimann. (Her father Emil Scholz had died in 1936.)

He soon proposed to her: she would not need a separate home or even a job, if she did not want them. He spelled out that he had a regular annual income of 15,600 guilders altogether – minus the 3,600 in alimony that he paid to his first wife, from whom he had long been divorced. On top of that, he had irregular earnings from lectures, articles, reports, and every now and then a bigger chunk of a few thousand for books – to cover possible ‘extras’. He also had rebuilt savings of 10,000 as an ‘iron’ reserve (with the disastrous German early 1920s and Dutch late 1930s in mind). So: *wir sind nicht reich, aber uns reicht’s, nicht wahr?* (A word play for ‘we are not rich but would have enough’).

So in the end she ceded to his advances. They married in Amsterdam, in 1958. For the honeymoon, they returned to Ascona. After that, she still had to return to Berlin until the autumn. He mentioned that they might visit the much-discussed World Expo with its futuristic ‘Atomium’ building in Brussels thereafter. They went to the Dutch artist village of Bergen with its sand dunes and long white North Sea beach. Surviving snapshots from these holidays show them relaxed and happy with their new life together.

## Eighty

In early 1963, Baschwitz’s circle was shocked to learn that he had been hit by a stroke. He was under great stress to complete the German original of what he himself considered his *magnum opus*, *Hexen und Hexenprozesse*. At first he was incapacitated, but he gradually recovered – through the unwavering support of his much younger wife. Everybody was relieved. His colleagues, staff, and friends decided to offer him another grand reception in the same Vondelpark in 1966 – for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The pictures show him and his spouse in good shape and spirits.

Press articles and reception speeches summed up his great achievements. The administrator of the Press Library he had founded reminisced in the main journalists’ magazine: ‘When Baschwitz was one of the first to leave his native Germany in 1933, he knew that the sterile *Zeitungswissenschaft* (newspaper science) as it was taught at a number of institutions in that

**Figure 20**

Snapshot taken during the honeymoon with his second wife, Ilse Scholz, in Ascona near Locarno: on the southern Swiss border with Italy, and the Lago Maggiore lake. Probably taken at their request, by a passer-by.

country, was a failure. Most of its practitioners had stood ready to put their intelligence at the disposal of Goebbels' propaganda apparatus'.<sup>8</sup>

The headline of a newspaper interview emphatically told the Dutch public 'Thanks for the hospitality', during all these decades. He also noted: 'Three years ago, I was seriously ill. But that is to be expected after [such] a life of tension and excitement', even though 'I have never been active in practical politics'. The headline of another interview repeated his central claim that 'Freedom of the press excludes mass delusion', and announced that he still wanted to write an overview book about *Wahnverblendung* (massive delusional blindness).<sup>9</sup>

In the newspaper he had long headed, his successor Rooij to the main press chair praised Baschwitz's 'still-great intellectual vigour and lucidity' as well as 'his great honesty and uprightness'. At the reception, he told him: 'Your coming to our country' has been 'of invaluable significance for scientific life in The Netherlands', and added that 'building on the foundations of Baschwitz's pioneer work', the first full-time, three-year school for

8 Dick H. Couvée, *De Journalist*, 31 Jan. 1966.

9 Protestant daily *Trouw*, 2 February 1966; social democrat daily *Het Vrije Volk*, 1 February 1966.

professional journalists was finally about to start the next academic year in centrally located Utrecht.<sup>10</sup>

Visitors from Germany included a famous schoolmaster crusader against the belief in witchcraft and attempted witch-hunts from Hamburg, whom he had supported over the years in his struggles. His colleague from the press chair in Münster brought him copies of the *Zeitungs-Verlag*, with some of his own articles he had never seen published – since they went to print after he had been chased out.<sup>11</sup>

The *Zeitungs-Verlag* itself even sent a representative – whose elaborate article, however, did not dwell very much on how Baschwitz had left in 1933. Instead, it concentrated on painting an idyllic picture of his current life, more than thirty years later:

The house where he lives is one of those small canal houses, abundant in the Dutch capital. The shrill light of an early winter afternoon shines into a tidied room, arranged with nut-brown antique furniture. From behind his desk, the ‘press professor’ views a façade leaning forward, old patrician houses, a lively street and the silent water of the Prinsengracht canal surrounded by icy fringes.<sup>12</sup>

### The mass psychology of the unruly 1960s

The 1960s were of course the decade of a worldwide generational shift, as the post-war baby-boomers became adolescents and young adults. They had grown up in peace and comfort, unlike with the war and crises that their parents had experienced – making them rebel against their entirely different values. This resulted in a rapid succession of crowd events, social movements, and rapid shifts in public opinion worldwide, which brought mass psychology and the sociology of collective behaviour back to the centre of attention. Not surprisingly, Dutch journalists and media returned time and again to the ‘Old Sage’ Baschwitz for comments. Time and again, he proved mild and lucid.

It began in 1965 in Amsterdam with the so-called ‘Provo’ anarchist movement. A small group of youngsters promoted playful ‘white’ utopian

<sup>10</sup> Rooij, *NRC*, 1 February 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Hamburg: Johann Kruse. Münster: Henk Prakke. He had studied in Groningen where Baschwitz’s sociologist colleague Pieter Jan Bouman introduced communication. Prakke had taught newspaper studies there (a colleague had already taken up broadcasting studies).

<sup>12</sup> *Zeitungs-Verlag*, 28 January 1966 (Vol. 63, Nr. 5).

plans, through 'happenings' and street agitation. They were also set on provoking the authorities – to reveal their 'true repressive nature' through their automatic reflex of always sending the police to 'restore order'.<sup>13</sup>

Two journalists asked Baschwitz how new these activities were. He told them: 'We have certainly always had this – let's say, actions by radical youths that are relatively unstructured. A radical party always has a youthful current. But in The Netherlands? There is no exciting political party available. Although one was soon founded.<sup>14</sup>

He continued: 'Young people with their *Sturm-und-Drang* [turbulent adolescence] – you understand how I mean this – do not know where to go. Of course, there have always been rebels and hangers-on. There are certainly no criminals among their [the Provo's] leaders. It is a bourgeois group. Well, don't include this; I do not want to hurt their feelings'.<sup>15</sup>

The next spring, 1966, there arose great consternation that the crown princess Beatrix had fallen in love with a German diplomat who had served in the *Wehrmacht* as a youngster at the very end of the war – stirring painful memories. Their marriage in Amsterdam was disturbed by smoke bombs. One of the aforementioned journalists later remembered that Baschwitz had predicted that this storm would soon subside, and that the affable Prince Claus would become even more popular than his father-in-law Prince Bernhard.

Baschwitz had said: In the past, 'royal persons have been exposed to attack and became very popular later. This is what I was thinking about in recent days. I would bet with you that the mood of the majority will soon prevail again [...] a kind of sympathy with the young couple will emerge'. His prediction proved entirely right.<sup>16</sup>

The next summer saw violent riots with barricades in the very heart of the capital. Construction workers protested that their holiday allowances had been cut because they happened to belong to the wrong (a 'non-recognized' communist-oriented) trade union. After one of them died during a confrontation with the police, and the largest (right-wing) newspaper *De Telegraaf*

<sup>13</sup> I did all three of the research projects for my graduate/master's exam on this movement under Brouwer, at what was then called 'The Baschwitz Institute'.

<sup>14</sup> Hans van Mierlo and friends founded the 'Democraten 1966' or D66, meant to be an innovative secular party. They had irregular successes and failures over the years. He became a minister of foreign affairs, but (so far) the party has never succeeded in entirely replacing the Christian democrats in the political centre.

<sup>15</sup> Interview by Tessel Pollmann-Schlichting and Ferd Rondagh, about 'Man and Mass', p. 111-113. Printed copy in the Baschwitz archives, file 2. It is not entirely clear where and when it was published.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by the same Ferd Rondagh in the daily *de Volkskrant*, 25 September 1971, in an article about Baschwitz's successor Rooij. Compare my 2003 study *Het mysterie monarchie*.

wrote that he had died of a heart attack, they besieged the paper's building and seemed ready to torch it. Baschwitz was asked about the large numbers involved in such disturbances. His response was:

Apart from the really aggressive people and their direct followers, there were many spectators. [But] in such cases, spectators are also involved. They help to make the situation confused, and thereby protect the perpetrators – without meaning to. They also encourage the perpetrators by simply being there, which is interpreted as them showing a sympathetic interest. They also maintain uncertainty about the attacks – as no one knows how many bystanders may join the action. But even if no one does, the anonymity of those committing violence is boosted by thousands of spectators – as is their sense of impunity.

Other mass psychologists later elaborated such observations into a larger framework.<sup>17</sup>

## Death

Baschwitz did not live to witness the May events of 1968 in Paris, the Prague spring, or the many radical youth revolts that challenged the post-war world status quo; as he died and was cremated after the first week of that year. His former political science sub-faculty was torn apart by conflict: between staff (i.e. his former assistants Daudt and Brouwer), between professors (like his long-time friend and colleague, sociologist and Americanologist Den Hollander) and their students, as well as between students of various persuasions. In an ironic 'return of the repressed', many younger assistants and students turned to different currents of Marxism, leading to endless ideological disputes and disturbed lectures.<sup>18</sup>

The next year, the central administrative building of the University, the ancient *Maagdenhuis*, was even occupied by students for half a week.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in his obituary in the daily newspaper *Het Parool*, 8 January 1969. The new approach to riots tried to spell out the many different ways in which the actions of both protesters and police restructured the key ins-and-outs of the situation, in successive steps. This facilitated some options and discouraged others for both sides.

<sup>18</sup> Details throughout Gevers, p. I, 34, 61, 65-66. Den Hollander had been in touch with Baschwitz when the latter was in hiding – witness a brief and otherwise trivial letter dated 9 December 1943 (in the university library).

The 'Baschwitz Institute' produced an elaborate 'content analysis' on how newspapers of various persuasions covered the event.

But Kurt Baschwitz had already died on Epiphany, at the end of the first week of the new year, 6 January 1968 – a month before his 82nd birthday. In spite of his eventful life, he had reached a respectable age, at a time when many did not even reach retirement. He lay in state at Pothoff undertakers in Amsterdam South, and was then cremated at Driehuis-Westerveld. Two sides of his divided family placed separate ads.<sup>19</sup>

Obituaries in the Dutch press were full of praise. The major daily *de Volkskrant* carried a headline on 'A wise scholar' who had gone. Another article in the archives has a final paragraph lauding 'his inborn modesty [...], his restless work drive [...], his unshakeable scientific integrity'.<sup>20</sup>

Yet his intellectual heirs felt uneasy that his unique contributions soon tended to be forgotten because of two major shifts. One the one hand, there was a shift in ages and styles: the pre-war qualitative approach by a multi-disciplinary generalist had been superseded by post-war quantitative approaches by all kinds of sub-disciplinary specialists. On the other, there was a shift in cultures and languages: the German and continental approach had been superseded by the overseas Anglo-American approaches. Baschwitz no longer fit into the picture; it was difficult to give him his proper place and due.

Upon the centenary of his birth, his two Dutch successors in the fields of press history and mass psychology wrote half a page in a major daily, pleading for English translations of his major works, or at least summaries of them. Without them, he risked being erased from scientific history.

The present intellectual biography in English, with vignettes on half a dozen of Baschwitz's major books, is an attempt to belatedly grant at least part of their wish.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The first was by Isa and her first son Bubo, then sixteen. The other was from Anton Gundelach, the father of her second son (who had died in an accident), and the rest of the Baschwitz family.

<sup>20</sup> *de Volkskrant*, 8 January 1968 (by Couvée, the former administrator of his press library). The second article is an unmarked clipping, probably from the university weekly *Folia* of those days (by his press chair successor Maarten Rooij).

<sup>21</sup> Marten Brouwer & Joan Hemels, *NRC Handelsblad*, 4 February 1986.



## 14 Conclusion

Baschwitz's wandering life completed a full circle. At the peak of his career, just before his retirement, Baschwitz participated in a key conference on journalism education, which immediately preceded the founding of the International Association of Mass Communication Research. The conference was in Strasbourg – then French again, and just opposite his German birthplace of Offenburg on the other side of the Rhine. This conference took place just before Strasbourg was designated the seat of the European parliament, which was also a symbol of Franco-German reconciliation.

Strasbourg had long been the capital of the Alsace-Lorraine region: a vital link between the main mining-and-industry areas of Germany and France. The region changed hands several times, and had thus become a centre of gravity for modern European history. It only had a surface area of just fifteen thousand square kilometres and a population of just a few million inhabitants: and yet it became *the* bone of contention par excellence between the two major powers repeatedly fighting for dominance over the western half of the continent. It seemed as if it might tip the balance of power between the two hegemons.

The Rhine flowed along the Franco-German border here, which had ultimately ossified into a long string of huge stone fortifications connected by the subterranean tunnels of the opposing Maginot and Siegfried lines. A thin, over-defended stretch, at the heart of two centuries of continuously escalating battles, from the invasions of the Sun King and Napoleon to the global conflagrations of the First and Second World Wars.

Earlier, Strasbourg had probably been one of the places where Gutenberg developed printing with movable type after Mainz. This had revolutionized early mass communication and led to the Reformation, the spread of the Bible in native languages, and the religious wars. But it had also led to the notorious *Malleus Malleficarum*: the manual for the witch-hunts that occupied Baschwitz's later works.

He had been born into a dynasty of printers himself: it was one of a limited number of newly emerging modern professions that was open to Jews (in contrast to most farming and certain traditional guilds). So there is a nice convergence in the fact that Kurt was to become a pioneer of the science of the press, of newspapers, and of mass communication.

Assimilated Jews had evolved into a very specific intermediary social category in Germany, France, and elsewhere, also because of their involvement in trade. Identifying with the national ideal but with more emphasis

on international and universal values, they played a central role in the emergence of both liberalism and socialism, or of humanism and a modern intelligentsia. Inside-outsiders, they helped develop new perspectives on the dynamics of man and society, and were early pioneers in the new disciplines of psychology and sociology. Baschwitz was exactly such an intellectual – straddling different worlds.

Germany had been late to unify, remained much more decentralized than either Great Britain or France – and does to this very day. There was even more of a tradition of *Wandergeselle*, or journeymen, in Germany than in the surrounding countries. Both artisans and students learnt by successively spending time in a number of regional capitals, each with their own outlook. Baschwitz did as well.

Baschwitz had done his secondary schooling in Frankfurt am Main: a prime financial capital. He also studied in nearby Heidelberg: along with other sleepy provincial towns, a major centre of quiet reflection. But he also studied in the booming northern capital of Berlin, and the southern capital of Munich. Thereafter, he first went to work in Hamburg, the major seaport and most international trading hub, choosing to go into the newspaper business. All of this gave him a varied overview of his giant emerging country and its many contradictions, for instance between the *Gemeinschaft* community of the idyllic traditional countryside and the *Gesellschaft* society of the bustling new metropolises. He also was a witness of the mass in its various incarnations: visible in crowds and riots, invisible in newspaper audiences and opinion currents.

Halfway through the First World War, his newspaper sent him to the adjacent neutral Netherlands as a foreign correspondent. The view of the conflict he had become familiar with at home proved to be profoundly at odds with the view of the conflict prevailing abroad. This got him thinking – about mass propaganda, enemy images, and the mass delusions of peoples confronting each other. His patriotism held firm at first. But the post-war intrigues in the press world of the Weimar Republic further shook his certainties. Especially when they culminated in the emergence of the Nazi movement, the coming to power of Hitler, and the firing of opponents and Jews like himself.

Well into his adult life, at age 47, Baschwitz thus felt forced to flee to the same Netherlands, with which he was already somewhat familiar. A relatively small country, hardly the size of a single large German state – such as the adjacent state of North Rhine-Westphalia. But Holland was also idealized as Germany's political *alter ego* by many liberal German citizens who were caught up in the authoritarian turn at home. It was a delta area

that had developed into a hub of long-distance trade, and more easily kept the free trade and freethinking that Baschwitz continued to favour. Further, Amsterdam retained the small scale of a provincial town, but cherished a rather cosmopolitan orientation. This is where he ultimately flourished, and wrote his most important books.

They show that Baschwitz was and remained a very typical *Bildungs-bürger*, following the nineteenth-century German ideal of a well read and well-educated, professional middle class citizen. His books abound with quotes from, and references to, the German philosophical and literary classics. Most of all Goethe and Kant, Lessing and Schiller, but also Heine and others. He had read about Frederick the Great and other Prussian kings, the works and memoirs of the Iron Chancellor Bismarck, but also of major foreign statesmen like Napoleon – and their various opinions on emerging mass politics. Baschwitz was a scholar of a type that has become increasingly scarce in overspecialized and fragmented modern social science.

This is also reflected in his central method, which becomes apparent when we focus on his books alone, and leave aside the distraction of his many articles and lectures (which usually deal with the same themes anyway). His method throughout was basically using a comparative socio-historical approach to explore the visible and invisible mass. Once he got to work on a particular theme, he read widely, collected examples from various countries and epochs, and laid them side-by-side. He tried to identify the similarities and differences, reflected upon their possible causes and consequences. In this way he attempted to identify the key processes at work. He thus worked by induction from everyday practice, not by deduction from a grand theory.

This is what he did with the four themes of his books (the four P's), and this is how he made some interesting observations that were sometimes ahead of his contemporary colleagues, even in the Anglo-American world. Though his first book nominally dealt with war propaganda, it was rather original in its analysis of the socio- and psycho-dynamics of enemy images. His second book nominally dealt with newspaper history, but not only focused on the institutions but also on 'the invisible mass' of their audiences: their segmentation and orientation, their evolution and impact on the political process.

His third book nominally dealt with mob and crowd behaviour, but was really a reflection on the kind of mass politics that was increasingly threatening democracy. First in Russia, then in Italy, and now in Germany, agitators invoked 'the will of the people' to regiment and subject them. His 1938 book was a desperate call to reason, even though it mostly came too late, could not reach German audiences, and thus fell on largely deaf

ears. His fourth and later books nominally dealt with the older phenomenon of witch-hunts, but in fact considered irrational mass persecutions like those of the Jews: how they originated, persisted, or could be brought to an end.

In a sense, Baschwitz's works make up four limited *capita selecta* on the riddle of the mass that float around the fringes of a broader psycho-social science. Yet they are all connected by a common focus on the strange dynamics of collective subjectivity: of leaders and followers, of social movements and media audiences, of party electorates and national citizenships, in a constant ebb and flow of conflict and consensus-seeking, of decelerating and accelerating change.

It is the ongoing negotiation of meaning, of always-new 'definitions of the situation', that is still at the heart of some specialized problem areas within mass psychology and collective behaviour sociology, within studies of mass psychology, culture, and ideology. Even if his contributions were rather idiosyncratic, and risk getting lost in the hustle-bustle of mainstream psycho-social science today.

Another characteristic was that his books were written in plain everyday language, with plenty of anecdotes and stories. As a journalist and academic, as an intellectual, he preferred to address an educated lay public, and therefore kept away from unnecessary jargon. Even though his sentences and arguments could sometimes become convoluted, as was common among Germans of his category and class (and even considered a sign of literary sophistication).

More or less literal translations into English, Dutch, or other languages, tend to make this problem even more acute, as we have sometimes seen; although reformulations with shorter sentences and slightly different wording may sometimes iron the distracting wrinkles out. The current book has tried to provide representative samples from his thought, in their original form.

At the same time, his six books form only one half of the picture. The other half is the quiet and persistent work of a quarter century, from 1933 onwards, to put 'newspaper science' and mass communication (as well as mass psychology and public opinion) on the map and the agenda in The Netherlands, elsewhere in Western Europe and even the world as a whole. To give it a place within the larger framework of an entirely new social and political faculty in Amsterdam, which was to help improve the *quality* of thinking about the nature and the challenges of democracy.

He did this while also promoting the collaboration between press theorists and press practitioners, out there in the real world. All of this needed a quiet, patient, and persistent diplomat, and that was what he became.

Without him, it would have been much more difficult to bring these different people and currents together. He was a peacemaker. He helped extend the emerging networks of 'press science' and 'publicistics' to Scandinavia in the north, to the Latin countries in the south, and linked them with the Anglophone countries across the waters in the west.

Even though he himself was not particularly well versed in English, he recognized that it was bound to become the dominant language for both science and media. The journal *Gazette*, which he founded, soon developed into a respected pillar of the emerging new field, alongside the International Association of Mass Communication Research.

So Baschwitz deserves a central place in the history of the field of mass communication and public opinion, as well as in that of adjacent mass psychology and collective behaviour sociology, or even that of psycho-social science in general.



# Epilogue

On the further fate of the cluster of institutions founded by him

Just a few further words on how Baschwitz's intellectual biography connects to the sprawling current theory and practice of communication and media studies at the University of Amsterdam today. Baschwitz's immediate legacy mainly consisted of two parts. First: newspaper or press studies (later also radio, television, and mass communication science), with special attention to its historical aspects. Second: (social and) mass psychology, public opinion, and propaganda (later also labelled collective behaviour, audience studies, and media effects by others).

In the press field, Baschwitz was succeeded as professor by Maarten Rooij (from 1957 to 1972), who had been editor-in-chief of the liberal daily *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* before and after the war, and had done a belated Ph.D. on the newspaper as a (mostly economic) institution. After some time, however, the related press institute was relabelled the 'Seminarium' for the study of the means of communication. The historical aspects were first covered by Maarten Schneider, later succeeded by Joan Hemels.<sup>1</sup>

In mass psychology and related fields, Baschwitz was succeeded by his former assistant Marten Brouwer. In this capacity, the latter came to head another newly founded 'Seminarium' for 'Mass psychology, public opinion and propaganda', which was soon relabelled the 'Baschwitz Institute'. On the eve of his retirement, Brouwer briefly tried to refocus it on the emerging international and interdisciplinary field of 'political psychology'.

But in Baschwitz's wake the communication sciences had exploded throughout The Netherlands. There was one (Utrecht) and then more professional schools for journalists, and one for cinema and also television (Amsterdam). After the catholic university in Nijmegen, and the protestant ('Free') university in Amsterdam, most other major universities also took up communication studies in one form or another. The Institute for Theatre

<sup>1</sup> On the one hand the development of people's communicative behaviour, on the other hand the development of thinking about it. Hemels also produced a long series of publications about the latter: from *De Journalistieke Eierdans* (1972) to 'Kommunikationswissenschaft in den Niederlanden' in Michael Meyen & Thomas Wiedemann (Hrsg., 2015), and a similar chapter in Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (Hrsg. 2017).

(and Film) Studies within the Literary Faculty of Baschwitz's own (municipal) University of Amsterdam morphed into a wide-ranging (Cultural) Media Studies program. Rotterdam and Groningen also started special post-graduate years for aspiring journalists.

So it was time to also bring Baschwitz's legacy up to date. Content-wise, the nomination of the British Denis McQuail as a general professor of mass communication at the University of Amsterdam (tenure 1977-1997) brought a highly productive closer link-up with the entire Anglo-American world, where it had already become a field in its own right. He was a pioneer in the media 'uses and gratifications' theory, and published introductions and handbooks that became global references. As of 2010, his *Mass Communication Theories* (Sage) had sold 80,000 copies worldwide. In later studies, he detailed and filled in notions like media 'performance' and media 'accountability'. Meanwhile, he had also helped co-found the *European Journal of Communication*.

Organization-wise, most of its re-founding and further expansion was patiently engineered by Jan van Cuilenburg (tenure 1988-2016). After the re-integration of the 'press science' and 'mass psychology' institutes, he supervised the introduction of a complete program for communication science (1992-3), the founding of the Amsterdam School of Communication Research ASCoR (1997), and finally the adoption of an entirely new Europe-wide approach to Bachelor and Masters programs in all fields. In 2005, the First European Communication Conference was held at the protestant 'Free' university in Amsterdam, underscoring the city's key role.

The cluster of institutions at the former 'municipal' university, now University of Amsterdam, chose to honour both of its main founders. At one point, a special Kurt Baschwitz Chair was introduced for visiting professors, who also delivered a special Kurt Baschwitz Lecture. Later, the research school ASCoR introduced a Baschwitz Faculty 'Article of the Year' Award, and a Baschwitz Young Scholar 'Article of the Year' Award. Still later, ASCoR created a Denis McQuail Award, which made the winner a visiting McQuail Honorary Fellow, who also delivered a McQuail Lecture.

Today, 'Communication and Media Studies' at the University of Amsterdam have developed into the oldest, largest, and most successful cluster in its field in The Netherlands, and one of the major ones in continental Europe and number two in the latest authoritative QS 'world university rankings by subject'. The ultimate result of the stubborn perseverance of a distraught Jewish exile who had been forced to flee Germany in 1933, who miraculously survived a transit camp and hiding from deportation during the war. Before finally realizing his dream of creating a true 'press institute', within the framework of a political and social faculty that he had helped found ...

# Appendix

## Baschwitz's Essay on 'The Power of Stupidity' [of Masses and Elites]<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his career, Baschwitz toyed with the idea of writing a complete book about 'The stupidity of politics/politicians'. The urge was at its peak after the Munich agreements of September 1938, and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's return to London with 'Peace for our time'. (The new war of course began within a year of this statement). But in fact all Baschwitz's books implicitly deal with this same theme, from *Der Massenwahn* to his later works on 'Witch-hunts'.

This 1952 essay presents an overview of some of Baschwitz's ideas, in his own words and one complete article. The piece was selected because it discusses a number of his very specific notions, and applies them to larger overview questions. Such as the social, political, and mass psychology of public opinion, democracy and dictatorship. Or: How ordinary people are often smarter than we think, and power-holders less so.<sup>2</sup>

PM. Note the specific notions, which had been present in Baschwitz' work since 1923: Hierarchical principle (compare Elihu Katz & Paul Lazarsfeld's later 'two step flow', 'personal influence' and 'opinion leadership'); Limited/conditional effects of propaganda (compare Carl Hovland et al.'s later studies on persuasion and attitude change, and Joseph Klapper's on media); Mental paralysis (blindness/ conformism of leaders, partly compare Irving Janis' later 'groupthink'); Must do/ Wanna believe (compare 'blaming the victim'); Need for evening out (compare Leon Festinger's later 'cognitive dissonance reduction'), etc.

During the time over which social psychology has developed – over the last fifty years – only very few books have appeared which declared already in

<sup>1</sup> Full article from *Wetenschap en Samenleving – Maandblad gewijd aan de ontwikkeling der wetenschap en haar betekenis voor mens en maatschappij* (Science and society – Monthly devoted to the development of science and its significance for man and society), Vol. 6, Nr. 1, p. 197-200. Published by the then-recently founded post-war (small, progressive) 'Association of Scientific Researchers'.

<sup>2</sup> Translation from the Dutch by me. I have tried to keep it as literal as possible. But even in Holland, Baschwitz kept the habit of an old-time German intellectual by composing unnecessarily long-winded and complicated idiomatic sentences. I have tried to break them up, and simplify them, as well as I could without changing their meaning.

their title that they would deal with 'stupidity' [i.e., dumb- or foolishness], and none of these books has left clear traces in the literature. But there have been numerous books that treated the subject without naming it. 'Stupidity' is indeed a vague notion, which can hardly be used with scientific exactitude.

But we are often confronted with wide-ranging notions in the terrain of social psychology – and particularly of mass psychology – [which are] at one time given one meaning and then another. Words like 'mass' or 'public' belong to those, especially the term 'public opinion'. Even for a word like 'suggestion', particularly in the compound term 'mass suggestion', one has to keep an eye on how the author delineates it.

It would go too far here, to speak of a new terminology that should be created in this domain. For the time being, we need to make do with what we have. Because this new terminology does not yet exist, and it even seems doubtful to me that it would solve everything. One would rather have to go by the facts that hide behind the use of words, which need not be the same every time.

When contemporaries – learned or not – speak about the mass, they often connect it to the notion of stupidity – explicitly or not. They mean, first of all, the large number of stupid people, or even a majority of stupid people. This representation can then be split again. [With, on the one hand,] the image of people who are simply ignorant, and can or must learn. [And on the other,] the image of people who are incapable of thinking or learning.

The psychologist only employs the term 'intelligence' in a more delineated meaning to indicate a capacity based on aptitude. But here we are dealing with a general form of speech, and the representations that come with it. Secondly: for many, the use of the word 'mass' evokes a detrimental influence, that can be exerted upon the mental capacity of people who are in no way stupid. These representations often mix, and as a whole produce the spectre of the power of stupidity. During earlier times, some occasionally dared speak of the reason [power of judgment] of the people. Today, one would consider the use of the expression 'the reason [power of judgment] of the mass' a paradox.

I will in no way deny here, that the reality we experience is very disquieting and worrying. But one has to realize that the discovery of this reality is still relatively new, and has not adequately been related to the experiences of earlier times. The phenomena that frighten us today have not been noted, much less studied, before. Many of our contemporaries have concluded that these phenomena have only manifested themselves in our time – which is far from proven –, and that the effects of the mass will make themselves increasingly felt. In other words: that the power of stupidity will constantly rise.

## Some examples

It is not my intention to claim here that this pessimistic representation is entirely without grounds, but rather that it cannot be demonstrated to rest on proven facts – if we put these facts in their historic context. What can be proven [is] that in many respects one can notice a beginning of improvement. Our times are often too quick to generalize. In doing so, one supposes that the ‘public’ is incapable of learning from experience, and will always react in the same way. A closer look at the facts demonstrates that this is not the case. From these facts, we will take only a few samples.

We start from the number of poorly gifted [individuals] that emerges from statistics – [which is] indeed fearfully large. Ever since intelligence began to be measured on a large scale: first of schoolchildren, then of recruits. Pessimists fear a fateful influence of this large number on the formation of public opinion, because they consider public opinion the average of all individuals. But in reality, the opinion of relatively few people has a much larger impact on the formation of public opinion than would correspond to their [small] number: persons esteemed in their own circle, and experts on the matter. Opinion formation starts in small circles, radiates to larger circles, and finally becomes public opinion.

Since about 1900, American social psychology indicates this process follows the ‘hierarchical principle’. But the condition for this process is an atmosphere of free exchange of ideas. This hierarchical principle does not only apply to the less gifted. Rather, all of us have the habit of forming an opinion in line with the example of people that appear authoritative to us in certain areas.

There is a sort of division of labour here. This means: we can concentrate our spiritual energy on our [own] profession, because in other areas we can follow the advice of people we have confidence in. The medical doctor and the lawyer are not the only examples. Intelligence lies in the choice of people whom we trust. In this sense, the large number of less gifted [people] has not always proven that unintelligent at all.

During our lives we have repeatedly seen distortions of public opinion, even taking the character of massively clouded judgment [mass delusion]. Many contemporaries see the cause in the wrong choices made by the large mass of less gifted and ignorant [people], the stupid mass, which fell victim to demagogues. But it is not that simple. Rather: the so-called intellectual elite also participates in the clouded judgment, and is even the deciding factor.

Le Bon and other French and Italian authors from around the turn of the century were the first to point to the failure of judgment in such situations.

There are a few things one could object to in their theories, but this is a fact they have seen and described well. Their mistake is most of all, that they tempt us to only use the word ‘mass’ for situations resulting in such clouded judgment.

In fact, however, they thus only describe the exception to the norm. Because [all of] us people can only live and work in an atmosphere of intellectual and emotional connectedness. It is not at all always detrimental, but often productive and generally indispensable. So it would be better to renounce the term ‘psychological mass’, than only to use it whenever there is a clouding of judgment.

## Clouded judgment

Massive clouding of judgment is always the result of terror, and indeed the terror exerted by a minority on a passive majority. The role of the intellectual elite is not always characterized by the fact that it provides the leaders. But rather by the fact that it does not demonstrate [enough of] a power of resistance, against the terrorizing minority. It shows symptoms of mental paralysis. The same is the case with the terrorized majority.

In this case we speak about the influence of a ‘paralyzing idea’. This is an indication of a complex whole of influences related to self-reproach, [and] conscious or unconscious feelings of guilt, with a feeling of shortcoming, of unjust successes, etcetera. The major component is the feeling of being connected in solidarity with the terrorizing minority, against a danger that threatens the community from the outside. The clouding of judgment that manifests itself as a distortion of opinion is not the cause, but the consequence, of the passivity of the majority and the elite.

In this regard, we speak of a ‘need for evening out’ [i.e. bringing acts, thoughts and feelings in line with each other]. This means: people who have become co-responsible or co-offenders with the acts of a terrorizing group through force and intimidation, want to believe that whatever they allowed to happen or participated in was justified. To respond to their [psychological] need for evening out, they neutralize their own reason, appraisal, and better judgment.

That is how [the contradictory effects of] propaganda can be explained. It is passionately embraced by one group, [which is] in thrall of a need for evening out. While it is recognized as mendacious and denounced by other groups, that are spiritually free. It is a superstition of our age, that one can always and everywhere be successful through a giant propaganda

apparatus. History provides many telling examples. One also has to be careful with the supposition, that a people or other group that has once greatly given in to a propaganda in line with its need for evening out, will be as 'suggestible' under other circumstances.

## Passivity

The defencelessness and passivity of the majority is also a discovery of this time; modern dictatorships are founded on this. This passivity, too, is often described as a characteristic of the sluggish 'mass'. This is also misleading. The majority is not at all always passive and defenceless. But one [only] calls her 'mass', when she has become defenceless under the influence of a paralyzing idea and the ensuing collapse of the legal order and the protection of the [individual] person.

In earlier times, when they spoke about 'people' in another sense, they talked about the passionate forces of revolt and revolution dormant in them. No government before the First World War, not even an autocratic one, considered what is now called the 'mass' (and what we would rather call the majority) [to be] meek and passive. There seems to be a contradiction between the experiences of our time and the opinions of those times. But it is wrong to conclude, that there has been a change in the people of our time. The explanation is rather that during earlier days they did not have a correct image of what happened during a violent revolution.

In fact, then too, it was only active minorities that determined the course of events, by exploiting an idea [that was] paralysing the old state government and the majority. People today are neither more cowardly nor more passive than their ancestors. This is also proven by resistance movements and the mental resilience of majorities in countries exposed to a foreign terror [implicitly: like the wartime Netherlands] – and where the need for evening out was therefore not stirred.

Massive clouding of judgment is described here as a result of terror and intimidation. One should not only think of physical terror in this respect. There are also purely psychological situations of coercion, which more or less confront the individual tied to his group with the dilemma of 'must do' and 'wanna believe'. Every war entails such a situation, and even the danger or fear of war.

We cannot extensively elaborate here, what history teaches us about the influence of public opinion on the decisions of a government. Let's only say this: a government that pretends to have been driven to war by

its public opinion behaves like someone who says he has been pushed by his own shadow.

## Summary

Whenever one abstracts from the influence of the need for evening out – the mental adaptation to coercion and terror – there is little left of the dark doctrine about the degrading influence of the ‘mass’ on the thoughts and feelings of the individual. The terrifying phenomena of massive clouding of judgment do not show that people have become dumber and worse. Only that, as a mass, they can come under the terror regime of fellow men of a less perceptive and less benevolent character. To investigate the special conditions under which this becomes possible is one of the major tasks of mass psychology. Or, as [Harold] Lasswell [the pioneer of political communication and political psychology in the U.S.] expresses it: democratic science.

The real danger lies in the failure of [those who are] in themselves sensible people. We need not despair about the capacity of the lesser gifted to learn what they need, or at least to learn from experience. We should not underestimate the power of stupidity in all its appearances. But in our times [that are] strongly tending to pessimism, it is appropriate to point to the limits of this power, and to the possibility of effectively countering it.

# Acknowledgements

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## Earlier works on Baschwitz

Earlier, there have been two master's theses about Baschwitz, both so elaborate that they could easily have developed into Ph.D. dissertations.

**Vera Ebels-Dolanová** (b. 1948 in Prague, Czechoslovakia; fled to The Netherlands in the fateful year 1968) did a Master's thesis in Dutch titled 'Een Aanzet tot een Biografie van Kurt Baschwitz – Zijn leven, werk en denken' ('A first draft for a biography of Kurt Baschwitz – His life, work and thought'), supervised by Baschwitz's partial successor Prof. Marten Brouwer of the 'Seminarium' for Mass psychology etc., within the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam.

She devoted extra attention to the Dutch and Amsterdam angle. She also ordered and studied a large amount of papers, both prints and notes, which Kurt Baschwitz had left to the Stichting Persbibliotheek (Press Library Foundation), to his widow, and to his youngest daughter. Most of

these papers are now in the Bijzondere Collecties (Special Collections) of the University Library at the Oude Turfmarkt, although they have been re-organized later – which may occasionally create confusion as to which document is where. (In recent years, Vera has added some further more confidential materials that she received from the same Rody/Rotraud Baschwitz). This is where I studied them.

During the first half of 1983, Vera also interviewed Baschwitz's second wife; former scientific assistants Marten Brouwer, Hans Daudt, and Hans van Schravendijk; former staff members Esther Cohen, Dick Couvée, and Lilian Jampoller; and acquaintances Arnold Buena de Mesquita and Boris Sapir (of the International Institute of Social History).

The thesis was completed in August 1983. It was then published as a special issue of the sub-faculty *Mededelingen* publication series No. 39 (ISSN 0168-0129), in April 1984. One of her informants had been Baschwitz's youngest daughter Rotraud/ Rody, not his eldest daughter Gisela/Isa. The two had been embroiled on and off, at least since the war.

In July 1984, Gisela/Isa submitted a long letter with 'addenda et corrigenda' to the author of the thesis. Because 'many passages concerning the personal life of KB are based on deficient or untrue information, and need to be revised'. She highhandedly demanded that her letter be added to all copies of the publication, and sent to all subscribers of the faculty publication series. (It is also kept with the archive's copy of the thesis). It is true that there were a few minor slips in the text based on Rotraud/Rody's account, but Gisela/Isa was often a rather difficult character.

**Dieter Anschlag** (b. 1958 in Rhede, Westphalia) later did a Masters' thesis in German 'Wegbereiter im Exil – Kurt Baschwitz: Journalist und Zeitungswissenschaftler' ('Trailblazer in Exile – Kurt Baschwitz:Journalist and Newspaper scientist') at the relevant department of Münster university (which is close to, and had always maintained 'special relations' with The Netherlands, Amsterdam, and Baschwitz).

It was published in 1990 as a special issue, number IV in the *Exkurse* series, of the Münster *Journal für Publizistik und Kommunikation*.

Anschlag devoted further attention to Baschwitz's press role in Germany before 1933, and his renewed cooperation with German colleagues after 1945. In November 1986, Anschlag (who understands Dutch) had conducted interviews with Brouwer and Ebels-Dolanová (see above), with Baschwitz's widow, and also corresponded with his eldest daughter (who had been in the resistance and knew more about the period around the war). She was not immediately satisfied and wrote him a further letter, and then a

nine-page note in 1987, on what she knew about their life. (She later also gave interviews to others, with additional information: see below).

**Joan Hemels** (b. 1944), a (much) later partial successor of Baschwitz as a professor of communication and communication history (i.e. the development of people's communicative behaviour, and the thinking about it). He is the author of the article on Baschwitz in the Dutch Biographical *Woordenboek*. As well as a large number of works quoted here: on the pioneers and various programs on press history, journalism, and communication science, in the Dutch as well as the Germanic language areas.

**Alex Geelhoed**, formerly at the International Institute of Social History, was kind enough to share key materials and notes on the contested late 1940s founding of the Political and Social Science Faculty at the University of Amsterdam.

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### Co-readers of the early manuscript

Since this intellectual biography touches on different geographical areas, historical epochs, and scientific disciplines, I found it wise to ask a number of colleagues to give me detailed feedback on the complete earlier first English 'arch' manuscript. My thanks go to:

**Ruud Abma**, lecturer in General Social Science at the University of Utrecht, and historian of social science.

**Vittorio Busato**, chief editor of the monthly magazine *De Psycholoog* at the main Dutch psychologists association Netherlands Institute of Psychologists NIP in Utrecht, also a historian of the field.

**François Dumoulin**, former lecturer of psychology at Saxion University of Applied Sciences & University of Twente, Enschede.

**Vera Ebels-Dolanová**, currently director at the fund for Central and East European Book Projects CEEBP in Amsterdam and author of the aforementioned 1983-4 Masters thesis in Dutch about Kurt Baschwitz (submitted at the University of Amsterdam).

**Eric Haas**, senior lecturer in the social sciences, InHolland University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam/The Hague, also a historian of psychology.

**Joan Hemels**, emeritus professor of communication and communication history at the University of Amsterdam.

**Jeroen Jansz**, professor of Communication and Media at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, also a historian of psychology.

**Walther Kok**, political scientist, director of the Witches' Weighing House museum in Oudewater.

**Pieter van Strien**, emeritus professor of foundations and history of psychology at the University of Groningen.

Two more co-readers were kind enough to look at the chapters and sections specifically concerning their expertise:

**Dieter Anschlag**, currently editor in chief of *Medienkorrespondenz* in Bonn; author of the aforementioned 1990 masters' thesis in German about Kurt Baschwitz (submitted in Münster).

**David Barnouw**, expert on Anne Frank, the *Diary*, and the German occupation of The Netherlands in general; formerly with the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation in Amsterdam.

Needless to say, if there are any remaining slip-ups, they are my sole responsibility.

#### Archives/libraries, collections/museums

**Amsterdam:** Bijzondere Collecties, Bibliotheek, University of Amsterdam (Special Collections, Library, University of Amsterdam). Baschwitz papers, boxes with some 180 separate files. (Special thanks: Klaas van der Hoek, Gijs Sevenhuijsen and desk staff)

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## About the Author

Jaap van Ginneken studied social psychology, with 'press studies' and 'mass psychology' as collateral subjects, at the University of Amsterdam. This was later followed by a Ph.D. with distinction on political and mass psychology. He was an assistant at 'The Baschwitz Institute' within the Political and Social Science Faculty, and ultimately a part-time associate professor at the International School and the department of Communication Science there.

At the same time, he followed a parallel career as an independent researcher, writer, speaker, and consultant (f.i. on information/ communication about psychology and the social sciences for exhibitions, museums, and television). He has published some two-dozen full-length and single-author books: many also translated into English and other languages. Some half of them were scholarly studies, the other half aimed at a wider public.

They basically dealt with two fields. First, the media and images of other cultures: in global news, Hollywood blockbuster movies, comic strips, and everyday life. Second, on political and mass psychology: its origins, various forms of collective behaviour, rapid shifts in public opinion, mood contagion, persuasion techniques, and most recently leadership.



# References

## Sources of illustrations

- 1, 2, 4, 7, 13, 19. Private pictures, donated by grandson Joris Bloklander. Most in a belatedly added unnumbered box with separate documents, at the end of series of boxes composing the Baschwitz archives (XXXII A 9). Special Collections, Amsterdam University Library.
3. Microfilm print, from the *Inst. f. Zeitungsforschung*, Dortmund.
5. Edmund J. Sullivan, *The Kaisers Garland*. London: Heinemann 1915, p. 71. Also reproduced in Paul Moeyes' Dutch overview book mentioned in the references, p. 45).
- 6, 8, 9. Creative commons pictures, in the public domain and free from copyright, attached to the relevant English Wikipedia articles. First origins: 6. 'The Lusitania's last voyage'.  
8. Graph produced by 'Delphi234', based on Table IV (p. 441) in *The economics of inflation* by Constantino Bresciani-Turroni (1937). 9. New Year 1933 supplement to the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* in the Baschwitz archives.
10. Cover for Baschwitz's book *De krant door alle tijden*, designed by artist Albert Hahn Jr. (1894-1953), commissioned by Keesing publishers.
11. Original in the German *Bundesarchiv*.
12. Reproduced in Schrijvers' book on Cohen, listed in the references, between p. 181 & 182.
14. Illustration from a 1554 Flemish manual on criminal law by Joost de Damhouder. Reproduced in Reinilde Vervoort's monograph on witchcraft images, p. 34.
- 15, 16, 18, 20. Private pictures, loaned by grandson Erik Bloklander to the author and scanned. Other copies sometimes later also found in the Baschwitz archives.
17. Part of private picture, author unknown. Copy in the possession of Alex Geelhoed, who organized a 1992 retrospective exhibition on 'The little Cold War' and the founding of the PSF faculty.

## Kurt Baschwitz, various book editions and brochures

*Chronological; Separate chapters and articles not included*

'Die Organisation der städtischen Haus -und Grundbesitzer in Deutschland – Ihre Entwicklung, ihr Wesen und ihr Wirken – Eine kritische Untersuchung' ('The organization of urban owners of houses and land in Germany – Their development, their essence and their functioning – A critical investigation'), German, Ph.D. dissertation, economics (Stuttgart: Druck Union Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 1909). Also published as volume 88 in the *Münchener Volkswirtschaftlichen Studien* edited by Lujo Brentano and Walther Lotz (Stuttgart/Berlin: J.G. Cotta 1909, 206 p.).

*Der Massenwahn – Seine Wirkung und seine Beherrschung (Mass delusion – Its functioning and control)*, German (1st and 2nd ed. Munich: C.H. Beck 1923, 276 p., in traditional Gothic script). Third, entirely revised edition, with the different subtitle *Ursache und Heilung des Deutschenhasses (Causes and healing of the hatred of Germans)* (1932, 385 p., in modern script). Unauthorized recent facsimile reprint of the last version by a right-wing group: Viöl, Nordfriesland: Verlag für ganzheitliche Forschung 1999.

*De krant door alle tijden (The newspaper through the ages)*, Dutch (Amsterdam: Keesing 1938; Second revised edition 1949, 288 p.).

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