

The Language of Nazi Genocide

Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry

In the Nazi genocide of European Jews, words preceded, accompanied, and made mass murder possible.

Using a multilayered approach to connect official language to everyday life, historian Thomas Pegelow Kaplan analyzes the role of language in genocide. This study seeks to comprehend how the perpetrators constructed difference, race, and their perceived enemies; how Nazi agencies communicated to the public through the nation's press; and how Germans of Jewish ancestry received, contested, and struggled for survival and self against remarkable odds.

The Language of Nazi Genocide covers the historical periods of the late Weimar Republic, the Nazi regime, and early postwar Germany. However, by addressing the architecture of conceptual separation between groups and the means by which social aggression is disseminated, this study offers a model for comparative studies of linguistic violence, hate speech, and genocide in the modern world.

Thomas Pegelow Kaplan is currently assistant professor of modern European history at Davidson College. He has also taught at Grinnell College and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he received his PhD. He was awarded a Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance Fellowship by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and a Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. His articles have appeared in *Central European History*, *Contemporary European History*, and *Zeitgeschichte*.

The Language of Nazi Genocide

*Linguistic Violence and the Struggle
of Germans of Jewish Ancestry*

THOMAS PEGELOW KAPLAN

Davidson College



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-0-521-88866-0 – The Language of Nazi Genocide
 Thomas Pegelow Kaplan
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521888660

© Thomas Pegelow Kaplan 2009

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2009

First paperback edition 2011

Reprinted 2011, 2012

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Pegelow Kaplan, Thomas.

The language of Nazi genocide : linguistic violence and the struggle of Germans of Jewish ancestry / Thomas Pegelow Kaplan. – 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-88866-0 (hardback)

1. Antisemitism in the press – Germany – History – 20th century. 2. Antisemitism in language – Germany – History – 20th century. 3. Jews – Press coverage – Germany – History – 20th century. 4. German language – Social aspects – Germany. 5. Mass media – Social aspects – Germany. 6. Press and politics – Germany – History – 20th century. 7. Government and the press – Germany – History – 20th century. 8. Germany – Ethnic relations. 9. Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) – Causes. I. Title.

PN5214.A58P44 2009

073'.08992404309043-dc22 2009010919

ISBN 978-0-521-88866-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-65057-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

In memory of

Franz Künniger, 1917–1996

Joachim Pegelow, 1923–2002

Contents

<i>Illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii
Introduction	I
1 “We Are All Germans; Why Then Ask for Religion?”: Cultural Identity, Language, and Weimar Pluralism, 1928–1932	15
2 “Racial and Social Boundaries between Germans and Jews Are to Be Strictly Drawn”: Dictatorship Building and the Process of Nazifying Language, 1933	58
3 Toward the Eradication of the “Impossible, Untenable Category of ‘German Jews’”: Enforcing and Contesting Racial Difference, 1935–1938	102
4 “The Jewess” Attempted to “Stage a Case on Her Descent”: Linguistic Violence as Part of Genocide, 1941–1945	160
5 “We Are Not Bad Jews, Because We Believe We Are Good and True Germans”: Another Beginning and Persisting Difference, 1945–1948	219
Conclusion	272
<i>Appendix: Frequency of Key Categories of Germanness and Jewishness</i>	281
<i>Bibliography</i>	289
<i>Bibliographical Essay</i>	293
<i>Index</i>	297

Illustrations

1.1 SA men distribute literature and papers to passersby, 1929. National Archives.	page 41
2.1 A merchant offering German-Jewish newspapers in Berlin, 1934. Bundesarchiv Koblenz.	88
2.2 Unidentified reader with a copy of the <i>CV-Zeitung</i> . Jüdisches Museum Berlin, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.	94
3.1 Joseph Goebbels and Alfred-Ingemar Berndt at the Propaganda Ministry, Berlin. National Archives.	115
3.2 Office of the <i>CV-Zeitung</i> , Berlin, 1936. Jüdisches Museum Berlin, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.	136
3.3 Robert Weltsch and staff at the office of the <i>Jüdische Rundschau</i> , Berlin, 1937. Jüdisches Museum Berlin, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.	137
3.4 Newspaper reader at newsstand in Vienna, 1938. AP/Wide World Photos, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.	146
4.1 Wilhelm Weiß, the <i>Völkischer Beobachter's</i> editor-in-chief. National Archives.	183
4.2 Photomontage by Frieda Eckart for the Reich Kinship Office, 1944. Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.	214
4.3 Additional montage by Frieda Eckart for the Reich Kinship Office, 1944. Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.	215

Acknowledgments

During my upbringing in the West Germany of Chancellors Schmidt and Kohl, I performed my nonmilitary service (*Zivildienst*) as a nursing aide for elderly patients. During these experiences, I was struck by statements made by war veterans that, upon closer examination, turned out to be pure Nazi jargon. I occasionally received pieces of “advice” from some of the patients in my care. “Do not trust the white Jews,” one of them told me. “They are worse than the black Jews.” It took me a long time to recover from the shock of these words. Pondering these slurs, my determination to understand where these words came from and why they made such an impression on these men grew over subsequent years. Eventually, I decided to undertake a systematic research project that would shed light on how the Nazis remade the ways in which Germans, such as these patients of my nonmilitary service period, spoke, thought, and wrote about Germanness and Jewishness. I wanted to know how the men and women whom the regime recategorized as Jews were able to respond to this massive linguistic onslaught.

Over the years, my research has taken me to an array of universities and research institutes, where I have found immense support from first-rate scholars. A large number of researchers, librarians, archivists, contemporary witnesses, and survivors answered my inquiries, commented on my work, and posed stimulating questions. It is with gratitude that I take this opportunity to thank them and the many other individuals and institutions who have made my work and this book possible.

I embarked on my research with funding from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which granted me a Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance Fellowship; the Illinois-based Holocaust Educational Foundation; and a research fellowship from the Graduate School of the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. Additional graduate school and history department grants, as well as a generous fellowship from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, supported the early writing process. Further research

for this book was made possible by a Bernadotte Schmitt Research Grant of the American Historical Association and faculty scholarship grants from the Dean's Office at Grinnell College and the Dean of Faculty at Davidson College.

I am particularly indebted to colleagues who carefully read portions of the manuscript. Ali Garbarini, Cora Granata, Jesse Spohnholz, and Katherine Watson offered insightful criticism and suggestions. I would also like to thank the two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press whose detailed comments proved to be immensely helpful. At Cambridge, Eric Crahan has been a patient and knowledgeable editor who walked me through the process with great care.

I have also profited from many opportunities to discuss my findings at conferences, workshops, and colloquia. I am thankful to Wolfgang Benz, Werner Bergmann, and Johannes Heil for their invitation to give a talk at the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism at the Technical University Berlin and for their support for my research. Gisela Bock and members of her research colloquium at the Free University Berlin offered invaluable suggestions. As a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, I benefited from an outstanding intellectual environment and comments from many fine scholars, including Suzanne Brown-Fleming, Martin Dean, Michael Gelb, Wendy Lower, and Jürgen Matthäus. I am grateful to Lisa Heinemann for the chance to address the University of Iowa's Gender Studies Workshop. Thomas Lekan provided a most productive setting at the inaugural Southeast German Studies Workshop at the University of South Carolina. Moreover, I am indebted to the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., where I had the good fortune to participate in an exceptional Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar. I would also like to thank my co-panelists, commentators, and audiences at meetings of the German Studies Association and the American Historical Association and at Lessons and Legacies conferences for enriching discussions. Parts of Chapter 4 have appeared in the form of an article entitled "Determining 'People of German Blood,' 'Jews' and 'Mischlinge': The Reich Kinship Office and the Competing Discourses and Powers of Nazism, 1941–1943" in *Contemporary European History* 15 (2006): 43–65. I am indebted to John Connelly and the journal's readers for their questions and suggestions.

Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to the following scholars, who readily offered valuable assistance and shared their impressive knowledge: Tom Angress, Avraham Barkai, Doris Bergen, William Brustein, Eric Ehrenreich, Geoffrey Giles, Sander Gilman, Atina Grossmann, Wolf Gruner, Jeffrey Herf, Dagmar Herzog, Michaela Hoenicke-Moore, Brandon Hunziker, Christoff Mauch, Beate Meyer, Francis Nicosia, Michael Phayer, Monika Richarz, Dirk Rupnow, Adelheid von Saldern, Karl Schleunes, Julius Schoeps, Susanne Schönborn, Claudia Schoppmann, Diana Schulle, Gerhard Weinberg, Edward Westermann, Richard Wetzell, and Jonathan Wiesen. Alan Steinweis went particularly out of his way and provided me access to his archival findings on the Hinkel office.

Acknowledgments

xi

I am most indebted to the survivors whom I interviewed in Germany and the United States. I feel honored by their trust, their willingness to share their memories with me, and, in many cases, their invitations into their homes. All of them have asked to remain anonymous. Otherwise I would have gladly thanked them here by name.

Like all historians, I relied greatly on the help of librarians and archivists who patiently provided me with the requested sources and introduced me to new collections. I would particularly like to thank Jana Blumberg of the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, Klaus Dettmer of the Landesarchiv Berlin, Sabine Hank and Barbara Welker of the Archive of the Centrum Judaicum, Alice Uebe of the Stadtmuseum Berlin, Jürgen Bogdahn of the Entschädigungsbehörde Berlin, and Monika Geilen of the Bundesarchiv Koblenz. I am also indebted to Timothy Mulligan and Amy Schmidt of the National Archives, College Park, Maryland; Aleksandra Borecka, Steven Kanaley, Aaron Kornblum, and Caroline Waddell of the archive and library of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; and Diane Spielmann of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. Furthermore, I have received diligent help from librarians at my institutional homes at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Grinnell College, and, since 2007, Davidson College. I am especially thankful to Leslie Gardner and Joe Gutekanst of the interlibrary loan departments.

Finally, I have benefited immeasurably from selfless teachers and outstanding scholars. Hans-Otto Binder and Peter Hilsch of Tübingen University introduced me to the academic study of history. Reinhard Rürup of the Technical University Berlin first guided me in the study of Nazism. At the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, I grew intellectually in response to the challenges of superb teachers and researchers like Lloyd Kramer, Melissa Bullard, Jay Smith, and, of course, Christopher R. Browning, one of the most impressive and generous historians I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Claudia Koonz of Duke University served on my committee and was always available for the most thought-provoking comments. At Grinnell and Davidson Colleges, I have benefited from the support of my history department colleagues who have been models to aspire to. My greatest appreciation is reserved for Konrad H. Jarausch. Over the years, he has been an invaluable mentor, tireless reader of my work, and generous innovator from whom I have never stopped learning.

Lastly, I want to thank my family, especially my parents and grandparents, who have stood by me even as I embarked on a journey that took me halfway around the world. I would like to express my deep affection for my late grandfathers, Franz Künniger and Joachim Pegelow, who inspired my interest in history and truly were my first teachers. And yet, no one has done more than my partner and wife Ann Pegelow Kaplan to help me with this research and book. Taking time off from her busy life to read and edit the entire manuscript, she has never failed to push me further. Her intellectual rigor and unwavering love and support sustained me from start to finish. My most profound admiration and thank-you will forever be hers.

Abbreviations

AHR	American Historical Review
ASfS	<i>Allgemeines Suchblatt für Sippenforscher</i>
BAB	Bundesarchiv Berlin
BAK	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
BayHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München
BAZDH	Bundesarchiv, Zwischenarchiv Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten
CDU	Christian Democratic Party of Germany (Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands)
CEH	Central European History
CJA	Stiftung Neue Synagoge Centrum Judaicum, Archiv
CSU	Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union)
CV	Central Organization of the German Citizens of Jewish Faith (Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens)
CV-Z	<i>C.V. Zeitung</i>
DDP	German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei)
DISCC	District Information Services Control Command
DNB	German News Agency (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro)
DNVP	German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei)
DP	Displaced Person
DPr	<i>Deutsche Presse</i>
DVP	German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei)
DW	<i>Der Weg</i>
EE	Evening edition
FME	First morning edition
FR	<i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i>
FSV	<i>Familie, Sippe, Volk</i>
FZ	<i>Frankfurter Zeitung</i>
Gestapo	Secret State Police (Geheime Staatspolizei)
HA	NSDAP Hauptarchiv

HIM	Hoover Institution Microfilms
HLRS	Hans-und-Luise-Richter-Stiftung
ICD	Information Control Division
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich
IMT	International Military Tribunal
<i>JN</i>	<i>Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Jüdische Rundschau</i> , Berlin
<i>JRM</i>	<i>Jüdische Rundschau</i> , Marburg
KPD	Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands)
KWI	Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute
LAB	Landesarchiv Berlin
LBIYB	Leo Baeck Institute Year Book
LoC	Library of Congress
<i>MBfPIV</i>	<i>Ministerial-Blatt für die Preußische innere Verwaltung</i>
NA	National Archives, College Park
NSK	National Socialist Party Correspondence (Nationalsozialistische Partei-Korrespondenz)
<i>NYHT</i>	<i>New York Herald Tribune</i> (European edition)
OdF	Victim of Fascism (Opfer des Faschismus)
OdNG	Victim of the Nuremberg Legislation (Opfer der Nürnberger Gesetzgebung)
OMGBY	Office of Military Government for Bavaria
OMGHE	Office of Military Government for Hesse
OMGUS	Office of Military Government for Germany – United States
OT	Organization Todt
PK	Wehrmacht's propaganda company (Propagandakompanie)
<i>PNP</i>	<i>Passauer Neue Presse</i>
PWD	Psychological Warfare Division
RfS	Reich Agency for Kinship Research (Reichsstelle für Sippenforschung)
<i>RGBl</i>	<i>Reichsgesetzblatt</i>
RjF	National Union of Jewish War Veterans (Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten)
RPL	Reich Propaganda Leadership (Reichspropagandaleitung)
RSA	Reich Kinship Office (Reichssippenamt)
RTLML	Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines
RuSHA	SS Race and Settlement Main Office (Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt)
SA	Storm troopers (Sturmabteilung)
SAPMO-BA	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, Bundesarchiv Berlin
SD	Security Service of the SS (Sicherheitsdienst)
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)

Abbreviations

xv

SfR	Office of the Expert in Racial Research at the Reich Minister of the Interior (Sachverständiger für die Rasseforschung beim Reichsminister des Innern)
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force
SMA	Soviet military administration
SME	Second morning edition
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
SS	Protection Squad (Schutzstaffel)
StK	Staatskanzlei
UPO	United Press Office of the Reich government and State Department
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Archives, Washington, D.C.
VB	<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i>
VdA	Union of Germans Abroad (Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland)
VdN	Persecutee of the Nazi Regime (Verfolgter des Naziregime)
VfZG	Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte
WTB	Wolff's Telegraphisches Bureau
ZfG	Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft
ZfS	<i>Zeitschrift für Standesamtswesen</i>
ZVfD	Zionist Organization for Germany (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland)