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Foundations of Nazi Cultural Policy and Institutions Responsible for Its Implementation in the Period 1933–1939

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present and analyze the foundations and premises of Nazi cultural policy, and the bodies responsible for its implementation, the two most important ones being: National Socialist Society for German Culture and the Ministry of National Enlightenment and Propaganda of the Reich. Policy in this case is interpreted as intentional activity of the authorities in the field of culture, aimed at influencing the attitudes and identity of the population of the Third Reich. The analysis covers the most important documents, statements and declarations of politicians and their actual activity in this domain. Adopting such a broad perspective allowed to comprehensively show both the language and the specific features of the messages communicated by the Nazi authorities, and its impact on cultural practices.

Key words

Third Reich, Nazi, cultural policy, National Socialist Society for German Culture, Ministry of National Enlightenment and Propaganda of the Reich

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of culture is one of the most important distinctive features of individual societies and nations. In a democratic social order, creators of culture can take full advantage of creative freedom, while the public can choose what suits them best from a wide range of possibilities. Culture is also a highly variable phenomenon, subject to various influences. Oftentimes, it becomes also the subject matter of political action. The impact of politics on culture is widely underestimated, and yet it is difficult to question the close links between the development of culture and the political decisions of the authorities². In a totalitarian system on the other hand, in extreme contrast to the democratic systems, there is no room for independent creativity and culture. State policy in the sphere of culture in this case can not be seen merely as a means of support for cultural activity, but as a tool for its intentional management instead. The changes that have occurred in Germany after the seizure of power by Adolf Hitler in 1933 concerned not only the political, social and economic life, but also to a large extent the domain of culture. The Nazis completely eliminated freedom in the field of culture and began to exert “control” over it. Culture has become a political tool, used in “storytelling”, in narratives and interpretations of the newly created reality supplied by the authorities. Its primary aim was to influence the political identity of society, impact the shared ideas, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of individuals³.

The purpose of this article is to present and analyze the foundations and premises of Nazi cultural policy, and the responsible for its implementation. The analysis covers the documents and politically relevant statements of those in power on the topic of culture, delivered in a manner particular to totalitarian regimes. This allowed the authors an opportunity to identify the features of the “discourse of power” in the field of culture: mainly newspeak, a characteristic element of that period in history. The knowledge of these problems permits to understand what is the place and role of culture in a totalitarian state. It serves also as a reference point for understanding culture as a political category today.

² R.Zenderowski, K. Cebul, M. Krycki, *Międzynarodowe stosunki kulturalne* [International Cultural Relations], Warszawa 2010, pp. 134–135.

³ See: E. Bahr, *Nazi Cultural Politics: Intentionalism vs. Functionalism* [in:] *National Socialists Cultural Policy*, G.R. Cuomo (eds.), New York 1995, pp. 5–22.

2. ORIGINS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST CULTURAL POLICY

The main interpretation and creed of the Nazi cultural policy was presented by Adolf Hitler on the pages of his political autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, which became to an extent a Nazi “Bible”. Its first volume was published in July 1925, and the second in December 1926. The author of *Mein Kampf* sharply criticized the culture of the Weimar Republic, and at the same time presented a plan to restore it to its former glory and health. Discussing the notion of “cultural revolution” (German: kulturelle Revolution), the starting point for Hitler was the assumption that only the Aryans – i.e. the representatives of the most perfect among human races – are capable of being the “founders of culture” (German: Kulturbegründer). Humanity owes them all the achievements in the fields of culture, arts, science and technology. The Aryans laid the foundation for all human achievements, without them there would be no culture and no civilization⁴. The German nation, as the most perfect creation of the Aryan race, is completely self-sufficient in terms of culture, so it must reject all foreign influences that lead only to its “degeneration” (German: Entartung). The author of *Mein Kampf* notes with regret that unfortunately the “degeneration” of the German culture has already, to an extent, occurred – a testament to this sad fact are, in his opinion, the avant-garde, innovative trends in the arts, such as Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism and expressionism. Moreover, this “degeneration” of culture is a clear sign of a crisis in the Weimar Republic. It is therefore necessary to take drastic action to “purify” the culture and – interestingly – to subordinate it entirely to the national political ideas⁵. The Germans as true “guardians of culture” were called to spread their culture among other nations, but not all nations could be the worthy “bearers” (German: Kulturträger) of the German culture. The main criterion determining such a possibility were the racial considerations⁶. As an example of a nation of “bearers of culture” in *Mein Kampf* Hitler lists the Japanese⁷. In his view, the greatest danger looming over the German culture are the “destroyers of culture” (German: Kulturzerstörer), namely the Jews, who are the polar opposite of the Aryans, and do not have any – even the smallest – culture-founding abilities. They steal the culture of other nations and

⁴ A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, München 1940, pp. 317, 318, 421.

⁵ Ibidem, pp. 279, 283.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 324.

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 318–319.

brutally destroy it⁸. As we can see from the above summary, the essential elements of Hitler's argumentation about culture were rooted in nationalistic and racist foundations, what is highly characteristic of the Nazi worldview on the whole⁹.

3. ALFRED ROSENBERG AND ACTIVITY OF THE MILITANT LEAGUE FOR GERMAN CULTURE

Among the party functionaries involved in implementation of the Nazi cultural policy model, Alfred Rosenberg was a particularly active player. He was born in Estonia, and studied architecture in Riga, followed by engineering studies in Moscow. In 1917, after the outbreak of the October Revolution, Rosenberg emigrated to Germany. From 1921, he worked in the editorial office of the newspaper "Volkischer Beobachter" and was its leading publicist. Subsequently, starting in March 1923, he served as the editor-in-chief of this publication – an important press organ of the Nazi party. He participated in the so-called Beer Hall Putsch (Munich Putsch) and after the coup failed Hitler – himself arrested and charged with treason – entrusted Rosenberg with the temporary leadership of the Nazi Party. In 1930 Rosenberg was elected to the Reichstag. In the same year, he completed work on the book entitled *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the Twentieth century), which – next to *Mein Kampf* – became the most important ideological work of the Nazi movement¹⁰.

The start of Rosenberg's organized, institutional activity in the field of culture dates back to the mid-1920s. During the third congress of the NSDAP (German: Parteitag), held in Nuremberg on 19–21 August 1927, this ambitious ideologue of the party called for the creation of a cultural organization which would take action to bring about the German cultural renewal. The essence of this renewal was to be the absolute "Aryanization" of culture, a complete rejection of "racially alien" influences and elements. Mid-October 1927, Rosenberg turned to the prominent functionaries of the Nazi movement asking for help in the implementation of the idea initially presented in Nuremberg. Having obtained the required support, on

⁸ Ibidem, pp. 329, 330, 332, 358.

⁹ Speeches and publications of other chief dignitaries of the Nazi movement on the topic, including above all that of Joseph Goebbels, are only a development of the ideas and notions presented by Hitler.

¹⁰ For more information see: A. Molau, *Alfred Rosenberg. Der Ideologie des Nationalsozialismus. Eine politische Biografie*, Koblenz 1993; E. Piper, *Alfred Rosenberg. Hitlers Chefideologe*, München 2007.

4 January 1928 Rosenberg founded the National Socialist Society for German Culture (German: Nationalsozialistische Gesellschaft für Kultur, NSGfK) with headquarters in Munich, and became its first chairman. The leadership of the newly established association included also Franz Xaver Schwarz – as Treasurer (also the Treasurer of NSDAP), Philipp Bouhler – as Secretary, and Heinrich Himmler and Gregor Strasser as founding members (German: Gründungsmitglieder). In a public appeal entitled *Kampf gegen den kulturellen Niedergang!* (The Fight against the Fall of Culture!) published in May 1928 in the magazine “Weltkampf”, Alfred Rosenberg stressed that while the idea of establishing such an association was indeed born in the circles of the National Socialists, the organisation itself operated independently of the NSDAP, and all “Germans aware and conscious of their nationality” (German: volksbewussten Deutschen), not necessarily members of the Nazi party, could join its ranks. The Society was thus to have a nationwide and supra-partisan character.

In December 1928, the Society was renamed as the Militant League for German Culture (German: Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, KfdK). The following specialist sections (German: Fachgruppen) operated within the League: section for music, theater, small theatrical forms (German: Kleinkunst), science, literature, fine arts, physical education and dance, as well as an architects’ and engineers’ section. Particularly active branches of the League could be found in Bonn, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Munich and Weimar. The main goal of the Society, and later of the League was to fight against the so-called cultural Bolshevism (German: Kulturbolschewismus) or – according to the Nazi criteria – all unwanted artistic orientations present in the contemporary cultural life of the Weimar Republic. The slogan of cultural renewal went hand in hand with the postulate of raising awareness of the German people as to the relationship between race and culture. It was believed that the culture created by Germans, the “purest” Aryans, is a testament to their racial perfection. Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur appealed to the German society to unite their efforts to heal and purify the national culture. The German culture was to be freed from all foreign influences, especially those of the Jews. The leading role of culture in the construction of the so-called German people’s community (German: deutsche Volksgemeinschaft) was to be restored. In its programming, the Society devoted little space to the tools with which it intended to implement the new cultural program. The emphasis was put mainly on the so-called national education (German: Volkserziehung), or the process of indoctrination of children and youth, and developing their sense of national and racial community and unity, born out of awareness of its unique racial origins. A kind of magnet for the potential supporters of the League was the acquisition of support of those with so-called

good German names (German: guten deutschen Namen), inter alia writers, artists, university professors. Their mission was to increase in the Weimar Republic – “by word and by letter” – the awareness of the “German cultural unity”, regardless of the existing political and economic divides¹¹.

Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur first introduced itself to the public on 23 February 1929 during a ceremony held in the Auditorium Maximum of the University of Munich. A philosopher and sociologist of the University of Vienna, Othmar Spann, delivered a lecture entitled *Die Kulturkrise der Gegenwart* (The Contemporary Crisis of Culture), marking the launch of the Kampfbund activities. He stated that the situation in the domain of culture was hopeless, and the responsibility for this state could be laid at the feet of the Weimar Republic authorities, as in a democracy everyone wants to have an impact on culture, leading to chaos. In the opinion of Spann, this crisis of culture was a testimony to the social crisis, and this dramatic situation could only be remedied through the creation of a “modern leader-state” (German: Moderne Führerstaat), enjoying authority and respect of the society. Only such a state would be able to restore the culture to its proper condition, in line with the true German spirit. Spann’s speech was sharply criticized in the contemporary press; newspaper articles were full of comments about “speculation”, “this vile event”, “scientifically unwarranted argumentation”¹².

The activity of the Militant League for German Culture focused mainly on organizing guest lectures, during which the speakers were to make the public aware of the importance of problems associated with the collapse of the German culture. However, they did not meet with much interest among citizens. Only two such events were considered by the press as “truly sensational”, i.e. the aforementioned inaugural lecture of Professor Othmar Spann and the lecture on *Der Kampf um die Kunst* (The Fight for the Arts) delivered on 30 January 1931 at the

¹¹ Bundesarchiv Berlin (henceforth BA-Berlin), NS 8/122, statutes of KfdK of 19 XII 1928 and “Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur”, Nr. 1/Januar 1929; A. Rosenberg, *Blut und Ehre. Ein Kampf für deutsche Wiedergeburt. Reden und Aufsätze von 1919–1933*, T. von Trotha (eds.), München 1938, pp. 231–234 (a public appeal, entitled *Kampf gegen den kulturellen Niedergang!*, published by A. Rosenberg in May 1928 in the magazine “Weltkampf”; therein he presented the main objectives of the NSGfK); H. Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus*, Reinbek 1963, pp. 7–21, 236–237; A. Molau, op.cit., pp. 136–138; P. Krakowski, *Sztuka Trzeciej Rzeszy* [The Art of the Third Reich], Kraków 1994, p. 23 and following; J. Gimmel: *Die politische Organisation kulturellen Ressentiments. Der “Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur” und das bildungsbürgerliche Unbehagen an der Moderne*, Münster 2001; R. Bollmus, *Das Amt Rosenberg und seine Gegner. Studien zum Machtkampf im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem*, München 2006, p. 27 and following; E. Piper, op.cit., pp. 259–261.

¹² H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 7–8; A. Molau, op.cit., p. 138; P. Krakowski, op.cit. p. 9; R. Bollmus, op.cit., p. 28; E. Piper, op.cit., p. 262.

Munich Technical University by Professor Paul Schultze-Naumburg, director of the Kunsthochschule in Weimar. Schultze-Naumburg harshly criticized the creations of contemporary arts, and using racial arguments illustrated his postulates with photographs of bodily deformations¹³.

During the 1930 Pentecost, on 7–9 July, the KfdK in cooperation with the Interior and Cultural Minister of Thuringia (German: Staatsminister für Inneres und Volksbildung), Wilhelm Frick¹⁴ organized in Weimar the first major convention in defense of culture, calling for opposition to all alien influences in theater, literature, visual arts and architecture¹⁵. An instrument of the fight for “pure” culture was also the bulletin published by the League, “Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur” (from January 1932 published as “Deutsche Kultur–Wacht. Blätter des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur”). In a special section “Zeichen der Zeit” (The Signs of our Times), the publication presented the silhouettes of “degenerate” and “harmful” artists. This list included, among others, the writers – Berthold Brecht, Erich Käster, Thomas Mann, Walter Mehring, Kurt Tucholske, the painters – Karl Hofer, Paul Klee, Emil Nolde; the movie directors – Leopold Jessner, Erwin Piscator and Maxa Reinhardt¹⁶. The number of Kampfbund members was steadily growing; as of 1 April 1929 the list of members was limited to 300, while on 1 January 1933 the number reached approximately 6 thousand¹⁷. It seems thus that the slogans of collapse of the German culture, wielded by Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, fell on fertile ground. The German society adopted a rather conservative stance towards contemporary culture, and rather warily and with disapproval observed the modern artistic developments of the Weimar Republic¹⁸.

¹³ P. Krakowski, op.cit., pp. 28–29; E. Piper, op.cit., pp. 264–267.

¹⁴ Minister Wilhelm Frick, who supported the activities of the KfdK, on 5 April 1930 issued a decree intended to eliminate “racially alien” (German: fremdrassigen Einflüsse) influences from the cultural life; see: H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 169–170 (document No. 7).

¹⁵ H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 17, 22–35; P. Krakowski, op.cit., p. 32.

¹⁶ BA-Berlin, NS 8/122, Mitteilungen des Kampfbundes für deutsche Kultur, Nr. 1/Januar 1929; H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 16–17; P. Krakowski, op.cit., p. 32.

¹⁷ R. Bollmus, op.cit., p. 29.

¹⁸ For more on the culture of the Weimar Republic see inter alia: J. Hermand, F. Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt am Main 1988; A.E. Steinweis, *Weimar Culture and the Rise of National Socialism: The Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*, “Central European History” 1991, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 402–423; P.U. Hein, *Die Brücke ins Geisterreich. Künstlerische Avantgarde zwischen Kulturkritik und Faschismus*, Reinbeck 1992; *Literatur der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933*, B. Weyergraf (eds.), München 1995; L. Schöne, *Neuigkeiten vom Mittelpunkt der Welt. Der Kampf ums Theater in der Weimarer Republik*, Darmstadt 1995; S. Becker, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Köln–

Ascension of Adolf Hitler to the position of Chancellor on 30 January 1933 opened the way for the comprehensive implementation of “cultural revolution” postulated by the KfDK. Alfred Rosenberg hoped that he would have a decisive voice in shaping the cultural policy of the Third Reich. In April 1933, the theater section operating within the KfDK structures was at the suggestion of Rosenberg transformed into a separate organization focusing on theater, called Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne and based in Berlin. Formally, the KfDK exercised control over the new organization, and its director was the former head of the KfDK theater section, playwright and theater critic, PhD Walter Stang, a close associate of Rosenberg. The statutes of Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne of 9 October 1933 presented its mission: creation of a “national movement” (German: Volksbewegung) for the renewal of German theater, because – as stated by Rosenberg – the theatrical arts “have collapsed, both ideologically and financially”¹⁹.

The organization was to ensure the theaters showed “appropriate” plays, and to allow citizens regular attendance at the theater. Its members were paying a membership fee, and thus gained the right, among others, to buy concessionary tickets and occupy the most attractive places in the audience. The establishment of Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne was undoubtedly a personal success of Rosenberg, who by then for some time had been seeking to gain greater influence on the German theatrical life. From the end of 1933, the organization was also publishing a theatrical magazine “Bausteine zum Deutschen Nationaltheater”, with Stang as its editor-in-chief²⁰. The Reichsverband also partnered with the National Socialist Association “Strength through Joy” (German: Nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaft “Kraft durch Freude”, KdF)²¹, engaged in finding appropriate leisure pastimes for the working

Weimar–Wien 2000; D.J.K. Peukert, *Republika Weimarska. Lata kryzysu klasycznego modernizmu* [The Weimar Republic. The Crisis Period of Classical Modernism], Warszawa 2005; Cz. Karolak, W. Kunicki, H. Orłowski, *Dzieje kultury niemieckiej* [The History of German Culture], Warszawa 2007, passim.

¹⁹ A report, drawn up probably in January 1934 and whose author is likely W. Stang, stated that “the National Socialist revolution in the German culture, and especially in the German theatrical culture, is thus far leaving no trace”, and deplored the fact that out of the fifteen Berlin theaters only three were “free of Jews” (German: judenfrei); see: BA-Berlin, NS 8/124; R. Bollmus, op.cit., p. 61.

²⁰ BA-Berlin, NS 8/122, decree by R. Hess of 11 IV 1933; ibidem, NS 8/124, statutes of the organisation “Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne” of 9 X 1933; H. Brenner, op.cit., p. 237; A. Molau, op.cit., p. 141; R. Bollmus, op.cit., p. 39 and following; E. Piper, op.cit., pp. 267–270, 390.

²¹ The KdF was a part of the German Labour Front (German: Deutsche Arbeitsfront, DAF), an NSDAP-affiliated organisation that, after elimination of the independent trade unions, became effectively the national German labour organization, whose membership was obligatory for both employers and employees. The KdF launched its activity on 27 November 1933 during a special

population. The leader of the latter, Robert Ley, became Rosenberg's ally in his campaign against Joseph Goebbels²². The cooperation of these two organizations was to facilitate achievement of specific cultural and political objectives related to the idea of strengthening the so-called "German people's community". In short, access to culture should be ensured for all citizens, especially those less affluent. Theater, seen as an instrument of mass influence on society, was to be open and accessible to crowds of spectators, as large as possible. The intention was to destroy the image of the theater as an elite institution, intended for a select, intellectually savvy audience. The KdF had the task of ensuring that the greatest possible number of its members, from different social and professional circles, participated in theatrical performances organized by Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne. For this purpose, a system of closed performances for plants and companies, and sale of theater tickets at a discount (some tickets were distributed free of charge) were introduced. This cooperation between Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne and the KdF also meant benefits for the theaters themselves, because the two organizations guaranteed them a steady income, needed to improve the sometimes deplorable financial condition of the institutions²³. As of 1 February 1934, after only ten months of operation, Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne had almost a million members²⁴.

4. THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL ENLIGHTENMENT AND PROPAGANDA OF THE REICH

It seemed that Alfred Rosenberg as the head of the KfdK was going from strength to strength. However, the leading role in the reorganization of cultural life in the Third Reich fell to someone else. The decree of the Reich President Paul von Hindenburg and Chancellor Adolf Hitler of 13 March 1933 established the Ministry of National Enlightenment and Propaganda of the Reich (German: Reichsministerium für Volkserziehung und Propaganda, RMfVuP); the commonly accepted abbreviation was

meeting of the DAF in Berlin; for more see: W. Buchholz, *Die nationalsozialistische Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude". Freizeitgestaltung und Arbeiterschaft im Dritten Reich*, München 1976.

²² Their joint campaign against the PROMI minister was not devoid of conflicts, however, and the grounds for these disagreements were above all the financial issues; for more see: K. Backes, *Hitler und die bildenden Künste. Kulturverständnis und Kunstpolitik im Dritten Reich*, Köln 1988, pp. 59–60; R. Bollmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 85–101; E. Piper, *op.cit.*, p. 391.

²³ BA-Berlin, NS 8/124, text entitled "NS Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude und Deutsche Bühne" of 23 I 1934.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, letter of W. Stang to A. Rosenberg, dated 1 II 1934.

the Ministry of Propaganda (German: Propagandaministerium, PROMI). The new institution was to be headed by Joseph Goebbels²⁵, one of the closest collaborators of Adolf Hitler. The head of the newly created Ministry was granted extensive powers to exert “spiritual influence” over the nation, and gain social support for the goals set by the Führer²⁶. Goebbels considered culture to be one of the most important means of propaganda, and wanted to have this domain under personal control. Developing and building on the ideas of Hitler, Goebbels formulated the concept of culture as a derivative of ideology, viewing it as a tool allowing to take control of the “spiritual life” of the then German society. As of 1 October 1933, two departments at the Ministry headed by Goebbels were dealing with the matters of culture: department V – for Film, led by Ernst Seeger and department VI – for Theater, Music and Arts, led by Otto Laubinger²⁷. It should also be mentioned that from April 1930, Goebbels was also head of the Reich Propaganda Directorate of the NSDAP (German: Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP, RPL), and wanted to use this position (German: Reichsleiter NSDAP) to impact the cultural activities of the party. His efforts in this area were successful, and in 1932 Goebbels obtained Hitler’s consent for the elimination of the 2nd “Race and Culture” Department (German: Abteilung für Kultur und Rasse), which since the end of 1930 existed within the structure of the Organisation Leadership of the NSDAP (German: Reichsorganisationsleitung der NSDAP, ROL). The powers of the defunct department were incorporated into the scope of competences of the RPL²⁸.

²⁵ On 28 October 1926, Hitler appointed Joseph Goebbels as the gauleiter of the Berlin–Brandenburg district, in 1928 as one of the twelve Nazis Goebbels was elected to the Reichstag, and at the end of April 1930 Hitler entrusted him with the position of head of party propaganda for NSDAP (German: Reichspropagandaleiter der NSDAP); for more see: R.G. Reuth, *Goebbels*, Warszawa 2004; P. Longeric, *Goebbels. Biographie*, München 2012.

²⁶ Reichsgesetzblatt (hereinafter RGBl), 1933, I, p. 104, Erlass über die Errichtung des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda. Vom 13. März 1933; ibidem, 1933, I, p. 449, Verordnung über die Aufgaben des Reichsministeriums für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda. Vom 30. Juni 1933; see also: *Dokumente der Deutschen Politik*, Vol 1: *Die nationalsozialistische Revolution 1933*, P. Meier-Benneckenstein (eds.), Berlin 1939, pp. 289–298 (speech by J. Goebbels of 15 III 1933); G.W. Müller, *Das Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, Berlin 1940; R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 191–192; P. Longeric, op.cit., pp. 227–231.

²⁷ E.C. Król, *Propaganda i indoktrynacja narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919–1945. Studium organizacji, treści, metod i technik masowego oddziaływania* [National Socialist Indoctrination and Propaganda in Germany 1919–1945. A Study on the Organisation, Message, Methods and Techniques of Mass Manipulation], Warszawa 1999, p. 127; R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 193–194; P. Longeric, op.cit., pp. 230–231.

²⁸ E.C. Król, op.cit., pp. 82, 84–85, 119 (footnote 310); R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 116–118; P. Longeric, op.cit., pp. 127–129, 138–139.

Finally, the plan of the Reichs Minister of National Enlightenment and Propaganda to subjugate and control culture came to fruition with the help of the Reich Chamber of Culture (German: Reichskulturkammer, RKK), established under the Act of 22 September 1933. The very first paragraph of this Act empowered the PROMI Minister to require all creators of culture in the nation be members of appropriate national associations governed by public law (German: Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts). Therefore, six specialist industry subdivisions or chambers (German: Fachkammer) were set up as part of the RKK, covering all the basic spheres of cultural activities and the mass media, all headed by their respective presidents (German: Präsident):

- Reich Radio Chamber (German: Reichsrundfunkkammer, RRK) existed until 28 October 1939, when radio-related matters were subordinated directly to the Minister of National Enlightenment and Propaganda of the Reich; Chamber president – ministerial adviser Horst Dreßler-Andrefß;
- Reich Music Chamber (German: Reichsmusikkammer, RMK); first president – Richard Strauss, from July 1935 – Peter Raabe;
- Reich Theater Chamber²⁹ (German: Reichstheaterkammer, RTK); first president – ministerial adviser and dramatic actor from Berlin, Otto Laubinger, from October 1935 the Chamber was headed by theorist of literature and editor of the theater section of “Völkischer Beobachter”, PhD Rainer Schlösser, from 5 April 1938 to 21 April 1942 – by Ludwig Körner (real name: Vivegnis), followed by actor Paul Hartmann;
- Reich Chamber of Fine Arts (German: Reichskammer der bildenden Künste, RKBK); first president – professor Eugen Hönig, since December 1936 headed by painter Adolf Ziegler, and finally from August 1943 by sculptor Arno Breker;
- Reich Press Chamber (German: Reichspressekammer, RPK); president – director of the central publishing house of the NSDAP, Max Amann;
- Reich Literature Chamber (German: Reichsschrifttumskammer, RSK); first president – Hans Friedrich Blunck, from October 1935 headed by Hanns Johst.

The Provisional Chamber of Film, renamed the Reich Chamber of Film (German: Reichsfilmkammer, RFK), operating since mid-July 1933 was also integrated into the structure of the RKK. Initially its president was attorney PhD

²⁹ More broadly: A.E. Steinweis, *The Professional, Social, and Economic Dimensions of Nazi Cultural Policy: The Case of the Reich Theater Chamber*, “German Studies Review” 1990, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 441–459.

Fritz Scheuermann, but since October 1935 the chamber was headed by Oswald Lehnich, and from July 1939 – by Carl Froelich. The subdivisions or chambers set up as part of the RKK were professional organizations, associations grouping representatives of individual professions and professional bodies (German: Fachverbände) dealing with broadly understood cultural activity³⁰. According to the decree of 9 November 1933 on the implementation of the Act on the RKK, anyone who wanted to undertake any cultural activity had to compulsorily become a member of one of the chambers within the RKK by 15 December 1933. Membership in the RKK was therefore a precondition for the people of culture to gain the right to practice their respective professions³¹. The activity of the Reichskulturkammer was inaugurated on 15 November 1933 during a ceremony held in the building of the Berlin Kroll Opera (German: Krolloper)³². Among the invited guests was also Alfred Rosenberg, who decided that the main host of the ceremony, Goebbels, showed him disrespect as he was given a place as far as in the nineteenth row³³.

To a certain extent, also the Reich Ministry of Science, Education and Culture (German. Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, RMfWEuV), established in the decree of the President and Chancellor of the Reich dated 1 May 1934³⁴ and headed by the minister Bernhard Rust³⁵ had certain

³⁰ RGBI, 1933, I, pp. 483–484, Gesetzes über die Errichtung einer vorläufigen Filmkammer. Vom 14. Juli 1933; ibidem, pp. 531–532, Verordnung über die Errichtung einer vorläufigen Filmkammer. Vom 22. Juli 1933; ibidem, pp. 661–662, Reichskulturkammergesetz. Vom 22. September 1933; H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 53–63, 243–248; V.Dahm, *Anfänge und Ideologie der Reichskulturkammer. Die “Berufsgemeinschaft” als Instrument kulturpolitischer Steuerung und sozialer Reglementierung*, “Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte” 1986, No. (1)34. pp. 53–84; idem, V. Dahm, *Künstler als Funktionäre. Das Propagandaministerium und die Reichskulturkammer* [in:] *Hitlers Künstler. Die Kultur im Dienste des Nationalsozialismus*, H.Sarkowicz (eds.), Frankfurt am Main–Leipzig 2004, p. 76 and following; L.Biały, *Izba Kultury Rzeszy w systemie propagandy hitlerowskiej* [The Reich Culture Chamber in the System of Nazi Propaganda], “Studia nad faszyzmem i zbrodniami hitlerowskimi” 1987, Vol. 12, pp. 241–259.

³¹ RGBI, 1933, I, p. 969, Zweite Verordnung zur Durchführung des Reichskulturkammergesetzes. Vom 9. November 1933; see also: L.Biały, op.cit., p. 249.

³² J. Goebbels, in the presence of Hitler, all Reich ministers, the diplomatic corps and representatives of culture read a solemn speech on *Die deutsche Kultur vor neuen Aufgaben* (The New Tasks of the German Culture), see: *Dokumente der Deutschen Politik*, Vol. 1, pp. 364–371.

³³ R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 52–53; E.Piper, op.cit., p. 376.

³⁴ RGBI, 1934, I, p. 365, Erlass über die Errichtung des Reichsministeriums für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung. Vom 1. Mai 1934; ibidem, p. 375, Erlass über die Aufgaben des Reichsministeriums für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung. Vom 11. Mai 1934.

³⁵ For more see: U. Pedersen, *Bernhard Rust: Ein nationalsozialistischer Bildungspolitiker vor dem Hintergrund seiner Zeit*, “Steinhorster Schriften und Materialien zur regionalen Schulgeschichte

influence over the sphere of culture. The responsibility of this ministry extended to issues related to museums, libraries and protection of monuments, as well as education in the fields of arts and music. Goebbels, as head of the PROMI, tried to seize part of the mandate of the Minister of Education (including control that the RMfWEuV held over fine arts universities and music academies) through intrigue³⁶. Goebbels' bold critical opinions about Rust are presented in his journal, in which, among others, he contemptuously calls the Minister of Education "a beak", accuses him of insanity, refers to the Ministry headed by Rust as a "pig-sty" and claims that his educational policy for the arts "is virtually worthless"³⁷.

However, undoubtedly the key competitors fighting out who would gain the decisive voice in terms of cultural policy in the Third Reich were Goebbels and Rosenberg. With the functions, held in parallel, of the Minister of Propaganda and president of the RKK, Goebbels secured a strong position enabling him to exercise control over the German cultural life. In spite of the above, Rosenberg's career was not halted, and he remained an influential figure. Since April 1933, Rosenberg was the head of the Office of Foreign Affairs of the NSDAP (German: Außenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP), but his ambition was not satisfied. On 1 December 1933, Rosenberg wrote a long, 12-page letter to Hitler in which he complained that he had been pushed aside as concerns the matters of Nazi cultural policy. He stated, however, that he will act in accordance with the will of the Führer in the matter³⁸. Hitler did not reply to that letter, but had a lot of confidence in Rosenberg, and on 24 January 1934 appointed him as his Supervisory Representative for the entirety of the spiritual and ideological training and education of the NSDAP (German: Der Beauftragte des Führers für die Überwachung und der gesamten geistigen weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP). In this role, he was responsible for spiritual education and maintaining ideological purity in the ranks of all the party organizations. Despite the new functions entrusted to him by the Führer, Rosenberg decided to attempt to intrude in the sphere of influence

und Schulentwicklung" 1994, Vol. 6; A.C. Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer. Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung 1934–1945*, Frankfurt am Main 2012; in the years 1933–1934 B. Rust held the position of the Prussian Minister for Cultural Affairs and Religious Beliefs.

³⁶ Even before the establishment of the Reich Ministry of Science, Education and Culture, Goebbels appealed to Hitler to include matters of education within the scope of his competences.

³⁷ *Joseph Goebbels Tagebücher 1924–1945*, Vol. 3: 1935–1939, R.G. Reuth (eds.), München–Zürich 2008, p. 994 (entry of 21 X 1936), 1051 (entry of 3 III 1937), 1096 (entry of 27 VI 1937), 1177 (entry of 13 I 1938).

³⁸ A. Molau, *op.cit.*, pp. 141–142; R. Bollmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 53–54.

of Goebbels, what was manifested among others in a speech he delivered on 22 February 1934 at the Kroll Opera House in Berlin. In this speech Rosenberg stated that, as Hitler's proxy for the entirety of the spiritual and ideological training and education of the NSDAP, he would take steps to imbue the domains of art and culture with the essence of the National Socialist worldview³⁹.

5. THE DISPUTE ABOUT CULTURE

The conflict between Rosenberg and Goebbels intensified in the second half of 1934. On the pages of his diary, under the date of 5 June 1934, Rosenberg expressed the opinion that in matters of culture a "formal tug of war" had begun. He also noted with satisfaction that complaints as to the "lack of decisiveness and direction in the operations of the Reich Chamber of Culture" are reaching him from various sources⁴⁰. On 6 June 1934 – the initiative coming from Rosenberg – the organizations *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* and *Reichsverband Deutsche Bühne* were merged, creating the National Socialist Culture Community (German: *Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde, NSKG*) in their place, with Walter Stang as chairman. Rosenberg, in his role as Supervisory Representative for the entirety of the spiritual and ideological training and education of the NSDAP, could through a circle of trusted people at the NSKG (the latter operating within the party structures) increasingly affect the cultural life in the country⁴¹. In his journal Rosenberg noted with pride that the first NSKG convention (German: *Tagung*) held from 4 to 7 July 1934 gathered approximately 20 thousand people⁴². Numerous studies and papers drawn up by the NSKG functionaries expressed disappointment in the National Socialist "cultural revolution" led by Goebbels. Also Rosenberg himself began to increasingly openly attack the PROMI minister, trying to undermine the authority of the rival and reduce his influence on cultural policy. In the summer of 1934 Rosenberg accused Goebbels of supporting "cultural Bolsheviks", thereby inhibiting the "cultural revolution". The grounds for this

³⁹ For text of the speech see: *Dokumente der Deutschen Politik*, Vol. 2: *Der Aufbau des deutschen Führerstaates 1934*, Berlin 1939, P. Meier-Benneckenstein (eds.), pp. 315–329.

⁴⁰ *Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs aus den Jahren 1934/35 und 1939/40*, H.G. Sera- phim (eds.), Göttingen–Berlin–Frankfurt 1956, p. 26.

⁴¹ H. Brenner, op.cit., pp. 81, 237–239; A. Molau, op.cit., pp. 141–142; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 66–67; E. Piper, op.cit., p. 391.

⁴² *Das politische Tagebuch...*, op.cit., p. 37; see also: BA-Berlin, NS 8/124, letter of W. Stang to T. von Trotha dated 16 VI 1934.

comment were the actions taken by Goebbels aimed at winning the support for the Nazi cause of such avant-garde creators as the sculptor, graphic artist and dramatist Ernst Barlach and painter and graphic artist Emil Nolde⁴³. In the entry dated 20 July 1934, Goebbels noted in his journal that Rosenberg was for him a source of many worries⁴⁴. In November 1934 Rosenberg initiated the persecution of Paul Hindemith, composer and famous representative of the avant-garde, considered by Goebbels as one of the most talented young musicians of the time. Rosenberg accused the composer of spreading alien influences and representing the “worst debasement of German music”⁴⁵. A close associate of Goebbels, popular conductor and vice-president of the Reich Music Chamber, Wilhelm Furtwängler, came to Hindemith’s defense. Hence the Reichs Minister of National Enlightenment and Propaganda was forced to take a stand on this issue – to stop Rosenberg’s attacks Goebbels changed his opinion of Hindemith’s work. On 6 December 1934 in the “Sports Palace” (German: Sportpalast) in Berlin’s Schöneberg district Goebbels gave a speech in which he very negatively assessed the artistic achievements of the composer. In the face of such facts Hindemith went into exile in the US, and Furtwängler resigned from the positions held i.e. that of Vice-President of the Reich Music Chamber, manager of the Berlin Philharmonic Hall and director of the Berlin opera house⁴⁶. Thus all pointed to the Hindemith–Furtwängler case (German: Fall Hindemith–Furtwängler) having ended with Rosenberg’s victory. In the end, however, Goebbels managed to convince Furtwängler to abandon the protest and resume cooperation⁴⁷.

The 2nd NSKG convention took place on 7 June 1935 in Düsseldorf; Rosenberg presented his personal “ideological roadmap” (German: Weltanschaulichen Vorträge) at the event. A close associate of Goebbels, president of the Reich Radio Chamber Horst Dreßler-Andrefß with indignation informed the PROMI minister

⁴³ K. Backes, op.cit., pp. 58–59; E.C. Król, op.cit., pp. 159, 193 (footnote 257); R.G. Reuth, op.cit., p. 228; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 61, 75, 106.

⁴⁴ *Joseph Goebbels Tagebücher 1924–1945*, Vol. 2: 1930–1934, R.G. Reuth (eds.), München–Zürich 2008, p. 846 (entry of 20 VII 1934).

⁴⁵ J. Wulf, *Musik im Dritten Reich. Eine Dokumentation*, Frankfurt am Main 1989, p. 380.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, pp. 376–378.

⁴⁷ For the “Hindemith–Furtwängler case” see also: B. Drewniak, *Kultura w cieniu swastyki* [Culture in the Shadow of the Swastika], Poznań 1969, pp. 179–180; Cz. Madajczyk, *Klerk czy intelektualista zaangażowany? Świat polityki wobec twórców kultury i naukowców europejskich w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Panorama* [Non-Partisan or Engaged Intellectuals? Politics and the European Creators of culture and scientists in the 1st Half of the 20th Century. A Panoramic View], Poznań 1999, pp. 274–275; E.C. Król, op.cit., p. 159; R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 230–231; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 76–78; P. Longerich, op.cit., pp. 283–284.

that Rosenberg openly spoke against the state institutions responsible for cultural affairs, and was organizing opposition against the PROMI and the RKK⁴⁸. Still in June 1935, Rosenberg openly attacked Goebbels and accused the PROMI Minister of promoting non-Aryan authors, going clearly against the main notions of the Nazi “cultural revolution”. The basis for these accusations was the case of the comic opera *Die Schweigsame Frau* (The Silent Woman) by Richard Strauss, whose libretto was written by the German author of Jewish origin, Stefan Zweig. Its world premiere was held on 24 June 1935 in Dresden. This provoked a sharp protest of Rosenberg, who prophesized a “cultural scandal” and demanded that Goebbels immediately ban the showings of the opera. Rosenberg’s position was supported by Hitler’s deputy party head, Rudolf Hess, so in this situation Goebbels relented. After the fourth performance, *The Silent Woman* was removed from the repertoire of German opera houses, and Strauss resigned from the function of president of the Reich Music Chamber, a position he took up in November 1933. In July 1935 he was replaced by conductor Peter Raabe. According to the official announcement, Strauss’ resignation was voluntary, and brought about by his advanced age and deteriorating health⁴⁹.

In the second half of 1935, Rosenberg felt secure enough in his power to turn to the Führer with the initiative of creating – under Rosenberg’s leadership of course – a new ministry, i.e. the Reichs Ministry for Ideology and Culture (German: Reichsministerium für Kultur und Weltanschauung). Rosenberg’s activities were a cause for concern for Goebbels, who managed to convince the Führer not to support Rosenberg’s idea⁵⁰. Despite this setback, Rosenberg did not stop or curb his attempts to discredit his main rival.

Another cause for dispute between Rosenberg and Goebbels was the matter of establishment of the Reich Cultural Senate (German: Reichskultursenat, RKS). The originator of this idea was initially Rosenberg, but through skillful intrigue the PROMI minister managed to convince Hitler that creation of the RKS was in fact his initiative. Officially, the functioning of the Reich Cultural Senate began on 15 November 1935, with it being composed of 105 members. The “senators” were the RKK senior officials and prominent figures of the Third Reich cultural

⁴⁸ A. Molau, op.cit., pp. 142–143.

⁴⁹ B. Drewniak, op.cit., pp. 113–115; J. Wulf, op.cit., pp. 196–197, 203–216; E.C. Król, op.cit., pp. 154, 159; R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 229, 234; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 75, 78; P. Longerich, op.cit., pp. 282, 284–285; V. Dahm, *Künstler als Funktionäre...*, op.cit., pp. 84–86; the disfavor R. Strauss fell into with Goebbels was temporary, and he was not excluded from the German cultural life.

⁵⁰ E.C. Król, op.cit., p. 159; A. Molau, op.cit., p. 145; R. Bollmus, op.cit., p. 81.

life. Two days later, Goebbels noted in his diary – with great satisfaction – that the uncontested control over culture finally rested in his hands⁵¹.

Goebbels' next step intended to weaken the position of Rosenberg as his serious rival was the proposal for the RKK to absorb the NSKG as a new, eighth chamber, dealing with “care of the arts” (German: Kunstpflege). The PROMI minister came up with this idea mid-July 1936. Ultimately, the plan failed, and in early June 1937 the NSKG was instead swallowed up by the structures of the National Socialist Association “Strength through Joy”⁵².

6. CONCLUSIONS

Hitler's rise to power brought about an uncompromising implementation of the National Socialist cultural policy model. In fact, in the Nazi times there was no cultural policy understood as an instrument of initiating and supporting independent, broadly defined artistic creation by the state authorities. The Nazis included culture in the arsenal of measures used to control the consciousness of German society, and it was subjected to strict administrative controls and ideological oversight. A significant number of agencies and institutions, both public and partisan, were engaged in the implementation of cultural policy. Their powers have not been clearly defined, which contributed to frequent conflicts as to the specific scope of competence, further exacerbated by the clash of personal ambitions. This was particularly evident at the level of relations between the two Nazi dignitaries discussed above – Goebbels and Rosenberg.

Joseph Goebbels as the PROMI minister, president of the RKK and Reichsleiter of the NSDAP propaganda – all these roles united in just one person – had larger impact on the cultural policy than Rosenberg. According to Goebbels' views, culture was to be subordinate to the propaganda objectives, especially in terms of popularization of the National Socialist ideology and in the process of forming the ideal state, based on a society with a strong sense of national unity, knowing

⁵¹ *Joseph Goebbels Tagebücher 1924–1945*, Vol. 3, p. 910 (entry of 17 XI 1935); K. Backes, op.cit. p. 60; Cz. Madajczyk, op.cit., p. 239; E.C. Król, op.cit., p. 159; R.G. Reuth, op.cit., pp. 237–238; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 80, 81; E. Piper, op.cit., pp. 392–394; P. Longerich, op.cit., p. 337; V. Dahm, *Künstler als Funktionäre...*, op.cit., pp. 102–104; in reality the Reich Cultural Senate did not play much of a role in the cultural life of the nation, and its membership was rather a matter of prestige than true influence.

⁵² E.C. Król, op.cit., p. 160; A. Mollau, op.cit., pp. 147–148; R. Bollmus, op.cit., pp. 84, 101–102; P. Longerich, op.cit., pp. 337–338.

its true value and entirely loyal to the Führer. Rosenberg, who enthusiastically engaged on issues related to cultural policy, has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the Nazi “cultural revolution” pursued and implemented by Goebbels. He believed that Goebbels’ methods were sluggish, and the concept not sufficiently radical. More than Goebbels, he insisted on the notion of “Aryan” culture and its racial purity. Although Rosenberg lost to Goebbels in their fight for control over the cultural policy of the Reich, he still wielded a considerable amount of power and remained one of the most influential Nazis.

Regardless of the dispute between Goebbels and Rosenberg, a characteristic feature of the Nazi cultural policy was the strict centralization and institutionalization of the culture management system. Culture – apolitical at its core – has been harnessed in the service of Nazi ideology. This instrumentalization of culture drastically limited the freedom of creative expression. Culture was deprived of its innovative and diverse nature, and only the clearly defined cultural products were to reach the public. One could even attempt to conclude that the Nazi cultural policy promoted in some ways a mass culture model. The opportunities associated with using culture as a tool of ideological influence over the nation meant the cultural message was addressed to a massive and diverse audience. Cultural policy was thus involved in creating the reality desired by the authorities, and has become one of the most important pillars of Nazi power.

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