



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI “FEDERICO II”
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI UMANISTICI
SCUOLA DI DOTTORATO IN
SCIENZE STORICHE, ARCHEOLOGICHE E STORICO-ARTISTICHE
CORSO DI DOTTORATO IN STORIA
INDIRIZZO “STORIA DELLA SOCIETÀ EUROPEA”
(XXV CICLO)

THE DISAPPEARING MIDDLE AGES
MEDIEVAL HISTORY IN NATIONAL SOCIALIST
VOLKSSCHULEN TEXTBOOKS 1933 – 1945

DOTTORANDO
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a.a. 2011 - 2012

Acknowledgments

The Ph.D., either you want to call it “*Dottorato*” or “*Promotion*”, is the first serious task a young scholar has to accomplish during his or her academic life. Researching, studying, writing, presenting your project, attending classes and conferences, applying for calls for proposals, discussing with colleagues and professors while, if possible, still enjoying what you are doing: those are all equally important activities of this task. But it is impossible to accomplish all that if the young scholar is left alone. For this reason the role of the Ph.D. advisor, either you want to call it “*Relatore*” or “*Doktorvater*”, is fundamental both from a scientific and from a human point of view. Therefore, I would like to thank professor Roberto Delle Donne for his support, help and advice.

Since the Ph.D. student needs to confront himself or herself with other colleagues and scholars, from my point of view it is one of the most important parts of the task to exchange ideas and perspectives. Thus, taking part at the founding conference of SISCALT at the *Deutsches Historisches Institut* in Rome in September 2012 and discussing my work with the other conference participants was particularly helpful and rewarding. I thank all the participants for their constructive criticism, suggestions and for the interest in my research they have shown. As well, the time I spent at the international textbook-center *Georg Eckert Institut* in Braunschweig had been fundamental for my research.

If writing a Ph.D. thesis was not complicated enough, I decided to do it in a foreign language, namely: in English. Despite we may have the illusion that English is “not so complicated” – because it has become a part of our daily life – learning the Anglo-Saxon methodology and structure of the academic writing and composition was one of the most significant accomplishments within the last 3 years. Therefore, I would like to thank Mr. Gary Rasnick and Ms. Meli Solomon for their support. In particular, I thank Meli for her effort, reliability and precision in correcting, proof-reading and lecturing my Ph.D. thesis.

Finally, I thank my friends, my family and my patchwork-family.

Berlin, March 2013

Contents

Aknowledgments.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Part I – State of the Research and New Findings.....	12
Chapter 1: Studies on the German Historiography of the National Socialist Regime.....	12
I.1.1 Studies on National Socialist historiography between 1990 and 2000. Three examples: Johannes Fried, Willi Oberkrome and Ingo Haar.....	12
I.1.2 Studies and research on National Socialist historiography during and after the 1998 <i>Historikertag</i>	17
Chapter 2: History and the Middle Ages in National Socialist <i>Volksschulen</i>	23
I.2.1 German <i>Volksschulen</i> under the National Socialist Regime.	23
I.2.2 National Socialist History Textbooks and Directives for the <i>Volksschulen</i>	31
I.2.3 History in the <i>Volksschulen</i>	37
I.2.4 The Middle Ages in the <i>Volksschulen</i>	43
Part I Summary	47
Part II - The Similarities, Trends in Medieval History in the National Socialist <i>Volksschulen</i>.....	51
Chapter 1: General Characteristics of the <i>Volksschulen</i> historiography	51
II.1.1 History teaching in the National Socialist <i>Volksschulen</i>	51
II.1.2 Creating a more Germanic interpretation of history	52
II.1.3 ‘As in the eleventh century’ – Past and present comparison in National Socialist <i>Volksschulen</i>	68
II.1.4 <i>Vorgeschichte</i> in National Socialist <i>Volksschule</i> – Kossinna’s effect	73
Chapter 2: Trends in <i>Volksschulen</i> Medieval History.....	79
II.2.1 Common topics in <i>Volksschulen</i> medieval history between 1933 and 1945 and overall view of Middle Ages history in German <i>Volksschulen</i> during the Weimar Republic.....	79

II.2.2 The New Periodization.....	85
II.2.3 The 1936 Ulm Conference	87
II.2.4 Trends in <i>Volksschulen</i> Historiography under the Nazi Regime.....	91
Part II Summary	139
Part III - <i>The Differences, Local Powers and National Socialist Volksschulen historiography</i>	
Chapter 1: The city, education and history teaching in the <i>Volksschulen</i>	141
III.1.1 Whose fault?.....	141
III.1.2 From the Centre to the Periphery	159
III. 1. 3 Summary	176
Chapter 2: The Land, education in the <i>Land</i> and <i>Dorfschulen</i>	178
III.2.1 History in the <i>Landschulen</i> and <i>Dorsfschulen</i>	178
III.2.2 The <i>Landschulen</i> as historiographic problem	182
Part III Summary	183
Conclusions.....	184
Illustrations	190
Tables	205
Archival sources.....	206
Chronological Bibliography of <i>Volksschulen</i> Textbooks (1933 – 1945).....	207
Bibliography	213

Introduction

Waking up in the morning, getting out of the cozy bed, getting ready for school and packing the textbook into the backpack. Then, leaving home and going to school. Sitting at your place in your classroom and opening your textbook while the teacher starts the lesson. We all know exactly what that feels like. The school, the classroom, the teachers, the lessons and the textbooks are parts of our everyday life, at least until we are through with being students.

Ever since education and schooling became two irreplaceable columns of the ‘civil life’, the school has embodied the place where the youngest citizens have met the state for the first time:

«Die Schule ist die Staatsschule, in welcher die jungen Menschen zu Staatsmenschen und also zu nichts anderem als zu Staatshandlangern gemacht werden. Ging ich in die Schule, ging ich in den Staat.»¹

In the 20th century, both in democratic and in non-democratic societies, the school played a key role in the educational process. School was and remains the staple of the ‘civil’ education that each state, independent from its political orientation, provides its citizens.

If we consider the role of the elementary school in a more specific context, i.e. the *Volksschulen* in 1930s National Socialist Germany, we have to admit that controlling these schools would have meant reaching more than the 90% of German children between 1933 and 1945 almost every day. No other school form or other youth organization created by the Regime could claim such numbers or had such visibility. Thus, it is not surprising that the Nazi Regime, with its totalitarian aims, attempted to control the educational process of the Germans by re-organizing the German school system in a more centralized way.

The Nazi Regime, as it concerned the *Volksschulen* in particular, pursued three ways in order to exercise its control over schooling and education: firstly, by centralizing the German school system that was, in fact, based on a federal structure; secondly, by ‘nazifying’ the teacher training with the help of the

¹ T. Bernhard, *Alte Meister, Komödie*, Frankfurt am Main 1985, p. 58.

Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund (NSLB) and instituting the *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerschule*; thirdly, by nazifying teaching plans and textbooks. In my research I will show how different this ‘nazifying process’ was from school to school and from region to region.

Indeed, in several documents and articles of the National Socialist period, the textbook, called either *Lesebuch* or *Volksschullesebuch*, was presented as being not just a simple pedagogical instrument whose use was limited to the school, but was, ideologically speaking, a connecting element between the school, the teacher, the family and the society, i.e. *Volksgemeinschaft*. That is, according to the Nazi politics of pedagogy politics, the textbook should have helped the German pupils to understand his or her role in the Nazi Volk-community. Thus, an aim of the school time was to form the next German generation. But, the ‘school’ its ‘form’ and its ‘ritual’ did not appear very different in the years immediately after 1933 than they did before. Both the ‘form’ – attending either a one-class school or a bigger school with eight classes – as well as the ‘ritual’ – sitting in the classes and listening to the teacher – of the German school did not really change after 1933. What did change, however, was the content.

It is then appropriate to ask, how the classes in a Nazi German elementary school were different from the Weimar ones, which topics and subjects became important and how the lessons were run by the teachers during the National Socialist Regime. Furthermore, if we take into consideration the totalitarian intentions of the Regime, its ‘unquestionable’ ideology and its violent politics, it is also reasonable to ask: did the German schools, including the elementary ones, become and look like Nazi barracks between 1933 and 1945? How totalitarian was the control of the Nazi Regime over the elementary schools?

To answer these questions, we can take into consideration reminiscences and private memories of pupils who attended the school during the Nazi Regime. Surprisingly, despite the rigidity and the severity of the Regime, those memories are very varied in their judgments. While for some pupils the school time actually meant ‘children’s time’ and was positively connoted. Such was the case for the historian Joachim Fest:

«Vielleicht täuscht und schön die Erinnerung. Aber ich denke an die Schulzeit im Dritten Reich nicht ungern zurück. Die Bilder und Empfindungen, in denen sie noch gegenwärtig ist, haben nichts mit Terror, unterdrückung und Rechtlosigkeit zu tun. Das alles gab es, und es war unübersehbar. Dennoch erscheinen mir die Jahre, deren Teil die Schulzeit war, im Rückblick weit eher als eine Mischung aus Enge und familiären Zusammenhang, aus Idylle, Entbehrung und Widersetzlichkeit, kurz allem, was sie glücklich macht.»²

For other pupils the school time was, essentially, a ‘boring time’, as it was for Professor Peter Wapnewski:

«Ich weiß ja nicht, wie es andernorts war, aber bei uns gab es keine fanatische, keine passionierte, keine heftige Jugend Hitlers. Sie alle machten eben mit, lustlos einige, lustvoll andere, gleichbültig viele, manchen waren «Führer» und zierten ihre Uniform mit einer Schnur. [...] Hart wie Kruppstahl, zäh wie Leder, schnell wie die Windhunde? Dieses Postulat aus der bilderreichen Rhetorik ihres Führers hat meine Jugend müde ignoriert. Wir waren eher lahm.»³

Actually, only a few people, when looking back at their past, could actually understand and feel the ‘change’ in January 1933. According to such memories, the school during the Nazi Regime primarily changed in its form and ritual by hanging Nazi flags on the walls and by introducing the daily “Heil Hitler!” salute when the teacher came into the classroom:

«Die Lehrer begannen den Unterricht mit ausgestrecktem Arm, und die Klasse hatte mit einem lauten «Heil Hitler!» zu antworten. Wie eine Fremdsprache lernte ich ein neues Vokabular an Parteiausdrücken.»⁴

Some of the changes introduced by the Regime consisted of emphasizing the physical activities, in adding new subjects, such as the *Rassenkunde*, and new topics, such as the *Rassengeschichte* whose success was uncertain among teachers and pupils:

«Es zeigte sich, daß den typisch nordischen Schädel, den in rassischer Hinsicht besten, nu rein einziger Schüler hatte. Es war ein Jude. Der Lehrer schien verlegen, aber nicht unglücklich. Er fragte ihn, ob er unter seinen

² J. Fest, *Glückliche Jahre*, in: M. Reich-Ranicki, *Meine Schulzeit im Dritten Reich*, Köln 1982, p. 188.

³ P. Wapnewski, *Meine Schulzeit im Dritten Reich*, in: Reich-Ranicki 1982, p. 88.

⁴ B. König, *Die verpaßte Chance*, in: Reich-Ranicki 1982, p. 134.

Vorfahren vielleicht doch Arier habe. Die Antwort lautete: "Nur russische Juden." Alle lachten. Nein, der Rassenkunde-Unterricht war in unserer Klasse nicht erfolgreich – zumal der schnellste Hundertmeter-Läufer und der beste Deutsch-Schüler Jude war.»⁵

«Das Schlimmste war die Rassengeschichte, das Schwerste für mich, den Geschichtsunterricht zu geben. Ich habe dieses Fach schon beim Kaiser unterrichtet, in der ersten Republik, bei Hitler und dann auch nach 45. Die Verherrlichung des Germanischen in der NS-Zeit ging mir ziemlich auf die Nerven. Manchmal dachte man, man müßte aufhören, man könnte das nicht weitermachen.»⁶

But, to a greater degree, the school, the classroom, the teacher and the family, represented for many German pupils a significant part of the world they knew. A 'normal' world:

«Wer in jenen Jahren aufwuchs, dem wurde der Nationalsozialismus wie ein Sack über den Kopf gezogen. Die Lebensbedingungen mußten nicht einmal bewußt gelernt werden, sie wuchsen uns zu, wir wuchsen in sie hinein. Wir kannten nur die Welt, in der wir lebten, und wir hielten sie für normal.»⁷

But such private memories showed only one part of the 'school time' during the Nazi Regime. In point of fact, behind the textbooks that the pupils read while being bored and behind the teaching plans that the teachers tried to follow, there was a multifaceted system, which 'translated' the ideology of the National Socialism in a very comprehensible language and 'transported' this *Weltanschauung* into teaching plans and textbooks.

The Ministry of Education, several NSDAP organization such as the *Dienststelle Bouhler* and the *NSLB*, *Gauleiter*, regional ministries of *Kultus* and education, publishing houses and editors, textbook authors and 'small historians' all worked in the backstage of the school.

⁵ M. Reich-Ranicki, *Geliebte Jahre*, in: Reich-Ranicki 1982, p. 59.

⁶ C. Stern, *Hitlerlieder singend zogen wir durchs Dorf*, in: Reich-Ranicki 1982, p. 165.

⁷ G. Hensel, *Der Sack überm Kopf*, in: Reich-Ranicki 1982, p.117.

So, when looking behind the curtain, the textbook is no longer just a 'book for children' but is the product of precise political and pedagogical ideas. Behind the curtain, people were thinking, discussing and working in order to produce a textbook that could express the new *Zeitgeist*. In addition, publishing, printing, transporting and selling textbooks was lucrative work that required considerable organization, all of which the private German editors demanded to be paid for. These latter elements, for instance, contrast the idea of a 'common' *Volksschullesebuch* for all the school subjects and for all the *Volksschulen* and, despite the political situation and the 'totalitarianism', the German editors kept the textbook production and the textbook market under their control instead of accepting a state monopoly.

Similarly, also the German regional powers, whether they were called *Land* or *Gau*, spoke their minds about the schooling process and they were 'conservative' enough to offer a certain degree of 'resistance' to the centralizing politics of the Nazi *Erziehungsministerium*. In fact, since the German education system had been structured on a regional basis, a central Ministry of Education never existed in Germany before the Nazi formed one in 1934.

Furthermore, when considering the history textbooks of the *Volksschulen* not as mere 'books for children' but as 'sources', then we have to deal with a variety of topics, such as: prehistory, roman history, medieval history, elements of cultural and political history; and several disciplines, such as: pedagogy, school history, education history and historiography. Thus, the Nazi textbook must be considered as being an example of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and historiography. Indeed, if we continue to look deeper behind the curtain, we find the textbooks authors, i.e. the historians who conceived and wrote the textbooks. Those historians, while writing their texts, represented a 'small historiography' that had no direct influence on the elites of the NSDAP and did not reach German scholars. But, these 'small historians' were formed by and simultaneously helped to form the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. These historians, being in the middle between the Nazi Regime and the school classrooms, interpreted, explained and 'translated' the Nazi ideology and its historical interpretation to the youngest German generation.

Thus, when analyzing the *Volksschulen* textbooks we can actually identify some of the characteristics of the Nazi ideology that should have formed and educated the youngest Germans. In this ideology, history played a key role since it was the most political school subject. Furthermore, history lessons had to form the *Weltanschauung* of the Nazi youth. So, German historians, who never reached the universities or never had any influence on the leaders of the NSDAP, could use their texts to actively contribute to the education of the first Nazi generation with their texts. In their texts, these ‘small historians’ expressed their understanding of the Nazi ideology, their ideas and, in some cases, their expectations for the future.

The case of the schoolmaster Ludwig Nehring is of particular interest. Nehring was an ‘anonymous’ writer among several *Volksschulen* historians, who published a Nazi edition of his textbook “*Vaterländische Geschichte*” in the first months of 1933. Nehring celebrated the *Führer* and the *Volk* as being essential elements for creating and sustaining the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Before any of the Regime’s directives and orders for the *Volksschulen*, before the *Erziehungsministerium* was even created by the Regime⁸, he celebrated National Socialism in his history textbook for the *Volksschulen*:

«Wir sehen hier, wie schon in alten Zeiten die große Wichtigkeit eines guten Führers anerkannt wurde. **Ein guter Führer und ein treues Volk sind die besten Stützen einer Volksgemeinschaft.** Das wollen wir auch im Dritten Reiche merken und unser Sinnen und Tun danach einrichten. Stets seien wir bereit, unserem Führer zu folgen und Gut und Blut für unser Vaterland einzusetzen, wenn dies von uns gefordert wird. **Germanische Treue und Heldenhafter Sinn** sollen auch uns al **Vorbilder** dienen.»⁹

Still, the teachers’ silence remains an insuperable barrier to understanding the history lessons during the Regime. What did the teachers think, what did the teachers actually say? We just don’t know. Similarly, it is hard to understand whether the textbook authors themselves were actually convinced by the Nazi ideology and its historiography, or just did what the Regime expected them to do. To put it simply, whether these ‘small historians’ truly shared the same historical interpretation and believed in what they wrote or, whether they just followed the

⁸ The *Erziehungsministerium* was created in 1934.

⁹ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte. 1. Auflage nach der nationalsozialist. Revolution*, Breslau 1933, p. 4.

stream by repeating Nazi slogans and adding cherished Nazi words to their textbooks is hard to sort out, and not even a memoir such as “*Meine Schulzeit im Dritten Reich*” can really help us.

My research, however, points out, on the one hand: the ‘disappearing’ of the Middle Ages from the *Volksschulen* textbooks of the National Socialist Germany; on the other hand, the failure of the Nazi Regime policies to reform the German school and education system. Firstly, in the *Volksschulen* textbooks the German pre-history and not the Medieval history was described as the ‘golden Age’ of the Aryan-Germanic populations. Thereby, the Middle Ages disappeared from many *Volksschulen* textbooks. Secondly, the Nazi Regime, according to the Nazi ideology, tried both to reform the German school-system which was based on a regional structure and, as well, to reform and re-edit the German *Volksschulen* textbooks. But, neither the school-system reform nor the textbooks one took actually place in Nazi Germany because of the private, regional and local “resistences” against the Regime’s orders and directives.

Still, what we can know, is how the Regime tried to form the next generation and how complex this process was. We will not know “*wie es eigentlich gewewsen ist*”, we will not know all the truth, but we can start to discover a part of it.

Part I – State of the Research and New Findings

Chapter 1: Studies on the German Historiography of the National Socialist Regime

I.1.1 Three examples of Studies on National Socialist historiography between 1990 and 2000: Johannes Fried, Willi Oberkrome and Ingo Haar

Since the early 1990s German historians have criticized both the historiography written during the National Socialist Regime¹⁰ and the continuities between German historiography written during and after the Regime. Differently from the 1960s studies that pointed out the development of the German historiography in the universities of National Socialist Germany¹¹, these new critiques focused on, firstly, the biographies of National Socialist historians and their relationships to the National Socialist party, and secondly, on the influence these historians had on German historiography after 1945. For instance, three German historians who made such critiques were: Johannes Fried in his work on the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis* published in 1991, Willi Oberkrome in his work on the *Volksgeschichte* published in 1993 and Ingo Haar in his work on the *Ostforschung* published in 2000.

Johannes Fried, focusing his attention on the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis*¹², pointed out the role played by the professor Theodor Mayer in German historiography after the Regime. Fried also discovered that, despite the cherished idea of “*Stunde Null*”, there was not a decisive change in the German academic leadership.

According to Fried, Theodor Mayer was very active between 1933 and 1945, as professor of medieval history, as president of the *Reichsinstitut für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* and as director of the *Deutsche Historische Institut* in Rome. Moreover, Mayer’s particular interests were, on the one hand, the internal

¹⁰ Hereafter referred to as the ‘Regime’.

¹¹ K. D. Bracher, *Die Gleichschaltung der deutschen Universität in: Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Universität*, Berlin 1966 – K. F. Werner, *Das NS-Geschichtsbild und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1967 – G. G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, Wesleyan University 1968.

¹² J. Fried (ed.) “*Vierzig Jahre Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte*”, Sigmaringen 1991.

reorganization of German historiography and, on the other hand, the establishment of German historiography as the lead model for European historiographies following the war:

«Ein zweienhalb Jahre nach Kriegsbeginn, am 11./12. April 1942, im „Völkischer Beobachter“ erschienener programmatischer Artikel über die „Geschichtsforschung in neuen Europa“ faßte Mayers Ziele zusammen.»¹³ – “die Gegenwart bestimmt den Standpunkt, von dem aus des Geschichtsbild zu betrachten ist.»¹⁴

Furthermore, Fried stressed that Mayer’s role continued to be important after 1945. Indeed, between the 1950s and 1970s, the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis* became a successful, flourishing and active forum for medieval studies in the newly founded *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (BRD) and Theodor Mayer, who led the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis*, became a well-known and valued historian in the BRD and Europe.

«Die Mediävistik in der Bundesrepublik besaß nun ein Forum, auf dem neue Thesen, Fragestellungen oder Perspektiven und bislang unerprobte Forschungsansätze der deutschen und europäischen Geschichte vor einem kompetenten Fachpublikum unmittelbar zur Diskussion gestellt werden konnten.»¹⁵

Also, in the *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis*:

«durfte man im Interesse der Wissenschaft streiten, und es wurde gestritten – manchmal heftig und laut, früher sogar eher lauter als heute. Die Mediävistik profitierte davon. Der Kreis der Redner und Tagungsteilnehmer wurde zunehmend international und die Themen fächer-übergreifend.»¹⁶

Actually, the Theodor Mayer ‘case’ was not an isolated one. In point of fact, after the 1991 reunification, a new generation of historians, analysing the curricula of German universities and the careers of their professors under the National Socialist dictatorship, noted strong continuities in German historiography during and after the Regime. Briefly, two types of continuities may here be considered:

¹³ Fried 1991, p. 13.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁶ Ibid.

first, the ‘historiographical continuities’ – in other words, those of methods and topics adopted by both the 1930s *Volksgeschichte* and 1960s *Sozialgeschichte*; second, the ‘biographical continuities’ – in other words, those German professors who had been working in German universities and institutes, without a significant break, from the 1930s to the 1980s.

For instance, two German historians who focused on such continuities were Willi Oberkrome and, later on, Ingo Haar.

Willi Oberkrome, in his work “*Volksgeschichte: Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918 – 1945*” (1993), discussed German and Austrian *Volksgeschichte* of the period.

According to him, the *Volksgeschichte*, arose from late nineteenth-century German Romanticism, and during the First World War a process of *völkisch*-indoctrination represented a new approach in German historiography throughout the 1920s. Furthermore, during the Regime, the *Volksgeschichte* became the *Geschichtswissenschaft* of National Socialist Germany and therefore found its place in German universities and research institutes.

But Oberkrome, besides writing the history of the *Volksgeschichte*, also pointed out the significant connection between the 1930s-1940s *Volksgeschichte* and the later *Sozialgeschichte*. A connection that, until the 1990s, was unknown to many historians. Therefore, the first chapter of Oberkrome’s work¹⁷ is dedicated to the *Sozialgeschichte* and its roots.

«Im Mittelpunkt der folgenden Untersuchung stehen Frage nach dem Entwicklungsgang, der historiographischen Bedeutung und Wirkungsgeschichte innovativer, sozialhistorischer Ansätze in der deutschsprachigen Geschichtsschreibung der Zwischenkriegszeit.»¹⁸

¹⁷ W. Oberkrome, *Volksgeschichte: Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft 1918 - 1945*, Göttingen 1993. Chapter 1, *Sozialgeschichte in der Bundesrepublik*.

¹⁸ Oberkrome 1993, p. 10.

In other words, Oberkrome shows the bonds between these two approaches in what may be called a ‘National Socialist historiography’ and the German Federal historiography, as well as stressing the moral, cultural and methodological obligation of German *Sozial* historians to German *Volk* historians. Finally, Oberkrome singles out two lines of continuity in twentieth-century German historiography:

«1.in der Ostforschung und 2. in der methodisch-theoretischen Diskussion der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft über Sozial und Strukturgeschichte seit den 1950er Jahren.»¹⁹

In contrast to Oberkrome, Ingo Haar, in his work “*Historiker im Nationalsozialismus. Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der ‘Volkstumkampf’ im Osten*“ (2000), analysed the academic and political careers of German historians during the Regime, and in particular, pointed out the influence of their studies on the National Socialist politics against the Jews and Eastern European populations.

In fact, according to Haar, German historians, history departments, institutes and universities were thoroughly integrated into the politics of the Regime. For example, the *Nord- und Ostdeutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft* (NOFG) took part in, and was responsible for, the National Socialist policies regarding extermination of the Jews:

«In die komplexen Entscheidungsprozesse und Planungen, die zur Ermordung der europäischen Juden führten, waren die Historiker und Geographen der NOFG eingebunden.»²⁰

More generally, the German historians who accepted work from the Regime, offering their research and capabilities to the National Socialists, became co-creators of the *Neuordnung Europas*. Still, as already revealed by Fried’s and Oberkrome’s work, some of these historians also made a significant contribution to re-organizing the German historiography after 1945, and some of their research became models for the German *Sozialgeschichte*. For instance, Haar clearly stated

¹⁹ Oberkrome 1993, p. 220.

²⁰ I. Haar, *Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der “Volkstumkampf” im Osten*, Göttingen 2000, p. 371

in the last page of his work that, especially in the *Ostforschung*, several studies written during the Regime became inspiring models for the BRD historians:

«Die wissenschaftlichen Verfahren der ostdeutschen Volksgeschichte sind für die Sozial- und Strukturgeschichte nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg von Relevanz gewesen.»²¹

To sum up, during the 1990s, German historiography pursued a new line of inquiry. The National Socialist historiography and its historians were the defendants, the new generation of German historians was the prosecutor, the historiography of reunited Germany was the judge and the city of Frankfurt am Main, during the 1998 *Historikertag*, became the courthouse.

²¹ Haar 2000, p. 373.

I.1.2 Studies and research on National Socialist historiography during and after the 1998 *Historikertag*

The 1998 *Historikertag* in Frankfurt am Main represented a turning point for German historiography. The new research, focusing on the relationships between German historians and the National Socialist Regime, involved almost all history departments and institutes in German universities. Also, this research, focusing on the political careers of German historians during and after the Regime, questioned the moral integrity of the earlier generation of BRD historians, the scientific value of their works and their personal bonds with the new generation of German historians.

Thus, Johannes Fried, during the opening speech of the 1998 *Historikertag*²², openly stated that German historians had a duty to answer questions about the 'brown' past of German historiography:

«Was wäre richtig gewesen? Mit dieser Frage steht sich auch der Verband der Historiker Deutschlands konfrontiert, da gegen frühere Vorsitzende schlimme Vorwürfe wegen ihrer NS-Vergangenheit erhoben werden und der Verband dazu nicht schweigen kann. Die Aufgabe fällt nicht leicht; denn Unliebsames wird eingefordert, die Selbstprüfung der eigenen Disziplin.»²³

Consequently, as expected by Fried, the section "*Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*" was anticipated with apprehension by the conference audience and during this session, run by professors Otto Gerhard Oexle and Winfried Schulze, five historians presented their papers. The historians were: Peter Schöttler, Pierre Racine, Götz Aly, Michael Fahlbusch and Matthias Berg. Altogether, their research investigated different and, at that moment, previously unknown aspects of the German historiography during the Regime.

²² Verbandes der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands (ed.), *Intentionen-Wirklichkeiten*. 42. Deutscher Historikertag in Frankfurt am Mai. 8. bis 11. September 1998, München 1999.

²³ *Intentionen-Wirklichkeiten* 1999, p. 3.

First, Peter Schöttler, introducing his research on the Rhenish *Landesgeschichte*²⁴ between 1918 and 1945, demonstrated how the Rhenish *Landesgeschichte* historians, after the Versailles peace treaty, propagated the revision of the western German border not only in order to ‘regain’ the German territory loss after the First World War, but also in order to militarily conquer new territories for the German Empire.

Second, Pierre Racine, presenting his research on professor Hermann Heimpel²⁵, stressed Heimpel’s role at the University of Strasbourg during the period 1941-44. According to Racine, Heimpel, in his Strasbourg classes, interpreted the history of the western European territories, since the formation of the French Empire, as a legitimate aim and ‘destination’ of the German hegemonial politics.

Third, Götz Aly discussed his paper on German historiography and its political role in the Regime²⁶. According to Aly: on the one hand, the German historians with their work and research contributed to the establishment of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*; and, on the other hand, these historians collaborated with the National Socialists in order to shape the racial state and its racial politics. In the end, the Holocaust was the last terrible consequence of these politics.

Fourth, Michael Fahlbusch presented his research on the role of the *Volksdeutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* during the Regime²⁷. These research groups, constantly funded by the Regime, became *Denkschule* for the National Socialist elite and prepared this elite for its political and military career. Also, Fahlbusch remarked on the political intentions, and in some cases the ambitions, of many German historians working under the Regime.

Fifth, Matthias Berg, presented his paper on the *Ostforschung* and its historians. According to Berg, the *Ostforschung* historians, collaborating with the SS between 1933 and 1945, in order to reorganize the eastern territories of the ‘new Europe’, produced a large number of historical, geographical and ethnological

²⁴ Intentionen-Wirklichkeiten 1999, p. 210. *Von der rheinischen Landesgeschichte zur nazistischen Volksgeschichte oder die „unhörbare Stimme des Blutes“*.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 211 “*Hermann Heimpel in Straßburg*”.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 212 “*Geschichtswissenschaftlicher Fortschritt und rassenpolitische Geschichtsschreibung*”.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 212 “*Volksdeutsche Forschungsgemeinschaften, ein Braintrust der NS-Volksstumpolitik*”

research. Still, after 1945, the historians in the BRD, especially those who were working on the *Vertriebenenforschung*, appreciated both the scientific value of this research and the capacities of these (former *Ostforschung*) historians.

These papers and the new studies on German historiography during the Regime shed a new light on the German *Geschichtswissenschaft's* past. Additionally, these works stimulated contemporary historians to conduct more extensive research and encouraged them to critically reconsider the works, and also the careers, of their advisors and mentors. Indeed, at the end of the 1998 *Historikertag*, professor Jürgen Kocka gave a clear and incisive description of the nature of German historiography and on the role of German historians before and after 1945:

«Die damals jungen Sozialhistoriker kamen übrigens nur zum Teil von Theodor Schieder (den wir nicht als Sozialhistoriker zählten) und Werner Conze; zum großen Teil hatten sie bei Gerhard A. Ritter studiert, der mit der Tradition der Volksgeschichte so viel zu tun hatte. – Es gab in der Geschichtswissenschaft - und auch in der Sozialgeschichte - keine Stunde Null. Das Erbe von vor 1945 wirkte weiter, belastend zumeist.»²⁸

As said above, after the *Historikertag*-shock, young German historians began to investigate the curricula of the German universities and the careers of German historians during the Regime. More than that, the new generation wanted to find out which of these German historians continued to have a significant role in the history departments at German universities after 1945. Among the new and interesting research in this field, is the work of Frank-Luther Kroll, Anne Christine Nagel and Gordon Wolnick, that discusses the interpretation of the Middle Ages by NSDAP members and university professors and the picture of the Middle Ages portrayed by National Socialist propaganda.

²⁸ Jürgen Kocka in: *Dikussion: Historiker im Nationalsozialismus. Kommentar von Prof. Dr. Jürgen Kocka in der Sektion – Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus – 42. Deutscher Historikertag, Frankfurt/Main, 10 September 1998*. Online : <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/beitrag/diskusio/nszeit/nszeit14.htm>.

In 1998, Frank-Lothar Kroll wrote “*Utopie als Ideologie, Geschichtsdenken und politischen Handeln im Dritten Reich*” which presented the various interpretations of German history, and in particular of medieval German history, given by the primary National Socialist ideologues Hitler, Himmler, Rosenberg, Goebbels and Darré.

In 2000, Anne Christine Nagel wrote “*Die Philipps Universität Marburg in Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente zu ihrer Geschichte*”, which studied historiographical trends in the study of medieval history, especially at Marburg University, during the Regime. In a later work published in 2005 (*Im Schatten des Dritten Reich. Mittelalterforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945 – 1970*), she extended these studies to include the post-war period.

In 2004, Gordon Wolnik wrote “*Mittelalter und NS Propaganda. Mittelalterbild in den Print- Ton- und Bildmedien des Dritten Reiches*” which analysed the uses made of German medieval history by the National Socialist Ministry of Propaganda.

Many other historians have also dealt with the topic of German historiography during the Regime. The most notable of these works are to be found in collections such as *Paths of Continuity. Central European Historiography from [the] 1930s through the 1950s*”, published by the German Historical Institute of Washington in 1994, “*Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*” published by Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Gerhard Oexle in 2004, and “*Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften*” published by Ingo Haar, Michael Fahlbusch and Matthias Berg in 2008.

As demonstrated, since the early 1990s the German historians criticized their own discipline and its National Socialist past. In particular, their work concentrated on the nature and various interpretations of the German history, frequently of medieval history, during the Regime. Thus, most of these historians focused either on the curricula of the universities, on the programs of the research institutes or on the interpretations by the NSDAP members and propaganda of the Regime.

Surprisingly, since 1998 only a few historians have studied the interpretation of the German history in the elementary and secondary schools. What is more, the historians studied neither the medieval German history as presented in the *Volksschulen* i.e. elementary schools – which represented the most widespread and influential tools of education – nor the *Volksschulen* textbooks which would have presented a clear description of history and the Middle Ages as they were actually learned by German pupils.

Nevertheless, the small amount of analysis that was done of different and various textbooks for the *Volksschulen* unearthed new and interesting findings about the nature of German history in the Regime, about the role of history in the National Socialist educational system and about the organization of this educational system.

Indeed, the study of the textbooks for the *Volksschulen* revealed unexpected interpretations of the German Middle Ages. For instance, interesting and absolutely singular was the re-periodization, also ‘re-germanization’, of the earliest Germanic and German history as *Ur-Germanische Zeit* and *Groß-Germanische Zeit* and, consequently, the disappearance of the Middle Ages, as such, from many *Volksschulen* textbooks. In addition, the examination of textbooks used in various German regions and cities also pointed out a lack of unity in the National Socialist educational system. In fact, the Regime, struggling against local powers – such as *Gaue* or local ministries – did not achieve the desired control over topics or establish a definite and consistent model of education for all *Volksschulen*. For example, the differences between the education in *Volksschulen* – specifically in towns – and in *Landschulen* – specifically in lands – were still very distinct.

In point of fact, the variations within the German school system are not new to contemporary historians nor were they unknown to many teachers and pedagogues of the Regime. Probably, such differences were also known to the National Socialist Ministry of Education, which had to organize and centralize the German school system. But, for example, the struggle for control of the education in the *Volksschulen* between the Regime and the *Gaue* – explicable as a conflict between central and local powers – and the failure of the Regime – which, in the end, accepted these variations within a totalitarian system – is new evidence

supporting the interpretation that the National Socialist Regime was neither monolithic in its structure nor almighty in its will. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to notice the gap between the totalitarian intentions of the Regime and its achievements in practice.

Finally, the Middle Ages and its various interpretations in the National Socialist Regime were connected not only to the research of some historians in the universities, the populist slogans of the propaganda and the racial or biological interpretations of Hitler, Himmler, Darrè and Rosenberg. The interpretations of the Middle Ages were also related to the numerous textbooks for the German *Volksschulen*, to the groups of historians, who were writing those texts, to the teachers, who were working in the *Volksschulen* and, undoubtedly, to all the German pupils, who were studying under the Regime.

Chapter 2: History and the Middle Ages in National Socialist *Volksschulen*

I.2.1 German *Volksschulen* under the National Socialist Regime

As early as in the 1960s, Historiography and pedagogy examined the German school system and the role of the pedagogy under the National Socialist Regime. In particular, the research focused on the role of pedagogy during the Regime and, simultaneously, on whether a National Socialist pedagogy really existed. Thus, after years of debating, many pedagogues and school historians assumed that it would not be correct or appropriate to talk about a National Socialist pedagogy. According to such an interpretation, the Regime, despite its interest in the youth, did not produce a clear and well-defined National Socialist pedagogy, and gave only vague advice and directives about the education. For instance, Hans Jürgen Apel and Michael Klöcker, in their work “*Die Volksschule im NS-Staat*” (2000) talk of a pseudo pedagogy of the National Socialism. Also, Hitler’s speeches about the role of the German youth in National Socialist society are to be viewed as part of his racial vision of the world, rather than as the Regime’s pedagogy:

«Kurz nach der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung am 30. Januar 1933 soll Hitler in einem vertraulichen Gespräch seine Pädagogik folgendermaßen umrissen haben: «Meine Pädagogik ist hart. Das Schwache muß weggehämmert werden. In meinem Ordensburgen wird eine Jugend heranwachsen, vor der sich die Welt erschrecken wird. So kann ich das Neue schaffen.»²⁹

On the other hand, the *Schulgeschichte* was generally oriented toward the study of the German school’s structure and organization during the Regime: how these structures changed after 1933, how the school system was organized and by whom was it run.

Thus, according to the historian Herald Scholtz, the history of the German school system during the Regime can be divided into three phases. During the first phase, between 1933 and 1936, the Regime spent its energy on the *Machtsicherung* and it did not intervene significantly in the organization of the German school system. In this first phase, continuities of method and organization bonded the National

²⁹ H-G. Herrlitz, W. Hopf and H. Titze, *Deutsche Schulgeschichte von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart*, Weinheim and München 1998.

Socialist school system to that of the previous Weimar Republic's. The second phase, namely the *Kriegsvorbereitung*, between 1937 and 1940 was the period of changes for the school system, which had to echo the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, but was also the time of clash struggle against the new youth organizations such as the *Hitler Jugend* or the *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt*. During the third phase, between 1941 and 1945, the Regime, despite its intentions to gain more control over the schools, shifted its energy and interest toward the war and the solution to the 'Jewish problem'. Nevertheless, independent of the existence of a real National Socialist pedagogy, the *Volksschulen* and the *Landschulen* were two fundamental institutions for educating German pupils in the National Socialist school system. As a matter of fact, no other youth organization was as widespread across the German territory as the elementary schools³⁰.

More precisely, circa 95% of German pupils attended a *Volksschule* during the period 1933 – 1945 and, according to a report of the Nazi Ministry of Education, the German *Volksschulen* were 51,739 with 191,153 classes and 7,758,307 pupils in 1937. The German pupils attended classes either in *Jugendklassen* – for boys only – and *Mädchenklassen* – for girls only – or in *Gemischteklassen* – mixed classes. Furthermore, the 22,118 one-class *Volksschulen* and the 10,751 two-classes *Volksschulen*, compared to the 5,095 eight-classes *Volksschulen*, represented the largest *Volksschule*-model widespread over the German territory³¹. Altogether, in 1930s while higher schools were attended in Germany by 456,652 pupils, the *Volksschulen* were attended by 7.5 millions of German children. That is, the new National Socialist generation was formed in the *Volksschulen*.

³⁰ Elementary school is here used as substitute of *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen*.

³¹ A. C. Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer. Das Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung 1934 – 1945*, Frankfurt am Main 2012.

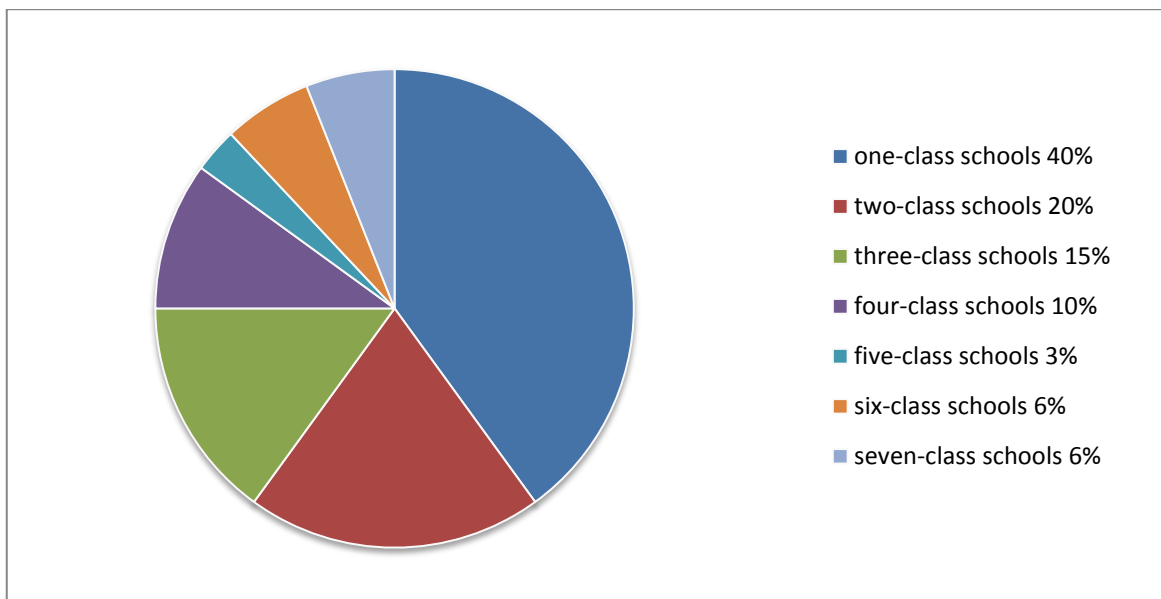


Table 1, Types of *Volksschulen* in National Socialist Germany.

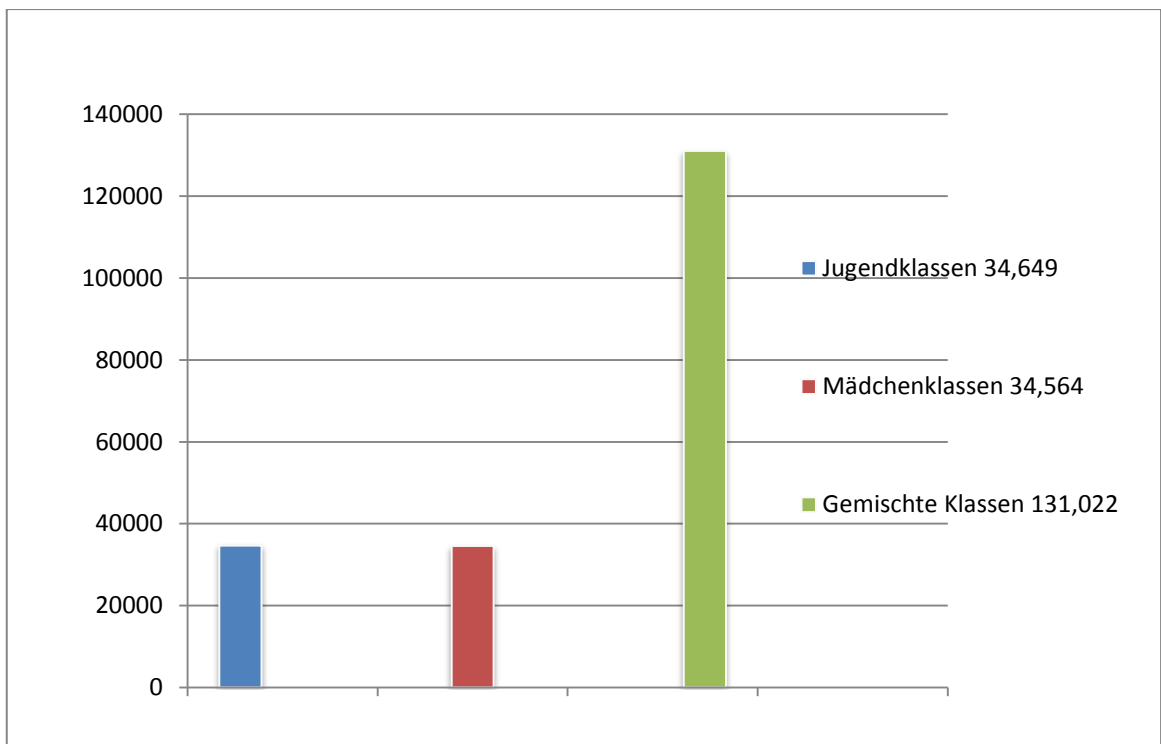


Table 2 Subdivision of the 1940 German *Volksschulen* according the class gender.

Among the different *Volksschulen* forms, also 684 elementary schools for handicapped children, namely: *Hilfsschulen*, *Gehörlosenschulen* and *Blindenschulen*, existed in National Socialist Germany. Besides that, 547 *Hilfsschulklassen* were incorporated in German *Volksschulen* for the amount of 85,169 pupils. These children, who could not take part in regular classes, were bred to become effective members of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*. Still, the reality was actually way sordid than it could sound. Indeed, in 1943 the Ministry of Education ordered that the eugenic and racial legislation should have been followed till its extreme consequences in case of children affected by hereditary disease:

«Ihre Lehrer sind verpflichtet, sich an den rassenhygienischen Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der erblichen Taubheit zu beteiligen, indem sie an der Auslese der Erbkranken nach Maßgabe der zu ihrer Verfügung stehenden Mittel mitarbeiten und Vorsorge treffen, daß Erbkranken die rassenhygienischen Vorschriften des Staates als notwendig verstehen lernen und die entsprechenden Maßnahmen verantwortungsbewußt und opferbereit freiwillig auf sich nehmen.»³²

More generally, the National Socialist Regime, with the establishment of the *Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung*³³ in the summer 1934, tried to re-organize and to control the whole German school system. This task implied a lot of work to do and, more than that, presented several problems. First, the German school-system, since its creation in the 19th century, was not conceived as being a centralized one but, actually, it was based on a federal structure in which every land had authority on its territory. This federal structure of the school-system was questioned neither during the German *Kaiserreich* nor during the Weimar Republic time. Indeed, in contemporary German history, the National Socialist Regime was the first one attempting to centralize the school-system and to overwhelm its federal structure.

Second, centralizing the German school-system was an operation that requested two essential factors above all, namely: time and money. But the Regime, that

³² “Richtlinien für die Bildungsarbeit in der Gehörlosenschule” RdErl. RMfWEV. vom 15. 1. 1943 – E II a (C 19 Geh.Sch.) 24/42 in: Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung, *Richtlinien für Bildungsarbeit in der Gehörlosenschulen*, Berlin 1943, pp. 7-8.

³³ Also referred to as *Erziehungsministerium*.

from 1939 on invested all its resources to win the war, gave neither enough time – from 1934 to 1939 – nor sufficient money to the *Erziehungsministerium*. In point of facts, the lack of time seemed to be the biggest obstacle for the *Erziehungsministerium* that, even if it invested a certain amount of money and energy in its cause, did not reformed the German school-system as expected by the Regime.

More than that, this new ministry was constantly hindered in its work by several members of the Regime's elite –such as, Goebbels, Rosenberg and Heß – who did not serenely 'accepted' Hitler's idea to assign the *Erziehungsministerium* and within part of the National Socialist youth education to Bernhard Rust. Apparently, the youth education, with all its ideological and political implications, represented a significant issue for many Nazi leaders that, instead of helping Rust, fought him and struggled against each other. That is, the National Socialist Regime showed its 'polycratic' and 'contradictory' nature. A more precise analysis of this issue will be, however, offered in the third part of this research. Still, the new ministry started to reorganize the school-system despite the political *querelle* as early as in 1934 and, indeed, it created the *Amt Erziehung* that contained four departments, namely: *Volksschulen*, *höhere Schulen*, *Berufs- und Fachschulen* and *landwirtschaftliche Fachschulen*³⁴. Furthermore, Bernhard Rust, chef of the *Reichserziehungsministerium*, commissioned the *Amt Erziehung* and the reform of the *Schulwesen* to his confidant Helmut Bojunga. Bojunga's assistants were Benze and Bargheer. Indeed, they were responsible for the reform of *Volksschulen* in the *Erziehungsministerium*.

All this data, presenting diversity among the German elementary schools, may help us to develop a more precise idea and more accurate picture of the ambience surrounding the pupils and their textbooks. Also, these records reveal how many German pupils were regularly involved in the elementary schools. A German elementary school, however, consisted of teachers as well as pupils. Indeed, the German teachers had the most influential role in the education and indoctrination of the first National Socialist generation.

³⁴ Nagel 2012, p. 75.

The role of the German teachers in the National Socialist elementary schools was increasingly tied to the activity of the *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* (NSLB). The NSLB, founded in 1929, was an association firmly committed to NSDAP and its aim was to indoctrinate all German teachers – from both schools and universities – and pedagogues as ‘true’ National Socialists. According to the Regime’s racial ideals and politics, the Jewish teachers, excluded from the NSDAP, were naturally not allowed to be part of the NSLB. For the NSLB, the efforts of Bayreuth *Volksschule* teacher Hans Schemm was essential during its early years of existence. Schemm, who was *Gauleiter* of the *Bayerischen Ostmark*, member of the *Reichstag* and, as of 1933, Bayer *Staatsminister für Unterricht und Kultus*, structured the NSLB and, subsequently, designated Bayreuth as the central post of the NSLB for all German territories. After Schemm, the *Volksbildung* minister Fritz Wächtler – between December 1935 and August 1936 – and Heinrich Friedmann – until 1945 – led the NSLB. The internal structure of NSLB was nearly identical to the NSDAP’s. In fact, the NSLB, adopting and following the NSDAP’s administrative division of the *Gau* in Germany, subdivided each German *Gau* into *Kreiswaltungen*. Furthermore, the members of NSLB, organized according their competences, were divided into *Fachschaften* and *Sachgebiete*. The seven *Fachschaften* represented and different types of schools and level of education.

Fachschaften [Departments]	Type of school
I	<i>Hochschulen</i>
II	<i>Höhere Schulen</i>
III	<i>Mittelschulen</i>
IV	<i>Volksschulen</i>
V	<i>Sonderschulen</i>
VI	<i>Berufs und Fachschulen</i>
VII	<i>Sozialpädagogische Berufe</i>

Table 3, NSLB *Fachschaften* organization.

Moreover, the *Sachgebiete* represented different topics and issues, such as: *Philosophie, Psychologie, Pädagogik, Rassenfrage und Familienforschung, Geschichte, Deutsch, Neuere Sprachen, Alte Sprachen, Weibliche Erziehung, Luftschutz und Luftfahrt, Erziehung zum Wehrwillen, Vorgeschichte, Mathematik, Religion* and *Landschulfragen*.

So, the German teachers, organized and structured by the bureaucracy of the NSLB, were expected to teach the pupils in order to make them conscious of Germany political and racial supremacy in Europe. Not surprisingly, the number of German teachers who joined the NSDAP rapidly increased in the first months of Regime. In point of fact, almost 20% of the German teacher joined the National Socialist party just in the first four months of the dictatorship and such a ‘positive’ trend culminated in 1936 when almost 97% of German teachers were recorded in the NSDAP’s membership rolls. Still, as for other Germans who joined the party, it is hard to say at this point whether all these teachers were truly followers of the National Socialist ideology – and of what aspect – and therefore joined voluntarily, or if they were forced – not only figurative speaking – to join. Nevertheless, it is true that national-conservative ideals already existed in the German school system before 1933.

Again, the German teachers had received some National Socialist indoctrination since the early years of the Regime by attending institutes such as the *Hochschulen für Lehrerbildung*³⁵, widespread across the German territories, which helped the Regime to mold the new generation of teachers politically. The role of these teachers was clearly stated by several of the Regime’s guidelines such as the 1939 *Richtlinien für die Volksschulen* which described the teacher as the *Führer* of the class: «*In Ihr [Klassengemeinschaft] ist der Lehrer der Führer.*»³⁶

³⁵ The ministry of Education Bernard Rust transformed the preussian *Pädagogische Akademien* in *Hochschulen für Lehrerbildung* (HLB) in May 1933. The HLB were College of Teaching Education.

³⁶ *Richtlinien für die Volksschule 1939*, in: K. Higelke, *Neubau der Volksschularbeit: Plan, Stoff und Gestaltung nach den Richtlinien des Reichserziehungsministeriums vom 15. Dezember 1939*, Leipzig 1940. Hereafter referred to as: *Richtlinien 1939*.

Nevertheless, the actual behaviour of a National Socialist teacher in a class was not easily control by the Regime and it is now impossible, despite sources and data, to reconstruct the precise content of a lesson. In other words, whether the class *Führer* was in complete accord with the National Socialist ideology and whether all the teachers, of various German classes, shared the same vision of this ideology, are topics for further discussion.

For instance, a very problematic situation was the *Landschulen* where the teachers, coming from the cities, taught poorly and often tried to leave these rural schools and the surrounding villages as soon as possible. Actually, despite the Guidelines and Hitler's pedagogy, the *Landschulen* and the so-called *Landflucht* were major problems for the Ministry of Education, for the NSLB, for the Regime and for the German school system. As it turned out, the National Socialist Regime could not find any solution to these problems.

I.2.2 National Socialist History Textbooks and Directives for the *Volksschulen*

Textbooks may be considered a primary educational resource of the school³⁷. Thus, textbooks may be studied not only for pedagogy and history but also for linguistics. Yet, a detailed linguistic analysis of National Socialist textbooks for the *Volksschulen* seems not to be present in the current humanistic research. Moreover, the book by the linguist Viktor Klemperer “*LTI, Notizbuch ein Philologen*” (2010) seems to be one of the few works focusing on linguistic or philological research of the Regime.

Nevertheless, the focus of this research is to understand not ‘how’ a National Socialist textbook was written but ‘what’ was written in the various history textbooks. That is, history textbooks and their contents are here considered as both a product of the German historiography, which was dedicated to the youngest National Socialist generation and not written by academic historians, as well as an attempt by the National Socialist State to control their youngest citizens. Such control, however, did not succeed completely.

Actually, in terms of the latter point, the brief works of Joachim Weiß, namely: “*Nationalsozialistische Schulbuchgutachten im Bundesarchiv Koblenz*” and “*Zur nationalsozialistischen Einflußnahme auf Schulgeschichtsbücher*” are interesting. These two works, analysing the Regime’s reports on the textbooks for all German schools and the influence of National Socialist *Weltanschauung* on the textbook’s contents, point out the gap between organizational intentions of the NSDAP and the actual functioning of the German school system between 1933 and 1945. According to Weiß, both the pre-existing regional differences in the German school system, which had existed since the late nineteenth century and never had a strong centralized organization, and the rivalry between Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior, *Hitler Jugend* and *NSLB*, were all equally responsible for

³⁷ D. Olson, *On the Language and Authority of Textbooks* in: *Journal of Communication*, 30, I 1980, p. 189.

such a gap. Actually, many of the Regime's centralizing intentions could not be realized: «Doch alle diese Intentionen konnten zunächst nicht realisiert werden.»³⁸

Furthermore, Weiß identified the Second World War as an additional factor, which enlarged the geographic reach and made complete control of the German school system by the Regime impossible.

Still, despite the final failure, the Regime actively and repeatedly tried to centralize the school system and the education in the German territories. In particular, the history teaching appeared a reasonable subject for the National Socialists from the very beginning of the dictatorship.

Indeed, even in May 1933, the National Socialist Ministry of the Interior Wilhelm Frick, releasing the “*Richtlinien für Neubearbeitung der Geschichtsbücher*”, proposed a re-orientation of the German history for the *Volksschulen* textbooks. Frick's guidelines, as well as the subsequent ministerial guidelines, only offered vague principles and suggested the direction toward the history teaching in German classes. The main idea, vaguely expressed by Frick in the guidelines, was to present a more Germanic interpretation of the history to the pupils. The lack of precise directives or clear pedagogical goal may be viewed as proof, confirming the absence of a National Socialist pedagogy. Indeed, the active engagement of the Ministry of the Interior, but not the Ministry of Education, in issues such as school education and organization of the history classes, again showed the conflicts within the Regime's hierarchy.

In point of fact, despite Hitler's proclamations about the role of the German youth in the National Socialist society, no clear and effective school policies were made during the Regime's rule. Still, as revealed by this research, the Regime tried to homogenize the education of the German pupils and the 1939 “*Richtlinien für die Volksschulen*” may be considered as the Regime's last attempt to organize the school system throughout the *Third Reich* that then also included Austria and the new conquered territories in the eastern Europe.

³⁸ J. Weiß, *Zur nationalistischen Einflußnahme auf Schulgeschichtsbücher*, in: *Internationale Schulbuchforschung. Journal of the Georg-Eckert-Institut*, 3. 1981, p. 115.

The 1939 *Richtlinien* clearly stated the role of the *Volksschulen* in the National Socialist society:

«Die Aufgabe der deutschen Schule ist es, gemeinsam mit den anderen nationalsozialistischen Erziehungsmächten, aber mit den ihr gemäßen Mitteln die Jugend unseres Volkes zu körperlich, seelisch und geistig gesunden und starken deutschen Männern und Frauen zu erziehen, die in Heimat und Volkstum fest verwurzelt, ein jeder an seiner Stelle zum vollen Einsatz für Führer und Volk bereit sind.»³⁹

Also, the first paragraphs of the *Richtlinien* called on teachers, principals and members of the school system to prepare the children for life in *Gemeinschaft*. This life in ‘community’, however, referred not only to the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*, which theoretically included not only all the German *Volk*, but also the smallest *Sippengemeinschaft*, including the family, and *Klassengemeinschaft*. Additionally, the German children were asked to ‘pass’ from the more familiar *Sippengemeinschaft* into the larger *Wehrgemeinschaft* and *Volksgemeinschaft*:

«In den oberen Jahrgängen der Volksschule sollen die Kinder allmählich über die Sippengemeinschaft hinaus in die große politische Volks- und Wehrgemeinschaft aller Deutschen hineinwachsen.»⁴⁰

That is, it is probably more correct to imagine the National Socialist society not only as a pyramid, with the *Führer* on top and the *Volk* in the bottom, but also as a concentric circles figure in which the *Familie* represented the smallest circle while the *Volksgemeinschaft* was the all-inclusive one. Furthermore, between *Familie* and *Volksgemeinschaft* existed other circles, namely: *Sippengemeinschaft*, *Klassengemeinschaft* and *Wehrgemeinschaft*.

³⁹ Richtlinien 1939, in: Higelke 1940, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

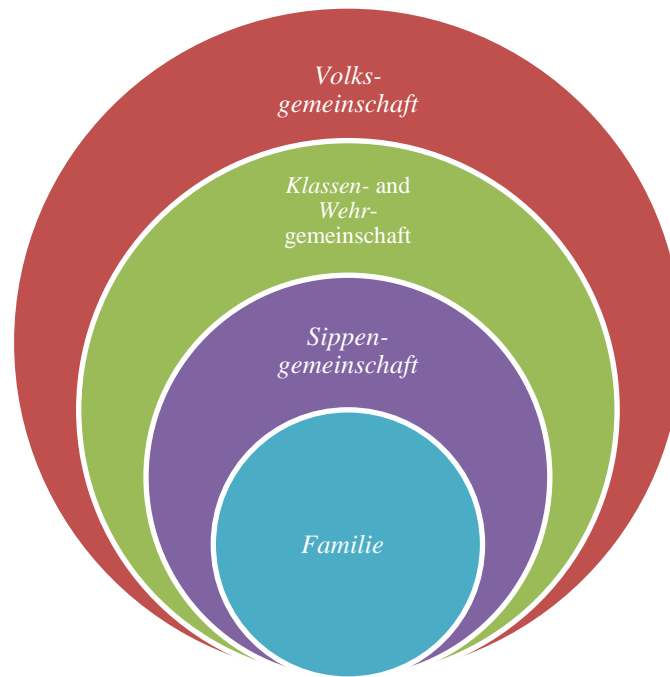


Table 4, Representation of the Nazi German Society as described by the 1939 *Richtlinien*.

To a great degree, the 1939 *Richtlinien* tried to firmly organize the complete German school system, down to the classroom, subjects and teacher's role. But, once again, the Regime had to deal with the "usual" practical problems, namely: local and regional differences and *Landschulen* variations. The Ministry of Education was probably mindful of these problems when they wrote the *Richtlinien*. Thus, the *Richtlinien* stressed that the German *Volksschulen* represented Germany not only in its 'unity' but also, surprisingly, in its 'diversity':

«Als Erziehungsstätte des deutschen Volkes und damit als Teil seines Volkslebens ist die Volksschule ein Abbild seiner Einheit, aber auch seiner Mannigfaltigkeit in den verschiedenen Gauen, in Stadt und Land.»⁴¹

So, apparently, the totalitarian *Third Reich* had to accept a certain amount of diversity in its own territories.

⁴¹ *Richtlinien* 1939, in: Higelke 1940, p. 23.

In particular, the *Landschulen* and the education in the village represented ‘the diversity’ in the National Socialist Regime:

«Die besondere Lebensnähe, in der die dorfeigene Landschule steht, bietet erzieherische und unterrichtliche Vorteile die voll auszunutzen sind. ... Dabei soll sie von sich aus das Bewußtsein der Dorfgemeinschaft pflegen und stärken, es jedoch zum Bewußtsein der Volksgemeinschaft erweitern. Sie legt zugleich den Grund für die Arbeit der ländlichen Berufsschule, ohne deren besondere Aufgaben vorwegzunehmen.»⁴²

The particular role of the *Landschulen* and more generally the education in German villages, may here be understood as a problem which entangled not only the Ministry of Education but also the ideology of the National Socialist Regime. In fact, beside pedagogical issues, such as the impossibility of offering the same education to all pupils in the Regime, the *Landschulen* and the *Dorfgemeinschaft*, with their renitence to accept the Regime’s education, posed an ideological problem for the National Socialists.

Actually, for the Regime’s leaders it was problematic to simultaneously emphasize the role of the German *Bauer* in the National Socialist society and accept that in the German villages the National Socialist ideology and education were misunderstood.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, was conscious of the discrepancies between the *Volksschulen* in various German regions, and between *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen*. As a result, *Volksschulen* retained as a certain amount of ‘looseness’ during the lessons: «Insoweit ist daher in der Volksschule grundsätzlich eine Lockerung bzw. Aufgabe der Fächerung geboten.»⁴³

Such a reference to “*Lockerung*” in the 1939 ministerial guidelines for the German *Volksschulen* stresses, once more, the gap between the Regime’s claims – such as unity and total control – and the concrete problems that National Socialism had to cope with. In other words, the Regime theoretically would have preferred to impose its guidelines on all German elementary schools, but in practice it had to handle various didactical and pedagogical problems, which

⁴² Richtlinien 1939, in: Higelke 1940, p. 23.

⁴³ Ibid.

forced the Regime to ask the German teachers – *Führer* of the *Klassengemeinschaft* – for a *Lockerung* while teaching in elementary school.

In brief, the Regime, aware of the problems concerning education, had to give some freedom and independence to the *Volksschulen*, *Landschulen* and their teachers.

In 1942 Kurt Higelke, director of the magazine *Die Deutsche Schule*, re-publishing for the third time his commentary of the 1939 Guidelines “*Neubau der Volksschularbeit: Plan, Stoff und Gestaltung nach den Richtlinien des Reichserziehungsministeriums vom 15. Dezember 1939*”, again wrote in the preface that issues about of *Landschulen* had been, finally, taken into great consideration and discussed in a special chapter of his work. Fundamentally, the *Landschulen*, and all the related difficulties, still constituted a major problem for the National Socialist indoctrination:

«Wenn bereits in kurzer Zeit eine zweite und dritte Auflage dieses Buches notwendig wurden, so ist das wohl der beste Beweis dafür, daß es einem dringenden Bedürfnis in rechter Weise entgegenkam. Um den Wert dieses Ratgebers zu erhöhen, sind in der durchgehend verbesserten und erweiterten Zweitaufgabe die Fragen der Landschule besonders berücksichtigt und dazu noch in einem Sonderbeitrag behandelt worden.»⁴⁴

That is to say, in 1942, when the German army had already invaded all of Europe and part of North Africa, and the Regime seemed to be at the turning point in its history, the *Landschulen* and, more generally, the education system remained unsolved problems.

⁴⁴ K. Higelke, *Neubau der Volksschularbeit: Plan, Stoff und Gestaltung nach den Richtlinien des Reichserziehungsministeriums vom 15. Dezember 1939*, Leipzig 1942: “Vorwort zur zweiten und dritten Auflage”.

I.2.3 History in the *Volksschulen*

Geschichte was a fundamental subject in National Socialist *Volksschulen*. The relevance of the history lessons was often emphasised by the National Socialist Ministry of Education, Bernard Rust, who considered history to be the main subject of the political education of the German pupils. Thus, in every *Volksschule* two hours per week in the fifth and sixth grades, and three hours per week in the seventh and eighth grades, were dedicated to history. Altogether, ten hours per week were dedicated to history in the last four years of *Volksschule* and, with the exception of German, no other humanities subject received such considerable attention. The political meaning of the history can be probed not only by the *Stundenplan* but also by Rust's opinions. In truth, according to the National Socialist Ministry of Education, the history classes essentially had a political connotation and a political role in the German *Volksschulen*:

«Die politische Erziehung in der Volksschule gründet sich in erste Linie auf den Geschichtsunterricht, der die Kinder mit Ehrfurcht von unsere großen Vergangenheit und mit Glauben an die geschichtliche Sendung und die Zukunft unseres Volk erfüllen soll.»⁴⁵

That is, the German history, from its earliest age to Hitler's Regime, was interpreted as the realization of the German *Volk's* destiny. In other words, the National Socialist party and the Regime was presented as the final and conclusive period of the German history – indeed, during this period the Regime anticipated lasting one thousand years, with the German *Volk* achieving supremacy in Europe. Such a political characterization of the history has, probably, influenced the later research on the National Socialist *Volksschulen*. In fact, this research has essentially examined the political role of the history in the *Volksschulen* and, in general, historians have focused mainly on the influence of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* on the history classes.

Thus, German historians, using guidelines, articles and work of the National Socialistic period to research the education in *Volksschulen*, have pointed out the enormous impact the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* had on the history classes.

⁴⁵ Richtlinien 1939, in: Higelke 1940, p.125.

On this topic, the works of several newer historians are relevant. Christian Vorein, author of “*Nationalsozialistische Schulbücher in Gau Mecklenburg*” (1962), pointed out, through lexical research, the influence of National Socialistic ideals on biology and history textbooks of the Mecklenburg *Volksschulen*; Helmut Keim and Dietrich Urbach, authors of “*Volksbildung in Deutschland 1933 – 1945*” (1976), analysed the rapport between the “new” National Socialist *Volksbildung* and the ‘old’ German education; and Horst Gies, in “*Geschichtsunterricht unter der Diktatur Hitlers*” (1992), by examining the guidelines for German schools and directives for German teachers and the speeches of the NSDAP leaders, offered an overall description of the history classes as conceived by the National Socialists.

Altogether, such research, based on National Socialist analysis of documents and guidelines, presented the history program in the German schools as if it were entirely influenced by the National Socialist ideals and completely controlled by the National Socialist ministry of Education.

But, a detailed analysis of *Volksschulen* textbooks from various regions, offers new evidence about the true nature of the history in German schools and about the actual influence of the National Socialist ideals on the history textbooks. Some evidence can be found: first, in thematic and interpretative continuities of the *Volksschulen* textbooks before and after 1933; second, in the different interpretations of medieval history and of National Socialistic ideology given by textbook authors between 1933 and 1945.

1. All the *Volksschulen* textbooks between 1933 and 1945 were aligned with the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, or, at least, they were not against it. Some of them frequently used words and ideas that were welcomed by the Regime. But, neither the repetition of propaganda slogans nor the embracing of National Socialist ideals implied that all the textbooks after 1933 became alike or that all the textbook authors shared the same interpretation of the history and wholly accepted the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*. In fact, the textbooks for the *Volksschulen*, despite the totalitarian intentions of the Regime, were extremely varied, in topic and structure, and they generally preserved their individuality

during the twelve years of the Regime. Also, many of these textbooks revised their topics, with a National Socialistic connotation, as late as 1936 and 1937. In other words, 1933 was not a significant break in the development of the *Volksschulen* textbooks. More precisely, many textbooks for the *Volksschulen* were strongly patriotic, while some of them went to the extent of being nationalistic even during the Weimar Republic. For example, Bernhard Kumsteller, author of the *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, dedicated the 1931 edition, and probably earlier editions as well, to the German youth and the consolidation of their love of *Volk* and *Vaterland*:

«Gewidmet Deutschlands Jugend, zum Verständnis der Gegenwart und Vergangenheit, zur Begeisterung an allem Großen, zur Vertiefung der Liebe zu Volk und Vaterland, zur Erweckung des Willens, für das Vaterland und damit auch zum Besten der ganzen Menschheit einst alle Kräfte einzusetzen.»⁴⁶

In many cases, the ‘nationalistic’ authors adjusted topics and structure of their textbooks, introducing National Socialist terminology as early as in 1937 or 1938.

On the other hand, textbooks that we may call ‘neutral’, firmly preserved their approach and interpretation of the history after 1933. A minority of these textbooks were dedicated to Hitler or to National Socialism, or included a swastika on their covers and, what is more, some of them actually ignored the re-periodization of the German history, into *Ur-Germanische* and *Groß-Germanische Zeit*, and retained the classic periodization. For instance, Melzer and Jungblut, authors of “*Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*”, published in 1942, dedicated a chapter of their work to “*das deutsche Mittelalter*”.

2. The Middle Ages was interpreted differently by the various authors of the *Volksschulen* textbooks through the lens of the National Socialistic ideology, despite its clarity. Such variations were in some cases minor and produced unimportant effects, but in other cases they were obvious and manifested their effects clearly. Certainly noteworthy are the disparities between textbooks for the urban *Volksschulen* and those for the rural *Landschulen*.

⁴⁶ B. Kumsteller, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, Leipzig 1931, p. III.

In nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany, *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen* shared the same educational aim and, in theory, the same methods and didactic approach. But, in reality, the *Landschulen* never followed the methods of the *Volksschulen*.

On the contrary, they were always a material problem for the German Ministry of Education and they constantly caused debates among the German pedagogues. In other words, the differences between *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen* generated two different models of education, namely an urban education and a rural one that was still apparent in 1933. Conscious of such gaps, the Regime, wishing to impose a singular National Socialistic education on all the German pupils, tried to homogenize the different curriculum of the German elementary schools – whether they were urban *Volksschulen* or rural *Landschulen*. But the Regime manifestly failed.

In reality, the discrepancies between *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen* remained evident throughout the Regime's rule. What is more, in 1934 the Regime issued the "*Richtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher*" but in reality, such a 'new' *Lesebuch* was never written and, in fact, the divergence of textbooks for *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen* became more evident. Likewise, the inconsistencies between urban and rural education deepened. Such inconsistencies, however, represented not only a pedagogical issue but also a political problem for the Regime.

In point of fact, as already noted, these issues were related to a major debate about the role of the German *Bauer* in the National Socialistic society and were, moreover, representative of the contrast between urban and rural life. Indeed, the role, characteristics, history and mythology of the German *Bauer* were interpreted differently in *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen*. In the latter, the German *Bauer* was presented not as 'the biological guard' of Germanic blood – according to Walter Darré's ideas – but only as a romantic figure in German history. Consequently, the history classes and the textbooks of the *Landschulen* emphasized the beauty of the modest rural life and the importance of a quiet rural community in the villages.

Both the romantic connotation of the German *Bauer* and the emphasis on the rural community, representing a 'misinterpretation' of the National Socialistic

Weltanschauung, were ostracised by the Ministry of Education and by the Ministry of Agriculture as testified by the following quotation from the Bayreuth *Gemeinschaftslagers des Reichsnährstandes des N.S.-Lehrerbundes* in 1939:

«Keine romantische Verzückerung über die Schönheit des Bauernlebens und des dörflichen Lebenskreises hat aber unsere Väter seit fünf Jahrhunderten auf ihren Höfen gehalten trotz aller Lockungen eines leichteren, bequemeren Lebens der Stadt. Die naturgesetzliche Härte des Bauernlebens und die tiefen Segnungen bäuerlicher Arbeit haben gute Bauernkinder vom ersten Tage ihres wachen Bewußtseins empfunden. [...] Seit ewigen Zeiten besteht der dörfliche Lebenskreis als ein geschlossenes organisches Gebilde, bestimmt durch das Herkommen aus dem Blut und der bäuerlichen Arbeit, die der Inbegriff der Werte schaffenden Arbeit überhaupt ist. Das Herkommen im Blut und das Ethos dieser Arbeit müssen auch die Grundlagen der politisch-biologisch bestimmten neuen Erziehung sein.»⁴⁷

As the research has revealed, the *Volksschulen* textbooks having either 'nationalistic' or 'neutral' backgrounds mostly retained their interpretations of the history and their structures in the early years of the Regime. So, the early years of the Regime did not represent a strong discontinuity from the Weimar period nor was 1933 a turning point for the *Volksschulen* textbooks. In fact, only a few authors had published a new National Socialistic version of their textbook as of 1933. Nevertheless, all the textbooks became aligned with National Socialistic *Weltanschauung* and all the authors, between 1933 and 1943, tried to follow the National Socialistic ideals. Whether they really believed in these ideals or only wanted to please the Regime in order to publish their textbooks, is still an open question.

Nevertheless, the authors themselves – historians, history teachers and pedagogues – presenting different versions of the German medieval history in their textbooks, offered the German pupils different images of National Socialism. As previously noted, the urban version of National Socialism, taught in the *Volksschulen*, was almost opposite the rural one, as taught in the *Landschulen*. The former, concentrating their attention on the political-biological aspect, condemned the bucolic and romantic interpretations of the history in the latter.

⁴⁷ Gemeinschaftslager des Reichsnährstandes des NS-Lehrerbundes (ed.), *Auf dem Wege zur völkischen Schule*, Bayreuth, 1939, pp. 7-8.

Here again, if the authors of the textbooks for the urban *Volksschulen* and those of the rural *Landschulen* were aware or preoccupied with giving dissimilar pictures of the National Socialistic *Weltanschauung* to the German pupils, is also an open question. Apparently, a cohesive National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* was easier to imagine than to realize for the Regime.

I.2.4 The Middle Ages in the *Volksschulen*

Since the late nineteenth century, German historiography has displayed a strong interest in the Middle Ages. Many historians of the *Volksgeschichte* focused their earlier studies intensively on the Germanic populations of the Middle Ages. Besides these historians, German writers, poets and painters also portrayed the Middle Ages in their work. Thus, the Middle Ages, either romantically depicted, religiously characterized or patriotically conceived, became a significant moment in German history. Furthermore, in the early decades of the twentieth century, the Middle Ages still represented a meaningful historical period for German historiography and the German culture. The significant attention on the period meant that, especially in the universities, there were innumerable works produced about medieval studies.

Not surprisingly, the National Socialists also often evoked the German Middle Ages, or its mythological and racial interpretation, in their speeches and slogans in order to convince the Germans of their cultural and racial superiority in Europe. A renowned example is the portrait of Hitler as a medieval knight – wearing heavy armour while riding a black horse and holding the National Socialist flag in his right hand, looking ahead gravely. Similarly, the academic studies of German historians about the Middle Ages are well known among current historians. The Regime and its leaders, the propaganda and its ministry, and the universities and their historians, however, only represent a part of the German society. A larger and less elitist part of the society was committed to the education system, namely: employers or managers of the Ministry for Education, teachers, school principals and pupils.

Among these interpretations, it may be worth discussing the one that emphasises a *longue durée* perspective of German and European history.

In 1939, several textbooks for the *Volksschulen* presented a lengthy continuity between prehistoric and medieval German history. Despite some elements of this continuity, such as the focus on the Germanic populations of the “*Bronzezeit*”, which were already present in earlier textbooks, the textbook authors of the Regime modified the contents of their works and adopted a new periodization for

the German and European history. In point of fact, the Middle Ages and the 'classic' periodization – Ancient, Medieval and Modern history – disappeared from the textbooks altogether and a new, more 'German' periodization was inserted, namely: *Urgermanische Zeit*, *Großgermanische Zeit* and *Deutsche Zeit*. Although this terminology was adopted by many authors, the temporal limits of the periodization were ambiguous. This terminology may be roughly described as follows:

1. *Urgermanische Zeit* delimited a period between 2000 and 500 B.C.. Characteristics of this period, formerly called *Bronzezeit*, were the *Ursiedlung* and the earliest *Völkerwanderungen*. The *Ursiedlung* represented the original settlement of the *Germanen* in the northern territories of present-day Germany. The *Germanen*, also called *Indogermanen*, was the first German population, and the origin of all the Germanic populations that, moving from northern Germany and migrating to Europe, Asia and North Africa, created the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Persian civilizations;

2. *Großgermanische Zeit* delimited a period between 500 B.C. and A.D. 1500. A significant characteristic of this period was the creation of the first German Empire and its subsequent collapse. Surprisingly, many authors presented Charlemagne as the emperor of the first Germanic Empire on a 'Germanic' territory. In fact, according the *Ursiedlung* theory, the Franken, settled in present-day France, were also a Germanic population. But, the first German Empire (*Deutsches Reich*), founded by Heinrich the First in the tenth century, symbolized the cohesion of all the German territories and the establishment of Germany as the leading power in Europe.

3. *Deutsche Zeit* delimited a period between 1500 and the present. During this period, Germany was divided by regional powers so the textbooks emphasized national heroes of German history, namely: Martin Luther, Friedrich the Second of Prussia and Otto von Bismarck. These three figures are depicted as the 'fathers' of the German *Volk* but the apex of German history was the 1933 *Machtergreifung* of the National Socialist Party and its leader Adolf Hitler.

Such periodization is a unique characteristic of the *Volksschulen* textbooks, but the provenance of such periodization is, unfortunately, not completely clear. Certainly, German historians had suggested a re-periodization of German and European history as early as 1933. For instance, Heinrich Schnee, a teacher at the Adolf Hitler Gymnasium and supervisor of history for the *Staatlicher Pädagogischen Bezirksseminar* in Gelsenkirchen, endorsed a ‘more Germanic’ re-periodization of history, and in particular of Medieval History, in his work “*Geschichtsunterricht im Völkischen Nationalstaat*” published in 1936:

«[...] Die Kaiserzeit des Mittelalters, die Zeit des Ersten Reiches, ist eine glanzvolles Zeit und eine Epoche größte Machtenfaltung [...] so wollen wir auch auf das erste Reich stolz sein [...] Das germanische Mittelalter müssen wir als Einheit behandeln.»⁴⁸

Still, Schnee was probably not the only one encouraging such a change of perspective in German historiography. The conflict between the old ‘state history’ and the new *Volk* history, which focused on the history of the German *Volk*, also entangled German universities and research groups. Nevertheless, the first concrete traces of re-periodization occurred in the *Putzger Atlas* and in the magazine “*Deutsche Geschichte*” published by Dürrs. In 1937, the atlas proposed a chronological table in which the historical structure was: *Nordische Frühzeit*, *Urgermanische Zeit*, *Großgermanische Zeit* and *Deutsche Zeit*. Similarly, Dürrs reorganized the contents of its magazine “*Deutsche Geschichte*” and used the new periodization for the first time. So, after the inaugural issue dedicated to “*Germanische Vor- und Frühgeschichte*”, the next issue was entitled “*Die großgermanische Zeit*”. Finally, the *Richtlinien* of the Ministry of Education confirmed and established the use of such periodization in all the German *Volksschulen* in 1939.

In short, this re-periodization of German and European history is to be found only in the *Volksschulen*’s literature. More precisely, it appeared for the first time in the *Putzger Atlas* and in Dürrs’ magazine for the German *Volksschulen* in 1937 as well as later on in the *Richtlinien* in 1939. Finally, it appeared, clearly stated, in many *Volksschulen* textbooks after 1939.

⁴⁸ H. Schnee, *Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*, Bochum 1936, p. 22.

Such periodization and its *longue durée* perspective were, however, connected to a broader interest in the pre-history of the Germanic populations. In point of fact, the work of the historian Gustav Kossinna, who established pre-history as a *Wissenschaft*, became very influential in the interpretation of history in the German *Volksschulen*.

In particular, Kossinna's work "*Deutsche Vorgeschichte, eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft*", published for the first time in 1911, turned out to be the principal and widespread source for the authors of the *Volksschulen* textbooks and an intriguing result of such influence was the transmission of pictures concerning the Germanic pre-history from Kossinna's work to almost every textbook assigned to *Volksschulen*. For example, some of the very popular and always recurrent images among the *Volksschulen* textbooks were the pictures of a Germanic pre-historical spread with a Swastika, and another of a Germanic vase decorated with Swastikas. Both of these pictures originally appeared in Kossinna's work in 1911. Furthermore, maps and drawings which were used by Kossinna in his book, were subsequently used by authors in their textbooks.

To resume, the idea of the Middle Ages in the German *Volksschulen* will be here considered from two points of view: firstly, pointing out the trends; secondly, stressing the differences.

On the one hand, the teaching of medieval history was torn by political and pedagogical debates internal to the Regime, such as the struggle between local and central power and the various, sometimes opposing, interpretations of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* in the urban *Volksschulen* and in the rural *Landschulen*; on the other hand, the interest in the German pre-history and the attempt to emphasize the roots of the Germanic *Volk* and its culture, produced a common interpretation of history in the National Socialist *Volksschulen*. This interpretation, however, in compressing almost six thousand years of German and European history, simply erased '*das deutsche Mittelalter*', so celebrated by the Regime and its leaders, from the textbooks of the National Socialist pupils.

Part I Summary

Before moving any further, into considering the results of this research, and before analysing the contents of the textbooks – which echoed more complex structural problems of the National Socialist Regime – it may be here necessary to resume the state of the research and the intentions of this study.

The historiography over the last twenty years has shown an increasing interest in the nature and role of German historiography under the National Socialist Regime. Of particular interest were the personal biographies of German professors, who were well known and scientifically appreciated during the BRD time. The most interesting, and somewhat shocking, new findings were those proving the existence of strong continuities in the German historiography between the National Socialist and post-war time. In brief, many historians who contributed positively to German historiography in the latter period, had been fully involved with the Regime and its racial politics.

The breaking point for such studies was the 1998 *Historikertag*. In fact, despite important studies, which had taken place even before 1998, the German *Geschichtswissenschaft* became completely aware of these shocking new findings only after that *Historikertag*. Consequently, a new generation of young historians, who had no direct relationship with the generation of post-war historians, investigated the curricula of German universities and political careers of historians during the Regime. That is, several remarkable studies have been published about these topics in the last decade. Still, current historians' predominant interest is the historiography produced in universities or in research centres. Also, other points of interest for the historians included the ideology of National Socialist elite group and their interpretations of German and European history.

But it is important pointing out that university professors and the leading group of the NSDAP were not the only parts of the Regime interested in history. In point of fact, history was also studied in the German schools and actually, in terms of numbers, those involved in the school system and in youth education definitely outnumbered those connected to universities or to NSDAP leaders. To put it

simply, historians, university professors and NSDAP leaders may be considered an elitist part National Socialist society, while the pupils, their family and their teacher may be treated as a more general and larger part of the Regime.

Furthermore, two more elements need to be taken into consideration: first, the historians writing for the schools did not have to deal with judgments of eminent historians. Thus, they were more free to 'experiment' and they could therefore present more 'innovative' interpretations of history; second, homogenizing the German school system was a difficult task for the Regime and, as a matter of fact, such homogenization did not completely succeed. So, the German school system seems to be a perfect field in which to test the real strength of the Regime and its concrete actions. In point of fact, the Regime, which could not rule with only terror and repression, had to cope with several problems regarding the structure and the organization of power during its twelve years of existence, that it was not able to solve.

What is more, several problems for the National Socialist Regime, concerning the school system and education, were caused by both the 'interference' of local powers, such as the *Gaue*, in national politics:

«Das Verhältnis zwischen den Ländern und dem Reichserziehungsministerium war in den Tagen der Beratungen und Entscheidungen zur Reichsschulreform nicht frei von Spannungen und Belastungen.»⁴⁹

and the conflict between the *SS*, *Hitler Jugend*, *NSLB*, *Reichsnährstand*, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education.

Concerning the latter point, it has become clear that all these institutions pretended to shape and rule the education of the German pupils:

«Der Schnell aufflammende Machtkampf um die Schulpolitik, die Querelen zwischen dem Reichsinnenminister Frick und dem preußischen

⁴⁹ M. Heinemann, *Erziehung und Schulung im Dritten Reich*, Stuttgart 1980, p. 199.

Kultusminister Bernhard Rust, dem Gauleiter von Südhannover-Braunschweig, zeigen wie offen die Machtfrage im Schulwesen war.»⁵⁰

That is, the Regime's structure seems to have been more chaotic than hierarchically organized:

«Es gab zu keinem Zeitpunkt des zwölf Jahre des „Tausendjährigen Reiches“ eine lineare Lette nach dem Muster Führerbefehl – Lehrplan – Lehrverhalten – Schülerverhalten. Bestimmungen, Anweisungen usw. mußten zunächst stets durch die Köpfe und Herzen der Menschen hindurch, die sie befolgen bzw. umsetzen sollten, und wurden von ihnen, je nach Verarbeitung bzw. Beurteilung, übernommen, modifiziert oder ignoriert.»⁵¹

Finally, the new finding of this research will be considered in two categories: 1, the idea of the Middle Ages as part of the German historiography in the National Socialist elementary schools; 2, the interpretation of medieval history within the struggle between regional and central powers of the National Socialist politics for the elementary schools.

Also, this research will point out the distance between what the National Socialist Regime claimed and what it really did in order to obtain total control in Germany and later in Europe.

Hence, these results will be here expressed in the next two chapters as representing similarities and differences between German *Volksschulen* and, more broadly, within the National Socialist education system.

The similarities will be analysed in the second part, namely: *The Similarities, Trends in Medieval History in the National Socialist Volksschulen*. This chapter, taking into consideration the variety of German elementary school⁵² history textbooks and the intentions of the Regime for the medieval history, will try to point out the widespread interpretations of the Middle Ages in the German elementary schools. In other words, this chapter will present how medieval history

⁵⁰ J. Finger, *Gaue und Länder als Akteure der nationalsozialistischen Schulpolitik. Württemberg als Sonderfall und Musterbeispiel im Altreich*, in: J. John, H. Moller and T. Schaarschmidt, *Die NS-Gaue, Regionale Mittelinstanzen im Zentralistischen "Führerstaat"*, München 2007, p. 160.

⁵¹ Arbeitsgruppe Pädagogisches Museum (ed.), *Heil Hitler Herr Lehrer! Volksschule 1933 – 1945*, Berlin 1983, p. 7.

⁵² Both *Volksschulen* and *Landschulen*.

should have been studied in National Socialist elementary schools to be in line with the Regime's intentions.

The differences will be analysed in the third part, namely: *The Differences, Local Powers and National Socialist Volksschulen historiography*. This chapter, comparing the Regime's guidelines for local and regional directives, will emphasize the diversity within the National Socialist school system. Subsequently, the various interpretations of both medieval history and National Socialist ideology in German elementary schools will be explained. In brief, this chapter will show how medieval history was actually studied in National Socialist elementary schools and how strong the influence of local powers were on the Regime's politics for its youngest generation.

Part II - The Similarities, Trends in Medieval History in the National Socialist *Volksschulen*

Chapter 1: General Characteristics of the *Volksschulen* historiography

II.1.1 History teaching in the National Socialist *Volksschulen*

Before analysing the topics and issues of *Volksschulen* textbooks, it is important to point out three characteristics of *Volksschulen* historiography that were present not only in the textbooks but also in the specialized literature dedicated to *Volksschulen* teachers and staff. Indeed, the most interesting and widespread tendencies were: first, a re-Germanization of history and the introduction of the *Gegenwartskunde*; second, an emphasis on comparing the present with the past – that is, that National Socialist Germany had to learn from German history – and third, the influence of the *Vorgeschichte* and in particular of Gustav Kossinna's work “*Die deutsche Vorgeschichte*” on the history textbooks.

II.1.2 Creating a more Germanic interpretation of history

History, as taught in the German *Volksschulen*, was to be a German history, interpreted and taught only from a pan-German and National Socialist perspective. This new emphasis on German history, that we found not only in the *Volksschulen* historiography but also in the one written by German history professors in universities or research centres, had a concrete effect only in the school system where a re-periodization of the history and a re-organization of the teaching plans took place.

Indeed, the National Socialist Ministry of Education ordered all *Volksschulen* to teach *Gegenwartskunde* starting in the first semester of the fifth school year. Indeed, the history lessons in the *Volksschulen* after 1939 were organized as follow:

School year	Semester	Subject
5 th school year	First semester	<i>Gegenwartskunde</i> (German history between 1918 and 1933)
	Second semester	<i>Urgermanische</i> and <i>Großgermanische Zeit</i> (from 5000 to 500 B.C.)
6 th school year	First semester	<i>Großgermanische Zeit</i> (from 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500)
	Second Semester	<i>Deutsche Zeit</i> (from A.D. 1500 to 1800)

Table 5, History Subjects in the *Volksschulen* after 1939.

In this new constellation, the term German Middle Ages not only formally disappeared from the history textbooks, that no longer dedicated a chapter to ‘*Das deutsche Mittelalter*’ as was commonly done during the Weimar period, but it also, in practical terms, received less attention from the teacher, who had to focus first on the present and then on the German ‘past’. Clearly, the aim of the *Gegenwartskunde* was to form the German pupils politically, through the

description of the NSDAP, its leader and its history. Also, the introduction of the *Gegenwartskunde* fulfilled the idea that the '*Machtergreifung*' was the conclusive part of the German millenary history. Furthermore, 1933 represented the historic moment when all the German *Volk* were finally joined together and, subsequently, Germany realized its destiny.

The *Gegenwartskunde* was fundamentally the history of National Socialism and its leader Adolf Hitler. It encompassed the time between 1919 and 1939 or, later, 1941. In particular, the dramatic history of the *Weimar Republik*, the economic crisis, the 1933 National Socialist 'revolution', the invasion of Sudeten, the *Anschluß* of Austria, the Munich Conference, the 1939 invasion of Poland, the 1940 invasion of Western Europe and the 1941 invasion of Russia were all topics of *Gegenwartskunde* classes. Indeed, the *Gegenwartskunde* lessons had both political and historical aims. On the one hand, the lessons were part of the National Socialist political indoctrination; on the other hand, they showed National Socialism as part of the German *Volk* destiny and depicted the National Socialist leaders as heroes.

The 1939 *Richtlinien* clearly stated that *Gegenwartskunde* was part of the history lesson for the *Volksschulen*. Furthermore, *Gegenwartskunde* became the first topic of history classes in the fifth school year and, for the first time, the history lessons in the *Volksschulen* did not follow the traditional order. According to the 1939 *Richtlinien*, the German pupils had to learn *Gegenwartskunde* for more than one semester and a mix of *Urgermanische* and *Großgermanische Zeit* in the last three months of their fifth school year. In the sixth school year, they started their history lessons with the German Frank empire [as opposed to another Frank empire?] and *Karl der Große*, whether or not they had actually had time for the history of the first part of *Großgermanische Zeit*.

That is, in the fifth school year almost seven months of history classes were dedicated to circa 20 years of German history while only three months were given to studying more than three millennium of Nordic-Germanic history. Not surprisingly, *Großgermanische Zeit* topics, that were negatively interpreted by several Nazi historians, were often omitted from several teaching plans that,

between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth school year, ‘jumped’ from the fifth century B.C. – beginning of *Großgermanische Zeit* – straight to the fifth century A.D. – the German Frank empire. In point of fact, ten centuries of German history, with the only exception being Armin, and very representative moments such as the German-Roman relationship and, more than that, the A.D. 375 *Völkerwanderung*, a date that for all Weimar Republic textbooks represented the beginning of the Middle Ages, were left out of the *Volksschulen* historiography altogether because they were not suitable to the National Socialist history interpretation that clearly showed more interest in the German pre-history than in the Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, it should be said that even from a National Socialist perspective, considering how much interest and attention was concentrated on Germanic pre-history, introducing *Gegenwartskunde* must have brought a noticeable change to the normal method of teaching history. Still, the new disposition seemed to be very effective and, beginning in January 1940, new *Volksschulen* textbooks were published for the German market and several of these were divided into two units, the first one dedicated to Hitler and National Socialist history, the second one to the *Urgermanische* and to the *Großgermanische Zeit*.

The National Socialist school system has to be understood, however, as more fractured and divided, and the regional powers more active and influential than expected. The introduction of *Gegenwartskunde*, while it was an innovation for all German *Volksschulen*, seemed to follow a similar guideline enacted, as early as March 1933, by the Bayern Ministry of Education, namely: the “*Schemm-Erlaß*”. More precisely, on March 27, 1933 Hans Schemm, *Gauleiter* of *Bayerische Ostmark*, ratified the “*Verordnung des bayerischen Staatsministeriums für Unterricht und Kultus*” that ordered all Bayern *Volksschulen* teachers to handle the 1918-1933 German history events during history, local geography and social studies classes of the 1933-34 school year. Indeed, the “*Verordnung*” was especially directed to history classes:

«Zu Beginn des neuen Unterrichtsjahres 1933/34 haben in sämtlichen Schulen Bayerns die Lehrkräfte in der ersten Wochen in Geschichte, Heimatkunde, Staatsbürgerkunde, Anschauungsunterricht die Schüler

einzuführen in die Bedeutung und Größe des historischen Geschehens der nationalen Revolution, wobei es darauf ankommt, in der heranwachsenden Jugend den Sinn und das Gefühl für des Volkes Ehre und Macht zu erwecken und in jedem Jungen und Mädchen die heiligen Gefühle der Vaterlandsliebe und der treuen Pflichterfüllung zu mobilisieren.»⁵³

Furthermore, the aim of *Gegenwartskunde* was to emotionally involve the pupil in the history of Germany and the *NSDAP*. Frequently, *Volksschulen* pupils were asked to sketch the history of their own family during the First World War and the Weimar Republic. Moreover, post 1939 textbooks asked the pupils: What did your grandfather do during the First World War? – What has your father done in the current war?

Altogether, the *Gegenwartskunde* has to be viewed as ‘pure’ National Socialist political indoctrination disguised as history lessons, and its introduction in *Volksschulen* didactical plans in December 1939, a few months after the invasion of Poland, is certainly not casual. The German pupils, after almost one year of propaganda, were finally ready to learn German history.

The strong change in the teaching plans and the introduction of *Gegenwartskunde* has to be also understood as a consequence of the debate within the Regime and entangled many historians who were interested in re-organizing the German school system. There were two authors, in particular, who recommended a more Germanic interpretation and teaching of the history in the National Socialist *Volksschulen*. These two authors are Karl Friedrich Sturm and Heinrich Schnee.

Karl Friedrich Sturm, in his work “*Der Geschichtsunterricht der Volksschule im nationalsozialistische Staat*” (1933), presented a conceptual and didactic reorganization of the history classes for all German *Volksschulen* under the National Socialist Regime.

Sturm’s main idea can be summed up by two points: firstly, the *Volksschulen* pupils should learn the German history and neglect the non-German one; secondly, the *Volksschulen* history teachers, focusing on the historical

⁵³ *Amtsblatt des Bayerischen Staatsministeriums für Unterricht und Kultus 1933*, in: H. Gies, *Geschichtsunterricht unter der Diktatur Hitlers*, Böhlau 1992, p. 144.

development of the German *Volk* from pre-history to contemporary Germany, should help the pupils to understand the National Socialist Regime as part of this development.

More precisely, Sturm pointed out in the first pages of his work that the history, both as scientific discipline and class subject, should always research the *Werden* of the *Volksgemeinschaft*:

«Was die Geschichte zu erforschen und darzustellen hat, was der Geschichtsunterricht der Jugend nahebringen muß, das ist das Werden, der Aufstieg und Niedergang der Zusammenbruch und die Erhebung der Volksgemeinschaft.»⁵⁴

Furthermore, Sturm suggested a reorganization of the history lessons contents. Indeed, the contents should be organized following the evolution and the history of the German *Volk* from three points of view: the military conquests, the creation of its 'vital' space and the creation of a state:

«Inhalt der Geschichte ist das Werden eines Volkes in der Eroberung oder Verteidigung, in der Bearbeitung und Formung eines geeinigten Lebensraumes.»⁵⁵

More generally, according to Sturm, history was a racial conflict in which several 'race-powers', such as blood purity or the bonds that every population had to its own land, influenced the history of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* sometimes in a positive way and sometimes in a negative way. Furthermore, Sturm, according to an eschatological historical interpretation that arose in the most conservative and *völkisch* branch of 1920s and 1930s German historiography, described the history of the German *Volk* as a long racial 'destiny':

«Was unserem Volke durch die Jahrtausende je widerfahren ist, das erwuchs ihm immer auch aus seinem Blute. Geschichte ist Rassenschicksal.»⁵⁶

⁵⁴ K.F. Sturm, *Der Geschichtsunterricht der Volksschulen im nationalsozialistischen Staat*, Dresden 1933, p. 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

That is, the history classes moving from historical and pre-historical moments of the German *Volk* should culminate in the description of the National Socialist Germany history. The history had to serve the purpose of being a ‘certificate’ of Germany’s cultural and political superiority in Europe through several millenniums and because of this superiority, Sturm also suggested that for the German pupils only German history was necessary and worth studying and the rest should be ignored:

«Deutsche Geschichte als Hauptsache, außerdeutsche nur, insofern dem Unterricht noch Zeit bleibt.»⁵⁷

Equally important for Sturm was the depiction of the German pre-history and ancient history as a period of glory for the German *Volk*. For this reason, surprisingly, German history as a focus of the history classes in the *Volksschule* was expanded to include the old German mythology, which should have helped the history teacher give German history a ‘heroic’ flavour. The German history was a ‘heroic history’ and it must become an example for all the National Socialist youth:

«Geschichtsunterricht soll heldische Menschen erziehen helfen, und zwar im besonderen dadurch, daß er der Jugend Helden schildert»⁵⁸

More particularly, the intromission of German mythology and saga in the history classes had a precise goal: to highlight the cultural value of the German *Vorgeschichte* and in particular, to portray the Germans as heroes, to fight the ‘prejudice’ of Germanic pre-historic *Volk* as barbaric or primitive populations. Neglecting the ‘barbaric prejudice’ and taking care of the image of Germanic populations in the pre-historical time were issues of particular interest not only for the German historians of the Regime but also for the Ministry of Education itself that released a notice on July 4, 1935, to counteract the negative habit, which was apparently diffuse, of describing the Germanic ancestor as “*Wandschmuck*” and ignoring the value of the *Germanentum* that, for instance, has been revived in the beginning of the twentieth century by authors such as Gustav Kossinna.

⁵⁷ Sturm 1933, p. 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

«In vielen Schulen werden heute noch Bilder unserer germanischen Vorfahren als Wandschmuck verwendet, die dem gegenwärtigen Stand der Wissenschaft und unserer Erkenntnis über das Wesen des Germanentums in seiner Weise mehr entsprechen. Auch das das Germanentum betreffende Anschauungsmaterial ist größtenteils so veraltet, daß es nicht geeignet ist, den Kindern ein wahrheitsgetreues Bild von der germanischen Kultur zu übermitteln. Ich bitte daher, anzuordnen, daß ungeeignete Bilder aus den Schulen entfernt werden.»⁵⁹

Aware of such problems, Sturm summarised in his work that the German ancestors were neither *Barbaren* nor *Primitiven*

«wir uns mit Stolz das älteste Kulturvölker Europas nennen dürfen, daß unsere Vorväter keineswegs Barbaren oder gar Primitiven gewesen sind, sondern vielmehr schon in frühesten Zeiten eine eigene hohen Kultur geschaffen und gepflegt haben.»⁶⁰

Finally, Sturm concluded his work by repeating two points: firstly, the history-destiny of the German *Volk* must be studied essentially from a German perspective «die Schicksale unseres Volkes vom deutschen Standpunkt her gesehen, erzählt und gewertet werden»⁶¹; secondly, the history classes must consider a pan-German point of view which would also include Austrian and Sudeten history

«Schließlich muß deutsche Geschichte, unter dem Volks- und Staatsgedanken betrachtet, großdeutsch sein. Sie wird weder die Österreicher noch die Sudetendeutschen, noch die Elsässer aus unserem völkischem Bewußtsein entlassen.»⁶²

Still, this latter request of a pan-German perspective while teaching history in National Socialist elementary schools throughout the Regime's territories, especially after the German invasions of the Sudeten territory and Austria, would have been difficult, almost impossible, to achieve.

⁵⁹ «Anschauungsbilder über das Germanentum dem 4. Juli 1935 – Erl.d.RuPrMfWEuV. Vom 4. 7. 1935» in: A. Kluger, *Die deutsche Volksschule in Großdeutsche Reich*, Breslau 1940, p. 244

⁶⁰ Sturm 1933, p. 45.

⁶¹ H. Schnee, *Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*, Bochum 1933, p.73.

⁶² Ibid., p. 74.

Karl Friedrich Sturm proposed ideas and interpretations in his work that were common among many other National Socialist historians who were part of the academy, the National Socialist ‘intelligentsia’ or of the school system. Sturm’s ideas referred to a more vague interpretation of the history, which did not promote a reform or reorganization of the didactical plan. In point of fact, Sturm drafted an outline for history teaching in the *Volksschule* but his *Lehrplanskizze* still followed the ‘classical’ history periodization. The plan started with the German pre-history, went through the Roman Empire and its relationship with the Germanic populations and ended up, so far as this research is concerned, in the German Middle Ages. Actually, the only new elements were the introduction of the German mythology in the fifth school year, the emphasis on the role of Nordic-Germanic blood in the European history and some references, in the sixth school year, to the ‘heroes’ of the German *Volk* such as: *Widukind* and *Heinrich I.*

In contrast, Heinrich Schnee, the second historian taken into consideration, proposed in his work “*Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*” not only an ideological reorganization of the topic – highlighting the role of the German blood and *Volk* – but also a practical reorientation of the history classes in the Regime. Thus, Schnee sketched out, in his work in 1933 and again in 1936, a re-periodization of the European history and consequently a repartition of the topics.

Schnee, in the 1933 edition of his work, moved from a similar position to Karl Friedrich Sturm. In fact, Schnee asked for a more heroic interpretation of the history that should be essentially a Germanic one. Furthermore, Schnee wanted to emphasize the continuity of the German history as if this continuity were a destiny. Clearly, also for Schnee, the German *Volk* had the central position in the historical happenings.

But, even in 1933, Schnee suggested both a new repartition of the history topics and a re-periodization of, what may today be called, European history. Consequently, Schnee contested the ‘classic’ periodization because it had too many divisions and fractures that interrupted the historical flow, while the real aim of the history classes was to present the German history in its continuity. For this reason Schnee suggested to consider the history in longer periods:

«Bei allen Zeiträume wird es aber immer darauf ankommen die Linien der geschichtlichen Entwicklung herauszuarbeiten. Dieser Aufgabe dient euch die übersichtliche Gliederung des geschichtlichen Ablaufs. Wir müssen größere Abschnitte zusammenfassen.»⁶³

Such re-organization would have particularly affected the ancient history that was, according to Schnee, easier to modify than the current one. In simpler terms, the history books for the *Volksschulen* divided their topics, the historical development, too much:

«Für die ältere Zeit ist dies ja viel leichter als für die jüngste Vergangenheit. Wir sind der Meinung, daß unsere Geschichtsbücher den Stoff noch zu stark gliedern.»⁶⁴

Consistent with this perspective, Schnee focused his attention on the German *Vorgeschichte* that should become a staple topic in the *Volksschulen* history classes. The Germanic pre-history, embracing or, more likely, compressing several millennia of German history, was divided into only *Urzeit* and *germanische Frühzeit*: «Wir machen zwei große Abschnitte: die *Urzeit* und die *germanische Frühzeit*»⁶⁵. Even in the *Urzeit*, the racial ‘question’ should be central to the history classes and, actually, precisely in these primeval times the Germanic-Nordic race distinguished itself from the other races. The racial characterization, however, was not limited to the Germanic *Urzeit* but, of course, involved every period of the German history. But, the *Urzeit* represented the time when the Germanic culture and the Germanic *Volk* emerged for the first time in history and showed its superiority.

The interest in the Germanic *Urzeit* and *Frühzeit* was very successful in the *Volksschulen* textbooks during the Regime for at least two reasons: firstly, because of the influence of Gustav Kossinna work, and his followers, on the *Vorgeschichte*; secondly, because the pre-history research was still very new in comparison to the history research – whether on ancient, medieval or modern history – which, consequently, gave many textbook authors the chance to present

⁶³ Schnee 1933, p. 37.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 45.

their theories and ideological interpretations without fearing any comparison to classical or acknowledged/accepted models. Certainly, for the *Volksschulen* historians the German pre-history seemed to be the perfect 'field' in which to construct the racial theory with credibility and on which to base the real superiority of the Germanic *Volk*, who, since pre-historical times, was portrayed as a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Thus, the time borders of the German pre-history always remained vague and they varied from author to author. Generally, the beginning of the Germanic *Urzeit* was around the 3000 B.C. but, as proved by this research, other historians started their historical narration in 5000 B.C. For what concerned Heinrich Schnee, who is one of the first authors to clearly state such re-periodization of the *Volksschule* history classes during the Regime, the *Eiszeit* had to be considered the beginning of the history of the Germanic *Volk*. Even during the glacial epoch, the racial characteristics of the Nordic-Germanic *Volk* were recognizable:

«Für die Urgeschichte gilt die Forderung, daß sie gegenüber der Frühgeschichte mehr betont werden muß, schon wegen der Berücksichtigung der Rassenfrage im Unterricht.»⁶⁶

But Schnee, differently from Sturm, also wrote a precise didactical plan for the history teaching in the National Socialist *Volksschule*. For instance, relevant topics concerning the *Urzeit*, included the expansion of the races in Europe – with a particular interest on the Nordic-Germanic race – and the description of the Germanic race and its culture: «Die Bronzezeit mit ihrer reichen Kultur, besonders den Leistung der Germanen verlangt eine ausführliche Darstellung»⁶⁷.

The constant overstating of the Germanic culture in the pre-historical times also served a different purpose, namely: to balance the relationship between Roman and Germanic populations. The Germanic people were no longer 'barbarians' who only learned from the Roman culture but, on the contrary, they already had a millenary history in which they developed their own culture and traditions. In some cases, the clash with the Romans produced more negative than positive effects. How this negative interpretation of the Roman Republic and Empire could

⁶⁶ Schnee 1933, p. 45.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

fit with the National Socialist politics toward Fascist Italy, is a topic to analyse. Still, Schnee presented a different picture, more keen to praise the German culture, of the *Völkerwanderung* and of the Germanic-Roman relationship:

«Die Germanen hatten eben eine Jahrtausende alte Kultur schon vor der Berührung mit den Römern, die ja eine besondere Vorliebe für den germanischen Typus in der künstlerischen Darstellung zeigen.»⁶⁸

Furthermore, the Germanic social life was contrasted to the Roman law system and to the liberal one in which, as reported by some authors, there was no rule and all components of the society were free to do what they wanted:

«Diese sozialistischen Bindungen und Einschränkungen unterscheiden den germanischen Eigentumsbegriff wesentlich von römisch-rechtlichen und vom liberalistischen (Wichtig für späteres Zurückgreifen; man kann aber schon hier an Vorstellung des Liberalismus erinnern, natürlich ohne den Begriff zu erwähnen: jeder kann mit seinem Eigentum, auch seinem Land machen, was er will. Im Gegensatz dazu die Bindung des Reichserbhofgesetzes.»⁶⁹

Consequently, following this paradigm, which emphasized the German millennial tradition and culture, the fall of the Western Roman Empire neither affected the history of the Germanic population nor represented a temporal caesura in the history. More than that, the fourth century *Völkerwanderung* was not seen by the *Volksschulen* historians as the beginning of a new era but, on the contrary, as part of a *longue durée* perspective outlining an extended continuity from *Urzeit* to the creation of the First Germanic Empire in French territories. In point of fact, the Holy Roman Empire was interpreted by Schnee as a German empire created in formerly Roman territory – «Germanische Reiche auf römische Boden»⁷⁰.

For Schnee, and many other textbooks authors as well, the role of the Christian religion and its relationship to the Germanic culture was problematic. Schnee neglected any consideration of this topic in his 1933 work but Christianity and the role of the Roman Church would, in general, constitute an unsolved problem for

⁶⁸ Schnee 1933, p. 46.

⁶⁹ U. Haacke, E. Ziemann, *Handbuch für den Geschichtsunterricht an Volksschulen*, Leipzig 1941, p.12.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

almost all the authors of *Volksschulen* textbooks who pretended to only emphasize the role of the Germanic culture during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in the National Socialist textbooks the only widespread topic related to the history of the Christian Church, will be Saint Boniface, ‘Apostle of the Germans’.

In his 1933 work, Schnee presented, when compared to Karl Friedrich Sturm, a more innovative idea and interpretation of the history for classes in the German *Volksschule*. The temporal extension of the German history, which started in the *Urzeit*, was preparatory to a new idea of the German history itself that had to be understood as a ‘long destiny’ of the Germanic race. Thus, in 1933 Schnee only outlined a new periodization of the history that he would openly state in his 1936 edition of the “*Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*”.

Heinrich Schnee, in the second edition of the “*Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*” (1936), gave a more detailed outline of his interpretation of the history and his plan for the National Socialist *Volksschulen*. The core idea was to always emphasize the racial character of the Germanic populations and to teach the history only from a German perspective. Furthermore, Schnee, after analysing the current interpretation of the German Middle Ages in the *Volksschulen*, suggested a new picture of German medieval history. Essentially, the medieval history should be a *gesamtdeutsche* or *volksdeutsche Geschichte* and it should play the key role in the National Socialist interpretation of the history.

Schnee, showing his intention to revolutionize the history lessons, addressed his 1936 work to all the teachers of all the German schools. Schnee’s idea was based on a more Germanic reconsideration of the history: «Volksdeutsche (gesamtdeutsche) Geschichtsbetrachtung». Such *gesamtdeutsche* history, a lemma that was well known by many German historians, was the result of a German history interpretation that prompted the change of the classic periodization. The core of the *gesamtdeutsche* history was the German Middle Ages.

Firstly, Schnee considered the history lessons and the history textbooks for the *Volksschule* to still be too marked by a western interpretation of the history:

«Unsere Geschichtsbücher sind, soweit sie die Geschichte des Auslandes berücksichtigen, völlig westlich orientiert»⁷¹.

The western ideals that Schnee recognized as un-German were responsible for this interpretation:

«Die Herrschaft westeuropäischer Ideen hat bewirkt, daß die Geschichte Frankreichs, Englands und neuerdings der Vereinigten Staaten über Gebühr Berücksichtigung wurde.»⁷²

The distrust toward the western civilization – its ideals and its philosophy – was a common feeling for a certain part of the German society during the Weimar Republic and, in a decadent perspective, the work of Oswald Spengler “*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*” assumed a particular value⁷³. Indeed, Spengler’s ideas and *Weltanschauung* became symbolic for and, at the same time, a carrier of *Kulturpessimismus* and *Zivilisationskritik* ideals that influenced several German intellectuals and historians⁷⁴. In particular, many *völkisch* intellectuals shared a pessimistic and anti-western interpretation of the history, such as: Erich Botzenhart, author of “*Geschichte des Einbruchs der westlichen Ideen in Deutschland 1789-1848*”; Hans Behrens, author of “*Augustinismus als Zersetzungsfaktor in der deutschen Geistesgeschichte*”; and Christoph Steding, author of “*Das Reich und die Krankheit der europäischen Kultur*”⁷⁵. These concepts, however, affected historians not only in the universities but also in the schools and, for instance, Schnee’s considerations, criticizing the western democracies and their ideas, were symptomatic of mistrust and disbelief toward Europe, the United States and the Occident. According to Schnee, the National Socialist Regime, to prevent a catastrophic future, had to look back in its own history, of which the Middle Ages was the core.

⁷¹ H. Schnee, *Geschichtsunterricht im völkischen Nationalstaat*, Bochum 1936, p. 23.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ O. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte, I Band: Gestalt und Wirklichkeit*, Wien 1918 – *II Band: Welthistorische Perspektiven*, München 1922.

⁷⁴ A. M. Kottanek, *Oswald Spengler in seiner Zeit*, München 1968 and D. Conte, *Catene di civiltà. Studi su Spengler*, Napoli 1994.

⁷⁵ K. F. Werner, *Das NS-Geschichtsbild und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, Stuttgart-Berlin 1967, p. 29.

Still, Schnee noted a fracture in the interpretation of the German history, and in particular of the Middle Ages. He referred to the *großdeutsche-kleindeutsche* polemic that brought the German historians and history teachers to different concepts of the German Middle Ages:

«Die Beurteilung der mittelalterlichen Kaisergeschichte hat die deutschen Historiker und auch die Geschichtslehrer in zwei Lager getrennt.»⁷⁶

For instance – so claimed Schnee – the German historians and history teachers had opposite interpretations of the medieval “*Erstes Reich*”. While the *großdeutsche* theory’s followers positively interpreted the First German Empire and considered its history as a prosperous era, the *kleindeutsche* theory’s followers negatively analysed the First German Empire because, actually, it was nothing more than a visionary idea and its history only retarded the formation of a “real” German Empire. Anyway, without any further analysis on this historical controversy, it is worth mentioning that Schnee’s purpose/intention was to present any period of the German Middle Ages as a bright moment of the German *Volk*’s history. Indeed, historians and history teachers, without debating, should have only been proud of the *Erstes Reich*, exactly as they were proud of Bismarck’s and, very likely, of Hitler’s *Reich*:

«Die Kaiserzeit des Mittelalters, die Zeit des Ersten Reiches, ist eine glanzvolle Zeit und eine Epoche größter Machtentfaltung, die sich durchaus auf realpolitischen Erwägungen aufbaute. Und wie wir uns nach dem Zusammenbruch von 1918 die Freude an der Blüte und Macht des Bismarckreiches nicht rauben ließen, so wollen wir auch auf das Erste Reich stolz sein.»⁷⁷

The comparison between the Middle Ages and the present is another typical characteristic of the National Socialist history interpretation for the *Volksschulen*. Every *Volksschulen* textbook repeatedly presented a comparison between the Middle Ages and the Regime. The comparison not only concerned political and geographical aspects – such as the *Ostsiedlung* or the German *Lebensraum*, two phenomena that were portrayed as ‘repetitions’ of the medieval history in the

⁷⁶ Schnee 1936, p.22.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

twentieth century – but also ‘social’ aspects. Indeed, the National Socialist pupils, learning the medieval history and knowing the moral values of German ‘heroes’ and the Germanic population, could also learn how to behave in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*. In other terms, the Middle Ages was not only a political model but also an example of virtues for the new generation of National Socialists. Somehow, the new Germans had to look deep into their history to find their future.

The Middle Ages was the staple of the German history, thus it had to be studied as a unit «Das germanische Mittelalter müssen wir als Einheit behandeln»⁷⁸. The western history interpretation had to be ignored, according to Schnee, and the Middle Ages, actually the “German Middle Ages” was between A.D. 900 and 1500, namely: from the creation of the First German Empire to its collapse. Such periodization cut off almost five centuries from the Middle Ages that were now part of the *Frühzeit*. Furthermore, Schnee did not consider *Charlemagne* and the Frank history to be part of the German Middle Ages and the problematic topic of the Roman-Germanic population relationship was now a topic within the German *Frühzeit*. Altogether, the new periodization proposed by Schnee, sketched the teaching of *Urzeit* and *germanische Frühzeit* in the fifth school year and the teaching of the German Middle Ages in the sixth school year. In point of fact, almost four millenniums of history, from 3000 B.C. to A.D. 900, were compressed into one school year while in the next school year the history lessons were all dedicated to the Middle Ages.

This re-periodization of the history may be considered an example of a fracture with the ‘classic’ periodization that was used, certainly until 1936, in the German *Volksschulen*. In point of fact, the periodization in the *Volksschulen* did not suffer any significant change either during the Weimar Republic or in the early stages of the Regime. The textbooks, before 1936-1937, dedicated only a few pages to the *Urzeit* and started their history narration with the fourth century *Völkerwanderung* and the Middle Ages.

Whether Heinrich Schnee and Karl Friedrich Sturm had any direct influence on establishing the new periodization that we found in the *Putzger Atlas* or on the

⁷⁸ Schnee 1936, p. 24.

1939 *Richtlinien* of the Ministry of Education, is, perhaps, not a relevant question. It is actually remarkable that Heinrich Schnee, history teacher at the *Adolf-Hitler Gymnasium* of Gelsenkirchen, and his colleague Karl Friedrich Sturm, teacher and senior civil servant in Dresden, were part of a historiography that, outside the German universities and the National Socialist Propaganda, tried to contribute to the establishment of the National Socialist Regime. A ‘small’ historiography was addressed to all teachers and pupils of the schools that was explicitly asked to form a new generation of Germans.

Thus, not only in the renowned German universities and not only during the celebrated National Socialist party’s rally, but also in the everyday life of a *Volksschulen* classroom, the Regime was building its own “*Weltbild*”: «Das nationalsozialistische Weltbild war ein Geschichtsbild»⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ Werner 1967, p. 9.

II.1.3 ‘As in the eleventh century’ – Past and present comparison in National Socialist *Volksschulen*

The past-present comparison had essentially two aims in National Socialist *Volksschulen*: first, to offer moral and civic examples; second, to offer political examples. The pupils, during history classes, learned how to behave in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* and had a more ‘clear’ idea of the current German political situation in Europe. Actually, Cicero’s motto “*Historia magistra vitae*” can properly describe the aims of *Volksschulen* historiography. This constant past-present comparison, was found not only in Hitler’s or Rosenberg’s history interpretations but also in textbooks, teaching plans and specialized literature for the *Volksschulen*. The future of the German youth was written in Germany’s past.

The past-present comparison was always intertwined with an eschatological idea of history, in which German history started in the *Urgermanische Zeit* and culminated in 1933 with Hitler’s *Reich*. History was principally interpreted as the ‘development’ of the German *Volk* and as the realization of its destiny. Indeed, concepts such as “*das Werden*” and “*das Schicksal*” were often used in the *Volksschulen* historiography. In such interpretations, the Germanic *Volk* went through different periods that either positively or negatively contributed towards the realization of its destiny: a new pan-Germanic Empire, which included all Germanic populations. Consequently, the moment of military expansion or political reunification were emphasized and described as extremely positive, while defeats and internal political fights, caused by the intervention of non-Germanic populations in German politics, were portrayed as absolutely negative. In simpler terms, the National Socialist *Volksschulen* historiography was, essentially, ‘black or white’ and the political compromises or the cultural integration were never mentioned.

Thus, history in National Socialist *Volksschulen* provided the examples that helped the German youth to avoid old mistakes and understand the present. For this reason, the first lines of the 1939 *Richtlinien* for the *Volksschulen*, delineating the aims and methods of history lessons, clearly referred to this historical paradigm and to the past-present comparison:

«Die politische Erziehung in der Volksschule gründet sich in erster Linie auf den Geschichtsunterricht, der die Kinder mit Ehrfurcht vor unserer großen Vergangenheit und mit dem Glauben an die geschichtliche Sendung und die Zukunft unseres Volkes erfüllen soll. Er richtet den Blick auf den schicksalhaften Kampf um die deutsche Volkswendung, bahnt das Verständnis für die politischen Aufgaben unseres Volkes in der Gegenwart und erzieht die Jugend zum freudigen, opferbereiten Einsatz für Volk und Vaterland.»⁸⁰

As noted, the use of terms such as: German *Schicksal* and *Werden* of the German *Volk* was common not only in the *Richtlinien* but also in specialized literature for the *Volksschulen*. In this literature, the German Middle Ages – or the *Großgermanische Zeit* – represented a crucial moment in German history. In the past-present comparison, German history was often described using loaded terms and words that were cherished by National Socialist propaganda and politicians:

«Das deutsche Mittelalter ist Deutschlands Schicksal genannt worden. Es ist die Zeit, in der aus germanische Stämmen ein deutsches Volk erwuchs [...] Das Mittelalter ist die Zeit, in welcher der deutsche Lebensraum abgesteckt und besetzt wurde [...] Das Werden des deutschen Volkes zu einer geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit, seine innere staatliche und soziale Ordnung ... das sind die großen Grundthemen deutscher Geschichte.»⁸¹

Furthermore, the authors of the *Volksschulen* textbooks frequently referred in their work to this ‘actualization’ of history and repeatedly compared the past events of the German history to the present. As already said, the pedagogical aims of this comparison were two, namely: giving moral and civic examples – how to live in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*; and giving political examples – how to understand the present political situation.

1) Since the *Urzeit*, Germanic populations had distinguished themselves from the ‘other’ through their innate values and virtues such as: *Sippengemeinschaft*, *Dorfgemeinschaft* or *Führergefolgschaft*. Both these values and virtues consistently typified the spirit of the Germanic *Volk* through the centuries and, indeed, they should have also characterised the National Socialist youth:

«Im Germanentum liegen die wichtigsten Wurzeln deutschen Wesens ... Darin liegt die Bedeutung des Germanentums für die Gegenwart. Nicht als ob gestorbene Formen künstlich wieder lebendig gemacht werden sollten!

⁸⁰ Richtlinien 1939, in: Higelke 1940, p. 125.

⁸¹ Erich Maschke, *Stoffe und Gestalten der deutschen Geschichte, Band I – Heft 3*, 1937, p. 1

Sondern die Grundhaltung, die aus diesen germanischen Einrichtungen spricht und die huete im deutsche Volk wieder lebendig werden soll.»⁸²

The comparison could also be a ‘contrast’ between the generally bad habits of German society in the 1930s and the good traditions of Germanic populations. For instance, P. Melzer and K. Jungblut, authors of “*Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*” (1942), juxtaposed the current German society, in which each person was alone and each family isolated, to the ancient Germanic community in which all members were racially and ‘sanguineously’ bonded together.

«Wenn wir heute von der Familie sprechen, dann meinen wir die Lebensgemeinschaft von Eltern und Kindern. Sie wohnt gemeinsam in einem Haus oder einer Wohnung ... Wenn die Söhne erwachsen sind und einen Beruf erlernt haben, verlassen sie das Vaterhaus und gründen eine eigene Familie; die verheirateten Töchter ziehen gleichfalls fort. Bei den Germanen kam es häufig vor, daß auch die verheirateten Söhne in der Familie des Vaters blieben, sich ihm unterstellten und auf dem Hofe arbeiteten [...] Die Blutsverwandtschaft schloß germanische Familien zu einer Sippe zusammen ... Ohne seine Sippe bedeutete der einzelne Germane nichts.»⁸³

Furthermore, the comparison to the past led to tracing the development of Germanic customs used in twentieth century German society. An interesting example is offered by Fritz Fikenscher who saw the block house as a long-lasting symbol of Germanic culture in his 1938 textbook “*Aus Deutschlands Ur und Frühzeit*”:

«Ganze Lager von Rundstämmen wurden zu behauen und an den Ecken eingekerbt, daß man sie zur Blockwand aufeinander fügen konnte. So entstand der Blockhausbau, der sich bis in unsere Tage erhalten hat. Blockhäuser bauten unsere Soldaten im Weltkrieg, wenn sie im Wald ein Lager bezogen.»⁸⁴

More than that, the Germanic *Blockhaus* became a symbol of German cultural superiority in the world:

⁸² U. Haacke, E. Ziemann, *Handbuch für den Geschichtsunterricht an Volksschulen*, Leipzig 1941, p. 11.

⁸³ P. Melzer, K. Jungblut, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Halle 1942, p. 5.

⁸⁴ F. Fikenscher, *Aus Deutschlands Ur- und Frühzeit*, Ansbach 1938, p. 22.

«Wie heute noch die deutschen Wanderer als erste Erinnerung an den Brauch der Heimat das Blockhaus errichten, so war es schon vor unvordenklichen Zeiten, die nordischen Völker verbreiteten auf ihre Wanderzügen das Rechthaus mit aufgesetztem Giebeldach; so sie siedelten, verschwand die Rundhütte der Südlichen Völker. Das Rechthaus ist ein Merkmal der nordischen Rasse.»⁸⁵

Finally, this morally oriented comparative history interpretation was summarized in the question: «Was ist für uns heute an dem Germanentum vorbildlich?»⁸⁶.

2) The 1939 *Richtlinien* clearly stated that the primary aim of history classes was political indoctrination. The past-present comparison served this purpose particularly well because it showed different moments of German history as very similar and analogous. Typically, authors compared German political conditions in the 1930s and 1940s with the German political situation during the tenth and eleventh centuries. In particular, the struggle against the *Slawen* and the reconquest of the eastern territories were always associated with National Socialist *Ostsiedlung* propaganda and politics. In other words, the eastern territories and populations were a problem for tenth century Germany and they still were for National Socialist Germany:

«Die deutsche Ostsiedlung, die größte und wichtigste Tat der alten deutschen Geschichte. Was war es, was das deutsche Volk zu der Tat der Ostsiedlung fähig machte? ... Vorstoßen und Rückfluten der deutschen Welle im Osten. Die deutsche Ostsiedlung, ein unvollendetes Werk. Das Versagen des Reichs gegenüber dem deutschen Ostlandskampf. Die Folgen der unvollendeten Ostsiedlung in der Gegenwart.»⁸⁷

Still, the ‘eastern-threat’ was not the only lesson that National Socialist Germany had to learn from its past. Germany during the Middle Ages, or during the *Großgermanische Zeit*, had accomplished the unification of all Germanic territories and populations into one empire. Consequently, the Regime had to follow this positive example and, simultaneously, to avoid the mistakes that caused the collapse of the First German Empire in the sixteenth century, such as

⁸⁵ Fikenscher 1938, p. 22.

⁸⁶ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

pursuing policies oriented towards the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, this comparative idea was so deeply rooted in National Socialist textbooks that Germany in the tenth century and in 1933 were often illustrated as sharing the same borders and the same geopolitical condition in Europe.

Furthermore, this continuous use of a past-present comparison had two effects in *Volksschulen* literature. On the one hand, German history was constantly brought up to date in order to create a long millenary German continuity, actually a destiny, that intertwined several moments of German history; on the other, the National Socialists, comparing their short history to the past, could gain more credibility and emphasize their historical role. Finally, in this long destiny the past and the present were often compared and sometimes confused and, similarly, the heroes of the National Socialist revolution were often compared and sometimes confused with medieval German heroes.

II.1.4 *Vorgeschichte* in National Socialist *Volksschule* – Kossinna's effect

Gustav Kossinna was one of the most influential historians on the *Volksschule* literature during the National Socialist Regime. Kossinna's research and theories on German pre-history were constantly quoted and reported by almost all textbook authors. Indeed, the interest in German pre-history, that was already present during the early years of the Weimar Republic, grew exponentially during the twelve years of the National Socialist Regime. What is more, between 1933 and 1945 authors of *Volksschulen* history textbooks not only followed Kossinna's theories but very often used pictures and illustrations from Kossinna's 1912 work "*Die deutsche Vorgeschichte. Eine hervorragende nationale Wissenschaft*" for their textbooks. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that Gustav Kossinna died in 1931 and he had not planned or imagined having any direct influence on the National Socialist school system.

Indeed, Kossinna, born in 1858, was a historian who lived during the German *Kaiserreich* and, after the 1918 catastrophe, witnessed the turbulent *Weimar Republik* era. Many other German historians also shared a similar biographical journey, namely: the cultural and historical formation during the Empire, the thrilling First World War, the 1918 drama of German defeat and the insecurities of German societies during Weimar's time. The work and the research of this generation of historians were of particular relevance for the National Socialists and, it is among these historians and their interpretations, that we find the *völkisch* connotation that epitomized German historiography between 1933 and 1945.

Still, it is worth remarking that Kossinna did not play any role in establishing National Socialism theories or historiography directly. Kossinna's work, however, influenced several German historians, some of whom were very active during the Regime. In point of fact, Kossinna's theories about pre-history Germany were emphasized and sometimes distorted by National Socialist historians who saw in the *Vorgeschichte*⁸⁸ a new field in which to apply their racial and biological concepts. Indeed, from a National Socialist perspective, the *Vorgeschichte* was not

⁸⁸ About the *völkisch* influence on the *Vorgeschichte* and the role of Kossinna in the establishment of the *Vorgeschichte* in Germany: I. Wiwjorra, *Die deutsche Vorgeschichtsforschung und ihr Verhältnis zu Nationalismus und Rassismus*, in: U. Puschner, W. Schmitz and H. Ulbricht (eds.), *Handbuch zur Völkische Bewegung 1871 – 1918*, München, 1999.

only a new “*hervorragende Wissenschaft*” but, more than that, was essentially only a ‘German science’.

On the one hand, the *Vorgeschichte* seemed to fit racial-biological theories perfectly because it could finally prove the cultural superiority of Nordic-German race; on the other hand, it also offered many historians, especially those writing for the German school system, the chance to present their theories without fearing any strong scientific competition. In simpler terms, in the *Vorgeschichte* field, almost everything was possible or probable. With no comparison to a traditional and conventional interpretation, the *Volksschulen* history textbooks authors were free to accentuate the value of Nordic-Germanic culture and to describe German pre-history as ‘German-time’ par excellence. The *Vorgeschichte* period, in National Socialist *Volksschulen* historiography, encompassed almost ten millennium of Nordic-Germanic tradition and in these millennium the Nordic-Germanic populations spread their culture and blood all over European territories. Still, these National Socialist interpretations of *Vorgeschichte* have to be understood as a misapplication of Kossinna’s original work.

Certainly, Kossinna asked to install the *Vorgeschichte* as a new German science and he surely put, for the first time, a new emphasis on pre-historical Germanic culture. As well, Kossinna probably imagined and described an ancient Nordic-Germanic civilization which could have been compared to the Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman ones, but Kossinna never supposed a Nordic-Germanic biological superiority and his work was probably flavoured with German nationalism but, undoubtedly, not with National Socialism:

«Es ist nicht möglich, die Vereinnahmung von Kossinnas Erbe durch das NS-Regime und Kossinnas Erhebung zu einem der Erzväter der NS-Ideologie als einem postumen Mißbrauch zu erklären, für den er nicht verantwortlich gemacht werden könne.»⁸⁹

Kossinna’s work “*Die deutsche Vorgeschichte. Eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft*” was not only one of the most influential books among the *Volksschulen* historians but it was also a milestone for early twentieth-century

⁸⁹ H. Grünert, *Gustav Kossinna (1858-1931) Vom Germanisten zum Prähistoriker. Ein Wissenschaftler im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik*, Rahden 2002, p. 340.

German historiography. His work, published for the first time in 1912, was reprinted eight times between 1914 and 1945, namely: in 1914, 1921, 1925, 1933, 1934, 1936 and 1941. Of particular interest is the 1914 edition that showed all Kossinna's nationalistic and patriotic feelings as the First World War began. Indeed, Kossinna wrote at the end of the 1914 edition preface: «Berlin, den 1. August 1914, am Tage des Befehls zu allgemeiner Mobilmachung»⁹⁰. Once again, Kossinna can be portrayed as a convinced German nationalist but not as a National Socialist.

Still Kossinna was recognized as the 'father' of the twentieth-century German pre-historical science by many historians, members of the *NSLB* and members of the *Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*, that was actually the National Socialist version of Kossinna's society for German pre-history, namely "*Gesellschaft für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*. For instance, the historian Werner Hülle, during a speech at the 1936 "*Zweite Geschichtstagung des NS-Lehrerbundes verbunden mit der dritten Reichstagung für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*", emphasized Kossinna's attitude and application for the establishment of the *Vorgeschichte* as independent science describing him as *Führer* and 'fighter' for that discipline:

«Da erstand am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts der deutschen Vorgeschichte ein neuer geistiger Führer, der nicht nur den schon fast verlorenen Kampf gegen die Archäologie und den Romanismus in jeder Form aufnahm, sondern der auch dieser Vorgeschichte eine einwandfreie wissenschaftliche Arbeitsweise und überraschend reiche Ergebnisse schenkte: Gustav Kossinna. [...] So war Kossinna gezwungen, einen heldenhaften Kampf für sein Werk, die deutsche Vorgeschichte, zu kämpfen.»⁹¹

Nevertheless, "*Die deutsche Vorgeschichte*" was an historical-archaeological research, which intended to point out the fine culture and civilization of Nordic and Germanic populations during pre-historical time. Kossinna's interpretation, essentially moving against Roman, Christian and Renaissance culture, tried to discredit a general idea that depicted the Germans as nothing more than barbarians without cultural tradition:

⁹⁰ G. Kossinna, *Die deutsche Vorgeschichte. Eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft*, Würzburg 1914, p. VIII.

⁹¹ W. Hülle, *Die deutsche Vorgeschichte in der nationalsozialistischen Erziehung in: Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Zeitschrift für Geschichtsunterricht und politische Erziehung*, Moritz Edelmann and Wilhem Mommsen (eds.), 26. Jahrgang, 1936, p. 567.

«alles, was Deutschland in den letzten drei bis vier Jahrhunderten an Großen geleistet hat, nur dadurch möglich geworden ist, daß der Humanismus und die sogenannte Renaissance, die Wiedergeburt der Antike, zum ersten Male eine wirklich Kulturleben bei uns geführt habe. Alles vorher bei uns vorhanden war, ist nach dieser Meinung nicht Kultur, sondern Unkultur gewesen, finsternes, barbarisches Mittelalter, von dem aus nicht der dünnste Verbindungsfaden mehr herüberleitet zu unserer heutigen Kultur.»⁹²

Also interesting, especially for *Volksschulen* literature, was the presence of 480 illustrations in the text. As this research has already verified, many of these illustrations were commonly used in *Volksschulen* history textbooks. Between 1933 and 1945, the illustrations concerning the *Spiralmotiv* – what was called a ‘Swastika’ by National Socialists – received particular attention by *Volksschulen* authors and editors. Actually, Kossinna identified and classified different types of Nordic Germanic *Spiralmotiv* in his work, but the *Doppelmäander*, which generally adorned vases and pots, was of particular interest. The *Doppelmäander* motif, formed by the intersection of two crossing lines, was similar to the *Hakenkreuz* that decorated pots and spears. Clearly, the illustrations of vases with the *Doppelmäander* motif and spears with *Hakenkreuz*, already present in Kossinna’s 1912 edition, became very popular in National Socialist *Volksschulen* literature. The Germanic Swastika, and with it the National Socialist *Hakenkreuz*, was deeply rooted in German history. Furthermore, Kossinna’s intention was to prove the finesse of a Nordic-Germanic culture and civilization, which existed and blossomed before the Roman and, of course, the Renaissance culture. The proofs of such culture were to be found in the early period of the Bronze Age, and consequently, the German pre-historians should have explored not the past 800 years but the past 8,000 years. What is more, Kossinna, willing to highlight the Nordic-Germanic civilization, also tried to refute the “*ex oriente lux*” theory which, on the contrary, supposed the cultural superiority of ancient eastern civilizations, namely: the Indian empire, the Persian and the Egyptian civilizations. In point of fact, according Kossinna, the Nordic-Germanic civilization already reached a sophisticated level of culture before coming into contact with oriental populations. Finally, Kossinna sketched a chronological table in the last pages of his work. Therefore, the Nordic-Germanic *Vorgeschichte* started in 10,000 B.C. and the German territories were divided into

⁹² Kossinna 1914, p. 1.

«Norddeutschland», «Mitteldeutschland», «Ostdeutschland» and «Süddeutschland». The table was organized as follow:

Zeiträume	Norddeutschland	Mitteldeutschland	Ostdeutschland	Süddeutschland
Bis etwa 10000 v. Chr.	Ältere Steinzeit (Paläolithikum)			
Etwa 10000 – 4000 v. Chr.	Mittlere Steinzeit und Übergang zur Jungsteinzeit			
4000 – 2000 v. Chr.	Jüngere Steinzeit			
	Nordischer, indogermanischer Kreis		Ostischer und nordischer Kreis	Ostischer und nordischer Kreis
2000 – 750 v. Chr.	Bronzezeit			
	Germanischer Kreis		Illyrischer Kreis (Lausitzer Kultur)	Urkeltische Kreis (Hügelgräber Urnfelder)
750 – 0 v. Chr.	Eisenzeit			
	Germanischer Kreis			Urkelten (Hallstatt) Kelten (Latène)
0 – 400	0 – 200 Ältere } Römische 200 – 400 Jüngere } Kaiserzeit Germanischer Kreis z.T. Römische Besetzung, Keltenreste in Süddeutschland			
400 – 600	Völkerwanderungszeit Germanischer Kreis z.T. Entvölkerung durch Abwanderung in Mittel und Ostdeutschland			

Table 6, Kossinna's periodization.

As said, Kossinna's research was extremely successful in the German historiography as early as in the 1920s, and his work on German pre-history was extensively quoted by several historians who dealt with history teaching in German schools. Consequently Kossinna's work became an exemplar for all *Volksschulen* historians who wanted to study *Vor-* and *Frühgeschichte* even after 1933. For instance, Heinrich Schnee strongly recommended that the *Volksschulen* history teachers read Kossinna's research and for the history textbook authors to add pre-history topics to their textbook contents for the *Volksschulen*.

Finally, “*Die deutsche Vorgeschichte*” was recommended in any plan for German *Volksschulen* of the Regime; Kossinna’s methods and interpretations of the German pre-history became landmarks for all pre-history studies in National Socialist Germany.

Chapter 2: Trends in *Volksschulen* Medieval History

II.2.1 Common topics in *Volksschulen* medieval history between 1933 and 1945 with an overall view of Middle Ages history in German *Volksschulen* during the Weimar Republic

Awareness of differences between textbooks is anyway helpful and it is therefore necessary to present a comparison chart of common topics present in *Volksschulen* historiography between 1933 and 1945 concerning medieval history.

1933 – 1945	Topics:	New Periodization	Nordic Race	Rome / Christianity	Local history	Bauerntu m	Ost- forschun g	German Empire	Not German history
Textbooks:									
L. Mehring, 1933			■	■			■	■	
C. Hoffmann 1934				■			■		■
J. Galle 1934				■		■	■		
B. Kumsteller 1934			■	■		■	■	■	
W. Füßler 1935				■			■	■	
A. Meerkatz 1935				■	■		■	■	
H. Falk 1936				■	■			■	
W. Füßler 1937			■			■	■	■	
F. Fikenscher 1938		■	■			■			
H. Uebel 1938		■	■		■		■	■	
W. Füßler 1938		■				■	■	■	
E. Ziemann 1938			■	■	■	■	■		
W. Füßler 1939		■				■	■	■	
L. Mehring 1940					■			■	
E. Ziegelmaier 1941				■	■				
P. Melzer 1942				■	■		■	■	
H. Werneck 1943		■	■				■	■	

Table 7, Medieval History Topics in *Volksschulen* textbooks during the Regime.

As already noted, 1933 did not bring any drastic change in terms of topics and contents for many *Volksschulen* textbooks and many of them still followed the pattern and structure of the Weimar Republic's time.

The Weimar Republic *Volksschulen* literature suffered the same lack of unity because of the German federal school organization, but the Weimar Republic state, unlike the Regime, had no explicit interest in homogenizing the history classes of all German territories.

Between 1918 and 1932 the *Volksschulen* history textbook, following the classic periodization – from German early history through the Middle Ages to the Modern history – always kept the past-to-present chronology. Indeed, the German history started around the fourth or third century B.C.. The early German history was primarily focused on the German-Roman relationship in terms of both political contrast and cultural exchange.

The *Völkerwanderung*, dated A.D. 375, was commonly interpreted as the beginning of the German Middle Ages and the Weimar Republic's *Volksschulen* textbooks emphasized this period, in which the German population gained more independence from Rome, pointing out the existence of Germanic culture and traditions. After the *Völkerwanderung*, these textbooks gave a lot of space in their narration to *Charlemagne* and the Holy Roman Empire was always set in relationship to the formation of the First Germanic Empire. But, in contrast to the Nazi *Volksschulen* literature, the First Germanic Empire was not interpreted as the leading power of all European countries.

On the contrary, the political relationship between Franco-Germanic empires and Christian Rome was, in the Weimar Republic history textbooks, always sharpened. Consequently, the life of Saint Boniface and Barbarossa together with the history of the Crusades were staples of the narration.

Furthermore, a large number of Weimar Republic textbooks, giving a detailed description of 'life in German Middle Ages', pointed out characteristics and aspects of German medieval society in both urban and in rural contexts. Lastly, the German Middle Ages "ended" in the sixteenth century with Luther's and the

Reformation's history. Once again, the textbooks showed the importance of the connection between a Germanic and a Christian domain.

Altogether, the textbooks of Weimar Republic Germany attributed great value to the German Middle Ages that started between A.D. 375 and the fifth century and ended in the sixteenth century. The relationship to Rome, interpreted as a political and cultural centre, was crucial to the historical narration. The influence of local history, however, allowed some textbooks to focus primarily on regional issues and to point out elements of local culture and habits. Nevertheless, Saint Boniface, who brought Christianity to the German territories, *Charlemagne*, Barbarossa and Luther were important figures in the German medieval history, but they were not depicted as 'German heroes'. In point of fact, the history, in Weimar Republic *Volksschulen*, stayed clearly separate from mythology.

Finally, in order to compare a Weimar Republic *Volksschule* textbook with one from the National Socialist Regime, it is revealing to present three different editions of the textbook *Vaterländische Geschichte* written and edited by the *Rektor* Ludwig Nehring who was an author of school textbooks from his 1909 "*Bilder aus der Vaterländische Geschichte*"⁹³ to his 1940 "*Vaterländische Geschichte*"⁹⁴. In particular, *Vaterländische Geschichte* was printed in its definitive version in 1920 and it continued to exist with the same name till 1940. Similarly, Ludwig Nehring was the author of this textbook during both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Regime periods. This textbook is of particular interest because it was one of the few that was published in a new National Socialist version as early as 1933. That is, two editions of *Vaterländische Geschichte* were published in 1933: a 'normal' one that followed the structure and issues of the Weimar time and a 'new' one, rearranged for the National Socialist Regime. The third version to take into consideration is the 1940 one, when the Regime had already ordered, with the 1939 *Richtlinien*, to follow of a new periodization and a pan-Germanic interpretation of history.

⁹³ L. Nehring, *Bilder aus der vaterländische Geschichte. Ein Merk- und Wiederholungsbuch für einfache Schulen des Ostens der Monarchie*, Breslau 1909.

⁹⁴ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte. Von der Urgeschichte bis zum Westfälischen Frieden*, Breslau 1940.

As the name of the textbook suggests, *Vaterländische Geschichte* was a patriotic textbook that tried, even in the Weimar Republic time, to emphasize figures and moments of German history. Still, the textbook, in keeping its own ‘identity’ in terms of topic and structure in Weimar and Regime times, as well as the author, who did not precisely follow the Regime directive in detail, are proofs of the distance between what the *Reichserziehungsministerium* in Berlin ordered and what in praxis happened. The 1940 edition, in particular, was a mix between German conservative and ‘national socialist’ history interpretation and it referred to both the ‘classic’ and to National Socialist periodization. Briefly, in this case the 1940 structure of the textbook was almost the same as the Weimar’s one while the contents changed.

	L. Nehring, <i>Vaterländische Geschichte</i> , Breslau 1933.	L. Nehring, <i>Vaterländische Geschichte. 1. Auflage nach der nationalsozialistische Revolution</i> , Breslau 1933.	L. Nehring, <i>Vaterländische Geschichte</i> , Breslau 1940.
Part I	Die Zeit des Heidentums (2000 B.C. – 0)	Aus der deutschen Vorgeschichte (2000 B.C. – 0)	Aus der deutschen Vorgeschichte (2000 B.C. – 0)
Part II	Deutsche Geschichte. (0 – A.D. 1500)	Deutsche Geschichte (0 – A.D. 1500)	Deutsche Geschichte (0 – A.D. 1500)
Chapters of Part II	A) Die alten Deutschen	A) Die alten Deutschen	A) Die alten Deutschen
	B) Die Franken	B) Die Franken	B) Die Franken
	C) Gründung eines christlichen Weltreiches	C) Gründung eines christlichen Weltreiches	C) Gründung eines germanisches Großreiches
	D) Der deutschen Einheitstaat im Mittelalter	D) Der deutschen Einheitstaat im Mittelalter	D) Der deutschen Einheitstaat im Mittelalter
	E) Das leben in Mittelalter	E) Das leben in Mittelalter	E) Das leben in Mittelalter (das Mittelalter umfaßt die Zeit von der Völkerwanderung bis zur Kirchentrennung 375 – 1517)

Table 8, Nehring textbook editions before and after the 1st January 1933.

The 1933 Weimar Republic edition of the textbook pointed out the role of the history as exemplar for understanding the present for the German youth. Furthermore, the cultural history and the history of foreign countries could help the comprehension of German history.

«Zum besseren Verständnis einzelner Vorgänge aus der Vaterländischen Geschichte sind auch einige Abschnitte aus der Geschichte anderer Völker aufgenommen worden.»⁹⁵

⁹⁵ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte*, Breslau 1933, p. I.

In this edition, the German pre-history was scarcely analysed and the beginning of the German history was around the last century B.C. The Germanic-Roman relationship and the *Völkerwanderung* were described as being the first important events of the German history. In this textbook the role of Rome and of the Christian 'culture' were largely mentioned in their interaction with the Germanic world. Furthermore, on the one hand the Middle Ages was precisely delimited, starting in A.D. 375 and ending in 1517; on the other, characteristics of medieval Germany and issues of medieval history were reported in the text.

Inversely, the 1933 National Socialist edition of this textbook focused on the German pre-history and introduced the *Indogermanen* and their migrations in its contents. Furthermore, the pre-history was described as a glorious time for the German *Volk* and the concepts of *Volksgemeinschaft* and *Führer* appeared for the first time.

«Wir sehen hier, wie schon in alten Zeiten die große Wichtigkeit eines guten Führers anerkannt wurde. **Ein guter Führer und ein treues Volk sind die besten Stützen einer Volksgemeinschaft.** Das wollen wir auch im Dritten Reiche merken und unser Sinnen und Tun danach einrichten. Stets seien wir bereit, unserem Führer zu folgen und Gut und Blut für unser Vaterland einzusetzen, wenn dies von uns gefordert wird. **Germanische Treue und Heldenhafter Sinn** sollen auch uns al **Vorbilder** dienen.»⁹⁶

Furthermore, this version included a chapter dedicated to the *Ostsiedlung* in which new figures of the German history, such as: *Albrecht der Bär* and *Heinrich der Löwe*, became topics of history classes.

Moreover, the 1940 version of *Vaterländische Geschichte*, published after the 1939 *Richtlinien*, even though it did not follow the new periodization, had to explain to its readers what the *Mittelalter* was and that medieval history encompassed the period between A.D. 375 and 1517. Still, this 1940 version emphasized the role of the *Rasse* in the historical development and described the Nazi-German *Volk* as based on *Gemeinschaft* feelings:

«Der Schüler muß erkennen, daß unser Volk eine Blutgemeinschaft, Tat- und Schicksalgemeinschaft, Seelen- und Sprachgemeinschaft ist. Darum gilt es, in Treue dem Führer zu folgen und Gut und Blut das Vaterland

⁹⁶ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte. 1. Auflage nach der nationalsoz.[ialistischen] Revolution*, Breslau 1933, p. 4.

einzulegen, wenn dies nötig werden sollte. Die Wichtigkeit der Rasse für das Gedeihen und die Erhaltung eines Volkes ist an verschiedenen Beispielen klargelegt worden. Das deutsche Kind muß stolz darauf sein, dem deutschen Volk als Mitglied anzugehören.»⁹⁷

Finally, it is worth stressing Nehring's immediate reaction to the 1933 *Machtergreifung* and the publication of a new National Socialist version of his textbook only few months after January 1933. It was a textbook in which the author could express his political credo and, actually, it almost seems that the author was 'waiting' for the 'National Socialist revolution' to openly state his ideas. That is: 'we are ready to follow our *Führer* and to sacrifice our blood for our nation'. Perhaps, the wounds of the First World War had not been healed during Weimar Republic time in Germany and, probably, those wounds are traceable through a *Volksschule* history textbook of an almost unknown German author.

⁹⁷ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte*, Breslau 1940, p. I.

II.2.2 The New Periodization

The most innovative, singular and significant characteristic of *Volksschule* historiography was the use of the new periodization that reshaped the German history into *Urgermanische Zeit*, *Großgermanische Zeit* and *Deutsche Zeit*. It is here worth remembering, once again, that such periodization was to be found only in the *Volksschulen* historiography. This new periodization, compared with the ‘classic’ one, that was used in German *Volksschulen* till 1938, took into consideration a much longer period of time, namely: from 5000 or 3000 B.C. to, approximately, the 1940s.

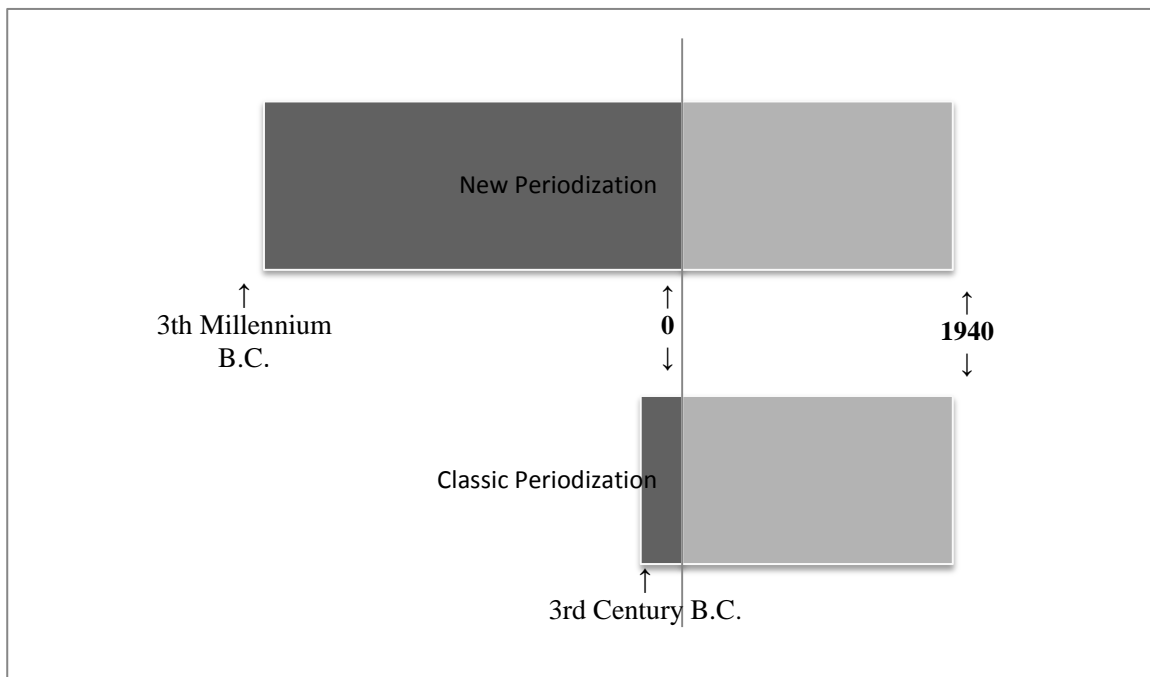


Table 9, New Periodization and Classic Periodization Comparison.

As noted, German history was divided in three macro sections that delimited six or seven millenniums of *völkisch* traditions and culture. There was, however, no temporal proportion between these three parts because, while the *Urgermanische Zeit* contained within it almost three millenniums, the *Großgermanische* and the *Deutsche Zeit* ‘only’ included fourteen centuries of history. Thus, such revolutionary theory definitely did not bring a more pragmatic teaching method.

On the contrary, the German pre-history, that theoretically represented a fundamental eve of history for the German *Volk*, was reduced to one single period and, as already remarked, compressed into a few weeks of lessons.

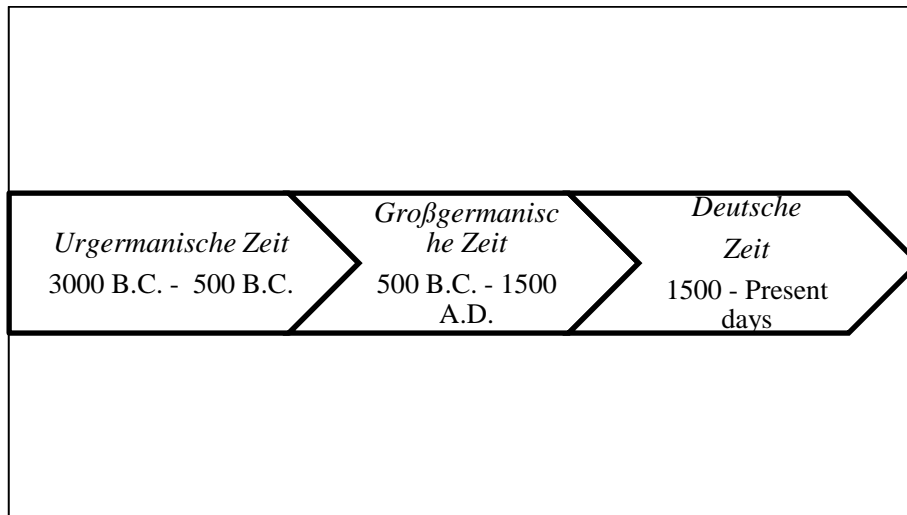


Table 10, New Perioditation.

That is, from 1936 onwards, a strong change is noticeable in the *Volksschulen* history textbooks. They not only included German *Vorgeschichte* in their contents but also considered it as the beginning of German history. The embracing by all *Volksschulen* historians of the *Vorgeschichte* in their textbooks was related to the establishment of the *Vorgeschichte* as pure National Socialist *Wissenschaft* in the Regime and caused a ‘sliding’ of interest from medieval history topics to pre-history ones in *Volksschulen* historiography.

II.2.3 The 1936 Ulm Conference

The introduction of the *Vorgeschichte* in *Volksschulen* didactical plans, textbooks and history lessons was planned in the 1936 “*Reichstagung für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*” that took place, together with the “*Zweite Geschichtstagung des NS-Lehrerbundes*” in Ulm from the 17th to 25th October. The conference’s aims were to check the *status quo* of the *Vorgeschichte* in Nazi Germany and to establish the German pre-history in the Nazi education and school teaching. In the opening speech, Alfred Rosenberg pointed out the role of *Vorgeschichte* in the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* and portrayed it as the purest German science. Actually, the *Vorgeschichte* was considered as the Bible of the German Volk:

«Die Ergebnisse der Vorgeschichtsforschung sind das Alte Testament des Deutschen Volkes.»⁹⁸

Aware of that, it seemed necessary to the *Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte* that the *Vorgeschichte* become part of the history lessons in the German school system and, in particular, in *Volksschulen*. Supporting such a perspective, the historian Werner Hülle stated that actually the Regime, even in 1933, wanted to enrol the *Vorgeschichte* in the German schools and that now, 1936, was the time to actively pursue that wish.

«Die Einführung der Vorgeschichte in die Schulen wurde schon durch einen Erlaß von Reichsinnenminister Frick im Jahre 1933 angeordnet, wofür freilich eine umfangreiche Schulung der Lehrerschaft in dieser Vorgeschichte sich als notwendige Voraussetzung erwies.»⁹⁹

Furthermore, Hülle, remembering Kossinna and his fundamental contribution to the pre-history science, said that it was finally time for the *Vorgeschichte* to separate itself from archaeology and ethnology and to achieve its own scientific independence in Germany. Indeed, according Hülle, there was no other science

⁹⁸ Die 3. Reichstagung für Deutsche Vorgeschichte in Ulm a.d.D. vom 17.-25. Oktober 1936, in: *Germanen-Erbe, Monatsschrift für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*, Hans Reinerth (ed.), Leipzig 1936, p. 223.

⁹⁹ W. Hülle, *Die Deutsche Vorgeschichte, ihr Weg und ihre Aufgaben in der nationalsozialistischen Erziehung*, in: *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Zeitschrift für Geschichtsunterricht und politische Erziehung*, Moritz Edelman and Wilhem Mommsen (eds.), 26. Jahrgang, Leipzig 1936, p. 568.

that embodied the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* better than the *Vorgeschichte*:

«Als eine der wenigen Wissenschaften, deren Blickpunkt stets unverrückt auf den letzten Maßstab nationalsozialistischer Weltanschauung, auf das ewige deutsche Volk, gerichtet war, hat die deutsche Vorgeschichtsforschung sich die Berechtigung erkämpft, im Dritten Reich ihre Selbständigkeit gerade in dieser Frage sichtbar zu dokumentieren.»¹⁰⁰

In point of fact, during the conference the *Vorgeschichte* was not only celebrated but also systematized. That is, the Bayern *Volksschule* history teacher Joseph Augustus Eichelsbacher sketched a didactical plan, which included the *Vorgeschichte* in the history lessons. Eichelsbacher's scheme referred to an existing *Lehrplan* that was used in *Volksschulen* of Mainfranken Gau and that could now be used as a model for all German *Volksschulen*:

«Wohl aber bietet diese Zusammenstellung eine willkommene Stütze, wenn es gilt, in Arbeitsgemeinschaften den Ganzen Stoff zu bearbeiten, ihn zu gliedern, methodische Hilfen zu beschaffen und das nationalsozialistische Geschichtsbild zu gestalten. Im Gau Mainfranken hatten wir bereits in dieser Hinsicht Vorarbeit geleistet. Gausachbearbeiter für Geschichte und Gaufachschaftsleiter IV hatten für das Winterhalbjahr 1935/36 die Bildung von Arbeitsgemeinschaften in den Kreisen des NSLB geordnet und Richtlinien für die Bearbeitung eines Geschichtslehrplanes für die Volksschulen hinausgegeben. [...] Schwierig war der Einbau der Vorgeschichte. Wir lösten die Aufgabe folgendermaßen:

Fünfter Schuljahr: I. Aus der Bronzezeit. II. Aus der Eisenzeit [...] Sechstes Schuljahr: Im Anschluß an die Behandlung mittelalterlicher Handwerkskunst ein vergleichender Rückblick auf die hohe Kunst der Germanen der Bronzezeit.»¹⁰¹

Furthermore, during the third day of the Ulm conference, namely in the morning of 20 October during the section “*Geschichtsunterricht als nationalpolitische Erziehung*” the new periodization was presented, which divided German history in UGZ and GGZ. Moreover, the Hamburg professor Matthes gave a brief description of UGZ and GGZ for the audience:

¹⁰⁰ Hulle 1936, in: *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* 1936, p. 568.

¹⁰¹ J. A. Eichelsbacher, *Der Lehrplan für den Geschichtsunterricht an den bayerischen Volksschulen*, in: *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, Zeitschrift für Geschichtsunterricht und politische Erziehung*, Moritz Edelmann and Wilhelm Mommsen (eds.), 26. Jahrgang, Leipzig 1936, pp. 577-578.

«Eine urgermanische Zeit, in der die Germanen auf verhältnismäßig kleinem Raum eine geschlossene völkische Einheit bilden, und eine großgermanische Zeit, in der sie sich in Stämme aufspalten und gleichzeitig in ihrem großen Teil Europas Land nehmen.»¹⁰²

Nevertheless, the German school system shows us, once again, its parochialism and particularism. Basically, in October 1936, while the *Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte* was debating about the need to introduce the *Vorgeschichte* in the German school system, a *Volksschule* in Gau Mainfranken had already introduced the *Vorgeschichte* in its history lessons almost a year before, namely from the last months of 1935. Thus, the Eichelsbacher proposal found success and, beginning in 1937, many *Volksschulen* textbooks added the *Vorgeschichte* to their contents, generally following the Eichelsbacher sketch, and referred to the 1936 Ulm conference to justify such a change:

«Auf Anregung der **‘Reichsstelle zur Förderung des deutschen Schrifttums’** sind im Band I die Abschnitte bis zum Ende der Großgermanischen Zeit z.Z. neu bearbeitet oder erweitert und die Bilder erneuert worden. Auch hat nun mehr die **in Ulm 1936 beschlossene Gliederung der Vor- und Frühgeschichte** Eingang gefunden. Damit dürfte das Büchlein nach Wort und Bild den heutigen Stand der Wissenschaft in kinder- und volkstümlicher Weise zum Ausdruck bringen.»¹⁰³

It is worth highlighting, however, the pragmatism of the Regime which, overcoming its hierarchical and centralizing aims, used a local but effective case as the model for all its territories. That is, the Regime's policracy also seems to have had a positive and active function if, as in this case, the dialogue between central and local powers was productive. Still, in many other cases opposition more than dialogue occurred among the *Reichsbildungsministerium*, *NSLB* and regional powers.

¹⁰² Die 3. Reichstagung für Deutsche Vorgeschichte in Ulm a.d.D. vom 17.-25. Oktober 1936, in: *Germanen-Erbe, Monatsschrift für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*, Hans Reinerth (ed.), Leipzig 1936, p. 229.

¹⁰³ W. Füßler and F. Werner, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Gießen 1939, p. III.

Moreover, it is important to point out the ‘interest-shifting’ from the German Middle Ages to the German pre-history that took place in the *Volksschulen* historiography of the National Socialist Regime. Such shifting is of particular interest when considering the role that the medieval history had since the nineteenth century in the German historiography and, as well, the political use of the German Middle Ages by the Nazi propaganda. Still, according to this interpretation, the Germanic population created its own brilliant civilization and fine culture not during the Middle Ages but already in pre-historical time. Also, the racial purity of Nazi German *Bauerntum* were to be found not during the Middle Ages but during the *Urgermanische Zeit* and, moreover, the true Germanic virtues, that were exemplars for the youngest part of the Nazi society, were to be found not in the medieval history but in the pre-history.

II.2.4 Trends in *Volksschulen* Historiography under the Nazi Regime

A) *Urgermanische Zeit*

According to several textbooks, the *Urgermanische Zeit*¹⁰⁴ started in the third millennium B.C. and ended in 500 B.C. The migration of Nordic and Germanic races all over European and Asian territories around the third millennium B.C. represented one of the most significant events of the *UGZ*. Indeed, thanks to the Nordic blood, carried by Nordic-Germanic, Asian and Mediterranean populations, such as the Babylonians, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, they could expand and let their civilizations bloom between approximately 2000 and 1000 B.C. Besides that, the Nordic-Germanic culture, in mixing with the local ones, helped the non-Nordic civilizations in their cultural progress.

Agriculture was the most important invention of the *UGZ* and, according the Nazi *Volksschulen* literature, it was the Nordic-Germanic race that discovered agriculture and all its techniques. Indeed, the Nordic-Germanic populations, aware of the benefits of agriculture, ‘decided’ to settle down and abandoned the nomadic life that was typical of the Slavic race and populations.

Agriculture, however, was not the only invention of the Nordic-Germanic populations. They also developed a rich and sophisticated culture as early as in the second millennium B.C. and especially during the Bronze Age, it was commonly called the ‘Germanic golden age’. Unfortunately, so claimed several authors, almost all traces of this culture were destroyed because of wars and forays that, caused by non-German populations, devastated German territories.

Nevertheless, to fully understand ‘what happened’ and ‘who the protagonists were’ of *UGZ*, it is worth analysing a *Volksschulen* history textbook of National Socialist Germany such as the 1939 textbook “*Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*” by Wilhelm Füllner and Ferdinand Werner. According to Füllner and Werner, the roots of Germanic history were to be found in the fifth millennium B.C. during the *Jungsteinzeit*. Indeed, between 5000 and 2000 B.C., i.e. before the *UGZ*, the

¹⁰⁴ Hereafter referred to as “*UGZ*”.

Nordic race appeared on the European continent and settled in northern territories between present day Denmark and northern Germany. This race distinguished itself by the racial purity of its members who were blond, blue eyed and very brave:

«In diesen ersten Jahrtausenden der Nacheiszeit und auch in denselben nördlichen Gegenden bildete sich nun auch diejenige Menschenrasse heraus, die später die große weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung erlang hatte. die nordische Rasse. Als ein hochgewachsenes, stolzes und kampftüchtiges Menschengeschlecht mit heller Haut, goldblondem Haar und blauen Augen lebte sie zwischen Wäldern und Sümpfen.»¹⁰⁵

Significant is the allusion to the role that the Nordic race would play in future world history. Indeed, the physical characterizations of the Nordic race – white skin, blond hair and blue eyes – were not casual but symptomatic of a race that developed in a northern European climate:

«Haut- Haar- und Augenfarbe zeigen jedenfalls an, daß diese Rasse in einem kühlen, nördlichen Klima sich gebildet hat»¹⁰⁶.

The toughness of a population and the purity of its race, according to such a theory, seemed to be directly proportionate to the roughness of its surrounding climate. Furthermore, the Nordic populations, who belong to the Nordic race, could also be referred to as Indo-Germanic or Aryan populations: «Die Geschichtsforscher nennen es [das nordische Volk] auch das ‘Indogermanische oder Arische Urvolk»¹⁰⁷. Actually, these nouns were often used as synonyms in the *Volksschulen* historiography.

Moreover, the Nordic populations, who invented agriculture and knew its techniques, abandoned the nomadic way of life and settled in small villages:

«Längst sind die blonden Riesen keine bloßen Jäger, Fischer und Sammler mehr. Ueberall, wo wir auf waldfreies Land kommen, treffen wir richtige Acker, die mit Hirse, Weizen, Gerste und Flachs bestanden sind.»¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ W. Füßler, W. Werner, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Gießen 1939, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

In those villages they built four-cornered houses with living spaces and kitchens:

«Sie [die Häuser] sind viereckig, aus Baumstämmen aufgeführt und dick mit Schilf gedeckt. – Im Innern sind Küche und Wohnraum durch eine Zwischenwand getrennt. Gezimmerte Schlafbänke und Gestelle für Geschirr machen die Räume wohnlich und behaglich.»¹⁰⁹

As already pointed out, the four-cornered house or block-house was considered a typical and globally appreciated creation of Nordic-Germanic culture and, actually, the Greeks copied the Nordic-Germanic four-squared model to build their temples. What is more, Füßler and Werner, in describing the twentieth-century apartment as a modern Nordic four-cornered house, clearly tried to set a comparison between Nordic-Germanic and National Socialist society. In simpler terms, it seems that the two authors wanted to say: ‘look, they were not so different from us!’

Still, the Indo-Germanic populations, after the first settlement, moved to the south, looking for new territories:

«In diesen nordischen Menschen lebte nämlich die Sehnsucht nach der Ferne, nach Abenteuern und Kampf, und die war oft starker als die Heimatliebe.»¹¹⁰

Such a phenomenon, also called the “*erste Völkerwanderung*” by other textbooks authors, is actually a clear contradiction to the general theory that characterized the Indo-Germanic populations as principally sedentary. Nevertheless, the Nordic-Germanic migration was described as an ‘adventure’, while the Slavic one was a brutal invasion.

The Indo-Germanic migrations, indeed, brought elements of Germanic culture to all of Europe and to many Asian territories. Indians, Persians, Greeks and Romans all received great benefits from the Indo-Germanic migrations:

«Ueberall wo diese hochgemuten, kühnen Indogermanenstämme hingekommen sin, haben sia als Herrenvölker Reiche gegründet, neues, höheres Leben erweckt und die Gesittung gehoben. Alles, was die Menschen schaffen und erfinden, um ihr Leben besser und würdiger zu gestalten, um es

¹⁰⁹ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

über die Stufe der Tiere zu erheben, das nennt man mit einem Wort 'Kultur'. So kann man mit Recht sagen, daß die Stämme der blonden Nordrasse für viele Länder der Erde große Kulturbringen gewesen sind.»¹¹¹

Culture was essentially a product of Nordic-Germanic cultural supremacy which the two authors saw as significant as the racial one. The race-culture connection was indeed very strong in the *Volksschulen* historiography.

The *Germanen*, direct biological ancestors of German Nazis, had to be included among the Indo-Germanic populations. Indeed, the millennium between 2000 and 1000 B.C. was entitled the "*Goldene Zeitalter*" and represented the beginning of German history. More properly, according Füßler and Werner, the period between 2000 and 500 B.C. was the "*Urgermanische Zeit*":

«Einen Zweig des indogermanischen Urvolks haben wir bis jetzt absichtlich nicht genannt, obwohl der Name "Indogermanen" ihn verrät: die Germanen, unsere nächsten Vorfahren und Blutsverwandten. Wir nennen die Zeit zwischen 2000 und 500 vor Chr. auch die 'Urgermanische Zeit'.»¹¹²

In this period the Germanic populations grew stronger and excelled in Europe and in the Mediterranean because of their racial superiority and culture. For example, they were the only populations to produce amber jewellery and bronze weaponry even in the second millennium B.C.

Still, the original *Germanen* settlements were not only in northern Germany but also in Denmark and the Scandinavian countries. Successively, the *Germanen* moved from the northern to western, southern and eastern German territories occupied by *Kelten* and *Illyrer*:

«Wenn wir eine Karte betrachten, wie sie die Gelehrten nach den Ausgrabungen entworfen haben, so stellen wir fest, daß die Germanen bis 1000 vor Chr. nur einen kleinen Teil Deutschlands bewohnten: das Gebiet zwischen Weser und Oder noch nicht einmal bis an das Mittelgebirge. Aber auch im heutigen Dänemark und weiter nach Norden, in Skandinavien, faßen sie schon lange. In West- und Süddeutschland wohnten die Kelten und in Ostdeutschland die indogermanischen Illyrer, damals ein großes Volk, von dem aber heute nur noch die Albanier übrig sind.»¹¹³

¹¹¹ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 13.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹³ Ibid.

The racial and cultural relationship between *Germanen*, *Kelten* and *Illyrer* was described in various ways in the *Volksschulen* literature. The racial definition of the *Illyrer* was especially complex, while some textbook authors included them in the Slavic populations, other authors considered them second-comers to the Germanic population. Thus, the *Illyrer* were a second class Germanic population and, consequently, the *Schlesien, Illyrer* racial descendants, were ‘second class’ Germans. It is interesting to see, how the National Socialist ideology, obsessed with the racial issue, prompted some *Volksschulen* historians to establish a racial hierarchy not only between Aryan and non-Aryan but also among the Germanic populations. Theoretically, as emphasized by the Nazi propaganda, the Germans were one *Volk* and one *Volksgemeinschaft* but historically, as some *Volksschulen* textbooks testified, the Germans were descendants of different Germanic populations with different grades of ‘racial purity’. Indeed, the Nordicism theory, which was one component of National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, which set a classification for all Germanic populations, only acknowledged the original *Germanen* – those who settled in Northern Germany, Denmark and the Scandinavian countries – as racially pure, due to being direct descendants of the Nordic race.

Still, the Germanic populations, despite their inner differences, were already active in European territories before Rome even existed:

«Ja, in jener Zeit saßen sogar noch die Vorfahren der Römer südlich der Donau und in den Alpen, denn die Stadt Rom war noch lange nicht gegründet. Sie ist erst 753 v. Chr. erbaut worden.»¹¹⁴

Furthermore, the two authors could clearly state that the *Germanen*, racially pure and culturally active, were certainly no barbarians:

«Die Germanen waren keine Barbaren!»¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Füßler and Werner, with an ethnological approach, pointed out habits and customs of Germanic populations to avoid and to fight the barbaric prejudice: «Heute weiß man aber, daß es im alten Germanenland ganz und gar nicht barbarisch zugging»¹¹⁶. The analysis, focusing on several aspects of the Germanic society, such as religion, science and social life, also portrayed the members of Germanic village communities as similar to those in Nazi Germany in their attitudes or clothes:

«Die Frauenkleidung war der heutigen sehr ähnlich, den sie bestand aus Bluse mit kurzen Aermeln und einem langen, faltenreichen Rock. – An Arm und um den Hals trugen die Frauen gern glänzende Schmuckstücke aus Bronze oder Gold.»¹¹⁷

The Germanics were portrayed as expert farmers and skilled navigators. They knew meteorology, astronomy, invented the wind rose and created their own calendar. Additonally, the Germanics believed in the Sun and some of their ancient religious rituals were still alive, with a different name, in Nazi Germany:

«Auch die Germanen der Bronzezeit waren Bauern wie ihre indogermanischen Vorfahren – Ebenso waren die Germanen kühne Seefahrer. [...] Als Bauer und Seefahrer mußte sich der Germane sehr genau um Witterung und Gestirne kümmern – Die achteilige Windrose mit den vier Haupthimmelsrichtungen und den vier Nebenrichtungen ist sicher uralt und eine Germanische Erfindung.- Heute wissen wir jedenfalls, daß unsere Vorfahren [...] schon einen richtigen Kalender hatten. – Der Glaube unserer Vorfahren war also ein Sonnen- ein Lichtglaube.- Im Frühling, wenn die Sonne wieder Kraft hatte und man den Samen ausstreuen konnte, feierte man das Frühlingsfest. Unser christliches Osterfest erinnert noch heute daran: Es trägt seinen Namen von der germanischen Frühlingsgöttin Ostara.»¹¹⁸

The emphasis on cultural and social aspects of Germanic populations was present in almost all *Volksschulen* textbooks of the Regime. It should be remembered that ethnological, cultural and geographical research was a typical method of the German *Volksgeschichte* that arose in German historiography, especially between the 1920s and 1940s – both in universities and research institutes. Thus, is it likely that historians, not only in universities but also in *Volksschulen*, were influenced by the *Volksgeschichte*. Indeed, another *Volksschulen* history textbook should also be taken into consideration, namely: the 1938 “*Aus Deutschlands Ur- and*

¹¹⁶ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 18.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

Frühzeit” by Fritz Fikenscher, who particularly focused his attention on several aspects of social life in a Germanic village during the *UGZ*.

The collective feeling of *Gemeinschaft* had to be imagined as the ‘glue’ that united all members of the village in one strong and compact community. As in the later Nazi German society, so the past Germanic one was subdivided into several *Gemeinschaften*. Indeed, the simple social life of a Germanic village was structured in layers of *Sippen*. The basic *Sippen* included some families, the larger *Sippengemeinschaft*, was a group of *Sippen*, and the yet larger *Dorfengemeinschaft*, included all members of the village.

While in times of peace the village community was quietly living in a proto-socialistic system in which everything was equally shared among all members of the village, in times of war the community was led by its *Führer*:

«Sie standen im Kampfe zusammen wie gegossenes Erz; ihre Bindung war die Blutsgemeinschaft; ihre Ehre war die Treue zum Führer.»¹¹⁹

The latter sentence, similar to SS motto “*Meine Ehre heißt Treue*” is probably a clue of one of the aims of Nazi schooling: the war education that would have made the German children ready for the *Wehrgemeinschaft*, namely: the war-community.

Furthermore, Fikenscher’s textbook described the role of Germanic children in their village and their training for battles and wars:

«Wer im Kampfe tüchtig sein will, muß seinen Körper hart und zäh machen: die beste Vorschule zum Kampfe ist darum der Sport. Die germanische Jugend mit ihren herrlich gebauten Körpern war Sport-gewaltig – Ueber die erzielten Leistungen ist uns natürlich nichts überliefert, wir wissen aber, daß spatter die Römer noch sagten, die Germanen seien die schnellsten Läufer der Welt.»¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ F. Fikenscher, *Aus Deutschland Ur- und Frühzeit: für den Volksschulunterricht*, Ansbach 1938, p. 39.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

What is more, the author claimed that the young Germanic children who did not play any sport were negatively considered, and actually made fun of, by the whole *Dorfgemeinschaft*:

«Wer lieber in der Halle am Feuer hockte und mit der Asche spiel, der wurde als ein ‘Herdputzer’ und ‘Rohlenbeißer’ verachtet.»¹²¹

By highlighting this past social norm with approval, the 1938 Fikenscher textbook encouraged all Nazi pupils to take active part in gym classes and, as German children, to be ready in case of war:

«Der Ringkampf war die Schule der Muskelkraft [...] Das war zugleich eine unmittelbare Vorbereitung auf den Männerstreit im Krieg.»¹²²

¹²¹ Fikenscher 1938, p. 40.

¹²² Ibid., p. 41.

B) Großgermanische Zeit

The *Großgermanische Zeit*¹²³ was the period between 500 B.C. and A.D. 1500. The most important event of this period was the creation of the First German Empire and the reunification of all Germanic populations in the tenth century. Other than these two moments, the GGZ was a negative era for the Germanic populations because: firstly, they lost their own independence and their territories; secondly, they were forced to struggle against Slavic populations and to fight, in some cases, against other Indo-Germanic populations; thirdly, by mixing their blood and race with non-Nordic populations, the Germanic lost their racial purity.

Indeed, the Slavic invasion from the East, the inner German political fight and the complex relationship with Rome, both imperial and Christian ones, destroyed the ‘simple’ Proto-Germanic world of *Dorfgemeinschaft* and prompted the Germanic populations to fight for their own territories and freedom. In accordance with the Nazi propaganda, the historians described the Germanic populations of this period as “*Volk ohne Raum*”.

On the one hand – from a didactical prospective – the narration of GGZ was broken into two parts in the *Volksschulen* textbooks and history lessons. Theoretically, while the first part of GGZ, from 500 B.C. to A.D. 400, was a topic of the fifth school year, the second part of GGZ, from A.D. 500 to 1500, was a topic of the sixth school year. But, because of the prominence of *Gegenwartskunde* in the history lessons, both UGZ and GGZ were scarcely considered during the fifth school year and in many cases topics of GGZ were often excluded from didactical plans and from the history lessons of Nazi *Volksschulen*. In simpler terms, the history narration skipped from the fifth century B.C. straight to the fourth century A.D. and to the creation of the Frank Empire. Consequently, the German-Roman cultural and political relationship as well as the *Völkerwanderung*, that were considered the beginning of the German Middle Ages in Weimar Republic *Volksschulen* textbooks, became insignificant topics for *Volksschulen* pupils of the Nazi Regime.

¹²³ Hereafter referred to as “GGZ”.

On the other hand – from a historiographical perspective – the *Volksschulen* historians cherished the Holy Roman Empire, considered as a Germanic empire, and the unification of all Germanic populations under the ‘First German Empire’. Also, the Vikings were portrayed as exponents of Nordic-Germanic culture and race, which was spread widely around the world. On the contrary, the *Limes*, the fourth-century *Völkerwanderung*, the Slavic invasions, the struggle against Slavic populations, the Crusades, Christianity, the Popes and the imperial German politics were negatively depicted. Altogether, the GGZ was described as a ‘time of crisis’ for the German *Volk* and, actually, only post-1918 Germany experienced more dramatic conditions:

«Die Völkerwanderung hatte für Deutschland keine gute Folgen. Ganze Stämme waren vernichtet worden. Bestes nordisches Blut ging damit nutzlos verloren. Der ganze Osten des Landes wurde nach und nach von Slawen besetzt. Schon im 12. Jahrhundert klagten die Deutschen über Landnot. Noch schlimmer wurde es durch den Schandfrieden von Versailles, den uns der Haß der Feinde diktiert hat. Die Deutschen sind heute ein Volk ohne (den nötigen) Raum. Auch das muß einmal anders werden.; denn – Raum für alle hat die Erde -, also auch für die Deutschen. Deshalb muß immer wieder die Forderung nach Kolonien erhoben werden.»¹²⁴

The narrative style that the *Volksschulen* historians used to describe the GGZ is compelling. It is a different style than that used for the description of UGZ. Indeed, while they focused on cultural and ethnological aspects of Germanic populations during UGZ, they pointed out the political situation of GGZ Germany. Thus, the UGZ narrative may be described as a sort of ethnic-cultural German history or *Volksgeschichte* in which the historians described virtues and characteristics of the German *Volk*; whereas the GGZ narrative was similar to political-institutional history or *Staatsgeschichte* in which they sketched the political German history in a European context. Both these two interpretations should have helped the Nazi youth to understand both the society – as virtues and characteristics – and the politics – the current political situation – of National Socialist Germany.

From this point of view, the mix of *Gegenwartskunde*, *Urgermanische Zeit* and *Großgermanische Zeit* that composed the history classes of the fifth *Volksschulen*

¹²⁴ L. Nehring, *Vaterländische Geschichte*, Breslau 1940, p. 18.

school year, has to be imagined as nothing more than bare Nazi ideology and propaganda. It was, in other words, the narrative of ‘alpha’ – the Nordic-Germanic populations – and ‘omega’ – the Nazi Regime and its 1933 revolution – of German *Volk* destiny. After the fifth school year the pupils would know: where were they from, who were they and where were they going.

As previously noted, the fifth school year textbook ended its narration with the end of UGZ and the sixth school year textbook started with the history of the Frank Empire in the sixth century. That is to say that ten centuries of German history were actually erased by *Volksschulen* textbooks. Still, because of the GGZ ‘officially’ started in 500 B.C., few textbook authors tried to give general information about the first part of GGZ and thus outlined, without giving any precise chronological references, customs and movements of various Germanic populations. In many cases, the time between the end of UGZ and the beginning of GGZ was included in one longer narrative and, anyway, no remarkable historical events or dates seemed to distinguish the beginning of GGZ from the end of UGZ. The only theory that was largely accepted, described the last five centuries B.C. as a difficult time for the Germanic populations that were forced to migrate from their original territories and, in some cases, to fight with each other. Moreover, neither the cultural nor the political connections with Rome were generally mentioned in the textbooks with the exception of *Armin*, who was portrayed as the first German hero who decided to help his own *Volk* and to fight the Romans.

Armin’s deeds were probably the only positive aspect of the German history during the first centuries of GGZ and, *Armin* was uniformly described as the first hero of German history. While the *Völkerwanderung* were dissipating Germanic bloods all over Europe and the Germanic populations were forced to fight against each other, *Armin’s* loyalty to Germanic *Volk* and Germany emerged. His virtues were, indeed, examples not only for the pupils but for all of Nazi German society. *Armin* was actually the first hero who, recognising Germany as being his *Heimat*, decided to free the subdued Germanic *Volk* and to fight its enemies. According the

past-present comparison, *Armin's* name was always quoted as being the first one of 'heroes of German history'. Furthermore, other *Führers* of the German *Volk* were compared to *Armin* who became the archetype of a military leader who fought for German independence and freedom in the Nazi *Volksschulen* historiography:

«Armin, der erste große Volksführer, hat Deutschland vor der Verwelschung gerettet. Armins Versuch, Deutschland zu einigen, ist an Eigennutz und Sodergeist gescheitert.»¹²⁵

Perhaps the most important characteristic of *Armin* was his awareness of being a German. According to the textbook authors, he understood that the Germans, even if subdivided in different populations, were actually one *Volk* and that, consequently, they should not have to fight against each other.

«Hervorzuheben ist, wie die auswärtigen Feinde zu allen Zeiten mit den inneren Zwietracht der Deutschen rechneten; genau wie damals Augustus, so dachte auch im Weltkrieg Loyd George: Deutsche können nur durch Deutsche besiegt werden.»¹²⁶

Furthermore, *Armin's* name became symbolic for all the Germans who, instead of welcoming and accepting other cultures, only cared about Germany and its *Volk*, that is: the opposition between *Flavusdeutsche* and *Armindeutsche* signalled the destiny of Germany:

«Gerade dabei wird die gefährliche Empfänglichkeit und übergroße Aufgeschlossenheit der Germanen für die fremde Kulturwelt deutlich werden. Schon bei Armins Gegenspielern, Segeft und den 'Römlingen' seines Anhangs, wird diese völkische Instinklosigkeit erschreckend klar. Die Gegensätze gewinnen sinnbildhafte Kraft in dem Brüderpaar Armin und Flavus. [...] Heinrich Wolf prägte im Anschluß daran die sehr fruchtbaren Begriffe 'Armindeutsche' und 'Favusdeutsche',¹²⁷ In einem kurzen Vorblick muß den Kindern gezeigt werden, daß es in der ganzen folgenden deutschen Geschichte bis in die jüngste Vergangenheit (Weltkrieg; Marxismus – Nationalsozialismus) solche Flavusdeutsche und Armindeutsche gegeben

¹²⁵ U. Haacke, E. Ziemann, *Handbuch für den Geschichtsunterricht an Volksschulen*, Leipzig 1941, p. 22.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹²⁷ The conceptual opposition between *Armindeutsche* and *Flavusdeutsche* will not have fortune in the German historiography. The right-wing extremist historian Gustav Sichelshmidt made a reference to this concept in his text, *Die Herrschaft der Internationalisten – Deutschlands innere Feinde*, (1995).

hat, und das es die Aufgabe der Gegenwart ist, die Flavisdeutschen endgültig auszurotten.»¹²⁸

Nevertheless, beside *Armin's* exploits, the history of Germany during the GGZ was not particularly positive and, actually, the question still unanswered is about the 'meaning' of the *Großgermanische Zeit* in German history and its master narrative in the *Volksschulen* historiography. The 1939 Füller textbook gave a brief answer to both these questions:

«**Was ist die Großgermanische Zeit?** In der Bronzezeit lebten unsere Vorfahren als seßhafte Bauern und Seefahrer auf einem verhältnismäßig kleinen Gebiet um die westliche Ostsee [...] In diesen Jahrhunderten wuchs das jugendstarke Germanenvolk immer mehr an, so daß ihm sein Lebensraum allmählich zu eng wurde. Dazu kam seit etwa 800 vor Chr. eine sehr entscheidende Verschlechterung des Klimas. Unsere Vorfahren waren also gezwungen, sich über ihre Urheimat auszudehnen. Sie eroberten dabei bis gegen 100 vor Chr. zunächst unser deutsches Vaterland, dann fast ganz Osteuropa von der Ostsee bis zum Uralgebirge und zum Schwarzen Meer und einen großen Teil des gewaltigen Römischen Reiches in der sog. 'Völkerwanderung' (von 200 bis 600 nach Chr.). Und noch spatter, zwischen 800 und 1000 nach Chr., drangen aus Dänemark und Skandinavien die germanischen Wikinger nach suden vor. Im Verlauf von 1500 Jahren haben sich unsere Vorfahren also fast über ganz Europa ausgebreitet.»¹²⁹

So, the first significant event of the GGZ was the German population moving from their original settlements and finding new territories in various parts of Europe. But, in doing that, the German population also mixed their race and blood with the local populations and, thereby, lost their purity. Some textbooks, however, delineated two different *Völkerwanderungen*, namely: the Nordic-Germanic and the Germanic one. During the first one, around 2000 B.C., the Nordic race spread broadly across Europe and parts of Asia, then during the second one, between 500 B.C. and A.D. 400, the Germans conquered new territories and mixed their race and blood with other populations.

Altogether, the history textbook historians neither accurately wrote nor precisely outlined a master narrative of the first centuries of the GGZ. In fact, they remained vague about this topic and they scarcely gave details or chronological information. The only information about the first centuries of the GGZ referred to

¹²⁸ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p.18.

¹²⁹ W. Füller, F. Werner, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Gießen 1939, p. 22.

the new populations whom the Germans came in contact with, such as: the *Kimbern*, *Teutonen* and *Hunnen*.

The *Kimbern* and *Teutonen* originally settled near the *Nordsee*, then moved in about 1000 B.C. to southern Germany and Northern Italy looking for new territories. The reason of such mass-migration was the worsening climatic conditions in their original native land. Hereafter, the concept “*Volk ohne Raum*” clearly referred to the 1926 Hans Grimm book titled “*Volk ohne Raum*” that became, in the 1930s and 1940s, a cherished slogan of Nazi propaganda:

«Um diese Zeit machten sich zwei Germanenstämme an der Nordsee auf, um in Süden besseres Wohnland zu suchen: die Kimbern und die Teutonen. Tobende Sturmfluten hatten ihre Heimat in Jütland weithin verwüstet, Menschen und Vieh verschlungen. Da luden sie ihre Habe auf Wagen, trieben ihre Herde zusammen, und fort ging's mit Weib und Kind die Oder hinauf. Ein Volk ohne Raum auf der Wanderung.»¹³⁰

When these two populations reached Italian territories, they encountered the Romans who were, as already noted, descendants of pure Nordic-Indo-Germanic populations:

«Aber den Platz wollte sich nicht finden lassen. An der Rhone traten ihnen nämlich die Römer entgegen, die dieses Land für sich beanspruchten. Vor vielen hundert Jahren schon hatten deren Vorfahren, als ein echt nordisch-indogermanisches Eroberervolk, ihre Sitze in Süddeutschland aufgegeben und waren über die Alpen nach Italien vorgedrungen. Im Jahre 753. v. Chr. hatten sie die Stadt Rom, gegründet und mit der Zeit ein mächtiges Weltreich erobert, zu dem alle Länder um das Mittelmeer gehörten.»¹³¹

Of particular interest is the description of Rome as an empire which ruled exclusively in the Mediterranean areas. Still, the *Kimbern* and *Teutonen* tried to settle at the border of the Roman territories but were forced into a war by the Romans. In this war the two Nordic-Germanics populations showed Rome their strength and heroism:

«Lähmender Schrecken hatte die römischen Soldaten erfaßt, als die blonden Riesen ohne Panzer, ja, mit entblößtem Oberkörper daher-gestürzt kamen.

¹³⁰ Füßler and Werner, p. 23.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 24.

Und ebenso groß war nach den furchtbaren Niederlagen die Angst in Rom.»¹³²

Furthermore, the *Kimbern*, even when defeated by the Roman army, could prove their moral virtues:

«Die Stolzen Germanenfrauen wußten, daß alle verloren sei, aber sie kämpften dennoch bis zum bitteren Ende. Keiner fiel lebend in die Hände der Sieger. Sie töteten sich selbst, weil sie Knechtschaft und Schande mehr fürchteten als den Tod. Das war das harte und unverdiente Schicksal germanischer Menschen, die in ihren einfachen bäuerlichen Sinn nicht verstehen konnten, daß ihnen kein Stückchen Land zu friedlicher Arbeit beschert sein sollte.»¹³³

‘To win or to die’, this was the destiny of all Germanic *Gemeinschaft* and this was one of the lessons the German pupils had to learn from their history.

Completely opposite to that was the description of the *Hunnen* that represented, in *Volksschulen* historiography, the eastern enemy of the German *Volk*, namely: the *Slawen*:

«Klein und häßlich waren sie [die Hunnen]; gelbbraun war ihre Haut, und das schwarze Zottelhaar hing ihnen in die schiefgeschiltzten Augen. Ihre Beine waren krumm wie Türkenfüße, denn sie saßen den ganzen Tag auf ihren kleinen, struppigen Steppengäulen, ja, oft schliefen sogar auf ihnen.»¹³⁴

Of note here is that in *Volksschulen* literature the Slavic populations and the Slavic race were regularly depicted as the monstrous enemy/enemies of the German *Volk*. Surprisingly, there were only a few references to the Jewish race or population. From this point of view, the orientalist stereotypes were more predominant than the Jewish ones in the *Volksschulen* literature and, altogether, the history textbooks, as compared to biology or *Rassenkunde* ones, were scarcely anti-Semitic. Probably, the *Rassenkunde* and the biology, more than the history

¹³² Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 26.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 26.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

that kept a strong political orientation, were the two subjects dedicated to the racial indoctrination during the Regime.

Furthermore, the *Hunnen* were portrayed as responsible for the A.D. 375 *Völkerwanderung* that forced the Indo-Germanic populations to once again lose their territories, freedom and peace:

«Friedlich saßen die Ostgoten nach ihren langen Wanderungen bereits in der Gegend des Scharzen Meeres [...] Da erschien um das Jahr 375 ein seltsames Reitervolk aus Asien. In ungeheuren Massen brach es aus den Steppen hervor und überfiel die verstreut wohnenden germanischen Bauern. Hunnen nannte man die kleinen, schlitziäugigen, krummbeinigen Reiter, die im jagenden Galopp ihre Knochenpfeile abschossen, ihre Feinde mit dem Lasso zu Boden rissen und zu Tode schleiften, überall plünderten und mordeten, die Dörfer verbrannten und die Felder verwüsteten.»¹³⁵

The *Hunnen* invasion brought chaos to eastern Europe first and then to all of Europe. The *Hunnen* were coming, and because of them the German *Volk* lost the east:

«Alle Germanenvölker Europas gerieten in Aufruhr. In dem Gesichtern der Menschen stand der Schrecken! Die Hunnen kommen! Die Hunnen folgten aber dem Westgoten nicht, sondern blieben in der Donauebene. In einem Steppengebiet, das ihrer asiatischen Heimat ähnlich war, ließen sie sich nieder. Vor hier aus unternahmen sie Beutzüge, plünderten und raubten soviel sie konnten, und kehrten, mit Schätzen und Vorräten immer reich beladen, in die Donauebene zurück [...] So ging der Osten für das Germanentum verloren.»¹³⁶

The clash between Germanic and Slavic populations during the GGZ was considered the beginning of the 'eternal fight' between two opposing civilizations – the Germans and Asians. This appeared again in Nazi German society after June 1941, in the fight between Germany and Russia and between National Socialism and Communism:

«Der Gegensatz von Asien und Germanien: Nomadentum, asiatischer Despotismus, Knechtung der Besiegten, Zerschlagen ihres Ehrgefühls, Schreckensherrschaft, übervölkisches Weltreich, Beute aus aller Herren Länder zusammengeraubt. Dagegen: Bauerntum, Gefolgschaftsgedanke, germanische Manneswürde, anständige Behandlung der Besiegten, Seßhaftigkeit, völkischer Bauernstaat [...] Grenze zwischen Germanen und

¹³⁵ [...] Melzer, [...] Jungblut, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Halle 1942, pp. 16-17.

¹³⁶ Melzer and Jungblut, p. 17.

Slawen. Was ist verlorengegangen? Was bedeutet dieser Verlust bis in die Gegenwart?»¹³⁷

Altogether, the first centuries of the GGZ, from 500 B.C. to the formation of the Holy German Empire, did not follow a precise master narrative. On the contrary, every textbook author pointed out various characteristics and described different events of those centuries according to their personal interpretations only. For this reason, it is worth briefly resuming the main historical stream of the Germanic populations in the last two millennia B.C. as delineated by the authors of history *Volksschulen* textbooks in the Nazi Regime:

Around 2000 B.C. the Nordic-Germanic race, also called Indo-Germanic, settled in northern German and Danish territories. The Nordic-Germanic race already had its own culture and customs, as testified by the archaeological research, which found traces of a Nordic-Germanic culture, namely: bronze weaponry and jewellery. In the same period, some Indo-Germanic populations, in search of adventure and new lands, moved to southern Europe, northern Africa and parts of Asia. These populations, wherever they appeared, mixed with the local ones and helped them to form new civilizations such as: the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians and the Romans.

Nevertheless, the most important Indo-Germanic population was the Germanic one. The Germanics had originally settled in a small territory between northern Germany and Denmark. The *Dorf* was the staple of the Germanic society and the *Dorfgemeinschaft* was its fundamental element that bound all Germanic populations together. The Germans had a prosperous culture and they were not only expert hunters and fisherman but also farmers. In particular, this latter element distinguished the Germanic from the Slavic populations, who maintained a nomadic life.

Around 500 B.C., Germanic populations who were still settled in their original territories were forced to leave those lands because of a drastic negative climate change and because of the Slavic invasions. Indeed, populations coming from eastern European and Asian territories attacked the Germans and occupied some

¹³⁷ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, pp. 24-25.

of their territories. Consequently, the Germans moved to southern territories and spread all over Germany. But, by doing that, they lost their racial purity and mixed themselves with other Indo-Germanic populations that, in some cases, they also had to fight against. Furthermore, part of the ‘original’ Germanic populations reached the Mediterranean area and mixed with non-Indo-Germanic populations. So, the loss of racial and blood purity was the price to pay for the Germanic populations who settled in all German territories.

This historical development, from a National Socialist perspective, provoked an inner contradiction. That is, the Indo-Germanic populations were schematized in a racial hierarchy that can be imagined as a pyramid. Firstly, the Germans, those of whom belonged to the populations situated between northern Germany and Denmark, were at the top of this pyramid. Apparently, they were the only racially ‘pure’ population. Secondly, the Indo-Germanic populations who originally settled in Western, Southern, Middle and Eastern Germany were ‘one’ step below because they had both Indo-Germanics and non-Indo-Germanic blood – in some cases they also mixed with the Slavic race. Thirdly, the populations of the Mediterranean Area and those who blossomed into great civilizations, such as the Persians, Romans and Greeks were another step below. These populations received Nordic blood carried by the Indo-Germans during their UGZ migrations. Finally, the Slavic populations coming from middle Asian territories were at the bottom of this pyramid. Those nomadic populations scarcely integrated with the Indo-Germanic and fought the Germanic populations.

Following such classification, even the twentieth-century Germans, including the German Nazis, were racially different because of their ancestors. As a consequence, between 1933 and 1945, several regional didactical plans and guidelines openly ignored and fought such theories. For instance, the *Volksschulen* of eastern German territories were particularly active in fighting such a ‘nordicist’ theory. In general, the tendency towards the extremes of the racial question was typical of the National Socialist Regime that, in a larger context, always increased its politics to exclude the non-Arian from its *Volksgemeinschaft*. Symptomatic of such a pursuit of extremes was the exclusion of the Jews, then half-Jews and then finally the one-quarter-Jews from the Nazi

school system. Similarly, the National Socialist eugenic politics became always more severe and radical in the last years of Regime and, in a larger scale, this tendency toward the extreme, can be also observed in the war, that became a *Totaler Krieg* and which increasingly and inexorably devoured all German resources. To a greater degree, we can here also refer to Mommsen 'cumulative radicalization' interpretation¹³⁸ which highlighted a constant and increasing radicalization of the Nazi politics during the twelve years of its existence. According to Mommsen, the Nazi Regime, differently from other totalitarian dictatorships, never interrupted or slowed down the radicalization of its 'revolutionary' politics.

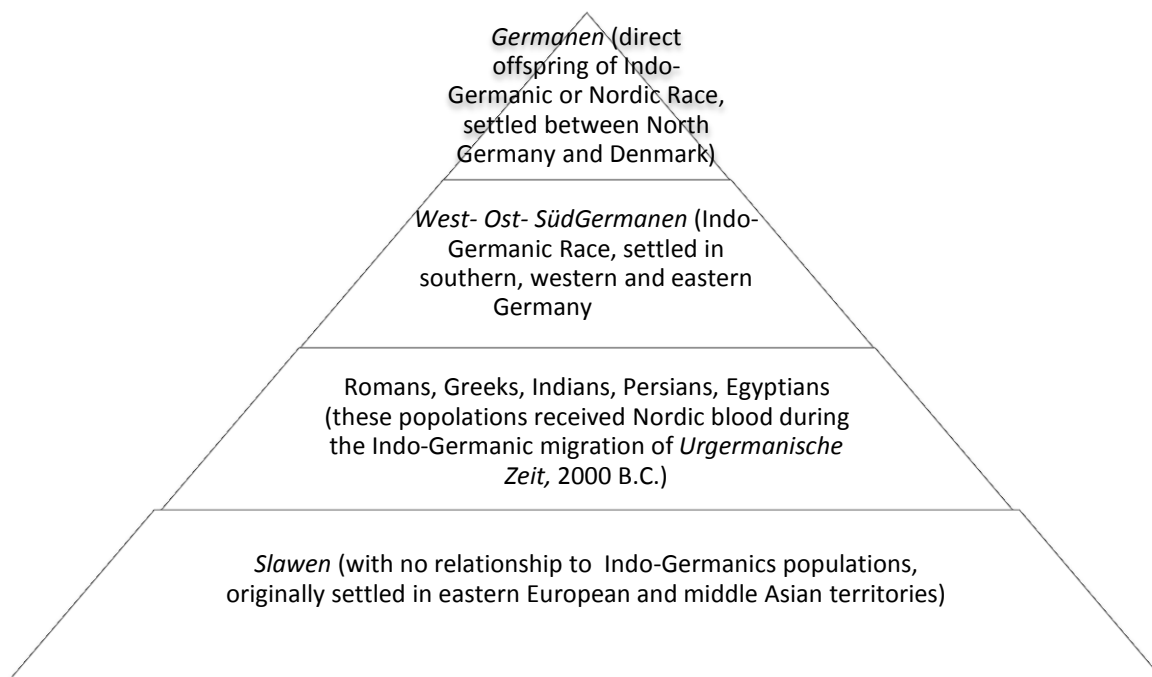


Table 11, Racial pyramid in *Volksschulen* historiography.

The first two events of the GGZ largely reported in all Nazi *Volksschulen* textbooks were the history of Gallia between sixth and eighth century A.D. and, then the formation of the Holy Roman Empire in A.D. 800. The Franks were recognized as a Germanic population and, consequently, both the Frank Kingdom and the Frank Empire were described as Germanic. Actually, *Charlemagne* was

¹³⁸ H. Mommsen, *Der Nationalsozialismus. Kumulative Radikalisierung und Selbstzerstörung des Regimes*, Mannheim 1976.

reputed to be the first Germanic emperor who tried to reunite all Germanic populations into one empire. So, the historical debate about whether *Karl der Große*¹³⁹ belonged to German or to French history had no influence and left no traces in the National Socialist *Volksschulen* historiography.

¹³⁹ K. Hampe, *Karl der Grosse oder Charlemagne? Acht Antworten deutscher Geschichtsforscher*, Berlin 1935.

C) *The Franken and Karl der Große*

According to the *Volksschulen* historiography, the *Franken*, as opposed to all other Nordic-Germanic populations, did not leave their original land but gathered their *Volkstämme*. More generally, all western Germanic populations did not take part in the *Völkerwanderung* process:

«Die Westgermanen wanderten nicht: Sie Schlossen sich zu Volksstämmen zusammen: die Sachsen im Wesergebiet, die Franken am Mittel- und Niederrhein, die Schwaben (Alamannen) südlich des Mains, die Bayern zwischen Donau und Alpen zu beiden Seiten der Isar, die Thüringer zwischen Harz und Fichtelgebirge und die Friesen an der Nordseeküste [...] Sie blieben immer mit dem Heimatboden verbunden.»¹⁴⁰

So, the *Franken*, ‘safe’ from the racial mix that affected many other Nordic-Germanic populations, were free to build their own Kingdom on their own territories between the fifth and sixth century A.D.:

«Nur die Franken waren nicht untergegangen.[...] Sie bildeten ein Reich, das zum Kernland ihre Heimat hatte. So wurden sie stark und mächtig. Sie hatten zur richtigen Zeit auch die rechten Führer.»¹⁴¹

Still, even if textbook authors had different opinions about the *Franken* kings that were positively described by some authors while negatively characterized by others, two elements were largely accepted by *Volksschulen* historiography: firstly, the *Franken* were Germanics; secondly, *Karl der Große* was the first Germanic emperor.

The dynasty of the *Franken* kings was scarcely reported by the textbooks that only mentioned *Chlodowig*, founder and first king of the *Franken* kingdom in A.D. 500, and *Karl Martell* who was always associated with the fights of *Tours* and *Poitiers* in A.D. 732. *Karl Martell*’s victory in A.D. 732 over the *Mauren*, also called *Mohammeddanen*, was of great relevance for the whole Occident that remained free from the religious and cultural invasion coming from northern

¹⁴⁰ H. Hausmann, R. Thiele and A. Kroll, *Sie alle bauten Deutschland: Ein Geschichtsbuch für die Volksschulen*, Breslau 1942, p. 13.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Africa. Following the Nazi historical interpretation, these fights were portrayed as a clash of civilization and population:

«Zu seiner [Karl Martell] Zeit waren die Mauren, ein Volk Nordafrikas, in spanien eingedrungen, hatten die Westgoten besiegt und waren in das Frankenreich eingebrochen. Karl schlug sie 732 bei Tours und Poitiers in Mittelfrankreich. Er bewahrte dadurch Europa vor der Unterwerfung unter ein fremdrassisches Volk.»¹⁴²

The use of the term ‘Europe’ is worth noting. The *Volksschulen* authors used it for the first time while describing the history of the *Franken* Kingdom and it seems also relevant for these historians to remark that Europe and Occident were safe from the invasion of north African populations while, as highlighted in this research, the anti-European and anti-Occidental perspective/attitude/stance was a strong component of National Socialist ideology. Anyhow, according to *Volksschulen* textbooks, different Germanic populations, among them the *Franken*, became aware of their political position and decided to band together and build the First Germanic Empire during eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

But the Germanic populations and the *Franken* found a good ‘Führer’ only with *Karl der Große*, who, in order to reunite all Germanic populations living in Europe, marched with his troops through Germany, French and Northern Italy. The role of *Karl der Große* was emphasized in all the textbooks, and he was generally portrayed as the first Germanic emperor.

The textbook authors, supporting the Germanic cause in the cultural and historic ‘fight’ against Rome and Romanity, particularly pointed out the ‘Germanic nature’ of *Karl* who always knew and always felt to be nothing else than a true Germanic man. Indeed, *Karl* preferred to use the German language:

«Karl war kein Römling¹⁴³, sondern ein echter Germane. Deutsche Sprache und Sitte verehrte er hoch. So hat er den Monaten deutsche Namen gegeben, die erst neuester Zeit sich stärker einbürgen (z.B. Lenzmond = März, Ostermond = April).»¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Hausmann, Thiele and Kroll, 1942, p. 14.

¹⁴³ «Römling» was a disrespectful adjective used at the beginning of the 20th Century to describe the German scholars of Roman history and archaeology.

¹⁴⁴ Füßler and Werner, 1939, p. 62.

Still, the existence of Christian and Roman elements in *Karl Frankenreich*, that outside the Nazi *Volksschulen* historiography was regularly and unanimously known as *Heiliges Römisches Reich* in both the first part of the twentieth-century German historiography and today, remained a controversial topic for the Nazi textbook authors who tried to lessen and subordinate those elements to a more general feeling of Germaness that was proper for *Karl*. So, *Karl* was essentially a Germanic emperor who was not keen to take orders from the Pope in Rome and who only allowed Christian and roman culture in the empire in order to reach his political aims:

«Er [Karl] ließ sich von ihr [the Roman Church] nicht befehlen, sondern blieb in seinem Wesen was er war, ein Germane. Er trug fränkische Kleidung und redete in seines Volkes Sprache, auch wenn er noch als Mann Lateinisch und Griechisch lernte. Erst unter seinem Nachfolger wurden diese Zeugen einer großen germanischen Vergangenheit vernichtet.»¹⁴⁵

Therefore, the *Volksschulen* historians showing no interest in the current polemics regarding the ‘nationality’ of *Karl der Große*, whether was he a German or a Frenchman, and emphasized his political strategy and always depicted him as a true German hero, even when describing the events of the *Sachsenkrieg* that, begun by *Karl der Große*, caused a sanguinary clash between two Germanic populations. Actually, the *Sachsenkrieg* was used by *Volksschulen* historians to emphasize the strong belief that all Germanic populations, even when fighting against each other, had in the final victory a deep relationship with their own territories. Indeed, the motto ‘to win or to die’ and the Propaganda slogan “*Blut und Boden*” were often quoted.

¹⁴⁵ Melzer and Jungblut, 1942, p. 27.

D) Sachsenkrieg and Widukind

The events of the *Sachsenkrieg* were accurately described by many *Volksschulen* textbook authors of the Regime who emphasized the heroism of the Germanic populations, in this case the *Sachsen*, when fighting for their own land. The *Sachsenkrieg* became the archetype of the liberation war in the *Volksschulen* literature. It was a *Freiheitskampf*.

The events of this war were sketched as follow: *Karl der Große*, in order to create the empire, invaded the *Sachsen* territories in A.D. 772. It was not the first time that *Karl* with his Germanic army, the *Franken*, was forced to fight another Germanic population, namely: the *Sachsen*, but in this case, the military conquer was particularly difficult because the *Sachsen*, extremely bonded to their territories and religion, neither wanted to become Christian nor to lose their freedom. Still, the *Sachsen* populations, who had no leader, could not offer enough resistance to *Karl*, who subjugated against almost all *Sachsen* territories in few years. The war was changed, however, when the *Sachsen* duke *Widukind* decided to fight for his native *Volk*. *Widukind's* charisma and personality gave new hope to the *Sachsen* populations who rebelled and fought *Karl's* army around A.D. 780. Aware of the dangers coming from this revolution, *Karl* invaded the *Sachsen* region the next time with a bigger *Franken* army to re-establish those territories under his political control and, as a consequence, in 782 *Karl* and his troops massacred thousands of *Sachsen*, circa 4500, around the city of Verden.

Widukind, realizing that his *Volk* did not have enough power to fight the *Franken*, decided to 'sacrifice' himself and his own freedom for all the *Sachsen* and in 785 agreed to be baptized and to submit to *Karl*. Nevertheless, part of the *Sachsen* populations, despite *Widukind* surrender, continued to fight the *Franken* till 804 when the last *Sachsen* rebels surrendered to *Karl* who, finally, had all their territories under his control.

The Regime introduced the history of *Widukind* into *Volksschulen* textbooks in 1933 and it represented something new within the National Socialist *Volksschulen* historiography, over the Weimar Republic's. *Widukind's* history was used as an

example of bravery for the German pupils of the Regime who should considered *Widukind* as a model:

«**Widukind, unser Vorbild!** Wenn wir heute in Widukind einen der größten Männer der deutschen Geschichte verhehren, so denken wir nicht an das was er erreicht, sondern an das, **was er gewollt hat. Seine hohes Ziel war, seinen Sachsen ihre angestammte germanisch-deutsche Art und ihre Freiheit zu erhalten.** Noch manchmal haben die Deutsche später um ihr urdeutsches Vätererbe kämpfen müssen, zuletzt unter der Führung unseres Volkskanzlers **Adolf Hitler**. [...] Ist der stolze Sachsenherzog für uns heute ein hohes Vorbild, denn auch wir wollen uns alle Mühe geben, echte, reine und unverwelschte Deutsche zu sein.»¹⁴⁶

The comparison between past and present as well as the association between a Germanic hero and Adolf Hitler were typical characteristics of the *Volksschulen* historiography during the Regime. It is also interesting to observe how *Widukind* ‘became’ a hero not for what he did and actually accomplished but for what he wanted to do. His character, more than his political actions, was the model for the Nazis. So, *Widukind* represented the perfect German hero and *Führer* who ‘emerged’ from his *Volk* in time of crisis, to help, to fight and to lead:

«Das war das Zeichnen zum Kampf. Immer wieder brach der Aufstand los, kaum, das Karl dem Sachsenlande fern war. In der Zeit der größten Not, erstand den Sachsen aus ihrem Volk ein Führer: Widukind.»¹⁴⁷

The emphasis on *Widukind* also helped the textbook authors to present his history and the whole *Sachsenkrieg* in a positive way, that is: even if they were defeated, they had a strong belief and fought till the end.

Not only *Widukind* but the whole *Sachsen Volk*, was described as a pacific peasant *Gemeinschaft*, was a model for the Nazi pupils:

«Die Sachsen wohnten in dem weiten Tiefland zwischen Rhein und Elbe, noch ein Stück ins Bergland hinein. Dort sah noch aus wie in altgermanischer Zeit. In Einzelgehöften wohnten die Sachsenbauern, knorrig und zäh waren sie wie ihre Eichen. Und true hielten sie zu ihren alten, angestammten Göttern.»¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Füßler and Werner, 1939, p. 61.

¹⁴⁷ Melzer and Jungblut, 1942, p. 27.

¹⁴⁸ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 57.

Indeed, the proud *Sachsen*, who were described according to the model celebrated by the Nazi Propaganda “*freies deutsches Bauerntum*”, led by their leader *Widukind* were forced to fight because their own freedom, territories and peaceful life was in great danger:

«Widukind rief die Sachsen zum Kampf und zum Widerstand.[...] Der Frankenkönig war außer Landes; er hatte an der Westgrenzen seines Riesenreiches zu tun. Widukind rief zum Freiheitskampf. Was wollten dies Fremdlinge hier? Die Freiheit war in Gefahr! Das Volk hörte den Ruf: die Edlen im Lande wollten ihn nicht vernehmen.»¹⁴⁹

More problematic for the textbook authors was probably the A.D. 785 baptizing of *Widukind* who surrendered to *Karl* and instead of fighting to the death, accepted defeat and found a ‘political’ solution to the problem, that is: he became Christian and *Karl* saved his life. Nevertheless, the textbooks described the baptism as a ‘moral’ martyrdom of *Widukind* who, after seeing the “*Blutbad*”¹⁵⁰ of his *Volk* perpetuated by *Karl* in 782, sacrificed his *Germanentum* and agreed to be baptized as a Christian:

«Lange sann der Herzog stumm und finster vor sich hin, bis er tonlos sprach: ,Unser Volk darf nicht ganz vernichtet werden. Ich will zu Karl gehen und ihn um Frieden für mein Volk bitten. Es ist besser, ich opfere mich, als daß es zugrunde geht.»¹⁵¹

More than a simple hero, *Widukind* was portrayed as the first ‘moral’ martyr of the *Germanentum* in the *Volksschulen* textbooks. Still, even if *Widukind* surrendered, the *Germanentum* was not in danger because *Karl* himself was a Germanic emperor and his only aim was to unite all Germanic populations against the enemies of the *Germanentum*.

«In geheimer Besprechung, Aug in Aug mit dem alten Widersacher, lernte er verstehen, daß der Frankenkönig nicht anders handeln konnte, wollte er sein ziel erreichen: Germanen mit Germanen zusammenzuschweißen gegen alle Feinde des Germanentums.»¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Melzer and Jungblut 1942, p. 27.

¹⁵⁰ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 60.

¹⁵¹ Hausmann 1940, p. 18.

¹⁵² H. Werneck und W. Matschke, *Geschichte für Volksschulen*, Leipzig 1943, p. 6.

Briefly, *Karl* and *Widuking* were also described as representing political and cultural aspects of Germany in history. For instance, while *Karl's* empire protected the Germans from foreign invasions and gave the Germans political stability, *Widukind*, fighting against Christianity and Roman culture, tried to protect the *Germanentum* and customs of the Germanics:

«Kaiser Karl, der Zwingherr der Deutschen zu staatlicher Einheit. Widukind, der Kämpfer für germanische Art.»¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 32.

E) The creation of the First German Empire

Karl's empire, after his death in A.D. 814, lost its political stability because of infighting among *Karl's* successors, but two new states arose in the ninth and tenth century, after the empire collapsed, namely: *Frankreich* and *Deutschland*.

«Karls Staat hat seinen Schöpfer nicht überdauert. Zu groß und zu uneinheitlich zusammengesetzt war das Reich. Diese Auflösung des übervölkischen Reiches gab den deutschen Stämmen den Weg frei, zu eigener Staatlichkeit zu gelangen. Seit der fränkischen Reichsteilung gibt es Deutschland und Frankreich als eigenen Staaten.»¹⁵⁴

The collapse of *Karl's* empire, according to the textbook authors, gave the Germanic populations the possibility of finding their own political unity, reuniting themselves into one German empire that encompassed all and only German populations. These populations were divided, according to their offspring, into five dukedoms: *Bayern*, *Franken*, *Lotharingen*, *Sachsen-Thüringen* and *Schwaben*. The textbook authors, who never clearly stated the difference between *Germanisch* and *Deutsch* and used Indo-Germanic, Germanic and German as synonyms, now identified the German language as the common denominator of these populations that tied them together and differentiated them from non-German speaking populations. Furthermore, the authors no longer considered the German empire as a cultural *völkisch*-creation, in which different populations co-existed thanks to their common cultural background, but as the 'German State' or 'Germany', in which nationality bonded all the Germans together. According to a *long durée* perspective, the German state and nation that arose in tenth century lasted until the present day.

«Wir haben nun schon oft von den 'deutschen' Stämmen gesprochen. Das dürfen wir jedoch nicht falsch verstehen. Bloß weil sie Deutsch als ihre Muttersprache redeten, dürfen wir sie so nennen, nicht aber, weil sie zu einem 'Deutschen Reich' gehört hätten. Doch bald nach dem Tode Kaiser Karls ist ein selbständiger deutscher Staat entstanden.»¹⁵⁵

Indeed, according to such interpretation, the 'First German Empire' was founded in A.D. 925 by former duke of *Sachsen Heinrich I.* who received the King's

¹⁵⁴ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 32.

¹⁵⁵ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 67.

crown from *Konrad* in 918, overcame the political disagreements among the five German dukedoms and convinced the dukes to be part of one German empire. Clearly, the textbook authors portrayed *Heinrich I* as one of the greatest heroes of German history, who, aware of the dangers surrounding Germany, dedicated his life and strength for the welfare and safety of his land. It is worth remembering that the *topos* of the hero, rising up from his own *Volk* to help and defending his country in a time of crisis, was frequently present in the *Volksschulen* historiography and the textbook authors used it for several German heroes such as: *Widukind*, a Saxon serving the *Sachsen*; *Heinrich I*, a German helping the Germans and Hitler, who ‘came’ from the German *Volk* to help Germany in a moment of need.

«Herzog Heinrich war sehr erstanunt; denn damit hatte er nicht gerechnet. Als er aber im Geist das zerissene und machtlose Reich vor sich sah, stand sein Wille fest, diesem Deutschland zu helfen. ‘Ich nehme die Königskrone an’, sagte er mit entschlossener Stimme.»¹⁵⁶

The German Empire was created, however, not through wars and battles but rather *Heinrich’s* political ability. Indeed, as this research has already stated, the ‘medieval history’ was essentially presented as a political one in which Germany’s problems were no longer solved only by fighting the enemies but also reaching positive political agreements:

«Nur einer, der Herzog von Lotharingen, der auch zu Deutschland gehörte, stand jetzt noch abseits. Er hatte sich sogar mit dem französischen König verbündet. Gegen den Lotharinger mußte der König [Heinrich I.] verschiedene Male zu Felde ziehen, bis er im Jahre 925 siegte und Lotharingen in seine Gewalt bekam. Nachdem Heinrich I. spatter dem Herzog Gisbert seine Tochter zur Frau gab, war die Westmark endgültig für das Deutsche Reich zurückgewonnen und die erste königliche Aufgabe gelöst. Das erste Reich der Deutschen war entstanden.»¹⁵⁷

Duke *Lothringen’s* agreement with *Heinrich I* in A.D. 925 was largely recognized as the moment that sanctioned the ‘birth’ of the German Empire, and, indeed, 925 was celebrated as the ‘year of birth’ of the German Empire by the *Volksschulen* history textbooks of the Regime:

¹⁵⁶ Hausmann 1940, p. 26.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

«925 ist das Geburtsjahr des Deutschen Reiches»¹⁵⁸ – “Schließlich erreichte König Heinrich I. 925 auch die Zustimmung des Herzogs von Lotharingen. Lange Jahre hatten sich die lotharingischen Herzöge zum westfränkischen Reich gehalten. Vom nun an gehörte Lothringen, das Gebiet an Rhein und Schelde, zum Deutschen Reich. Im Jahre 1925 konnte die tausendjährige Zugehörigkeit der Rheinlande zum Deutschen Reich gefeiert werden.»¹⁵⁹

The year 925 became a significant date in German history and, in point of fact, all textbook authors referred to that year as being the beginning of the German Empire. Still, as this research has already proved, the *Volksschulen* historiography during the Regime was framed in a particular way and, in some cases, also contradictory way. For example, concerning the history of the First German Empire and its periodization, the 1939 Füßler and Werner textbook anticipated the ‘birth’ of Germany as earlier, in 848, when *Karl*’s empire was collapsing and two new lands were being shaped, namely: France and Germany:

«Das Westreich wurde **Frankreich** genannt, für das Ostreich kam bald der Name ‚Deutschland‘ auf. So ist 843 das Geburtsjahr dieser beiden Länder.»¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, according to this textbook, the German nation and with it the First German Empire arose in A.D. 968 in the German territories and lasted until Napoleon invasion in 1806:

«Das ‘**Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation**’, das ‘**Erste Reich der Deutschen**’, war begründet (962-1806).»¹⁶¹

But, what is more, the two textbook authors Füßler and Werner, maintaining the ‘old’ nomenclature and reshaping the course of German history, referred to the period between A.D. 900 and 1500 as the ‘Middle Ages’. The use of this term, that recalls the old periodization, was actually very contradictory and unclear because in the new periodization, where history was divided into three macroperiods there was no place for the Middle Ages. Besides that, in the old periodization the Middle Ages began with the A.D. 375 *Völkerwanderung* and not

¹⁵⁸ E. Ziegelmaier, *Volk und Heimat*, Frankfurt am Main 1941, p. 19.

¹⁵⁹ Werneck and Matschke 1943, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 67.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

in the tenth century. So, it is once again possible to comment on the fractured nature of the *Volksschulen* history textbooks in which almost every author, trying to narrate history according to the Regime's *Richtlinien* and the Nazi's historical interpretation, came up with a new and original, but at the same time 'unorthodox', interpretation and periodization of the German history.

Still, *Heinrich I* was celebrated by all textbook authors of the Regime, regardless of the periodization that they adopted. In particular, *Heinrich's* biggest merit and contribution to German history was the political independence from Rome that Germany achieved after A.D. 925. Germany was then no longer divided into parts, and neither was it a component of a bigger racial and national empire, as during *Karl's* times, but, finally, Germany stood on its own. That is, both Christian and Roman elements were left out of the German territories. Once again the textbook authors used an anti-Roman perspective to emphasize Germany's uniqueness. Furthermore, *Heinrich*, with his political foresight, gave the chance for all different Germanic stripes to conserve a certain degree of cultural and political independence within their own territories. In the end, the German state created by *Heinrich* was more similar to a confederation of states than to a strong hierarchical empire in which all decisions were taken centrally.

«Heinrich ist der Gründer des deutschen **Einheitsstaates**. Nicht mit Gewalt (wie Karl der Große), sondern mit Milde und durch Verhandlungen mit den Herögen erreichte er sein Ziel. Er ließ die Selbständigkeit der Herzöge bestehen. Jeder Volksstamme konnte seine Angelegenheiten allein ordnen. Heinrich wollte nur der höchste Richte und Heerführer sein. Deir deutschen Einheitsstaat war meh rein Staatenbund unter Heinrichs Führung.»¹⁶²

For this reason and because *Heinrich* was chosen as German King both by the German dukes and by the German *Volk*, he was also known as the "*Volkskönig*". A King who was particularly close to and knew how to talk to his own *Volk*:

«Heinrich war Völkskonig, durch freie Wahl des Volkes erkoren»¹⁶³ – "Der König hatte keinen festen Wohnsitz, er zog von Pfalz zu Pfalz und hielt sich in jeder Pfalz längere Zeit auf. Dadurch behielt er die Fühlung mit dem Volke und sprach nach altgermanische Weise vor allem Volk Recht. So lernten ihm alle kennen und fühlten, **daß sie einen Führer hatten, dem sie**

¹⁶² Nehring 1940, p. 25.

¹⁶³ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 34.

vertrauen und dem sie folgen konnten. Heinrich I. war ein wahrer Volkskönig.»¹⁶⁴

In this particular quote, one can detect a vague reference to Adolf Hitler's mass- and *völkisch* politics. But, as this research has already pointed out, the past-present comparison, especially when describing heroes of German history, was always 'welcome' in the *Volksschulen* textbooks and it was, in fact, requested by the *Richtlinien* of the *Reichserziehungsministerium*.

Furthermore, *Heinrich I*, after consolidating Germany's internal political situation, focused on defending Germany's Eastern territories from a Slavic invasion. It is important to point out that the *Ostpolitik* was almost unanimously described as the most important aspect of German foreign policy by the textbooks authors. Indeed, *Heinrich I* proved his value and consecrated himself as a true German hero not only because he reunited the Germans into one *Reich* but also because he protected Germany in a moment of danger. According the *Volksschulen* textbooks, Germany was under pressure because of a new invasion coming from the east in the tenth century, as in the fourth century *Völkerwanderung*. In order to describe this moment, the textbook authors often used the expression "*Land in Not*", that, being a *topos* of *Volksschulen* historiography, had been already used both for the *Hunnen* invasion during the *Völkerwanderung* and for *Karl*'s invasion of *Sachsen* territories in the ninth century:

«Land in Not. Nachdem das Reich im Innern geordnet hatte, konnte er [Heinrich I.] die äußeren Feinde abwehren. Das Reitervolk der Ungarn verheerte sein Land, steckte Dörfer und Klöster in Brand, tötete die Bewohner und schleppte viel Beute davon.»¹⁶⁵

The *Ungarn* invasion was described in similar terms as the *Hunnen* and they can be categorized as models of the 'Invasion from the East' that hit Germany during its history, namely: an unpredictable invasion that only brought violence and brutality against the Germans. In point of fact, the authors described the *Ungarn* themselves in the same way they portrayed the *Hunnen*, that is: black haired, short and ugly.

¹⁶⁴ Werneck and Matschke 1943, p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Melzer and Jungblut 1942, p. 34.

«‘Seit Jahren können die Ungarn ungestraft unsere Lande plunder. Nach jedem Raubzug liegen die Dörfer in Schutt und Asche, die Felde sind verwüstet, Vieh und Menschen mißhandelt, erschlagen oder verschleppt’ – Des Königs Rede wurde von einigen eintretenden sächsischen Kriegen unterbrochen. Sie führten einen der vornehmsten ungarischen Heerführer herein [...] Schwarzharig, klein und häßlich war er, aber ruhig und unerschrocken blickte er mit seinen dunkeln Schlitzaugen den König an»¹⁶⁶
– «Die Ungarn, ein wildes Reitervolk ähnlich den Hunnen begannen in die Ostmark und nach Bayern einzufallen.»¹⁶⁷

The *Ostpolitik* and the struggle against Slavic populations appeared to be, again, the crucial moment of German history. According to the eschatological interpretation of history, the reconquer of the Eastern European territories was the mission of the German *Volk* destiny.

«Er [Heinrich I.] erkennt die Schicksalfrage des deutschen Volkes: den Osten. Er sieht die beiden Hauptaufgaben: Sicherung gegen die Slawen und Ungarn. Er stellt die schwerere zurück, verliert sie aber nie aus den Augen und stählt an der Lösung der leichteren Aufgabe die Kräfte für die letzte große Entscheidung, die große Befreiungsschlacht.»¹⁶⁸

Finally, *Henrich*’s politics was an example for Nazi Germany:

«Heinrichs Regierung ist wieder ein Beweis für den Satz: Sicherheit des Volkes nach außen hängt ab von der gesten politischen Ordnung und Zielbewußten Führung im Inner sowie einer schlagkräftigen Wehrmacht. Hinweis auf die Zeit seit 1933!»¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Hausmann 1940, pp. 25-26.

¹⁶⁷ Ziegelmaier 1941, p. 18.

¹⁶⁸ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 35.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

F) The Ostpolitik obsession

As pointed out, *Henrich I* became a hero of German history not only for his political ability in uniting the Germans into one *Reich* but also because he fought the *Slawen*¹⁷⁰ who were destroying the German eastern territories. The *Ostpolitik* and the struggle against the *Slawen* was described obsessively as the most important aim of German politics throughout its history by the history textbook authors of the Nazi *Volksschulen*. Even if these two issues were also present in *Volksschulen* textbooks of Weimar Republic Germany, during the Regime the textbook authors emphasized and characterized the German *Ostpolitik* as a 'mission'. Fighting the *Slawen* was in the destiny of the German *Volk* and, actually, the several battles and clashes that Germans had with the *Slawen* populations were almost 'tests' for the Germans themselves and for the German heroes. From the tenth century on, only those who had bravely and successfully fought the *Slawen* belonged to the category of 'hero'. What is more, the political history of Germany since *Henrich I's* time was positively or negatively evaluated by the *Volksschulen* historians according to whether Germany focused all its political and military strength in re-conquering the eastern European territories.

According this idea, the *Ostpolitik* was the crucial point and the key to German politics and history. Any other political event, war that was not connected to the *Ostpolitik* was described as unnecessary and dangerous for the German *Volk* by the *Volksschulen* textbook authors. For instance, the Crusades were described as being a Christian-Roman political event that only wasted German blood :

«Die Kreuzzüge als eine von den Päpsten erweckte Bewegung ursprünglich aus dem romanischen Europa, die mit den Lebensnotwendigkeit des deutschen Volkes nicht zu tun hatte. Die fanatische, wundergläubige religiöse Inbrunst dieser Bewegung. Der Verlust deutschen Blutes im Orient, die Ablenkung der deutschen Könige von ihren eigentlichen Aufgaben.»¹⁷¹

According to the Nazi history textbooks authors, who often simplified historical events as being 'good' or 'bad', all German kings and emperors between A.D. 1000 and 1500 were judged and evaluated concerning their contributions for the

¹⁷⁰ About the anti-slavismus in the German *völkisch* ideology: W. Wippermann, *Antislavismus*, in: Pushner, Schmitz and Ubricht, 1999.

¹⁷¹ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 42.

Ostpolitik. That is, while *Barbarossa* became an ambiguous character in German history because he showed political interests toward both southern and eastern Europe; *Friedrich II*, who lived for a long time in southern Italy, was scarcely quoted in the *Volksschulen* historiography and became a marginal figure of the German history. Instead, the textbook authors ‘enrolled’ new German heroes in their textbooks, such as: *Heinrich der Löwe*, *Albrecht der Bär* and *Adolf von Schauenberg*. These were the new heroes of German history who dedicated their life and energy to fighting the *Slawen* and regaining the eastern Germanic territories. Among these ‘new entries’ in the German *Volksschulen* historiography between the Weimar and Regime periods, the *Wikingen* were also celebrated as a Germanic *Volk* who founded cities and brought German civilization to other parts of the world and, in particular, to Poland and Russia.

Consequently, the textbook authors pointed out how each German hero had contributed to the German *Ostpolitik* and *Ostsiedlung*. For instance, *Karl der Große* after unifying all Germanic populations in the First German Empire fought the *Slawen* and protected the Germanic *Volk* by reinforcing the eastern borders of his empire:

«Die Awaren an der Donau waren schlimme Nachbarn. Gar oft fielen sie in das Deutsche Reich ein und raubten und plünderten. Die Bayern suchten sie zwar zu vertreiben. Doch konnten sie gegen die schnelle Feinde nicht viel ausrichten. Das wurde erst anders, als Karl mit einem Heere herbeieilte. Er schlug die Awaren so gründlich, daß ihr Name kaum noch in der Geschichte genannt wurde. – Zum Schutze des Reiches im Osten erreichte Karl die Ostmark (zwischen Enns und Raab). Sie wurde von germanischen Bauern besiedelt und von einem bayerischen Grafen verwaltet.»¹⁷²

Similarly, as already proved, the authors pointed out the eastern politics toward Eastern Europe of *Heinrich I* with the *Hunnen* in defence of the German Empire and *Volk*:

«Um seine Heer zu erproben, zog Heinrich gegen die slawischen Wenden. Diese waren oft raubend und mordend in das Deutsche Reich eingefallen. Heinrich besiegte sie, eroberte ihre Festung Brennabor und legte hier die deutsche Stadt Brandenburg an. Zum Schutze der Ostgrenze gründet er die

¹⁷² Nehring 1940, p. 23.

Nordmark (928). Er drang auch in Böhmen bis Prag vor und zwang den Tschechenherzog zum Treueid.»¹⁷³

Otto I., *Heinrich I's* successor to the German throne, was celebrated and 'remembered' for his *Ostpolitik* more than for his role as German *Kaiser* by *Volksschulen* historians. Indeed, if not all textbook authors recognized *Otto* as being the first German *Kaiser*¹⁷⁴, they all acknowledged his victory against the *Slawen* – a victory that saved not only Germany but all of Europe from the *Hunnen* danger:

«Otto wurde damit zum Befreier Europas von der Ungarnot, und dadurch hat sich Deutschland das Anrecht als Vormachtstellung und die politische Führung Europas erkämpft. [...] Der Kampf um den Osten wird mehr und mehr zur nationalen Aufgaben des deutschen Volkes.»¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, the history textbook authors emphasised *Barbarossa's* politics towards the East while condemning his interest in southern Europe and, in particular, Italy. The German politics should have been directed to the East and nowhere else. It is important to note that the opposition between east-oriented and south-oriented politics in German medieval history was, however, not a particularity of the *Volksschulen* historiography but also entangled other German historians of the Regime¹⁷⁶. Thus, echoes of this historical polemic were to be found in *Volksschulen* textbooks:

«Daß die Italienpolitik auf die Dauer zu einer Überspannung der vorhandenen Kräfte und einem Abirren der deutschen Politik von ihren volksgemäßen Zielen führte, zeigten schon die Ereignisse unter Otto II. und Otto III. – Man erinnere auch an die verhängnisvollen Folgen der Preisgabe des Ostens in der Großgermanischen Zeit. Immer wieder entzieht der Süden dem deutschen Osten seine Kraft. Ob die Züge der Kaiser nach Rom

¹⁷³ Nehring 1940, p. 25.

¹⁷⁴ The 'Füßler and Werner' was one of the few textbooks to recognize *Otto* and not *Heinrich I* as being the founder of the First German Empire.

¹⁷⁵ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 36.

¹⁷⁶ F. Güterbock, *Barbarossa und Heinrich der Löwe* in: *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsunterricht und politische Erziehung*, Moritz Edelman and Wilhelm Mommsen (eds.), 23. Jahrgang 1933, PP. 251-268 – J.S. Horstmann, *Der Vernichtungskampf der deutschen Fürsten gegen Heinrich den Löwen* in: *Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, 27. Jahrgang 1937, PP. 589-598 – H. Hostenkamp, *Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik in der deutschen Historiographie seit v. Sybel und Ficker*, Berlin 1934 – F. Schneider, *Neuere Anschauungen der deutschen Historiker zur Beurteilung der deutschen Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters*, Weimar 1934.

politisch notwendig waren oder nicht, diese Entscheidung wird wenigstens vorläufig noch stark von der persönlichen Überzeugung des einzelnen abhängen; daß aber die tatsächliche Durchführung dieser Politik verhängnisvolle Folgen gehabt hat, daß die dem deutschen Volke lebensnotwendige Ostpolitik infolge der Südpolitik nicht zu voller Auswirkung kommen konnte, dies sollte herausgearbeitet werden.»¹⁷⁷

Perhaps the most evident trace of this polemic was the emphasis on the relationship between the *Kaiser Barbarossa* and the German Duke *Heinrich der Löwe* by the textbook authors. Briefly, while *Barbarossa* was attracted to Italy, *Heinrich der Löwe* fought the *Slawen* and defended the eastern border of the German empire. The two figures became symbols of a divided Germany, which did not pursue a common political agenda, namely: the *Ostpolitik*:

«Deutlich werden muß die verhängnisvolle Doppelheit der politischen Stoßrichtung des deutschen Volkes nach Osten und nach Süden und die Kräftezersplitterung, die die Folgen davon ist. Unter den Hohenstaufe wird diese Spannung besonders deutlich und sinnfällig durch den Gegensatz der beiden Persönlichkeiten Friedrichs I. und Heinrichs des Löwen.»¹⁷⁸

If *Barbarossa* was condemnable because of his *Italienpolitik*, *Heinrich der Löwe* was celebrated because of his devotion for the *Ostpolitik*. Indeed, *Heinrich der Löwe*, to protect the German *Volk* and the German territories from the *Slawen*, was forced to struggle against his own *Kaiser*. That is, while *Barbarossa* was wasting energy and time in unnecessary wars and battles, *Heinrich der Löwe* understood that the East should have been the only aim of German politics. Once again the textbooks pointed out the ambivalence and the controversy of German politics during the Middle Ages:

«Viele deutsche Kaiser kümmerten sich mehr um Italien als um ihr eigenes Reich. In den Kämpfen, die die Kaisermach auch in Italien befestigen sollten, wurde dort viel deutsches Blut unnütz vergossen. Die ‘Romfahrten’ hinderten die Herrscher daran, ihre Pflichte für ihr Land zu erfüllen. Hier bedrückte der Starke den Schachen. Fürsten und Städte suchten ihre Macht zu erweitern. Darüber wurde die so nötige Besiedlung des Ostens zum Schaden des Deutschtums vernachlässigt. – Da war es Heinrich der Löwe, der die große Bedeutung des Ostens für unser Volkstum zuerst erkannte.

¹⁷⁷ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 43.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Darum unterwarf er in harten Kämpfen die Slawen in Holstein, Mecklenburg und Pommern.»¹⁷⁹

As already said, new figures of German history ‘found’ their place in the *Volksschulen* historiography of the Regime. *Adolf von Holstein* and *Albrecht der Bär*, who were mentioned scarcely or not at all in the Weimar Republic textbooks, were portrayed in the Regime as true Germans, who fought against the *Slawen* to protect the German *Volk* and its territories. *Adolf von Holstein* and *Albrecht der Bär* re-conquered the eastern European territories that were considered part of the German *Reich* by the textbook authors. As early as 1934, these two historical figures were quoted in *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes* by the *Magistrat* and *Schulrat* by Josef Galle:

«Die Ostgermanen hatten in der Völkerwanderung ihre Sitze zu beiden Seiten der Oder und der Weichsel verlassen. Das Land östlich der Elbe und der Saale war für Jahrhunderte aus der deutschen Geschichte ausgeschieden. Allmählich letzte eine großartige Bewegung nach Osten in unserem Volke ein, eines der wichtigsten Ereignisse der deutschen Geschichte. Heinrich I., Otto I, Heinrich der Löwe sind Führer nach dem Osten. Zwei Männer gaben dem Verlaufe jener Bewegung eine feste Form. Der eine ist Albrecht der Bär, der Markgraf der Nordmark, der sich 1144 als ‘Erbe’ eines Wenderfürsten zum Markgrafen von Brandenburg macht und damit der Begründer des brandenburgischen Staates ist. Der andere ist ein Graf Adolf von Holstein, der un dieselbe Zeit die wendischen Wagrier von der Ostküste Holstein vertreibt und das Land mit deutschen Bauern besiedelt.»¹⁸⁰

Altogether, *Ostpolitik* and *Ostsiedlung* were almost ‘romantically’ depicted by the *Volksschulen* textbooks. The *Ostsiedlung* was almost an adventure and the song “*Nach Ostland wollen wir reiten*” became the symbol of the re-conquest of the East:

«Nach Ostland wollen wir reiten,
nach Ostland wollen wir fort,
all über die grünen Heiden
all über die Heiden
da ist ein beßrer Ort.»¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Nehring 1940, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸⁰ J. Galle, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Berlin 1934, p. 62.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

G) *The Wikingen and the global expansion of the Germanentum*

According to *Volksschulen* history textbooks, the *Wikingen* also played a particular role in the *Ostsiedlung*. Indeed, the *Wikingen* diffused the *Germanentum* and the German culture not only in Europe but in the ‘world’. They belonged to the *Nordgermanen* and settled in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. There, they lived as free *Bauern* in observance of the old Germanic lifestyle.

«Außerhalb des großgermanischen Frankenreiches blieben die Nordgermanen. Sie wohnten in Norwegen, Schweden und Dänemark und wurden Normannen oder Wikingen genannt. Nach Urväter Art lebten sie als freie Bauern auf ihren zerstreut liegenden Höfen oder befuhren als wagemutige Seefahrer auf schlangen Schiffen die Nord- und Ostsee.»¹⁸²

The *Wikingen*, also called *Normannen*, were not only *Bauern* but also very skilled sailors and with their ships they crossed the Baltic Sea to reach Poland and Russia and circumnavigated Europe to reach England, France, southern Italy and northern Afrika.

«Auf ihren Eroberungszügen gründeten die Normannen auch mächtigen Staaten. In Nordfrankreich heißt das von ihnen einst beherrschte Gebiet noch heute die Normandie. Besonders kühne Seefahrer drangen in das Mittelmeer ein und erreichten in Süditalien ein blühendes Normannenreich. Von der Ostsee aus fuhren Wikingen die Düna und Memel aufwärts, setzten ihre Schiffe auf Rollwagen und gelangten so in den Dnjeper und diesen abwärts in das Schwarze Meer und bis nach Instambul, das einst Bysanz hieß. Der Wikingenfürst Rurik gründete im Dnjeprgebiet einen eigenen Staat mit der Hauptstadt Kiew. Auch der polnische Staat verdankt seine Entstehung einem Wikingen.»¹⁸³

The *Wikingen* brought their Germanic techniques and civilization in ‘new’ territories and, as the *Indogermanen* during the *Urgermanische Völkerwanderung* helped local populations to blossom in new civilization. Actually, the *Wikingen* settled in the East and created new states not only with their culture but also with their technical skills. More generally, the textbook authors pointed out the Germanic settlements in eastern Europe as being economically much more productive and fruitful than the Slavic ones. For instance, these latter only knew

¹⁸² Hausmann, Thiele and Kroll, 1942, p. 27.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

underdeveloped techniques of agriculture. That is, the Germans worked more effectively and harder than the *Slawen*.

«Zwei Kräfte haben den Osten dem deutschen Volke wiedergewonnen: die Kraft des erobernden und schützenden Schwertes und die Kraft der schaffenden Arbeit, der Arbeit des Pfluges, des Handwerks, des Geistes. Die Macht der deutschen Leistung war es, die sich den Osten gewann. Selbst die Slawenfürsten beugten sich der Kraft dieser Leistung und holten die deutschen Siedler in ihr Land. Die Deutschen wirtschafteten aus demselben Boden mehr heraus als die Slawen, ihre landwirtschaftliche Technik (Räderpflug) erlaubte ihnen, den Slawen unzugängliche schwere Böden zu bebauen.»¹⁸⁴

So the *Wikingen*, who had both technical skills and military power, were actually able to cross the Atlantic Ocean and to reach the American continent. Indeed, the textbook authors stated that the *Wikingen* ‘discovered’ America four hundred years before Columbus.

«Um 1000 wurde Eriks Sohn noch weiter westwärts verschlagen und entdeckte ‘das schöne Weinland’, das heutige Nordamerika. Das war die erste Entdeckung Amerika, 500 Jahre von Kolumbus.»¹⁸⁵

In terms of ‘Global History’, we can present the *Wikingen* as the global protagonists of the *Germanentum*. They carried the Germanic culture and traditions from a local context, i.e. Europe, to a global one. They created new Germanic cities, states and civilizations in different places of the world around more than any other Germanic populations had ever done during the *Völkerwanderung*. The *Wikingen* expansion was the expansion of the *Germanentum* itself that shaped and improved several non-Germanic populations all over the world.

«Die Siedler auf Grönland sind untergegangen, die Entdeckung Amerikas ist wieder in Vergessenheit geraten, die Wikinger in Rußland wurden verslawt, die Normannen in Süditalien romanisiert. Die Staaten die diese Germanen geschaffen haben, leben heute noch, und noch heute lebt der Ruhm ihrer Fahrten in dem ungeheuren Raum zwischen Marokko und Spitzbergen, zwischen Wolga und Amerika.»¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 49.

¹⁸⁵ B. Kumsteller, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, Leipzig 1934, p. 35.

¹⁸⁶ B. Kumsteller, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, Leipzig 1938, p. 47.

It is worth pointing out that the *Wikingen* became part of *Volksschulen* history lessons only during the Regime. That is, the Weimar Republic *Volksschulen* textbooks hardly referred to the *Wikingen* and their conquests. On the contrary, the *Wikingen*, described as a Germanic population, became a staple topic of the *Volksschulen* textbooks during the Regime. Furthermore, according to the past-present comparison, the textbook authors compared the *Wikingen*'s expeditions with military achievements and victories of the German Navy during First and Second World Wars:

«Die Fahrten der Wikinger als die letzte Völkerwelle aus der nordischen Völkerheimat. Die Kühnheit und das Geschick ihrer Seefahrt. Rückblick auf die nordisch-germanische Seefahrt seit der Indogermanenzeit; Ausblick auf die Gegenwart und jüngste Vergangenheit: die deutsche Flotte im Weltkrieg (Wikingergeist der Emden, der Uboote) und 1939/41 (Prien in Scapa Flow).»¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 33.

H) Rome and Christianity

If the *Slawen* represented the political and ‘racial’ enemy of the German *Volk*, Rome and the Christian Roman world perhaps represented the cultural enemy of the Germans. In point of fact, both the focus on the German pre-history as conceived by Kossinna and the emphasis on the millenary Germanic culture were used to contrast the idea/image of the ‘barbaric nature’ of the Germanic populations. But, if the comparison with the Roman Empire could be generally avoided in the history classes of the *Volksschulen*, they would be. For example, the teaching plans compressed the *Urgermanische* and the first centuries of *Großgermanische Zeit* (500 B.C. – A.D. 400) into less than three weeks of lessons. That is, neither the plans nor the history textbooks talked about Rome, its history and relationship with the Germanic populations with the sole exception of *Armin*. However, the comparison between the Germanic world and Roman Christian one was unavoidable for medieval history.

Aware of such problems, the history textbooks of the *Volksschulen* during the Regime focused their attention only on German history and handled the Middle Ages not as a period that started with the collapse of the Roman Empire and the *Völkerwanderung*, but folded the German medieval history into a bigger temporal unit, namely: the *Großgermanische Zeit*. Still, during the Middle Ages or *Großgermanische Zeit*, the German kingdoms and empires, as well as the German kings and *Kaiser* were constantly confronted with Rome. So, the strategy adopted by the *Volksschulen* historians was to reduce, as much as possible, any references to Rome and the politics of the Popes, even when these politics concerned the German territories, and, when avoiding was not possible, the textbook authors described the Roman politics as unnecessary for Germany because they distracted the Germans from the real aim of German politics, that is: the *Ostsiedlung*.

Evidence of such a strategy, either avoiding or blaming Christian Rome, were to be found, for instance, in the description of *Karl der Große* as being a true German who only used Rome for his political aims – the Holy German Empire was actually referred to as the ‘German Empire’ in the *Volksschulen* historiography – or in the description of the Crusades as being nonsense Roman

politics that only wasted Germanic blood. One case is especially interesting, that is: *Kanossa*.

While the Weimar Republic textbooks explained *Kanossa* within the broad context of the German-Roman relationship and battles for power, the Nazi textbooks tried to present *Kanossa* as a victory of the German spirit over the Christian Roman one. Actually, *Kanossa* had to be considered as a remarkable victory of *Heinrich IV* over the Pope:

«Drei Tage hintereinander erschien er [Heinrich IV.] im Schloßhof und bat um Lösung vom Bann. Seine Feinde haben nachher erzählt, er habe die ganze Zeit barfuß und im Büßergewand dagestanden und weinend und jammernd den Papst um Gnade angefleht. Das ist aber nicht wahr. – Drei Tage lang sträubte sich der Papst. Aber was wollte er machen? Heinrich bereutete seine Sünde, und da mußte er ihn lossprechen; anders konnte er als Geistlicher nicht handeln. So erreichte der König sein Ziel, die **Lösung vom Bann**. Ohne Zweifel hat Heinrich damit einen **großen politischen Sieg** errungen: der Papst hatte ihm die Kaisertrone nicht nehmen können.»¹⁸⁸

More generally, the role of Christianity in German territories was hardly emphasized in the *Volksschulen* textbooks with the exception of *Bonifatius* who was called by his ‘real’ German name “*Winfried*”. Still, the history of *Bonifatius*, always present in the Weimar Republic *Volksschulen* textbooks, was gradually excluded from the *Volksschulen* historiography of the National Socialist Regime and, for instance, in 1939 only a few textbooks reported on the history of *Bonifatius*:

«**Die Bindung der deutschen Kirche an einen ausländischen Herrn wurde für uns sehr nachteilig.** So hat Bonifatius, ohne es zu ahnen, das deutsche Schicksal auf Jahrhunderte hinaus bestimmt.»¹⁸⁹

The role of the *Kloster* in the German territories was perhaps more ambivalent and, consequently, more difficult to evaluate for the textbook authors. Monasteries and convents were described, on the one hand, as economic and political centres bonded to Rome and, on the other hand, as cultural centres in which the abbots kept their Germanic nature and could develop the German

¹⁸⁸ Füßler and Werner 1939, pp. 82-81.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

culture. Altogether, the contrast between the isolation of the monastic life and the *Gemeinschaft* life of the Germanic populations was probably irreconcilable in the *Volksschulen* textbooks:

«Die mönchische Lebenswelt in ihrer fremden Eigenart und ihrer Gegensätzlichkeit zu germanischem Wesen. Das Kloster als wirtschaftliche und politische Macht. Man vergleiche die mönchische, asketische, gegen Sippe und Volk gleichgültige Erziehungsweise mit der germanischen Erziehung. [...] Die meisten Äbte freilich blieben zunächst lebensbejahend, kämpferisch und deutsch; das stand aber zu den Zielen des Mönachtums in Gegensatz. Dadurch kam in ihr Leben und das in das gesamte Klosterwesen ein innerer Widerspruch, der einmal schlimme Früchte tragen mußte.»¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 39.

I) Das Bauerntum and its role in German history

According to the National Socialist history interpretations, the protagonists of German history in the *Volksschulen* textbooks were 'heroes' and *Bauern*. While the heroes were kings, emperors or *Führer*, such as: *Karl der Große*, *Heinrich I* and *Widukind*, the *Bauern* were the largest parts of the Germanic populations during the *Urgermanische Zeit* and of the German *Volk* during the *Großgermanische Zeit*. That is, if Adolf Hitler and the leaders of the NSDAP could be compared to the heroes of German history, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* could be compared with the German *Bauern* in the *Volksschulen* historiography. Still, it is important to point out that even a German *Führer* was a *Bauer*, who shared his life with his peasant community.

«Unter den freien germanischen Bauern ragten einige hervor, die sich durch Klugheit, Tapferkeit und Treue zum Volk einen Namen gemacht hatten [...] Zu Beginn eines Krieges wurde der fähigste Mann, und das brauchte nicht immer ein Edelmann zu sein, zum Heerführer gewählt, auf einen Schild gehoben und im Kreise der versammelten Freien umhergetragen. Alle sahen ihren Herzog und jubelten ihm zu. Damit war er anerkannt, und jedermann hatte ihm treue Gefolgschaft zu leisten.»¹⁹¹

Furthermore, the *Bauern* were always present in the different periods of German history, from the *Urgermanische Zeit* to the present day, and they were consistently described as defenders of the virtues of the *Germanentum* and as protectors of the Germanic racial purity in their small peasant communities. The textbooks authors always used the same words and concepts to describe the characteristics of the German *Bauerntum* through the millenniums. In point of fact, the German *Bauern* never changed their spirits or essence:

«Auch die Germanen der Bronzezeit waren **Bauern** wie ihre indogermanische Vorfahren, nur daß ihre Werkzeuge nun meist aus Bronze und nur selten aus Stein bestanden.»¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Melzer and Jungblut 1942, p. 7.

¹⁹² Füßler and Werner 1939, p. 18.

That is, the textbook authors compared the old Germanic *Bauerntum* with the German medieval one. Germanic peasantry of 1000 B.C. was shown parallel to German peasantry of A.D. 1000:

«Die deutsche Landschaft hat sich seit der Germanenzeit verändert, aber noch immer leben neuen Zehnten des deutschen Volkes in Dörfern, in der Natur. In den wesentlichen Zügen ist die bäuerliche Wirtschaft die gleiche geblieben (in sich geschlossene Hofwirtschaft, Züge sozialistischer Gebundenheit), und wenn von der alten Freiheit auch manches abgebröckelt ist, so ist die Stellung des Bauern innerhalb des Volkskörpers noch kraftvoll und gesund: er ist wehrhaft geblieben, stolz und selbstbewußt und wirtschaftlich selbständig. Wie seine germanischen Vorfahren lebt der Bauer trotz Rittertum, Klosterschulen, Kirche und Christentum weiter in innigster Verbundenheit mit dem Boden, mit den Tieren, mit dem Storb und Werde des Pflanzenlebens, mit dem Jahreslauf.»¹⁹³

So the *Bauern* represented a naturalistic aspect of the National Socialist ideology, which encouraged its members to rediscover the bond with German nature and *Boden* in the 1930s and 1940s. What is more, admirable characteristics of the *Bauern* included not only the moral virtues but also the technical skills that they developed as early as in the *Urgermanische Zeit*. While several of the non-Germanic populations were still nomadic, the German *Bauern* had already settled and knew about agriculture. Surprisingly, the textbook author Fritz Fikenscher stated that the German *Bauern* knew about crop rotation as early as 1000 B.C.

«Die Dreifelderwirtschaft war seit den ältesten Zeiten der Germanen Brauch, ihm fügte sich jeder Bauer; so war man sicher, daß immer zwei Drittel des Ackerlandes frucht trugen, in der Brache aber ruhte der Bden un wurden von Vieb gedüngt.»¹⁹⁴

Indeed, the German *Bauer*, through his technical competence and hard-working spirit, could produce more than any other peasant. These qualities made the *Bauern* fundamental to the processes of *Ostsiedlung* that characterized several moments of German history. Actually, the *Ostsiedlung* was possible only through the combination of German heroes and German *Bauern*. In case of war, the *Bauern* were always ready to fight to protect their territories and to defend their freedom. Indeed, the German *Bauern* had always been free, even in the

¹⁹³ Haacke and Ziemann 1941, p. 47.

¹⁹⁴ Fikenscher 1938, p. 38.

Urgermanische Zeit, when they shared a peaceful common life in small *Gemeinschaften*:

«Der blieb der Familienbesitz des freien Bauern. Die Sippe des Dorfes verwaltete die Allmende, den gemeinsamen Besitz und teilte jedem einzelnen ihrer Angehörigen zu, was er an Wiesen, Wald und Wasser für sich und seinem Hof benutzen durfte.»¹⁹⁵

According to the *Volksschulen* historiography, the Germanic *Bauern* invented agriculture, developed its techniques as early as 1000 B.C. but, since then, they did not produce any other innovation and, actually, two thousand years later they were still in the same living and working conditions as the *Urgermanische Zeit*. How was that possible? Why did the Germanic *Bauern*, who developed their techniques before and better than any other peasant population, interrupt their technical progress? If, from a ‘cultural’ point of view, the textbook authors presented the German *Bauern* as proud of their millenary culture and virtues, from a more scientific perspective, such ‘arrested development’ had no logical explanation. Thus, the answer is to be found somewhere else and, more precisely, in the ‘interest-shifting’ from the Middle Ages to the pre-history that prompted all *Volksschulen* textbook authors to emphasize the German pre-history. In point of fact, several history textbook authors, forced by the pre-history trends that characterized part of the Nazi historiography, attributed techniques such as crop rotation or the bronze ploughshare, and customs such as producing refined art and clothes, to the pre-historic Indo-Germanic and Germanic communities, that actually belonged to the medieval peasantry. In brief, several *Volksschulen* historians exaggerated Kossinna’s interpretation of German pre-history.

Still, the *Bauerntum*, a symbol of racial purity and loyalty to the *Boden* in the National Socialist ideology¹⁹⁶, became an element of continuity in the German historiography of the *Volksschulen*. In every moment of German history, the *Bauern* kept the tradition of their Germanic forefathers alive. But, as this research

¹⁹⁵ Melzer and Jungblut 1942, p. 6.

¹⁹⁶ Several members of the National Socialist Party showed interest in the role of the *Bauerntum* in German history and pre-history, among them it is worth pointing out the research of Walter Darré, Minister of the *Reichsnährstand*, and of the historian Alfred Thoß. W. Darré, *Das Bauerntum als Lebensquell der nordischen Rasse*, München 1929 – A. Thoß, *Nationalismus und Geschichtsschreibung* in: *Odal.Monatsschrift für Blut und Boden*, 1935/36.

is going to prove, the symbolic value of the old Germanic *Bauern* would be misunderstood or ignored by the *Landschulen* and the *Dorfschulen* of National Socialist Germany. Ironically, in the countryside, the role of the Germanic *Bauern* would be constantly misunderstood and the National Socialist *Bauern* did not show any particular interest in their Indo-Germanic and Germanic ancestors.

Part II Summary

To sum up we can now outline characteristics and topics of the Medieval History, i.e. *Urgermanische Zeit – Großgermanische Zeit*, in the National Socialist *Volksschulen* historiography.

Firstly, the German pre-history, the *Vorgeschichte*, became an essential topic in the *Volksschulen*. According to the textbook authors the ‘golden time’ of the Germanic populations was the one around the 1,000 B.C.. In this time the Germanics population developed their culture and preserved their Nordic-Aryan race from any impurity. Furthermore, the Germanic culture was interpreted as fundamental for the developing of several ancient civilizations such as: the Greek, the Egyptian and the Roman one.

Secondly, the Middle Ages was actually a negative period for the Germanic populations. Because of the 375 B.C. *Völkerwanderungen* these populations lost their racial purity and fought against new enemies, such as: the *Slawen* and the *Hunnen*. Beside the creation of the First German Empire with *Heinrich I.*, the German populations did not have the political coesion necessary to establish a stable German Empire on the European territories. Actually, the German Middle Ages was a period of inner-German fights, wars against the *Slawen* and political quarrel with Christian Rome. That is, while the *Slawen* were the racial enemies of the German *Volk*, Rome and the Christian ‘world’ were the political and cultural ones.

Thirdly, the history had a function of ‘example’ in the *Volksschulen*. The history was “*magistra vitae*”. The examples were either ‘moral’, the virtues and values of the Germanic populations, or ‘political’, the *Ostpolitik* and the creation of the German empire. From these examples, the German pupils had to understand the current European political situation and, also, they could learn how to become active and reliable members of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Fourthly, to emphasize the political role of the history lessons, the Regime introduced from 1939 the *Gegenwartskunde* in all German *Volksschulen*. The *Gegenwartskunde* was the history of Germany from the First World War to 1939. The *Erziehungsministerium* ordered, with the 1939 directives, to teach the

Gegenwartskunde in the first semester of the fifth school-year, also in the first semester of history lesson. That is, the *Gegenwartskunde* was taught before the Germanic pre-history and the German history.

Fifthly, as early as 1937 a new periodization of history was adopted by several manuals. This new periodization – that divided history in: *Urgermanische Zeit*, *Großgermanische Zeit* and *Deutsche Zeit* – had the function to give a more German flavour to history and to substitute the ‘old’ periodization that was assumed as being a creation of the ‘Western-liberal democracies’.

Sixthly, the Regime tried to impose a *gesamtdeutsche* history interpretation that could apply and fit all German *Volksschulen* of the different regions. Hence, the emphasis on local culture and on regional history was absolutely not recommended by the *Erziehungsministerium*.

The effectivity of the 1939 directives was, however, questionable. Surprisingly, the German school-system showed a certain degree of resistance against the plans and orders coming from the *Erziehungsministerium*. Similarly, German editors and publishing houses, at least those who could still work under the Regime, were tendentially against a centralized control and censure of the textbooks by the state. As well, the regional powers showed, in several occasions, a distrust toward the centralization of the German education-system which, traditionally, was regionally controlled and federally divided.

Thus, as I will demonstrate in the next part of this research, either for economical reasons or for regional ‘conservatism’, the Regime toiled to impose its will concerning the history teaching in the German *Volksschulen*. Probably, the Regime failed.

Part III - *The Differences, Local Powers and National Socialist Volksschulen historiography*

Chapter 1: The city, education and history teaching in the *Volksschulen*

III.1.1 Whose fault?

The “*Parteiamtliche Prüfungskommission*” (PPK), section of the “*Dienststelle Bouhler*”, founded in 1934 and situated in the *Kanzlei des Führer* was responsible for the approval of all books, including *Volksschulen* textbooks, published under the Regime. Theoretically, all texts should have been approved by the PPK before going on the market. Thus, the PPK was also in charge of monitoring the political and ideological ‘quality’ of the textbooks for the German *Volksschulen*.

The *Dienststelle Bouhler* and the *Erziehungsministerium* had both political and economic oversight for writing and distributing the ‘general textbook’ for all German *Volksschulen* with the help of private and public¹⁹⁷ publishing houses. However, the private publishing houses, despite being under political control, offered a certain resistance to the plans concerning the establishment of a *Volksschule* ‘general textbook’ that, from their perspective, would have brought lower textbook production levels and, thus, lower sales. Furthermore, neither the *Gauleiter*, the regional Ministries of Education, nor the *Volksschulen* administrations responded positively to the idea of a ‘general textbook’ being imposed from Berlin.

Nevertheless, the idea of a ‘general’ textbook that could be used by all German *Volksschulen* was a topic discussed among German pedagogues, staff of the *Erziehungsministerium* and members of the *NSLB* during the entire twelve years of National Socialist dictatorship. Indeed, several magazine writers and journalists wrote articles and reports concerning the policies that the Regime began, or wanted to begin, in order to write the “*Allgemein*” or “*Einheit*” textbook. But,

¹⁹⁷ In 1942 the *Deutsche Schulverlag*, headed by the *Rechtsleiter* Amman and politically controlled by the *Dienststelle Bouhler*, took direct control of textbook production in Germany.

despite several attempts, neither the *Erziehungsministerium* nor the *Dienststelle Bouhler* was able to write such a textbook and, probably, a ‘general’ textbook remained a vague idea more than a concrete plan during the Regime¹⁹⁸. Consequently, pedagogues, teachers and staff of the public administration often referred to the ‘general’ textbook calling it by different names, such as: the “*Allgemein Volksschullesebuch*”, the “*Einheitsbuch*” or the “*Reichsvolksschullesebuch*”.

Still, if using one textbook for the whole elementary school system was not possible, the *Erziehungsministerium* and the *Dienststelle Bouhler* at least tried to recommend to the *Volksschulen* teachers which textbook, published privately, they should use. But, the regional powers, namely: *Gauleiter* and members of the *NSLB*, disregarded the orders coming from Berlin. For instance, in 1944 the *Dienststelle Bouhler* sent a letter to the *Erziehungsministerium* complaining that several German territories were not using the appropriate textbooks for the schools. What is more, so claimed this letter, some of these territories, ignoring the orders, used old textbooks instead of new ones, recommended by the Regime, that remained in the warehouses. The regional administrations defended their ‘conservative’ position by claiming that they would use the new textbooks as early as the new school year.

«Das Land Bayern ist durch die Formulierung der reichsministeriellen Anfrage verwirrt worden. Es gibt zwar an, wohin die Restbestände, die weit unter dem alljährlichen Bedarf liegen, geliefert werden sollen, hält aber eine Einführung der neuen Ausgabe erst im Schuljahr 1944/45 für Notwendig. Ähnlich steht es im Regierungsbezirk Hannover und in Münster/Westfalen.

Ganz merkwürdig und völlig unerklärlich ist das Verhalten folgender Gebiete: Schlesien, Pommern, Düsseldorf, Saargebiet, Sudetenland und Westpreußen. Obwohl Bestände überhaupt nicht vorhanden sind, erklären sie die sofortige Einführung der neuen Bände III und IV für unnötig.»¹⁹⁹

When analysing such political controversy concerning schooling and education, it is important to remember that National Socialism was the first political power that actually tried not only to write a ‘general textbook’ but also to centralize the

¹⁹⁸ In point of fact, there is no concrete outline toward a ‘general’ textbook in the *Bundesarchiv* funds; neither at the *Kanzlei des Führer* nor at the *Erziehungsministerium*.

¹⁹⁹ “*Reichsvolksschullesebuch, Band III und IV*”, in: *NS 51*, 184:20, Bundesarchiv of Berlin-Lichterfelde (BBL).

German school system. In its revolutionary inclination the Regime wanted to drastically change – actually revolutionize – the German education and school instruction. The task was not an easy one and, probably, the times did not help the Regime with its plan. Indeed, the *Reichserziehungsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* and the *Dienststelle Bouhler*, despite having been created in 1934, had no more than five or six years to [re-]organize the existing documents sent by the different regional ministries for education and to write new directives and orders. In point of fact, the beginning of the war in 1939 signaled for the *Erziehungsministerium* and *Dienststelle* the end of their aspirations. Instead, the priorities shifted to the *Kriegsbedürfnisse*, which requested money, material, time and commitment from all the offices, factories and plants of the National Socialist Regime. For instance, even ink and paper became rare items after 1942.

This already problematic situation became unmanageable worse in the last two years of the war. Logistic support, transportation and materials: everything was missing or not working. Both German train and post systems were only occasionally working and not in condition to guarantee regular service. So, between 1943 and 1945, while the *Erziehungsministerium* and the *Dienststelle* were repeatedly putting pressure on the publishing houses to produce the new textbooks, they were complaining that in such a difficult situation it was impossible to produce or transport textbooks.

The correspondence between the *Deutscher Schulverlag* and the *Dienststelle* in the late months of 1944 is highly illustrative of this tug-of-war. On 25th October 1944 the *Deutscher Schulverlag* sent an exhaustive letter to the *Dienststelle*, whose subject was “*Lieferverzögerungen*”, pointing out the main problems that were occurring while publishing new textbooks and explaining why so many textbook deliveries were delayed:

«Besonders in den west- und südwestdeutschen Gebieten fallen durch tägliche feindliche Luftangriffe immer neue Bahnstrecke aus. Hinzu kommen die durch Feindbesetzung immer neue Frontverlegung usw. bedingten Sperren.»²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ “*Lieferverzögerungen bei Schulbüchern*”, in: *NS 51*, 185: 10, BBL.

Furthermore, the *Deutscher Schulverlag* noted that a great number of *Volksschulen* textbooks, more than 800,000 units, were destroyed by the allied bombing in the past few months.

«Besonders empfindlich sind die durch feindliche Luftangriffe entstandenen Verluste an Volksschul-Lernbüchern. [...] Bei der gegenwärtigen Lage muß täglich mit neuen Verlusten gerechnet werden.»²⁰¹

Clearly, the *Deutsche Schulverlag* was not the only one dealing with such problems. In point of fact, the “*Geographisch Institut und Verlag*”, a private publishing house based in Wien, also reported similar difficulties to Hitler’s Chancellery on 29th November 1944. Not only the train system was under attack but also the post system worked badly and, thus, all the plans conceived to save the production and to guarantee the textbooks distribution had to be considered as ineffective.

«Die Versendung der Schulatlantanten durch die Post ist dadurch sehr erschwert, dass z.B. unser Verlag zu Zeit nur 5 Postpakete pro Tag aufgeben darf [...] Alle Vorstellungen, dass Schulbücher nur einer bestimmten Zeit des Jahres versendet werden müssen, bleiben wirkungslos.»²⁰²

The political activity of the *Dienststelle* and *Erziehungsministerium*, however, continued to be frenetic until the end of the Second World War and, in 1944 Minister Rust and his entourage insistently asked for help, in terms of materials and logistic support, to the “*Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion*”. Indeed, several letters were sent to Albert Speer with the hope of receiving positive answers. But, in 1944 neither the domestic nor international situation brought good news.

For instance, on 25th January 1944 the “*Befehlsleiter*” of the *Dienststelle*, Karl Heinrich Hederich, wrote a reminder to Speer asking him news about the *status quo* of the overall German production during the war and asking him assurances about the textbook production.

«Ich bitte Sie [Speer] daher, mich Ihre Absichten, die Sie auf dem Gebiet der Papierversorgung, Druckereianstalten usw. haben und die geeignet sein

²⁰¹ “*Lieferverzögerungen bei Schulbüchern*”, in: *NS 51*, 185: 17, BBL.

²⁰² “*Versandsschwierigkeiten bei der Reichspost*”, in: *NS 51*, 185: 1, BBL.

können, die Produktionsfrage des Schulbuches zu beeinflussen, doch unmittelbar wissen zu lassen, da ein solches unmittelbares Zusammenwirken eine große Erleichterung und Vereinfachung in der Durchführung meiner Arbeiten bedeutet.”²⁰³

Still, despite the political effort of the *Dienststelle*, the textbooks production and distribution in Germany slowed down drastically.

As if these problems were not enough, the *Dienststelle* and the *Erziehungsministerium* also had to struggle with each other and other institutions or elite members of the National Socialist party that wanted to personally intervene in the field of education. Symptomatic of this complex situation were the letters sent by Bouhler, or by his adjutant Hederich, to Minister Rust and to the head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* complaining about their ‘invasion’ of his field of action. For instance, on 11th December 1943, Bouhler firmly asked Rust to not contact or ask Speer for information concerning the textbook supply issue because this was a problem that concerned only the *Dienststelle*.

«Im Auftrage von Reichsleiter Bouhler habe ich inzwischen die Frage der Schulbuchversorgung bzw. der Produktion von Schulbüchern weiter geprüft und die unmittelbare Verbindung mit Herrn Reichsminister Speer aufgenommen. – Ich bitte Sie im Auftrage des Reichsleiters, um jede Komplikation zu vermeiden, sich nicht mehr unmittelbar an Herrn Reichsminister Speer oder andere Stelle in der Schulbuchfrage zu wenden, sondern Wünsche, Anregungen, Vorschläge bzw. Hinweise auf mit der in Rede stehenden Frage wichtige Zusammenhänge ausschließlich an Herrn Reichsleiter Bouhler heranzutragen.»²⁰⁴

A similar letter was sent to the head of the *Sicherheitspolizei* in August 1944.

«Sie haben für Ihre Dienststelle in Markkleeberg-West, Pfarrgasse 15, vom Deutschen Schulverlag, Bayreuth die erscheinenden reichseinheitlichen Schulbücher angefordert. Ich bitte Sie, sich in Zukunft nicht unmittelbar an den Deutschen Schulverlag zu wenden,

²⁰³ “An den Herrn Reichsminister für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion”, in: NS 51, 182: 411,12, BBL.

²⁰⁴ “An den Herrn Reichsminister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung”, in: NS 51, 182: 445, BBL.

sondern an die Reichsstelle für das Schul- und Unterrichtsschrifttum,
Berlin W 35, Bissingzeile 19.»²⁰⁵

But, Bouhler was not the only one who had to fight for his institution and, in point of fact, also Rust, despite being the head of the Ministry of Education, had to watch his back for political attacks.

A precise and vivid description of the history of the *Erziehungsministerium* is given by Anne C. Nagel in her 2012 work “*Hitlers Bildungsreformer. Das Reichserziehungsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung 1934-1945*”²⁰⁶. Indeed, Anne Nagel pointed out the numerous economic and political difficulties that the *Erziehungsministerium* had to deal with during its existence and, among them, the personal conflicts that characterized the National Socialist politics are of particular interest. Nagel’s book portrayed an image of the Regime as internally divided by envy and competition between the leaders of the NSDAP that, more than cooperating [with each other], quarrelled and fought against each other. Rosenberg, Goebbels, Himmler and Heß, to name just the most influential members, all wanted to give their personal ‘touch’ to the education of the German youth.

Two articles, the first written by Johannes Guthmann for the magazine of the NSLB “*Deutsches Bildungswesen*” in 1936, and the second written by Hansulrich Horn for the annual report of the *Erziehungsministerium* in 1941, are particularly useful for understanding the debate about the ‘National Socialist textbook’ as framed by such a political constellation.

Guthmann’s article, titled “*Zum ersten deutschen Reichs-Volksschullesebuch*” was published in two editions of the “*Deutsches Bildungswesen*” between April and September 1936. The article, describing the history of the textbook in Germany,

²⁰⁵ “An den Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD”, in: NS 51, 182: 6, BBL.

²⁰⁶ A. Nagel, *Hitlers Bildungsreformer. Das Reichserziehungsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung*, Frankfurt am Main 2012.

described the *status quo* of the Nazi politics regarding the *Volksschulen*, and celebrated the ‘textbook reform’ that the Regime wanted to start.

Thus, according to Guthmann, the regional and local differences between the German *Volksschulen* was the first problem to overcome in order to establish a ‘general National Socialist textbook’. Indeed, in 1936, Germany still suffered from the particularism that allowed each *Volksschule* to use a different textbook that reflected the their own regional uniqueness in terms of education and schooling:

«Eine Karte der deutschen Lesebuchlandschaften des Jahres 1933 ergäbe ein noch zersetzteres Bild als etwa die Gebietskarte Deutschlands für die Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts darstellt: 1934 waren in Berlin 17, im Gebiet des früheren Königreichs Sachsen 1933 neben 25 Fibeln 36, in Preussen über 100 Lesebuchwerke, in Bayern und Württemberg konfessionell gespaltene Landeslesebücher eingeführt.»²⁰⁷

Guthmann interpreted the absence of a standard and general German education for all pupils of the *Volksschulen* as connected to the absence of one textbook that could bring to each German class the ideology of the National Socialism and, with it, the ‘essence’ of *Germanium*.

«Für alle die, denen es darüber hinaus vergönnt war, maßgebende früher in Deutschland geschaffene Lesebücher durchzuarbeiten, vielleicht auch solche anderer Völker damit zu vergleichen, ergab sich die Erkenntnis, daß das deutsche Volksschullesebuch, dieses vielgescholtene Werk, das dem Volk und dem Kinde gleicherweise dadurch dienen soll, daß es kindertümlicher Ausdruck wahren deutschen Wesens ist, bisher nicht in erster Linie Kündler des Deutschtums war, sonder viel mehr, ja entscheidend abhing von der wirtschaftlichen, der politischen und der weltanschaulichen Lage unseres Volkes. Als beispielweise der damalige bayerische Kultusminister 1925 seinem Volksschulreferenten erklärte: ‘Ich habe mich entschlossen, das Lesebuch konfessionell zu gestalten’, war das nichts als ein übersteigter Ausdruck der durch das vorher abgeschlossene Konkordat geschaffenen Lage.»²⁰⁸

But this situation, caused by the difficult economic, political and ideological situation in Germany after the First World War, was going to change because the National Socialism wanted to give its youth a more German education. Indeed, the

²⁰⁷ J. Guthmann, *Zum ersten deutschen Reichs-Volksschullesebuch* in: *Deutsches Schulbuchwesen*, April/Mai 1936, p. 215.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Regime, according to its revolutionary tendencies, wanted, for the first time in German history, to politically and ideologically form and to take care of the next generation. The success of such a revolutionary intention was dependent on the use of a ‘National Socialist textbook’ in every German elementary school.

«Eine Staatsführung, die deutsche Zukunft schaffen will und die gesamte Volkserziehung grundlegend deutsch gestaltet, braucht dazu ein Mittel, mit dessen Hilfe sie bis in die letzte deutsche Schule hinausgreift.»²⁰⁹

According to Guthmann, the consistency of content and topic would have been a fundamental characteristic of a ‘National Socialist textbook’ that should have been legitimate in any German regions by the Regime’s *Richtlinien* and valid for the whole German territory. Small differences, stemming from different school contexts, could have been present among various textbook editions but its central core should have been the same for every school.

«Der Inhalt dieses Buches muß also einheitliche ausgerichtet und zum Teil gleich sein [...] Die Richtlinien für das zu schaffende Werk mußten reichsverpflichtend sein.»²¹⁰

Following its plans, the National Socialist Regime was now close to a significant turn in the history of education and textbooks:

«Damit sind wir in der deutschen Bildungs- und Schulbuchgeschichte an einem Wendepunkt angelangt, wie er nur in Jahrhunderten widerkehrt.»²¹¹

Actually, to ‘turn’ the history of the German education the Regime should have transformed in practice what it had already planned to do in the 1934 “*Reichsrichtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher*”. Therefore, Guthmann, quoting several sentences of 1934 *Richtlinien* in his article, recalled to the reader’s mind how the Regime wanted to change the actual *status quo* of the German education.

²⁰⁹ Guthmann April/Mai 1936, p. 215.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 216.

Firstly, the Regime, showing its ‘positive’ totalitarian intentions, wanted to take full responsibility for the education of the German youth. By doing that, the Regime pointed out one of the differences between National Socialist and liberal ideologies²¹², namely: while the former, based on the idea of *Gemeinschaft*, was interested in the educational process of every member of its *Volk*, the latter allowed individualism to grow in society:

«(I. 1) Der nationalsozialistische Staat trägt im Gegensatz zum Staate des liberalen Individualismus in sich die Verantwortlichkeit gegenüber der Ganzheit des völkischen Leben.»²¹³

Furthermore, the Regime took over control of the German schools in order to educate and raise the ‘National Socialist man’ politically:

«Um die Erziehung der deutschen Jugend zur Reife solcher Staatsgesinnung zu sichern, ist die Schule unter ausschließlicher Führung durch den Staat das Ziel gesetzt, den nationalpolitischen Menschen zu erziehen und zu bilden.»²¹⁴

Thus, the textbook, according to the *Richtlinien*, was an instrument used by the Regime to homogenize the process of learning across the different German schools and, indeed, it played a key role in such a totalitarian vision of education in which the state pretended to control every aspect of the schooling.

«(I, 2) In der Erziehungsarbeit zu diesen allen deutschen Schulen gemeinsamen Ziel kommt dem Lesebuch unter den Hilfsmittel, die die Volksschule in ihren Dienst stellt, grundlegende und richtunggebende Bedeutung zu.

(II, 1) Die Aufgabe des Lesebuches leitet sich aus der der Volksschule im Rahmen der Gesamterziehung gesetzten besonderen Aufgabe her, die darin besteht, den jungen Menschen dahin zu erziehen, daß er sich freudig als dienstbereites und nützliches Glied in die Volksganzheit einordnet und ihn mit den vom praktischen Leben geforderten Kenntnissen und Fertigkeiten auszustatten. Demnach hat das Lesebuch für die nationalpolitische

²¹² G. A. James, *The Faces of Janos. Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, 2000.

²¹³ *Richtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher* in: Guthmann April/Mai 1936, p. 233.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Gesinnungsbildung richtunggebend zu sein und den stofflichen Bildungsaufgaben zu dienen.»²¹⁵

So, Guthmann, when writing the last part of his article, once again outlined problems and issues that the Regime had to overcome: firstly, the excessive variety of available textbooks for the German schools; secondly, the necessity of writing a textbook that could be used and understood by pupils in all German regions. That is, the author recognized the revolutionary character of the National Socialist politics regarding schooling while also identifying in the ‘traditional’ regional German education-system, an inner enemy for the Regime.

«Der zersplitternden Vielfaltigkeit und der aufdringlichen Sondertümelei jener Bücher steht ein volksumfassendes Werk gegenüber, das in jeder Hinsicht das Reich zum Urheber hat. [...] Deren schwierigster Teil ist darin zu sehen, daß zu allen gleichalterigen deutschen Kindern der verschiedenen Stämme und Stände das gleiche Buch spricht.

Wir haben in der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte noch kein Werk gehabt, das gleich notwendig (im tiefen Sinne des Wortes) und gleich kühn die stammlichen, gesellschaftlichen und bekenntnismäßigen Verschiedenheiten – womit solche der Entwicklungshöhe mitbezeichnet sind – überbrücken wollte.»²¹⁶

The risk of regional and local resistance against a centralized organization of the German school system was apparently clear as early as 1936.

If Guthmann’s article described the situation of the German school system concerning the possibility of introducing a ‘general National Socialist textbook’ in 1936 and hoped for a strong change that could bring the German schools under direct state control, the article written by Hansulrich Horn and published in 1943 on the “*Deutsche Schulerziehung, Jahrbuch des deutschen Zentralinstituts für Erziehung und Unterricht*”²¹⁷ outlined the problems that the

²¹⁵ Guthmann April/Mai 1936, p. 233.

²¹⁶ J. Guthmann, *Zum ersten deutschen Reichs-Volksschullesebuch*, in: *Deutsches Bildungswesen*, August/September 1936, p. 497.

²¹⁷ The *Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht* was created in 1915 and even if it officially remained an independent foundation during the Regime, it was controlled and funded by the *Erziehungsministerium*.

Erziehungsministerium did not solve and the delusion of a National Socialist textbook reform that did not work.

Still, between 1936 and 1943 the textbook reform continued to be a topic of discussion in magazines, reviews and books about schooling and education. For instance, the publication of the “*Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht – the Deutsche Volkserziehung. Schriftenfolge für die deutsche Erziehung*”²¹⁸ – published the primary version of the 1934 “*Richtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher*”²¹⁹ in its January/February 1937 edition and then in its July/August edition, it published an article by Peter Seidenstecker who focused his attention on the pictures to use in the textbooks of the *Volksschulen*.

So, when Hansulrich Horn²²⁰ was writing a report in 1943 about the condition of the textbooks in the German schools during the war for the magazine of the *Zentralinstitut*, he actually drew an interesting image of the failed textbook reform in National Socialist Germany. The magazine “*Deutsche Schulerziehung*” was published by *Ministerialrat* Rudolf Benze, who was a trustworthy assistant of Minister Bernhard Rust.

Horn pointed out in the first lines of his report how important the textbook was for the National Socialist education. Actually, the textbook was not a ‘simple’ didactic instrument that remained confined to the school classroom. Rather, it had a central role in connecting the school with the family in order to politically and ideologically educate the children.

«Dem Schulbuch kommt neben der Vermittlung des Wissensstoffes eine ganz besondere Bedeutung für die politisch-weltanschauliche Erziehung des Volkes zu: Es gelang über das Schulkind in die Familie und vermag dadurch

²¹⁸ The “*Deutsche Volkserziehung. Schriftenfolge für die deutsche Erziehung*” was a bimonthly magazine published by the “*Deutsches Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht*”.

²¹⁹ “*Richtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher*” in: *Deutsche Volkserziehung. Schriftenfolge für die deutsche Erziehung*, Heft 1/2, p. 119.

²²⁰ Hansulrich Horn’s article “*Die Neuordnung des Schulbuchwesens*” was probably the last one he wrote. Indeed, at the end of 1943, Horn was sent to fight on the Eastern Front, more precisely in Poland. In the August 1944 edition of the *Befehlsleiter* of the *Parteiämliche Prüfungskommission zum Schutze des NS-Schriftums* at Hitler’s *Kanzlei*, Karl Heinrich Hederich, asked the *NSDAP* Chancellery in *München*, without success, if it was possible to recall Horn from the Eastern Front.

nicht nur bei den Schülern, sondern gerade auch im Bereich der Familie, eine besondere Breitenwirkung zu erzielen.»²²¹

The collective nature of the Regime's society, in which education is a collective responsibility, is emphasized in these reports and, as in the 1939 *Erziehungsministerium's Richtlinien*, the family and the school are imagined as working together for the benefit of the German child in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Consequently, the National Socialist Regime, which presented itself as different from the liberal countries, wanted to manage the textbooks which were not only written for the school's use but also for the *Volksgemeinschaft* education.

«Es ist darum auch begreiflich, wenn der Nationalsozialismus sich der Gestaltung und Lösung der Schulbuchfragen ganz besonders annimmt.»²²²

Thus, according to Horn, the first duty of Bouhler's *Prüfungskommission*, which was subject to the *Dienststelle*, was to respond to the "Schulbuchfragen". However, despite Bouhler's commission having been created in 1934, there had been little progress in the intervening years. As of 1943, neither the textbook reform had taken place nor had the "Schulbuchfragen" been resolved. It is legitimate to ask whether the two institutions that wanted to solve the textbook issue, namely: the *Dienststelle* and the *Erziehungsministerium*, actually worked together and cooperated or, as emerged from Nagel's work, were 'victims' of the personal conflicts that characterized the Regime's internal politics and that slowed down the already complex process of reforming the school system.

But envy and personal conflicts were not the only obstacles in the way of the textbook reform. The year 1939 basically marked, for both Bouhler's commission and for the *Erziehungsministerium*, the end of any chance to seriously reform the school system and within it, the textbooks. Furthermore, especially after 1941, it was clear to several Germans, including Horn, that the war, which had now extended to eastern Europe and Northern Africa, would draw all available resources and materials. The textbook reform, however, was emphatically

²²¹ H. Horn, *Die Neuordnung des Schulbuchwesens und Schulbuchfragen im Kriege* in: *Deutsche Schulerziehung. Jahrbuch des Deutschen Zentralinstituts für Erziehung und Unterricht*, Berlin 1943, p. 78.

²²² Ibid.

described by Horn as extremely important for the education of the next National Socialist generation and, thus, the “*Schulbuchfrage*” still had to be included among the ‘necessities’ of the German *Volk*.

Even without the practical challenges posed by the war, good intentions and will, however, would have been insufficient to achieve the textbook reform since the Regime, either through the *Erziehungsministerium* or the *Dienststelle*, did not seriously deal with two kinds of issues: firstly, the diffidence of the textbook authors, especially the history textbook writers, who were ‘against’ the “*Politisierung*” of their works; secondly, the resistance offered by the private publishing houses that did not like the idea of losing their profits which came from selling a range of textbooks.

Firstly: the issue concerning the “*Politisierung*” of the textbooks’ content is an ideological question and it shows us how different the understanding and interpretations of the National Socialist ideology was during the Regime. National Socialism had a strong anti-party stream in its doctrine and, for this reason, the *NSDAP*, despite being a political party itself, strongly criticized the Weimar Republic’s political system that did not take care of the German *Volk* in its entirety because it was torn by divergent political interests. In contrast, the Regime promised to provide for the necessities of every German and to create, in the classroom as elsewhere, a more egalitarian system, on a German-Aryan racial base, in which any social and political contrast would be overcome. But such ‘socialist’ intentions of the Regime are today strongly criticized and challenged. For instance, Hans-Georg Herrlitz, Wulf Hopf and Hartmut Titze claimed in their 1998 work “*Deutsche Schulgeschichte von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart*”, that the school politics of the Regime was actually anything but “*sozialrevolutionär*”²²³. Similarly, Hans Jürgen Apel and Michael Klöcker, authors of “*Die Volksschule im NS-Staat*”, described the National Socialist political cohesion in the *Volksschule* as insufficient to actually reform and revolutionize the German school system²²⁴.

Still, the promise to build an ‘un-political’ and more egalitarian society, based on racial and eugenic criteria and including only the members of the

²²³ H.-G. Herrlitz, W. Hopf and H. Titze, *Deutsche Schulgeschichte von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart*, Weinheim und München, 1998.

²²⁴ H. J. Apel and M. Klöcker, *Die Volksschule im NS-Staat*, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2000.

Volksgemeinschaft, also influenced the textbook reform plan. Furthermore, concerning the history textbooks, the Regime wanted to avoid misinterpretations of German history because it was the ‘most political’ *Volksschule* subject. So, Horn interpreted the intromission/involvement of the Regime in the *Volksschulen* history textbook debate as a legitimate act for a state interested in the education of its youth and concerned with protecting the true German spirit.

«Die begonnene Neuordnung des deutschen Schulbuchs hat ihren Anstoß von der Seite der politisch-weltanschaulichen Erziehung erhalten und ist als hochbedeutende politische Angelegenheit erkannt. Ist damit nun der Weg der radikalen ‘Politisierung’ des Schulbuchs beschritten? Wer diese Frage stellt, hat das Wesen der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung und vor allem der nationalsozialistischen Revolution nicht verstanden: Die politische Erziehung ist kein Einzelaufgabe, sondern die Grundlage, auf der sich alle erzieherischen Maßnahmen und Einzelforderungen aufbauen! Dieser Gesamtaufgabe hat in besonderem Maße das Schulbuch zu dienen. Es muß in allen seinen Teilen Ausdruck der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung sein.»²²⁵

Furthermore, according to Horn, if the Regime had not adopted an incisive political stance about the textbook contents, it would have risked the intrusion of un-German, and thereby incorrect, historical interpretations in the *Volksschulen*.

«Kein Raum ist in unseren Schulbüchern dagegen für artfremde Ideologien und vor allem für die politische Verhetzung!»²²⁶

The consequences of ‘wrong’ education and schooling politics were observable, for instance, in France and the Soviet Union. In these countries, the textbooks were influenced by ‘corrupting’ and ‘demagogical’ ideologies that ‘brought’ both countries to a politically weak state against their own inner enemy, namely: the Jewish-Bolshevik ideology:

«Wir haben beispielsweise in Frankreich nach dem Siege in Tausenden von Schulbüchern mit die Ursachen dafür gefunden, weshalb die Masse der Franzosen nicht die Kraft fand und die Gelegenheit nahm, den jüdisch-bolschewistisch Verantwortlichen der französischen Katastrophenpolitik, die zur blutigen Auseinandersetzung mit Deutschland trieb, entgegenzutreten und um Europas willen, nicht zuletzt aber auch für das Wohl des eigenen Landes, die dargebotene Versöhnungshand des Führers anzunehmen. Hier

²²⁵ Horn 1943, p. 82.

²²⁶ Ibid.

fanden wir klassische Beispiele der politischen Verhetzung und Vergiftung der Kinderseele, angefangen beim ABC-Schützen.

Ganz zu schweigen in diesem Zusammenhang von den bolschewistischen Schulbüchern der UdSSR, die wie alles dort, ebenfalls im Dienst der grauenhaften Ertötung jedes seelischen Eigenbezirkes allgemeinemenschlicher Natur standen und stehen, deren Auswirkung so eindringlich seit dem 22. Juni 1941 vor unser aller Augen steht und nicht zuletzt vor Europas Gewissen stehen sollte! Es ist nötig, bei der Behandlung des Schulbuchproblems auch gerade hierauf einmal hinzuweisen.»²²⁷

Secondly: the social and geographical differences between the German *Volksschulen* were properly considered as a consistent problem by Hans-Ulrich Horn. Indeed, he pointed out the difficulties of writing a textbook that could be used by different elementary schools, for example a single-class *Volksschule* in a small city and an eight-class *Volksschule* in a big metropolis, had different needs and pedagogical aims. Furthermore, the challenges became even clearer when considering the unique situation of the *Landschulen* that were situated in small villages, away from an urban context, and that often did not reach the minimum standard of the German school system, in terms of didactic materials and pedagogic method. What is more, the price of the ‘general’ textbook should have been easily affordable by any German family: by those living in the city and those living in the countryside. The Regime had to give credibility to its promise of a more socially equal school system.

«Die Verhältnisse liegen aber hier auch am schwierigsten. Schon der vielfach gegliederte Aufbau dieser Schulgattung von der einklassigen Landschule bis zur achtklassigen Stadtschule macht die Gestaltung und Bereitstellung der verschiedenen Lernmittel besonders schwierig. Die große Schülerzahl erfordert hohe Auflagen einzelner Schulbücher, und an den Verteilungsapparat werden gesteigerte Anforderungen gestellt, wenn das Schulbuch rechtzeitig bis in das kleinste Fischerdorf oder fernstgelegene Gebirgsdorf rechtzeitig gelangen soll. Dazu kommen dann noch die Schwierigkeiten aller mit der Preisgestaltung zusammenhängenden Fragen.»²²⁸

The economic aspect of the textbook production was, indeed, an issue often discussed among *Dienststelle Bouhler*, *Deutscher Schulverlag* and private publishing houses. Probably, the economic issue was the central reason behind the

²²⁷ Horn 1943, p. 83.

²²⁸ Ibid.

failure of the whole Nazi textbook reform effort. Horn pointed out that the creation of a 'general' textbook was incorrectly interpreted by many authors and editors as the first step to state monopoly.

«Das Einheitsbuch stellt für manche grundsätzlich ein Schreckgespenst dar. Diese Vorstellung ist nicht richtig. Es gibt viele gute Gründe die – zumindest in einigen Fächern und für bestimmte Klassen der Volksschule – für ein Einheitsbuch sprechen. [...] Die Frage des Einheitsbuches ist – das sei zur Klarstellung hier noch vermerkt – nicht zu verwechseln oder gar nicht identisch mit der Schulbuchmonopols.»²²⁹

The private publishing houses, according to Horn, should have overcome their fears and realized that the textbook outlook in Germany was, for some subjects, particularly negative. For instance, of particular worry was the situation of the history textbooks which, to a great degree, were inconsistent with the National Socialist ideology and, consequently, inappropriate for the *Volksschulen*. Indeed, Horn emphatically pointed out that appropriate history textbooks were actually missing:

«Es wurde schon erwähnt, daß seit Jahren geeignete Lernbücher für Geschichte und Lebenskunde und der Atlas überhaupt fehlen.»²³⁰

Horn's analysis about the lack of a usable textbook is actually confirmed by a 1944 report of the *Dienststelle Bouhler*. This report pointed out that, despite a decrease in the number of textbook publishing houses in Germany from 380 to 25 between 1933 and 1944, the *Dienststelle* did not efficiently regulate the textbook production, which remained in the hands of the private editors. The *Dienststelle* controlled the textbook production and publishing more effectively, only after stipulating an accord with the *Deutscher Schulverlag* in 1942.

«Preispolitik und Herstellung wurden ausschliesslich durch privatwirtschaftliche Tendenzen bestimmt. [...] Die Reichsstelle [the Dienststelle Bouler] konnte daher bei ihren Arbeiten an der Frage der Privatschulverlage als Träger der wirtschaftlichen Prozess nicht vorbei.»²³¹

²²⁹ Horn 1943, p. 83.

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 80

²³¹ "Zusammenfassung über die Entwicklung der Arbeiten aus dem Schulbuchauftrag Reichsleiters Bouhler", in: *NS 51*, 182: 128/131, BBL.

Basically, with the sole exception of the school atlas, which the editors reached an agreement with the Regime on as early as 1942²³², the German textbook production was still ‘uncontrolled’.

Moreover, the situation of the history textbooks, among other *Volksschulen* subjects, was particularly critical. Indeed, Horn was worried not only by the economic issue but also by the factionalism, namely: regionalism, that negatively characterized the historical interpretations in the different textbooks. Thus, a textbook that portrayed a “*gesamtdeutsche*” picture of the German culture was the only possible ‘answer’ to the regionalism.

«Genau so, wie z.B. beim Geschichtsbuch gegen eine partikularistische Verengung des Geschichtsbildes durch Überbetonung falsch verstandener Heimatgebundenheit Fron gemacht werden muß, hat auch das Lesebuch auf der Oberstufe der gesamtdeutschen Erziehung zu dienen und Ausdruck der gesamten deutschen Kulturleistung zu sein.»²³³

But, in point of fact, the German pupils in 1944 had no other option besides the old, regionalist and ‘unsuitable’ textbooks because those textbooks were the only ones they could get. Despite Horn’s expectations about the new “*Einheitsbuch*”, the *Erziehungsministerium* ordered all the school administrations, families and children to take good care of their own textbooks and to give them to the younger classes.

«Alle Schulbücher der Schule.

Kein für den Schulunterricht verwendbares Buch
darf ungenutzt bleiben!

Der totale Krieg verlangt sparsamste Materialverwendung auf allen Gebieten. Er zwingt zum Einsatz aller verfügbaren Kräfte für Rüstung und Reichsverteidigung.

[...] An die Schuljugend und ihre Eltern ergeht deshalb die Aufforderung, alle Schulbücher, die gegenwärtig zum Schulgebrauch zugelassen sind, von ihren Eigentümern nicht mehr gebraucht werden, aber noch benutzungsfähig sind, der Schule zur Verfügung zu stellen.

[...] Jugend und Mädel, helft Euren jüngeren Kameraden durch Abgabe Eurer alten Schulbücher!

²³² “Zusammenfassung über die Entwicklung der Arbeiten aus dem Schulbuchauftrag Reichsleiters Bouhler”, in: *NS* 51,182: 128/131, BBL.

²³³ Horn 1943, p. 83.

Väter und Mütter, sorgt dafür, daß durch die Abgabe entbehrlicher Schulbücher andere Kinder in den Besitz der für ihre Schulausbildung unentbehrlichen Hilfsmittel gelangen!»²³⁴

²³⁴ „*E I a (4 Schrifttum) 2, E II, E III/1944*“, in: *NS 51*, 184: 40, BBL.

III.1.2 From the Centre to the Periphery

The 1939 *Richtlinien* ordered the introduction of a ‘pan-Germanic’ interpretation of the history to all *Volksschulen* teachers. The so called “*gesamtdeutsche*” interpretation was the only one allowed in the *Volksschulen* history classes of the National Socialist Regime: no more emphasis on local heroes, no more focus on regional history and no more accent on regional culture. The history should have been, to a large extent, the pan-German one. But, as we have already mentioned, this order was completely or partially snubbed by the regional administrations.

Therefore, in order to point out the differences between ‘centre and periphery’, it is worth briefly reviewing what the *Erziehungsministerium* ordered with its directive exactly:

«Soweit die Sonderentwicklung in der Geschichte der einzelnen deutschen Stämme sich in der Stoffauswahl in einzelnen auswirkt, ist besonders darauf zu achten, daß diese Stoffgebiete in die große gesamtdeutsche Entwicklungslinie hineingestellt werden.»²³⁵

Similarly, Kurt Higelke, editor of the magazine “*Die Deutsche Schule*”, highlighted the pan-Germanic ‘spirit’ of the history classes while commenting on the 1939 *Richtlinien*:

«Bei der Stoffauswahl sehen wir streng darauf, daß wir nicht eine preußische, österreichische oder andere Geschichte, sondern eine gesamtdeutsche Geschichte bieten wollen. In ihr muß auch das Schicksal der Volksteile außerhalb unserer Reichsgrenzen gebührend berücksichtigt werden.»²³⁶

Furthermore, the 1940 “*Lehr- und Arbeitspläne für die Großdeutsche Volksschule*” published by the editors Ferdinand Hirt and Hermann Schroedel, reminded the teachers that any reference to local history and culture was allowed only if framed within the pan-German vision:

²³⁵ Richtlinien 1939, in Higelke 1940, p. 20.

²³⁶ K. Higelke, *Neubau der Volksschularbeit*, Leipzig, 1941, p.131.

«Da der vorliegende Plan nicht für eine besondere Landschaft geschaffen ist, konnte die Sonderentwicklung in der Geschichte einzelner deutsche Stämme nicht berücksichtigt werden. Bei der Auswahl und dem Einbau derartiger stammesgeschichtlicher Sonderentwicklungen ist darauf zu achten, daß diese Stoffgebiete in die große gesamtdeutsche Entwicklungslinie hineingestellt werden.»²³⁷

Moreover, Paul Cretius, author of “*Ziele und Wege des neuen Volksschulunterrichts*” (1940), enlarged the idea of *Gesamtdeutsche* to all German-speaking populations:

«Da wir stets das Volk als rassische Einheit darstellen müssen, müssen wir auch bei der völkischen Geschichtsbetrachtung über den reichsdeutschen Raum hinausgreifen und das Schicksal der Volksdeutschen außerhalb der Grenzen betrachten.»²³⁸

Why did so many authors emphasize the necessity of staying within the pan-German interpretation of history? They did so because many regional administrations were not following the directive of the *Erziehungsministerium*. Indeed, after the 1939 state directive, several regional powers released local *Richtlinien* and teaching plans, for instance: in Bayern, Baden and Schlesien.

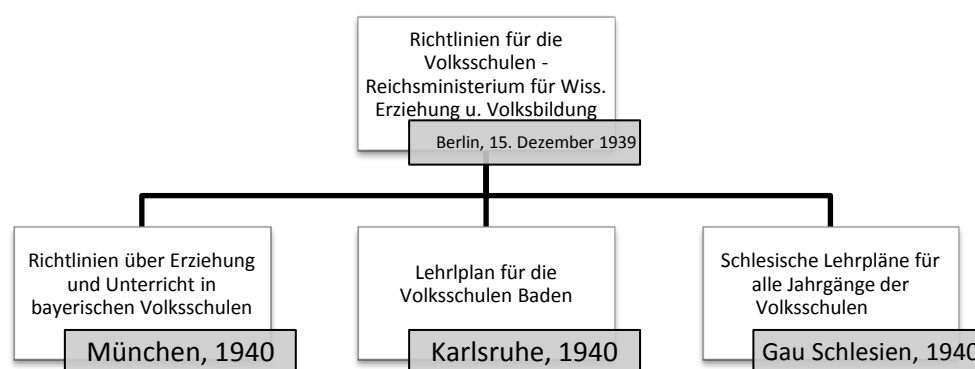


Table 12, 1939 Erziehungsministerium Richtlinien and following regional directives.

²³⁷ F. Hirt, H. Schroedel, *Lehr- und Arbeitspläne für die Großdeutsche Volksschule*, Breslau and Halle, 1940, p. 12.

²³⁸ P. Cretius, *Ziele und Wege des neuen Volksschulunterrichts*, Berlin, 1941, p. 80.

Clearly, the relations between the centre, as represented by the *Erziehungsministerium* or by the *Dienststelle* in Hitler's Chancellery, and the periphery worsened with the onset of the war. With the central power struggling with lack of materials and allied bombing, the German regions voluntarily delayed orders and instructions. For instance, in February 1944 the *Dienststelle Bouhler* sent complaint letters about the delay in textbook deliveries and the local administrations' lack of cooperation to several regional education ministries, including: Thuringian, the Eastern-Prussian, the Sachsen and Mecklenburg.

So, despite the new geo-political constellation organised by the Regime, which abolished the federal structures and instituted the *Gau* organization, the former German *Länder* offered some resistance against the centralised school system and the textbook reform effort that was never realized. Each region, sometimes with the help of the local *Gauleiter* and other times with the support of the local *NSLB* branch, found a way to keep part of the school education under their control.

A) *München*

Bayern offered the strongest resistance to orders and directives coming from the *Erziehungsministerium* and the *Dienststelle Bouhler*. Actually, a ‘Bavarian-Prussian’ rivalry characterized the political relationship between the city of the National Socialistic Revolution, *München*, and the city of the political power, Berlin. Furthermore, the head office of the *Nationalsozialistischer Zentralverlag* and one office of the *Kanzlei des Führers*, part of the *Parteizentrale des NSDAP*, were situated in *München* while the *NSLB* had its headquarters in the Bavarian city of Bayreuth. Also, *München* and Bayern had a unique value for Adolf Hitler – who had lived and started his political activity in *München* – and for the history of the *NSDAP*.

The *Bayerische Staatsministerium für Unterricht und Kultus* was very active under the Regime. For example, *Gegenwartskunde*²³⁹ – the German history from 1918 to Hitler’s *Machtergreifung* – was taught in Bavarian *Volksschulen* as early as 1933 while it was not officially introduced in the other German *Volksschulen* by the *Erziehungsministerium* until 1939. Probably, the introduction of the *Gegenwartskunde* in the Bavarian *Volksschulen* can also be considered as a sort of regionalism. Indeed, while the Bavarian version of the *Gegenwartskunde* only focused on the early years of the *NSDAP* and Adolf Hitler’s early political activity, namely the political and revolutionary activity of the *NSDAP* in 1920s *München*; the ‘Regime’s version’ of the *Gegenwartskunde* included not only the *NSDAP* history but also that of the First World War and the subsequent negative political and economic situation in Germany between 1918 and 1933. Once again, while the Bavarian interpretation connoted ‘particularism’, the Regime was oriented towards “gesamtdeutsch”.

A significant example of Bavarian particularism about schooling and education is provided by the “*Richtlinien des Bayerischen Staatsministeriums für Unterricht und Kultus über Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen*”²⁴⁰, released by the Bavarian Ministry of Education on 27th July 1940. This

²³⁹ In: R. Fricke-Finkelnburg, *Nationalismus und Schule: amtliche Erlaße und Richtlinien 1933-1945*, Opladen 1989.

²⁴⁰ In: *Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen*, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, München 1940.

Richtlinien, revising and editing the 1939 directive of the *Erziehungsministerium*, organized and structured the school teaching and instruction in all Bavarian *Volksschulen*. The authority of such document is also confirmed by being published by the *Zentralverlag* of the Nazi Party and not by some private editor. Indeed, the Bavarian *Richtlinien* would be valid from 1st August 1940 on.

«Zu den vom Herrn Reichsminister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung mit Runderlaß vom 15. 12. 1939 Nr. E II a 3500/39 K V (a) erlassenen Richtlinien, die mit Min.Bek. vom 8.4.1940 für die bayerischen Volksschulen verbindlich erklärt wurden, habe ich für die Volksschulen Bayerns Ergänzungsrichtlinien genehmigt, die mit Wirkung vom 1. August 1940 im Unterricht in allen Volksschulen anzuwenden sind.»²⁴¹

The Bavarian *Richtlinien*, as compared with the 1939 ‘central’ *Richtlinien*, are differently organized and written, but, in some spots, they shared the same goals. Indeed, the Bavarian directives considered the *Volksschulen* as the place where German children could learn how to become part of a community that was greater than the family, namely: the *Volk-* and the *Wehrgemeinschaft*.

«sollen die Kinder schon in den ersten Jahren in der Schule lernen, sich als Angehörige einer größeren Gemeinschaft zu fühlen. In den oberen Jahrgänge der Volksschulen sollen die Kinder allmählich über die Sippengemeinschaft hinaus in die große politische Volks- und Wehrgemeinschaft aller Deutschen hineinwachsen.»²⁴²

Still, in contrast to the 1939 central directives, the Bavarian *Richtlinien* strongly emphasized the *Wehrerziehung* as being the final aim of National Socialist education and the pedagogical role of Adolf Hitler. In point of fact, these directives constantly quoted Adolf Hitler about the aims of the education and about the process of history learning in the National Socialist ideology:

«Das wesentliche einer Revolution ist nicht die Erringung der Macht sondern die Erziehung der Menschen – Man lernt nicht Geschichte, um zu wissen, was früher war, sondern man lernt Geschichte, um in ihr eine Lehrmeisterin für die Zukunft und für den Fortbestand des eigenem Volkstums zu erhalten. – Aus der Unzahl all der großen Namen der deutschen Geschichte sind die größten heraus-zugriefen und der Jugend so

²⁴¹ Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen 1940, p. 5.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 8.

eindringlich vor-zuführen, daß sie zu Säulen eine unerschütterlichen Nationalgefühls werden.»²⁴³

According to the Bavarian *Richtlinien* and contrary to the *Erziehungsministerium* directives, the *Wehrerziehung* and not political indoctrination was the first priority of history classes and history provided several examples of the belligerent spirit of the German *Volk* for the National Socialist youth. Furthermore, the second priority of history teaching was to prepare the German, or rather the Bavarian, youth to fight for the state and for the *Volk* until the last and biggest sacrifice. Furthermore, history revealed the ‘law of the blood’ to the German *Volk* and the pedagogical interpretation of history, suggested by the ‘central’ directives, was unmistakably disregarded in Bayern:

«Das erziehliche Ziel des Geschichtsunterricht ist der in Gesinnung und Haltung art- und nationalbewußte deutsche Mensch, der, volksverbunden und wehrwillig für Volk und Staat das höchste Opfer zu bringen bereit ist. Geschichte zeigt das Gesetz des Blutes und läßt in den Ahnen uns selbst erkennen.»²⁴⁴

But the most remarkable difference between the Bavarian and ‘central’ directives concerned the topics selected for the history classes of the *Volksschulen*. Indeed, while the *Erziehungsministerium* supported the idea of the Nordic-Germanic race as being the racial ancestors of the Nazi Germans, the Bavarian Ministry of Education rejected this ‘nordicist’ history interpretation as a lie. Thus, the directives ordered getting rid of all the so-called history-lies from the *Volksschulen* of the Bayern:

«das bedeutet wiederholt Neugestaltung überkommener Geschichtsbilder und absolutes Aufräumen von Geschichtslügen (z.B. nordisch-germanisch Frühkultur, konfessionell gebundene Schau des Mittelalters, deutschvölkische Gestaltung der Zeit der Reformation, des 30jährigen Krieges, der französischen Revolution, der Süd und Ostpolitik, Einbezug des großdeutschen Gedankens, der Grenz- und Kolonialfrage usw.)»²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen 1940, p. 5, - p. 43.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

The ancient and ‘prestigious’ Nordic-Germanic culture, celebrated by Alfred Rosenberg, studied by the *Reichsbundes für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*, emphasized by the textbooks authors and supported by the Ministry of Education, was firmly criticized and finally disparaged in Bayern *Volksschulen*. In point of fact, the pan-Germanic historical interpretation itself was actually questioned by the Bayern Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the Bavarian directives clearly ordered to the history teachers to ignore the history of the Nordic-German culture and the original settlement of the Nordic man in northern Germany because these facts were of little importance to the German racial history. On the contrary, the history teachers were free to choose different topics concerning the *Urgermanische Zeit*. That is, the ‘form’ – the new periodization – remained the same in Bayern as in other German regions but the ‘content’ drastically changed. The contradiction with the pan-Germanic history interpretation supported by the *Erziehungsministerium* is here glaring:

«Im letzten Jahrdritten des 5. Schuljahres folgen die Bilder aus der Urgermanischen Zeit (2000-500 v. Ztr.) und der Großgermanischen Wanderung (bis zur Wikingerzeit reichend). Um diesen Unterricht bei der ohnehin beschränkten Zeit nicht zu zersplittern sind Darstellungen aus den ersten Anfängen der menschlichen Kultur (ältere und mittlere Steinzeit), die für die rassistisch bestimmte Geschichte von geringer Bedeutung sind, zu unterlassen. Die Auswahl der Bilder wird freigegeben.»²⁴⁶

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that the crucial problem was actually caused not by the intention of the Bavarian ministry to disrupt the pan-Germanic history interpretation but by its desire to offer the Bavarian pupils a different pan-Germanic history idea that could ‘fit’ with the local history. Furthermore, the Education Ministry of Bayern did not question the new history periodization, even though such periodization was connected to the belief in the existence of a Nordic-Germanic culture, but it modified the interpretation of the *Urgermanische Zeit*. That is, while in the ‘general’ interpretation the Nordic-Germanic settlement in northern Germany was considered as the first evidence of the German-Aryan race, the local history analysis in Bayern believed that *Armin* (called *Hermann*), *Ariovist*, *Alarich*, the *Wikingen* and the *Kimbern* and *Teutonen* were the only racial ancestors of Nazi Germans.

²⁴⁶ Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen 1940, p. 47.

«Doch darf Hermanns Kampf gegen die Römer als ein erster Versuch zur Einigung deutscher Stämme keinem deutschen Kind unbekannt bleiben. Zur Auswahl stehen: Kimbern und Teutonen, Ariovist, Alarich, Geiserich, Theodorich, Wikingerfahrten. Wenn die Auswahl in den Schulen verschieden getroffen wird, so bereichert das die Gesamtbildung unseres Volkes in seiner frühen Geschichte; daher ist ein solcher Wechsel erwünscht.»²⁴⁷

We must therefore presume, that the idea of a Nordic race as being the matrix of all Germanic and then German populations that were finally reunited in the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*, was unacceptable to the Bavarians despite having supported the *NSDAP* and Adolf Hitler as early as the 1920s. The National Socialist “*Bewegung*” had arisen in Bayern and, consequently, the Bavarians did not want to be remembered in German history as being less racially pure and therefore less important than northern German populations. The involvement and the commitment toward the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* assumed the form of a ‘competition’ in which everybody wanted to excel. Thus, the regionalist and particularism-oriented history interpretation of the Bavarian textbooks and teaching plans, in which the racial and cultural origin of the German *Volk* was to be found in southern German territories more than in the northern ones, has to be considered a consequence of this competition. The core idea of the Germanic pre-history, namely: the Germanic race spreading its virtues and its blood all over European territories, was shaped to fit the history of southern German populations.

In the Bavarian *Volksschulen* the *Westgermanen*, *Südgermanen* and the *Bajuwaren* population, imagined as being ‘ancestors’ of modern Bavarians, more than the *Nordgermanen*, were protagonists of the German history. For instance, Eugen Ziegelmeier in his 1941 textbook for Bavarian *Volksschulen* “*Volk und Heimat*” dedicated a chapter to the *Westgermanen* and their fight to obtain “*Lebensraum*”²⁴⁸.

²⁴⁷ Erziehung und Unterricht in den bayerischen Volksschulen 1940, p. 47.

²⁴⁸ E. Ziegelmaier, *Volk und Heimat: Zusammenschau der Sachstoffe für die Schüler der Volksschule. 5. Schuljahr*, Frankfurt am Main, 1941, p. 49.

«Die Landnahme der Westgermanen war ein zähler Kampf um Boden an der Grenze. Aus der Heimat zogen dauernd junge Kräfte nach. Heimat und neuer Siedlungsraum waren dadurch enge verbunden. [...] Dadurch wurden die Westgermanen Retter des germanisch-deutschen Volkes.»²⁴⁹

In contrast to the ‘nordicist’ history interpretation, that identified the *Völkerwanderung* as essentially negative for the Germanic populations because they lost their racial purity, Ziegelmeier described the *Völkerwanderung* positively – as a heroic time for all the *Germanen*.

«Am Ende der Völkerwanderung. Die Zeit der großen Wanderungen der nordischen Menschen war eine Zeit hohen Heldentums. Mächtige germanische Reiche waren errichtet worden. [...] Im Süden lag das römische Reich zertrümmert am Boden. Groß war das Opfer an germanischem Blute.»²⁵⁰

Altogether, the Bavarian Ministry of Education and the authors of the Bavarian *Volksschulen* textbooks did not actually intend to discredit the authority of the Regime; neither was it offered in the Bavarian schools an alternative to the National Socialist history interpretation and ideology. As well, there is no textbook in National Socialist Germany that did not show complete support to the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and to Hitler’s politics. But, the *Volksschulen* textbooks authors showed various approaches to the Nazi ideology. These approaches caused evident differences between, what we have called, the ‘general’ and ‘local’ historical interpretations.

A fundamental dilemma lay within this approach. On the one hand, the *Vorgeschichte* and the history of the Nordic-Germanic populations was propaedeutic to creating a new and ‘more Germanic’ history and, according to *Erziehungsministerium*, to giving more pride and historical awareness to Nazi Germany. On the other hand, the emphasis on the racial purity of the Nordic-Germanic populations and the idea of the original Aryan settlement being situated in a small area between northern Germany and southern Denmark, discredited the history and cultures of the southern German populations, among others. Finally, what could have been a historiographical debate between historians supporting the

²⁴⁹ Ziegelmaier 1941, p. 51.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

‘nordicist’ interpretation and those who were against it, ended up in the contraposition between a pan-German historical interpretation sustained by the Regime, and a ‘regionalist’ one supported by former German *Länder*. Indeed, Bayern was not the only German region with a particularist historical interpretation during the Regime – the *Schlesien* and the *Ost-Preußen* offer two additional supporting examples.

B) Schlesien and eastern German territories

The pan-Germanic historical interpretation supported by the *Erziehungsministerium* and used widely in several *Volksschulen* textbooks, supported the theory of a primordial Nordic-Germanic/Aryan race that lived around 4,000 B.C. and was racially 'uncontaminated'. According to several textbook authors, this race, which was composed of one or more populations, moved to southern, eastern and western territories where it mixed with non-Aryan populations and combined its 'Aryan blood' with their non-Aryan blood. *Rebus sic stantibus*, the northern Germanic population(s) was the purest one racially, while all the others had in their veins a certain degree of non-Aryan blood and were, thereby, mixed race.

Nevertheless, according to such a theory, while in western and southern German territories the population(s) coming from the North mixed their blood with other Germanic populations, in the eastern German territories the northern Germans mixed their Aryan blood with Slavic blood. Consequently, while the result of the 'northern-western' and 'northern-southern' racial encounters was positively described by the textbook authors for all the Germanic populations that were now sharing the same Aryan blood, the effect of the 'northern-eastern' encounter was often negatively interpreted. Indeed, the new eastern Germanic populations 'generated' by the fusion of Aryan and Slavic blood were not considered as racially pure by several textbook historians of the National Socialist Regime who portrayed the racial history of the eastern German territories and populations as extremely chaotic. It was indeed difficult to say whether the *Ostgermanen* were Aryan or not. The historical issue became, thereby, a racial one.

It is then easy to understand that such historical-racial issues posed a serious problem of racial legitimization for the Germans who were living in the eastern territories of the Nazi Regime. In fact, in the eastern territories of the Nazi Regime, especially after 1939, being Aryan, whatever that actually meant for the different Regime's leaders racial interpretations, was the first and essential requirement for being part of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. For the Germans there was no 'half way': either they belonged to the *Gemeinschaft* or they did not.

To prove their own participation and membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Germans had to biologically demonstrate they were Aryan but, in terms of political education in the *Volksschulen*, it was important to prove their descent from an Aryan Germanic *Volk* as, for instance: *Sachsen, Bajuwaren, Alemannen* and *Kelten*. But, for some regions and cities of eastern Germany during the Regime, such as the *Schlesien* or the city of *Danzig*, the relationship to their historical ‘ancestors’ was particularly untoward. In fact, several *Volksschulen* textbooks, clearly subdivided the Germanic populations into two groups – the *Westgermanen* and the *Ostgermanen* – stating that the *Ostgermanen*, who lived in the eastern German territories during *Urgermanische* and *Großgermanische Zeit*, were a German-Slavic population.

As a reaction to this interpretation, the teaching plans and the textbooks of both the *Gau Schlesien* and of the *Gau Danzig* ordered the rejection of the ‘infamous’ accusation of having mixed Slavic origins or, even worse, of having Slavic blood but instead, to strongly emphasize that the populations settled on the eastern territories had always been Germanic. Furthermore, the *Ostgermanen*, because of their geographical proximity to the Slavic populations, constantly proved their loyalty to the German *Volk* by fighting the *Slawen* at the front.

As early as 1937, the “*Erziehung und Bildungsplan für die danziger Schulen*” edited by the Department of Education and Instruction of the *Gau Danzig* in cooperation with the *NSLB*, shed a light on the complex interpretation of the eastern German history. Firstly, the *Danzig* teaching plan, quoting Adolf Hitler’s sentence «Die Rassenfrage ist der Schlüssel zur Weltgeschichte»²⁵¹ stated the importance of the ‘Racial Question’ in order to understand and to correctly interpret history. Secondly, in order to underline their racial bonds with the Germanic *Volk*, referred to this latter group by using the adjective ‘our’, thereby showing that the eastern Germans were naturally part of the Nazi-German *Volk*.

«Das Blut unseres germanisches Volkes ist in der Hauptsache das des nordischen Menschen. Diese Rasse bildet daher auch die Grundlage für das Schicksal unseres Volkes.»²⁵²

²⁵¹ Abteilung Erziehung und Unterricht Gau Danzig (eds.), *Erziehung und Bildungsplan für die danziger Schulen*, Danzig 1937, p. 8.

²⁵² Ibid.

Thirdly, the *Danzig* directives warned of the dangers of the racial “*Vermischung*” that causes the degeneration and decadence of the *Volk*. Fourthly, they briefly described German and European history as being extremely influenced by the racial commingling that took place after the Germanic *Völkerwanderungen*. Finally, the *Danzig* directives undoubtedly stated that it was no longer possible to accept the idea that ‘our ancestors’ arrived from Asia:

«Es ist nicht mehr angebracht, daß wir, wie bisher, aus der Vorderasien und Südeuropa zur Geschichte unseres Vaterlandes kommen, vielmehr müssen wir unsere völkische Entwicklung aus unserer Heimat heraus erleben.»²⁵³

So, the *Danzig* teaching plan directives, on the one hand, emphasized the value of the racial purity for the German *Volk* by interpreting history under a strong racial perspective while, on the other hand, they identified the eastern Germans as members of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In a comparable context the textbook authors Hans Uebel, Ernst Hartmann and Gerhard Gonscherowski, adopted a similar strategy to fight the ‘orientalist prejudice’. Indeed, they celebrated the history of the *Ostpreußen* region in their *Volksschulen* textbook “*Deutsche Geschichte: Geschichtsbuch für die ostpreußischen Volksschulen*”, as being fundamental to the destiny of all German *Volk*. In this textbook, the destiny of the *Ostpreußen* was identified with the destiny of Germany itself and, consequently, the three authors on the first page of their textbook, near an Adolf Hitler portrait, quoted the *NSLB* administrator of the *Gau Ostpreußen*, as saying the ‘local’ history was always part of the German one. Contrary to the ‘orientalist racial prejudice’, the Germans who were living in the eastern territories of the Nazi Regime highlighted ‘their’ past and their struggles against the *Slawen* as an exemplar for all other Germans:

«Die ‘Deutsche Geschichte’ ist die Geschichte der deutschen Volkswenden über alle Kampf- und Notzustände der Jahrtausende hinweg.

Ostpreußens Schicksal war immer deutsches Schicksal!

Die Ehrfurcht vor den großen Männer und vor dem Opfergang von Millionen Menschen deutschen Blutes muß wieder der deutschen Jugend als heilige Verpflichtung eingeprägt werden.»²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Unterricht Gau Danzig 1937, p. 10.

It is worth also pointing out that this textbook, as the others we have analysed, had been approved by the *Parteiamtliche Prüfungskommission* of the *Dienststelle Bouhler* in Hitler's Chancellery. Apparently, as long as the cherished idea of the *gesamtdeutsche* historical interpretation did not actually homogenize the *Volksschulen* history teaching, the Regime had no choice other than to approve textbooks that emphatically characterized regional and local history. Furthermore, both the *Gau* and the regional department of the *NSLB* supported this form of particularism.

Furthermore, the three authors of the textbook for the *ostpreußischen Volksschulen* dedicated several chapters of their work to the history of the eastern German territories in different epochs: during the *Urgermanische-* and *Großgermanisch Zeit* as well as in 1930s. According to their interpretations, the destiny of the German *Volk* and, to a larger degree, the destiny of the Nazi-German *Reich* was connected to and actually dependent on the history of the *Ostpreußen* and its habitants. Indeed, the *ostpreußischen* populations, who fought against the *Slawen*, colonized and reclaimed new territories for the good of the *Germanentum*, and gave new regions and room to the German *Volk* as early as in the *Großgermanischen Zeit*. That is, thanks only to the *ostpreußischen* and *ostgermanische* populations, who resisted several *Slawic* invasions, the Nazi Germans could now pursue aggressive eastern politics and look at the eastern European territories as German "*Lebensraum*".

Consequently, the three authors described the *Ostpreußen* as being one of the oldest Germanic settlement as early as in the *Urgermanischen Zeit* and the eastern Prussian populations as having all the physical characteristics of the Aryan race, namely: blonde hair, white skin, blue eyes and a strong physique. There was no doubt that these populations could have been something other than Germanic and, according the three authors, the *ostpreußen* populations shared the same use and customs as the Germanics.

«Ostpreußen ist ebenso wie das übrige Deutschlands uraltes Siedlungsland.
An bearbeiteten Mammutknochen und Renntiergeweihstangen können wir

²⁵⁴ H. Uebel, E. Hartmann and G. Gonscherowski, *Deutsche Geschichte. Geschichtsbuch für die ostpreußischen Volksschulen*, Königsberg 1938. p. III.

erkennen, daß bald nach dem Abschmelzen der riesigen Eiszeitgletscher Menschen auf ostpreußischem Boden lebten. Es waren Jäger und Fischer [...] Die Preußen, hatten als nordischgeartete Menschen blondes Haar, blaue Augen, ein rotes, blutvolles Gesicht und einen starken Körper.»²⁵⁵

As with all the Germanic populations, who lived separately in peace-time but united their strengths in wartime, so also the Prussians, who were normally divided among different populations and settled in different territories, united their powers in times of danger. That is, as early as in the *Urgermanisch-* and *Großgermanischen Zeit* the *Preußen* populations, led by one *Führer*, bravely fought the Russians and Polish. The evident anachronism – referring to Russians and Poles in 1,000 B.C. – has to be understood as the consequence of the constant past-present comparison and ‘presentism’ of the history that was proper for the *Volksschulen* historiography during the Nazi Regime. Additionally, by doing that, the three authors ‘legitimated’ the role of local history in the pan-Germanic history interpretation.

«Hauptsächlich unternahmen sie [the Preußen] siegreiche Heerzüge gegen die ländergierigen polnischen und russischen Fürsten. Während im Frieden die einzelnen Stämme genau wie bei den Germanen meist abgeschlossen für sich selbst lebten, lernten sie in Not und Gefahr unter tapferen Führen gemeinsam kämpfen.»²⁵⁶

As in the case of Bavarian textbooks and teaching plans, so also the eastern German *Volksschulen* historians emphasized the local history in order to demonstrate the value and importance of their region in the Nazi Regime. For instance, both Bavarian and Prussian history textbook authors did not want to criticize the Nazi historical interpretation or the Nazi ideology, but they wanted, with a similar perspective but from two different aspects, to prove how important the history of the Bayern region and also of the Eastern-Prussian region was to German history and thus for the historical credibility of the Nazi Regime. We can describe these attempts as “*Sensucht*” toward the Nazi ideology in which both Bavarians and Prussians wanted to excel and be considered as models for National Socialist Germany.

²⁵⁵ Uebel, Hartmann and Gonscherowski, 1938 p. 25.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

Being legitimate members of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* by proving their historical origins needs to be understood, ultimately, as the fundamental aim of such local historians when writing textbooks for the *Volksschulen*. To achieve such legitimation, nothing was more important than proving the racial quality of their own ancestors in the *Ostpreußischen* territories.

«Es war ungefähr 1000 Jahre vor der Zeitwende, da strömten nordischen Menschen aus ihren Ursprungsland nach Osten und besiedelten auch unsern ostpreußischen Heimatboden. Es waren die Uisten oder Esten (nicht zu verwechseln mit den Esten im heutigen Estland!), die spatter auch das Volk der Prussen oder Preußen genannt wurden. – Sie wurden nicht von der Wanderlust ergriffen und haben ihr Land sstets gegen die feindlichen Nachbarvölker erfolgreich verteidigt. Es ist also nicht wahr, daß Litauer oder Slawen in alter Zeit in unserer ostpreußischen Heimat gewohnt haben.»²⁵⁷

The orientalist prejudice, however, not only entangled the *ostpreußischen* territories and *Volksschulen* but also the *Schlesischen*. In point of fact, textbooks and teaching plans of the *Schlesien* region strongly recommended that the teachers, both, reject the ‘Slavic prejudice’ and, avow the racial purity and the Germanic roots of their ancestors.

For example, the 1940 “*Schlesische Lehrpläne für alle Jahrgänge der Volksschulen*”, published after the 1939 publication of the *Erziehungsministerium* directives and edited by the *NSLB* department “*Erziehung und Unterricht*” of the *Gau Schlesien* in collaboration with a study group of Silesian teachers, clearly stated that the “*Schlesien*” were Germans and not Slavs.

«Die vorliegenden Lehrpläne wurden auf Grund der Richtlinien „Erziehung und Unterricht in der Volksschulen“ vom 15. 12. 1939 von einer Arbeitsgemeinschaft schlesischer Erzieher im Auftrage der Abteilung Erziehung und Unterricht des NS-Lehrerbundes Gau Schlesien ausgearbeitet.»²⁵⁸

The Silesian directives particularly recommended stating the ‘truth’ about the Germanic origins of the Silesian populations during the *Urgermanischen Zeit*.

²⁵⁷ Uebel, Hartmann and Gonscherowski 1938, p. 27.

²⁵⁸ Abteilung Erziehung und Unterricht des NS-Lehrerbundes Gau Schlesien (eds.), *Schlesischen Lehrpläne für alle Jahrgänge der Volksschulen*, Breslau, 1940, p. 3.

Once again, the new periodization of history was accepted but the ‘nordicist’ theory was refuted. The Silesian historians, like the Bavarians and the Prussians, had to prove their racial ‘right’ to belong to the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*.

«Die Vorgeschichtswissenschaft hat unser Geschichtsbild gegenüber ehemals außerordentlich geweitet. Aber nicht die zeitliche Ausdehnung des Wissens ist dabei das Entscheidende. Weit wichtiger ist die dadurch herbeigeführte neue Sicht auf den Gesamtverlauf unseres rassisch-völkischen Werdens. Das Hinaufgehen zu den erschlossenen früheren Jahrtausenden führt uns zu den Ursprüngen unseres rassisch-völkischen Seins, auf die wir uns immer wieder besinnen wollen. Nicht in Asien, sondern in Nordland stand die Wiege unseres Blutes.»²⁵⁹

More precisely, the Silesian directives stated that the “*Illyrer*”, who were generally described as being the direct ancestors of the Silesians, were Germans.

«Beim Ausgehen von heimischen Bodenfunden ist zu beachten, daß in Schlesien zur Bronzezeit Germanen nicht siedeln. Hervorzuheben ist auf alle Fälle, daß *Illyrer* keine Slawen waren. Ihre Rasseverwandtschaft mit den Germanen wird hervorgehoben.»²⁶⁰

But, these directives simply restated a common trend of the Silesian *Volksschule* historiography, which, during the twelve years of Nazi Regime, were always concerned about the racial and historical roots of the Silesians. Indeed, as early as 1934, the “*Handbuch für den Unterricht der deutschen Vorgeschichte in Ostdeutschland*” ‘proved’ the Germanic origins of the Silesians by asking: «Warum ist die Schlesien ein urgermanisches Land?»²⁶¹

“Weil seit dem Einwandern der Bastarnen und Skiren der Zustrom der Germanen nicht mehr versiegt. Der Wanderzug der Kimbern und Teutonen führte durch Schlesein, diesen folgend siedelten die Wandalen in ihm und im Westen wurden die Burgunder ansässig.”²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Unterricht Gau Schlesien 1940, p. 59.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ F. Geschwendt, *Handbuch für den Unterricht der deutschen Vorgeschichte in Ostdeutschland*, Breslau, 1934, p. 81.

²⁶² Ibid.

III. 1. 3 Summary

Two essential factors, beside the war, prevented the National Socialist Regime from enacting out the reform of the *Volksschulen* textbooks and from establishing a common pan-German historical interpretation in the history classes of the *Volksschulen*: firstly, the contentiousness that characterized the political life of the Regime; secondly, the influence of the regional and local historiography.

Firstly, both the *Erziehungsministerium* and the *Dienststelle Bouhler* wanted to reform the textbooks of Nazi Germany. But, these two institutions, despite sharing a common aim, constantly quarrelled with each other. Furthermore, both the ministry and the *Dienststelle* suffered from a political rivalry that exacerbated their relationships with other National Socialist ministries and institutions. Nonetheless, directives and orders issued both by the *Erziehungsminister* and by the *Dienststelle*, often lost their strength and effectiveness when reaching territories under the political administration of *Gauleiter* who conservatively supported the ‘old’ federal structure of the German school system. Especially in this latter case, the problematic issue was the centralization of the school system and the overpowering of the federal structures by the Nazi Regime, which on the contrary, continued to guarantee some political independence, albeit to a lesser extent, to the regional administrations.

What is more, neither the *Erziehungsministerium* nor the *Dienststelle Bouhler* effectively controlled the politics of the few private publishing houses, which continued to work during the twelve years of the Regime. In point of fact, in June 1944 the *Dienststelle* admitted in a private report, that only the school atlases were actually ‘reformed’ while all the other *Volksschulen* textbooks were still under control of the private publishing house²⁶³. Moreover, the *Dienststelle* had a say over neither the price nor the distribution of the *Volksschulen* textbooks.

Secondly, the textbook reform, as concerned the history, also failed because of the unwillingness of the local ministries and departments of education, bound to the *Gau* or to the local section of the *NSLB*, to simply accept the directives concerning

²⁶³ “Zusammenfassung über die Entwicklung der Arbeiten aus dem Schulbuchauftrag Reichsleiters Bouhler, Juni 1944”, in: NS 51 ,182: 128-131, BBL.

the contents of the history classes. History, emphasized as being the most political of all *Volksschulen* subjects, was not always taught with a pan-German interpretation as the Regime ordered in its 1939 directives to all *Volksschulen*.

It is beyond a doubt that many textbook authors wrote their texts precisely following the orders coming from the *Erziehungsministerium* and, as well, it is certain that in many *Volksschulen* the history was taught from a pan-Germanic perspective. But many is not all. Either because the pan-Germanic interpretation discredited the culture of some regions, such as in Bayern, or because it damaged the image of some regional 'populations', such as the Silesians, several textbooks and teaching plan authors, often members of the *NSLB*, preferred to point out and emphasize aspects of their local culture and history rather than the pan-German interpretation.

More precise and detailed archive and textbook analyses are necessary in order to better outline and understand the dynamic between central and local powers. Still, if the Regime had difficulties affirming the pan-German historical interpretation in the German territories of the *Reich*, such as Bayern, eastern Prussia and Silesia; it is very likely that the Regime directives had almost no effect in the new 'German' territories, such as Austria, Sudeten and Poland in which a national historiography already existed before being absorbed into the *Third Reich*.

Chapter 2: The Land, education in the *Land* and *Dorfschulen*

III.2.1 History in the *Landschulen* and *Dorfschulen*

History classes in the German *Land*- and *Dorfschulen* had different aims and methods in comparison to the *Volksschulen*. Several textbook and teaching plan authors were clearly more interested in describing the past of ‘their’ small village communities than in emphasizing the Germanic or pan-Germanic history. Furthermore, in the single-class *Land*- and *Dorfschulen*, in which only one person taught all the school subjects and in which the lessons were a mix of different subjects such as biology and geography, ‘history’ lost its singularity and was merged with other disciplines. Since there was no separate history teacher in the *Landschulen*, there was also no separate history lesson. Thus, history was just one part of the rural education that formed the rural German pupils.

Unfortunately, only a few *Land*- and *Dorfschulen* textbooks or teaching plans are still available and accessible nowadays for this research either in German libraries and archives or in the specialized school textbook centre *Georg Eckert Institut* in Braunschweig. One of the reasons is certainly because of the limited editions of these textbooks to begin with, as they only served small rural schools and, as we just saw, were published by small publishing houses. The 1940 teaching plans “*Stoffplan für die einklassige Landschule*” (Hermann Otto Abel) and “*Bildungsplan für die einklassige Industrie- und Landschule*” (Paul Vogt), however, can be taken into consideration as examples.

Hermann Otto Abel, author of the first teaching plan, pointed out the difficult situation of the German *Landschule* in the first sentence of his preface²⁶⁴. According to Abel, the *Landschulen*, because of its uniqueness, needed different teaching methods and contents than other German *Volksschulen* in the urban areas. Furthermore – so claimed the author – the 1939 directives were only partially

²⁶⁴ H.O. Abel, *Stoffplan in Bildungseinheiten für die einklassige Landschule nach den Richtlinien vom 15. Dezember 1939*, Bochum 1940, p. II.

serviceable for the *Landschulen* because the rural life, with its different perception of time, was much too distant and different from the urban one. Unlike that of the city, the rural life was completely dependent on agriculture and this had its own particular rhythm: a rhythm based on the succession of day and night and on the cycles of the four seasons. According to Abel, the *Landschulen* was actually conceived as being an active part of the local village community more than of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*. The primary/principle aim of the *Landschulen* classes was to help the pupils to be, first, good and trustworthy peasants and, then, National Socialists.

In support of his observations, the structure of Abel's teaching plan clearly showed how different the *Landschulen* lessons were from the *Volksschulen* ones. While the latter were divided among different school subjects the *Landschulen* lessons were 'seasonal':

«Inhalt: Im Frühling, S. 5 – Die Familie, S. 11 – Im Garten, S. 16 – Unser deutscher Wald, S. 21 – Im Herbst, S. 26 – Auf der Landstraße, S. 31 – Der Winter ist da, S. 36 – Von Wind und Wetter, S. 40 – Haus und Hof, S. 44 – Unser täglich Brot, S. 49»²⁶⁵

The structure of the “*Bildungsplan für die einklassige Industrie und Landschule*” written by Paul Vogt in 1940²⁶⁶ was similar. This lesson plan likewise stressed the uniqueness of the rural situation. Of particular concern, according to Vogt, was the situation of the one-class *Landschule* that was called “*Schmerzenskind*” as compared to the urban *Volksschulen*:

«Betrachten wir jedoch einmal die Leistungsertüchtigung, so ist die einklassige Landschule noch immer das Schmerzenskind unserer Zeit.»²⁶⁷

Because of this 'painful' condition, the teaching plan could not slavishly follow the 1939 *Erziehungsministerium* directives, but was modified to serve the needs of the *Landschule*. Thus, the teaching plan echoed the rural life's tempo and activities, for instance: the four seasons, night and day, the forest and the village:

²⁶⁵ Abel 1940, p. II.

²⁶⁶ P. Vogt, *Bildungsplan für die einklassige Industrie- und Landschule*, Bochum 1940.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. II.

«Übersicht über den ersten Jahresring: Unser Vaterhaus, Auf den Bauernhof, Auf dem Lande, In unserem Walde, Winterfreud und Winterlied, Unser Dorf, Wald als Lebengemeinschaft, Schnee und Eis – Nacht und Licht.»²⁶⁸

More specifically, as concerned history, it is remarkable to notice the absence of a clear chronological master narrative that would unite the different history topics in the teaching plans. Since the topics were related to the seasonal changes or to the surrounding nature, the history lessons ‘lost’ their chronological development in the *Landschulen* and, what is more, history was not narrated and presented as being the ‘destiny’ of the German *Volk*. In the process, history lost its independence and it was, thereby, always associated with other subjects. Rather than being a distinct subject, history became a ‘container’ of information and data that was used depending on the local needs.

For instance, according to Paul Vogt, in a strange mix of history, ecology and meteorology, the culture of the *Germanen* and the effects of the springs on fields and woods were taught at the same time and in the same teaching unit during the fifth school year:

«Die Germanen waren Bauern, keine Nomaden, Germanische Kultur in unserer Heimatlandschaft; die heimatliche Tier und Pflanzenwelt, Die Frühlingsweise, die Garten in Frühling, Frühlingsraunen im Walde.»²⁶⁹

Alternatively, the history of the *Germanen* could be associated with the topic ‘Wood’ and the lesson was then organised as follows:

«Der Deutsche Wald und die deutsche Wirtschaft. ‘Nicht in Baueten von Stein, sondern in Wäldern verehrten die Germanen ihre Götter; sie siedelten sich an, wo ihnen ein Bach oder eine Quelle giefel’ Tacitus – Wir suchen alte Heimatbräuche and Bäumen: Eiche, Buche, Linde, Tanne; Germanenglaube an Waldgeister und dem wilden Jäger; Reste dieses Glaubens in meiner Heimat.»²⁷⁰

Furthermore, working on the topic “*Stadt und Land*”, Vogt took elements of ancient and medieval history to describe the parallel development of cities and

²⁶⁸ Vogt 1940, p. 4.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

villages in the various parts of Germany. Mixed elements of roman and German medieval history were then presented as one topic:

«Stadt und Land – Hand in Hand: Vom Hof zu Dorf – vom Siedlungsdorf zur Stadt; Das Wachsen und Werden der großen Städte; Emporblühen deutscher Industriestädte, Ein Rückblick auf das Leben und Treiben in einer mittelalterlichen Stadt. Die alte Stadt Rom – Germanen vor seinen Toren; Germanischer Freiheitskampf; Wanderungen – Hof und Siedlungsgründen.»²⁷¹

More generally, Vogt focused on the German *Bauerntum* as being the only protagonist of German history and, from his point of view, he hoped to transform the Nazi German *Reich* into a *Bauernreich*. Thus, various history topics were related to the *Bauerntum*.

«Unser Reich muß ein Bauernreich werden, oder es wird untergehen. [...] Vom germanischen Bauerntum bis zur Jetztzeit, Bauernfreiheit, Bauernknechtung, Bauernkriege und Bauernbefreiung. Das Odalsrecht der Germanen, Bauern kämpfen gegen das römische Recht; Kapitalismus und Bauerntum.»²⁷²

Altogether, there were two principal characteristics of history in *Land-* and *Dorfschulen*: firstly, history was not taught as a single subject but was combined with other subjects, such as natural history, biology or history of the peasantry; secondly, the pan-German historical interpretation, supported by the *Erziehungsministerium*, was ignored in the *Landschulen*. There, the history of the village was preferred over the pan-German one.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 19.

III.2.2 The *Landschulen* as historiographic problem

The scarceness of available sources, both textbooks and teaching plans, allowed us to only outline some general characteristics of the *Landschulen* teaching methods during the Regime. More generally, according to the current state of the research, we can only sketch the existence of the divergence between the German urban society and the rural one during the Nazi Regime. Such divergence, in fact, pre-existed the Regimes' 1933 inauguration but, as several *NSLB* authors pointed out, the Regime was the first political power to emphasize the role of the German *Bauerntum* not only in German history but also in German society, i.e. the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Consequently, many pedagogues expected efficient policies from the Regime, which could actually change and improve the *status quo* of the German land.

The teaching plans and the specialized literature about the *Landschulen* reflected some aspects of this urban-rural controversy. In point of fact, two pedagogies existed in the German school system: one for the *Volksschulen*, another one for the *Land-* and *Dorfschulen*. These two pedagogies were, in many ways, incompatible. While in the *Volksschulen* history was always taught and studied as a separate subject, in the *Landschulen* there was only one lesson that integrated topics from different subjects. Also, while the German *Bauer* in the *Volksschulen* was just one of the 'protagonists' of the Germanic and German history alongside kings, emperors and warriors, in the *Landschulen* the *Bauer* was basically the only 'figure' of history.

Finally, the effectiveness of the Regime's policies toward education and schooling, as well as the understanding of the National Socialist ideology, were seriously questioned and sometimes disregarded in the rural areas of Germany.

Part III Summary

The variety of *Volksschulen* textbooks as well as the diversity of the local directives characterized the Regime's policies toward the schooling. As noted, different history interpretations, which echoed the regional culture of the German regions, were actually allowed in the different German *Volksschulen* during the Regime's period.

Whether the *Erziehungsministerium* approved or disliked such differences, it had, in the practice, no other choice than to tolerate them. So, Bavarian, Silesian and Prussians pupils were allowed to learn different versions of the National Socialist history that could fit with their cultural backgrounds.

Way more complexed was the situation of the *Land-* and *Dorfschulen* in the German villages. There, textbooks and directives were following a 'rural pedagogy' that was different from the 'urban' one and was only functional to the *Landarbeit* and to the rural life in the small peasant community. Still, more detailed research are necessary to shed a light on the different aspects of the *Stadt-Land* relationship under the Nazi Regime.

Conclusions

How many questions still remain open after this analysis of the *Volksschulen* historiography and what implications can this research make/establish?

Firstly, this research fills, even if partially, a lacuna in the current state of research²⁷³. What has been missing, in Germany and elsewhere, is a thorough and systematic analysis of German textbooks from different German areas under the National Socialist Regime with the intent of pointing out similarities and differences. Highlighting trends and incongruities of the *Volksschulen* historiography under the Regime was, indeed, the first aim of this research.

By doing that, this research gives a ‘voice’ to, what has been called, ‘small historians’ and ‘small historiography’ which, away from the German universities and from the elite of the NSDAP, expressed with simple words and concepts the National Socialist ideology, with all its different interpretations, to the youngest members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Nevertheless, these different interpretations that intertwined with the Nazi ideology as well as with the pan-Germanic historical interpretation did not, in any case, stop or block the process of ‘nazification’ that involved the whole German school system. The differences between teaching plan and textbooks did not represent a ‘reaction against’ the National Socialist ideology, but, they did represent different attempts to ‘fit in’ the Nazi *Weltanschauung* and *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Indeed, as noted earlier, it seems likely, that the aim of the 1940 Bavarian teaching plan was not, for instance: ‘How to distance the Bavarians from the Germans or from the National Socialists’; but it was: ‘How to present the Bavarians as being the most true among the Germans and the most pure National Socialists’. Similarly, and even more evidently, was the situation for the Silesians *Volksschulen* historiography, in which the authors of both teaching plans and textbooks wanted to reject the ‘orientalist prejudice’ – which portrayed the *Schlesien* as being a German-Slavic population – by showing the racial purity of their ancestors and, consequently, their own membership in the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*.

²⁷³ March 2013.

Secondly, this research supported the thesis that the Regime was ‘poly-centric’ and not, in fact, completely centralized. Aside from the success of the *Erziehungsministerium*’s reforms, the quarreling and struggling among different NSDAP and Regime institutions were recurrent elements in my research. Reforming the ‘education’ and the ‘schooling’, i.e. having the chance to control and reach the biggest part of the German youth almost everyday, were appealing tasks for many leaders of the NSDAP. Indeed, Goebbels, Rosenberg and Heß all envied the political power, visibility and the economic possibilities of the *Erziehungsministerium* head Bernhard Rust. Moreover, the political conflict between the *Dienststelle Bouhler* and Rust’s ministry was evident and it is sufficiently attested to in the German *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin. Until 1944, the *Dienststelle Bouhler* and *Erziehungsministerium* quarreled continuously about who was in charge of doing what and whose politics were inappropriate. Similarly, various conflicts of interest have occurred, between the central power, represented by the *Erziehungsministerium*, and the local powers, represented by the regional Ministries of Education and by the local departments of the *NSLB*.

More detailed research is, indeed, still necessary to clarify the relationship between ‘central and local’ under the Nazi Regime. More precisely, it is not completely clear, for instance, how independent the *Gauen* were from the Regime and, also, if the *Gauen* could legislate in their territories or, on the contrary, the *Gauen*’s role was only to disseminate information, directives and orders from Berlin to the German cities and villages.

Thirdly, from a historiographical point of view, it is remarkable to see/discover the emphasis on the German pre-history that characterized the *Volksschulen* historiography. The German *Vorgeschichte*, more than the German Middle Ages or than any other epoch, was considered exemplar for the Nazi youth and it was portrayed as being the ‘golden age’ of the German *Volk*. Such a process of ‘interest-shifting’ was reflected in the expression ‘Disappearing Middle Ages’ in the title of this research. It was, indeed, surprising to find out that in the German *Volksschulen* during the Regime, the medieval history lost its symbolic value and

its 'place' in history. The interest in the German medieval history and its *völkisch* interpretation are not discoveries of the National Socialism. The Regime did, however, capitalize on both via propaganda, such as posters and slogans, and in the figure of Hitler himself, who named the military plan for invading Russia 'Barbarossa', to perpetrate the *völkisch* interpretation of the Middle Ages in German society after 1933. Similarly, Heinrich Himmler's idea of being the 'successor' of *Heinrich I* allowed us to expect a particular emphasis on medieval history in the elementary school during the Regime. But, as we have now found out, more than the Middle Ages, it was the *Vorgeschichte* that received primary attention from the 'small historians'.

Furthermore, the use of a new periodization – *Urgermanische Zeit*, *Großgermanische Zeit*, *Deutsche Zeit* – as well as the introduction of the *Gegenwartskunde* in the *Volksschulen* testified to the revolutionary nature and aims of the Regime which wanted to drastically break with the past and start a new era. Both the new periodization and the *Gegenwartskunde* have to be considered as unique of the 'small historiography'. It is not accidental that both the new periodization and the emphasis on the 'present' are characteristics of the *Volksschulen* historiography that, contrary to the academic one, was not so exposed to the German scientific community. Perhaps, for a similar reason, the German *Vorgeschichte*, and not the German Middle Ages, despite its popular, well-known and *völkisch* flavored mythology, became the German time par excellence in the *Volksschulen*.

In point of fact, the *Vorgeschichte*, rather than the medieval history, seemed 'easier' to re-orient and to re-interpret according to the National Socialist ideas for the *Volksschulen*. Several German historians were ideologically supported by Alfred Rosenberg's "*Reichsbund für Deutsche Vorgeschichte*". As outlined above, the history textbook authors, especially following the 1936 Ulm conference, described the prehistory as the brightest period of the German *Volk* history while portraying the German Middle Ages, with few exceptions, as a time of political difficulties and fighting that destroyed the ancient German racial purity.

Fourthly, this research also brought up education, pedagogy and schooling in *Landschulen* and *Dorfschulen* as a topic. When reviewing the *Landschulen* teaching plans and magazine articles about the *Landschulenfrage*, the existence of a controversy between two different pedagogies – the urban one and the rural one – was pointed out. Additionally, these two pedagogies reflected the contrasts between urban society and rural one under the National Socialist Regime. Certainly, more detailed and precise research is necessary on this topic. Some questions remain open, such as: How influential and successful were the Nazi ideology and policies in the rural areas of Germany between 1933 and 1945?

Altogether, the *Volksschulen* have to be taken into consideration and seen in relationship to all the other school forms that were gradually ‘nazified’ by the Regime. Indeed, the *Volksschulen* also falls into the triphasic nazification of the school system as described by Ottwilm Ottweiler in his 1980 article “*Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik im Bereich des Volksschulwesens im Reich*”. According to Ottweiler, three phases characterized the education policies of the Nazi regime after 1933: the first one, between 1933 and 1934, in which the Regime produced the first administrative directives to re-organize the school system; the second one which started after the creation of the *Erziehungsministerium* on 15th May 1934 and was aimed at the destruction of the federal structure; the third one, after 1939, in which the Regime actively tried to reform the contents and topics of the German school²⁷⁴. That is, there is actually no doubt that the *Volksschulen*, within the textbooks and the teaching staff, were also ‘nazified’. But the question asked and the problem illuminated in this paper, was: what does ‘nazification’ mean for all these different people who worked in education? Did they have a different idea and understanding of the National Socialist ideology? And if ‘yes’, did they transmit different forms of National Socialism to the German children?

Thus, when considering the differences between the regional historical interpretations and the pan-German one, as well as when looking at all the ‘unorthodox’ interpretations of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, we do not find

²⁷⁴ O. Ottweiler, *Die nationalsozialistische Schulpolitik im Bereich des Volksschulwesens im Reich*, in: M. Heinemann (ed.), *Erziehung und Schulung im Dritten Reich*, Stuttgart, 1980.

‘resistance’ to the Regime and Nazi ideology, but, we do find different ways of being a National Socialist. For example, over-emphasizing the role of the local culture instead of celebrating the pan-Germanic history has to be considered as a common desire that characterized all the different local historical interpretations, of having a clear and well-defined role in the Nazi historiography. No regional historiography or regional culture wanted to be considered as second comers or less important and they therefore emphasized the Nazi characteristics that fit with their local culture. It was an ‘aspiration’ and a ‘desire’ toward the National Socialism in which all the contenders wanted to be as National Socialist as possible.

A central question remains: What was the real aim of the National Socialist education? Was the Regime actually only interested in creating soldiers, or did it want to ‘educate’ its youth? To these questions we give two opposing/conflicting answers:

Firstly, Hitler only wanted to have soldiers for the German army and that is why the Regime was scarcely interested in all the methodological or interpretative issues that concerned the *Volksschulen* historiography. For instance, that the pupils of the Bavarian schools considered the history of the original Aryan settlement in Northern Germany as a big historiographical lie, all that was neither interesting nor important for the Regime, which remained indifferent to such issues. As well, we can also claim that the Regime did not have enough time to revolutionize the German school system, indeed the *Erziehungsministerium* only had a few years, from 1934 to 1941/42, to reform the structure of the German school and the textbooks. Probably, this task, which was already a difficult one, became unrealizable after the beginning of the War, which was, in any event, the real aim of the Nazi Regime.

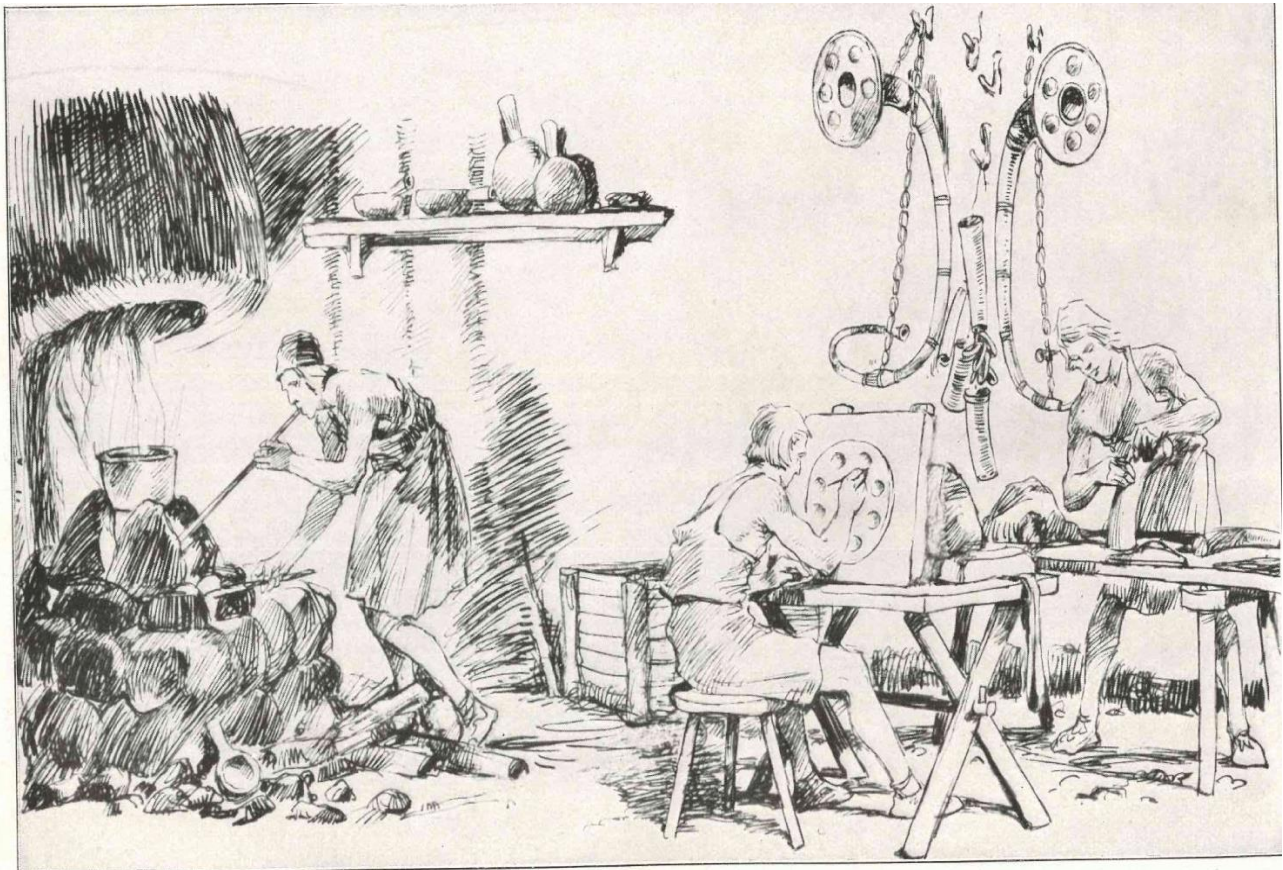
Secondly, the Regime actually tried and failed to reform the system in order to give the German children a new education. Evidence of the Regime’s will include the new directives for the history textbooks published in 1933, the directives for the composition of the ‘general’ textbook in 1934, the creation of the *Erziehungsministerium* in 1934 and the *Richtlinien* for all the German *Volksschulen* released in 1939. Furthermore, the Regime also allowed the

Dienststelle Bouhler, the *NSLB* and several other Nazi organizations to take part in the educational reform but, as already noted, these organizations did not cooperate with each other. Additionally, the brisk debates about history teaching, Nazi pedagogy and about the textbook reform that played out in German magazines and books between 1933 and 1945 proved the intentions of the Regime to reform the school and to establish a new *Weltanschauung* which, based on a *gesamtdeutsche* history interpretation, could be functional for the creation of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Finally, in the complex field of the German education and schooling during the National Socialist Regime, under which different actors, such as: the *Erziehungsministerium*, the *NSLB*, the *Dienststelle Bouhler*, the *Reichsnährstand*, the *Gauen* and the local Ministries of Education, played their roles, the conflicts between central and regional powers as well as between different National Socialist organizations left traces in the textbooks and teaching plans of the *Volksschulen*. Various opinions, debates and controversies characterized the German history between 1933 and 1945, despite the totalitarian intentions of the National Socialist Regime that tried to homogenize and control all aspects of the social life. But, if we want to recognize all these tensions and contradictions we cannot just study the Regime's orders that were coming from Berlin, but also the effects and the reactions to these orders in the daily life of the German society. Similarly, once that we have defined the National Socialist ideology, we can find out how the Germans understood, interpreted and remodeled that ideology on the basis of their private and public life.

Illustrations

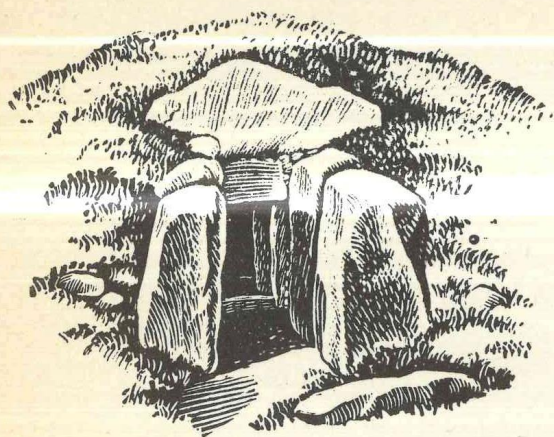
History in the *Volksschulen* textbooks was not only written but also was drawn. Here a brief collection of illustrations of the *Volksschulen* historiography during the National Socialist Regime.



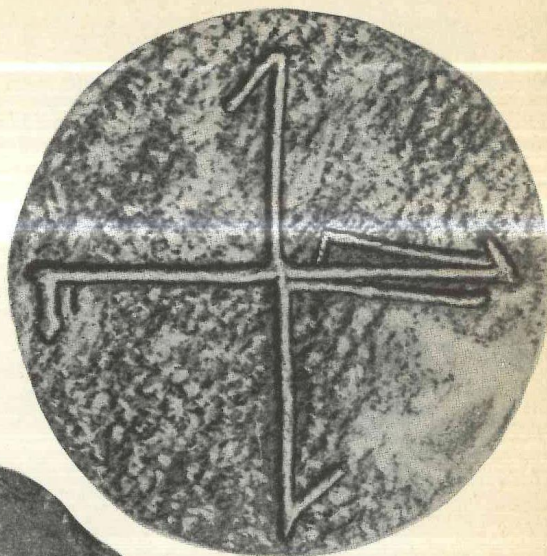
Lorenzwerkstatt

Aus Lechler, 5000 Jahre Deutschland. Curt Kabisch Verlag Leipzig 1936

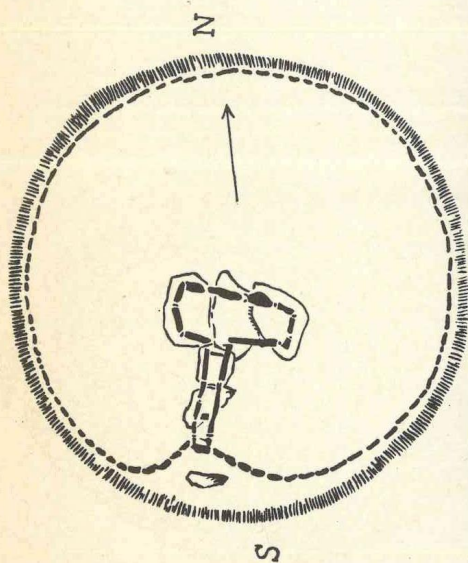
Figure 1: "The German Bauer", in: B. Kumsteller, U. Haacke and B. Schneider, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, Leipzig 1938, p. 33



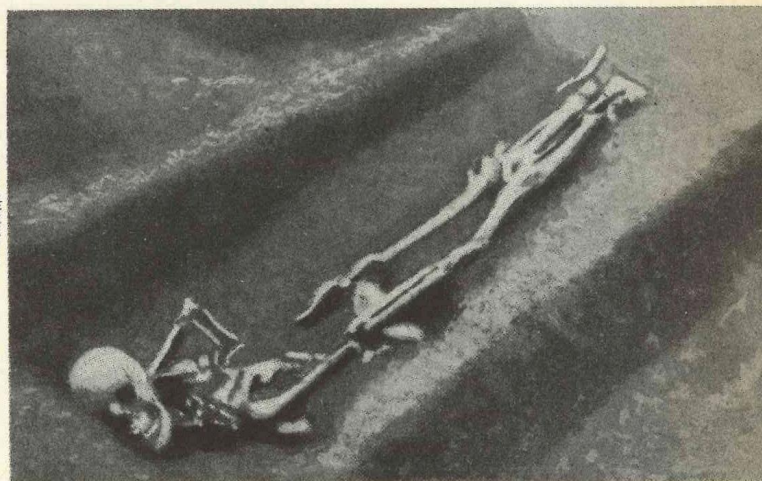
Ganggrab, Eingang



Die ältesten nordischen
Hakenkreuze von Drosa
und Roslau
(3000 v. d. Ztr.)



Grundriß eines Ganggrabes



Freigelegtes vorgeschichtliches Grab

3000 — — — — —

Indogermanenzeit
3000 v. d. Ztr. — 1800 v. d. Ztr.

Figure 2: "The Swastika in the Germanic prehistoric culture", in: L. Franz, *Von Hakenkreuz zum Hakenkreuz*, Dortmund 1938, p. 4

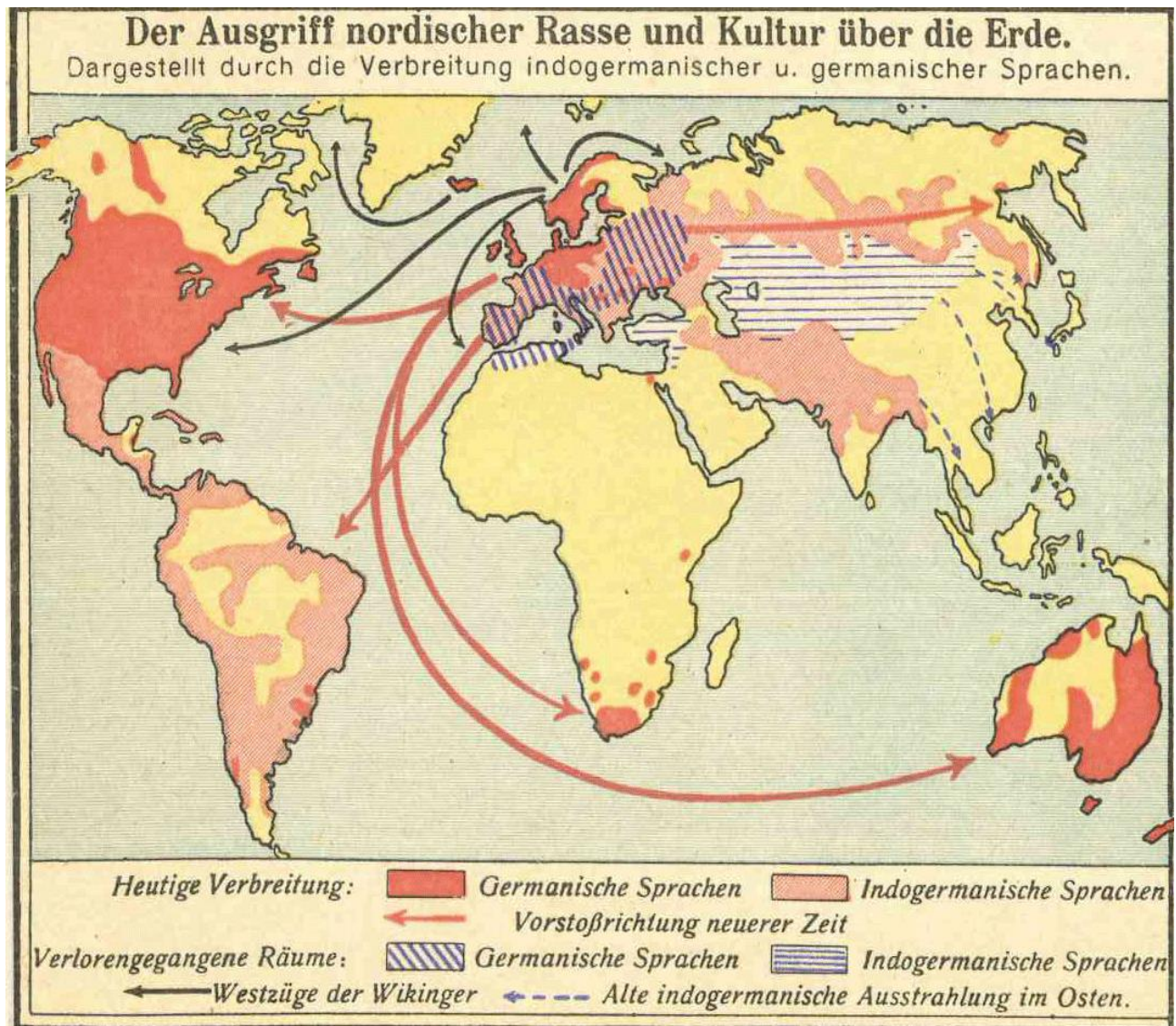


Figure 3: "The global expansion of the Indogermanic culture", in: F. Putzger (ed.), *Putzgers historischer Schul-Atlas*, Bielefeld 1937, p. 1.

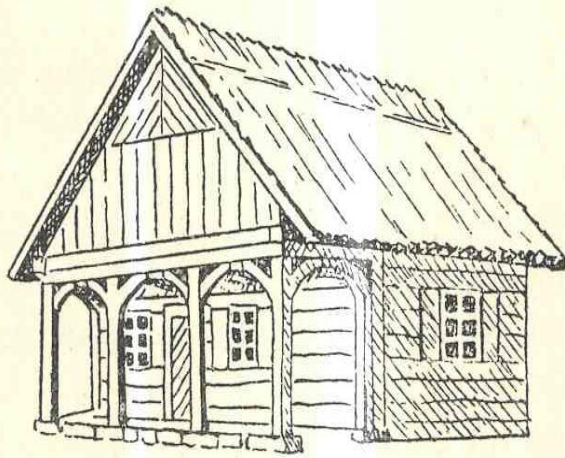
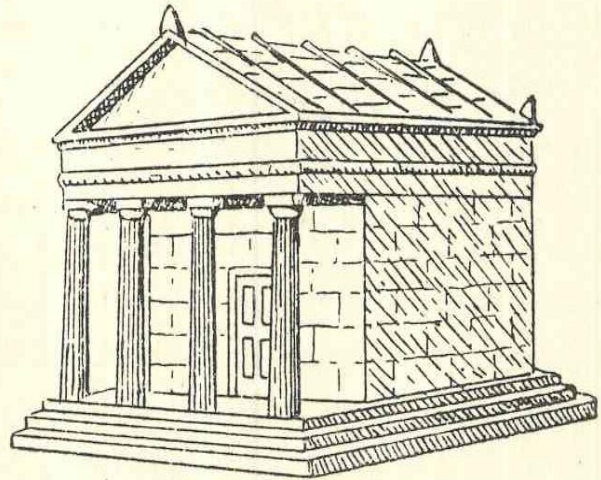


Abb. 10.

Germanisches Bauernhaus

Im nordischen Viereckhaus mit Vorhalle und Pfostenreihe wurde die Vorstufe des griechischen Tempelbaues erkannt



Nach Köhn-Behrens

Griechischer Tempel

Figure 4: "The Germanic *Bauernhaus* as model for the Greek Temple", in: F. Fikenscher, *Deutsche Geschichte. Der neue Weg*, Ansbach 1937, p. 23.

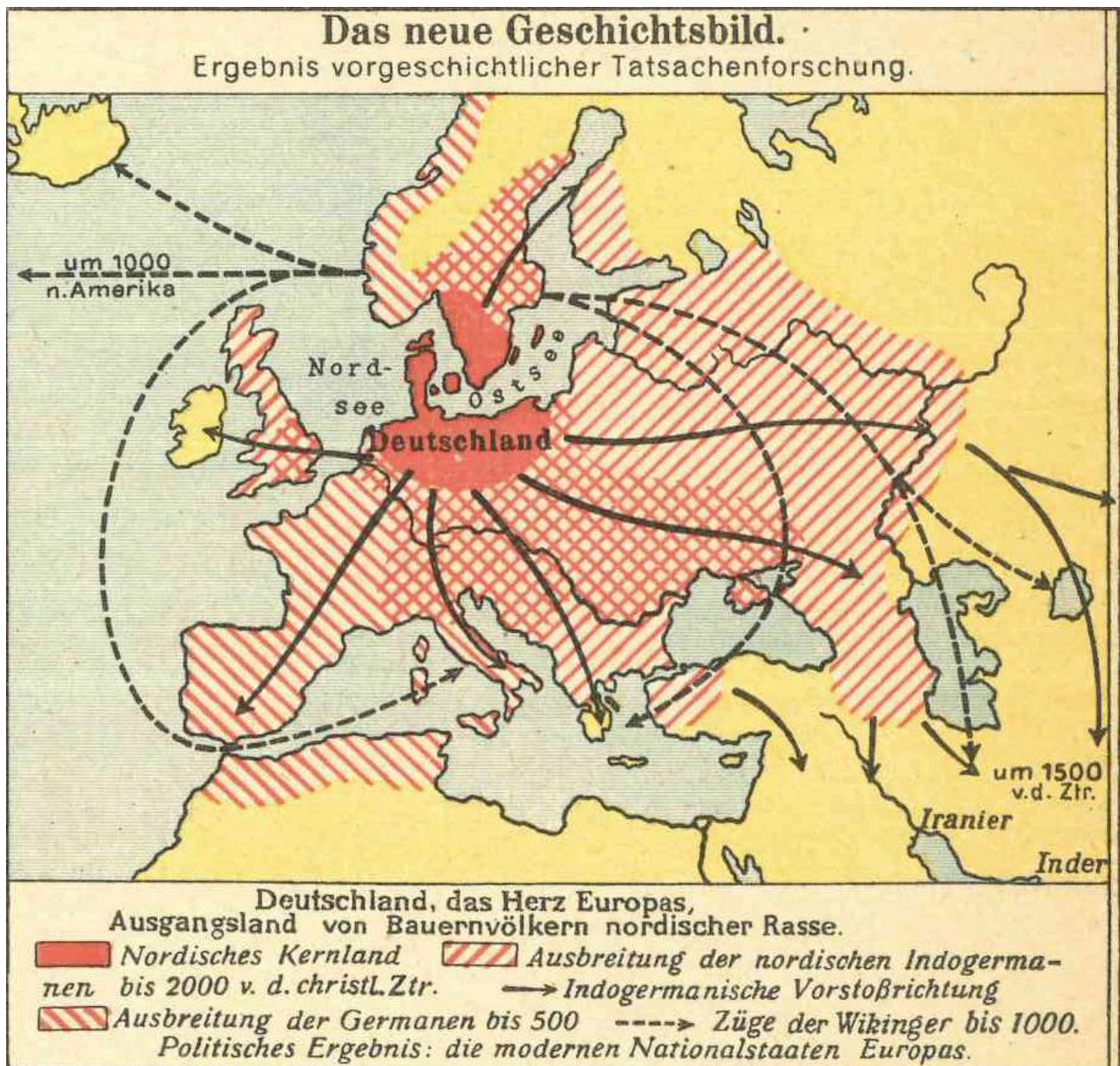


Figure 5: "The Germanic Ursiedlung", in: Putzger 1937, p. 1.

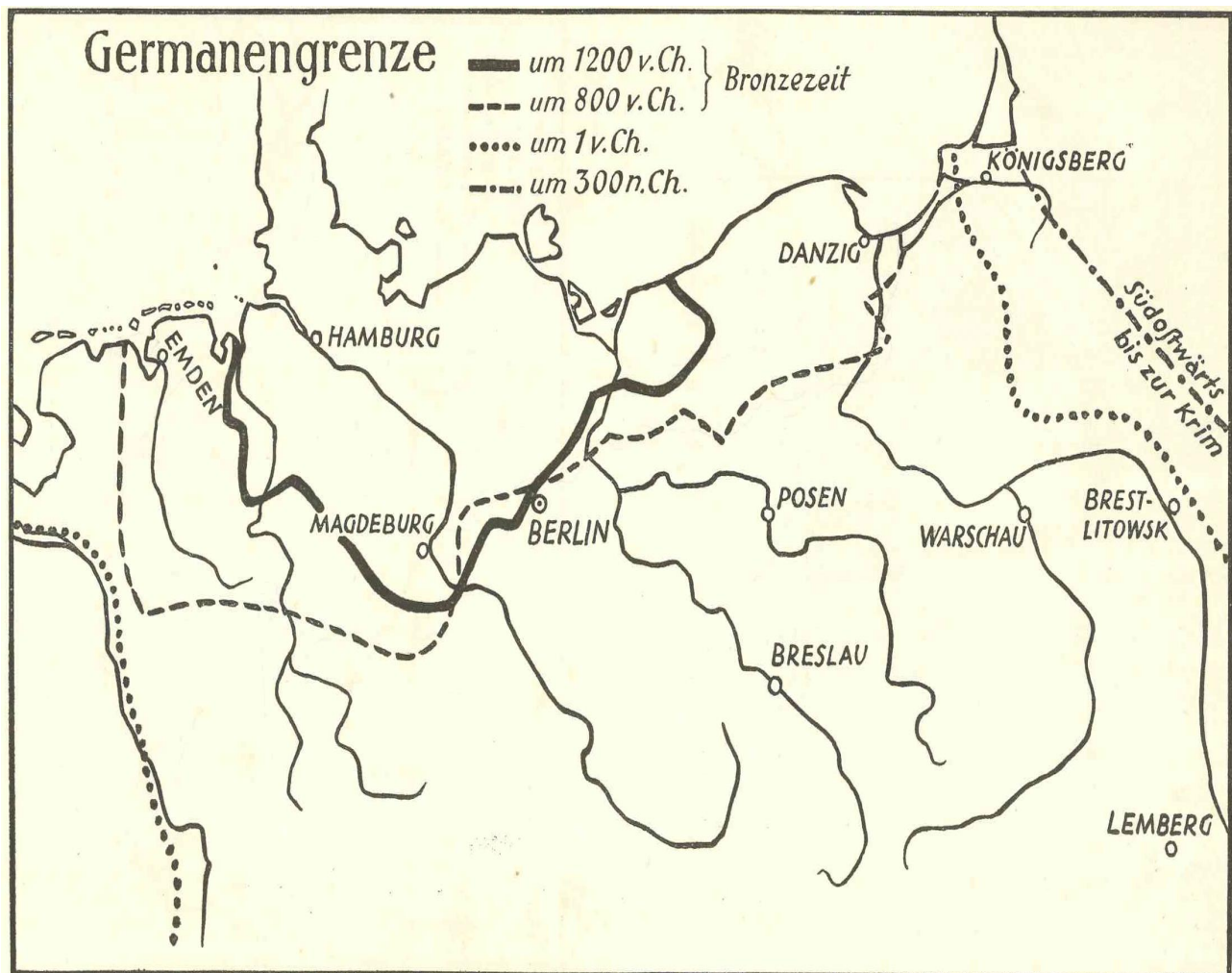


Figure 6: "Germanic *Ursiedlung* compared to 1930s-1940s German geopolitical situation", in: B. Kummsteller and U. Haake, *Geschichtsbuch für die deutsche Jugend*, Leipzig 1942, p. 95.



Figure 7: "Germanic Spear", in: J. Galle, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, Langensalza 1934, p. 19.

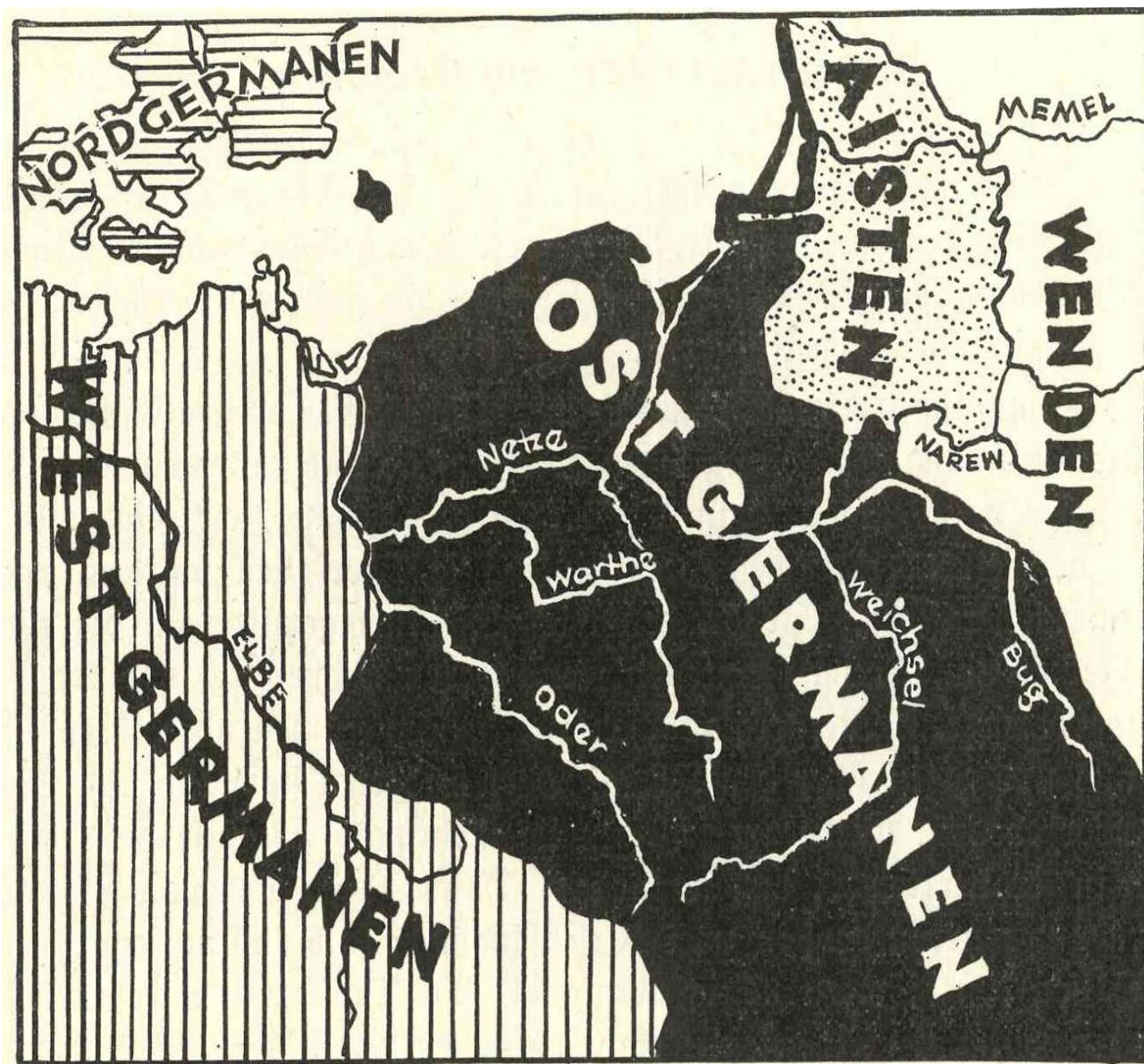


Figure 8: "Western and Eastern Germanen", in: W. Matschke, *Geschichte für Volksschulen*, Bielefeld 1943, p. 31.

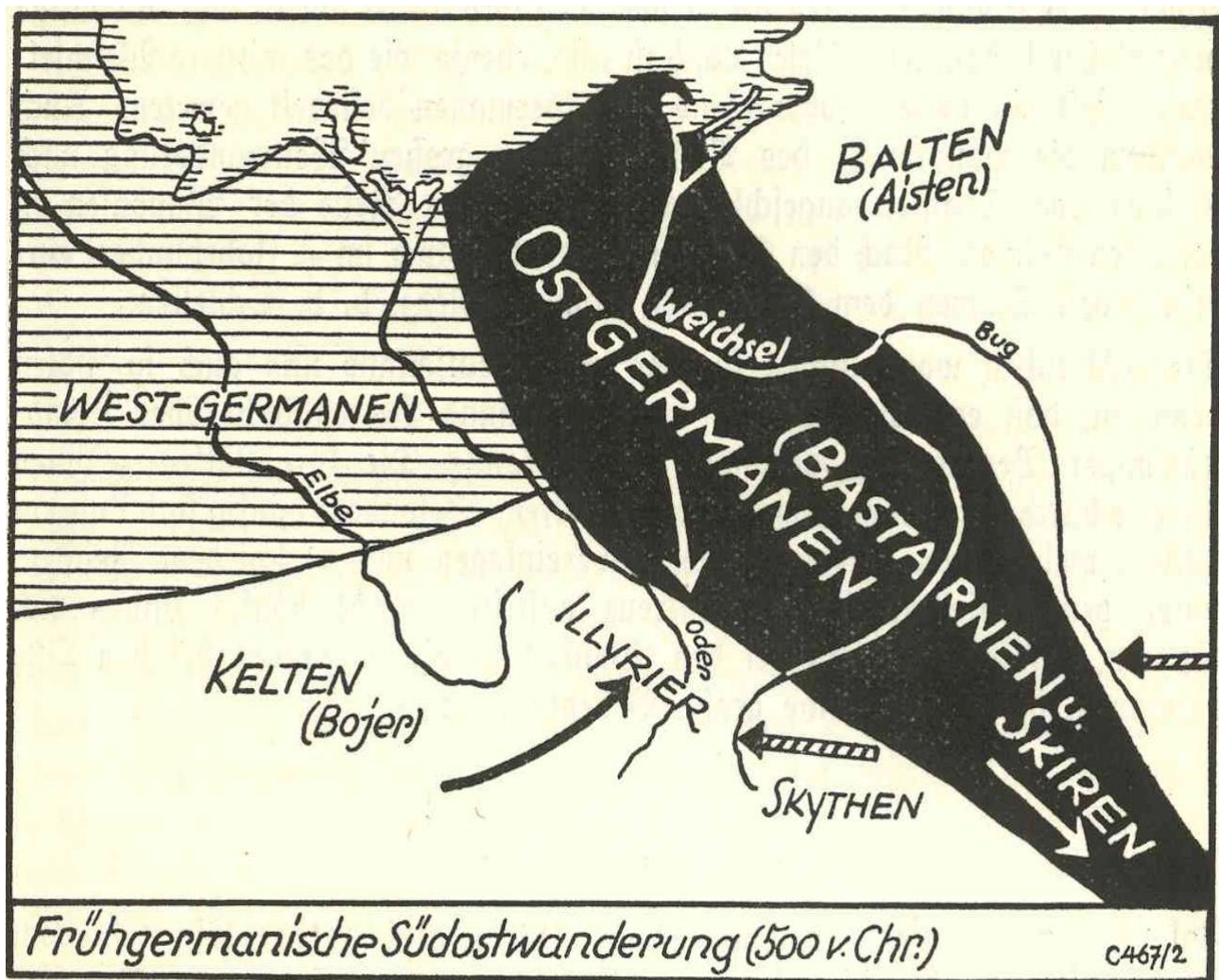


figure 9: "Western and Eastern Germanic populations", in: G. Simoleit, *Ostdeutschland und Osteuropa. Ein Hilfsbuch zur Behandlung deutscher Ostfragen aus Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Zickfeldt 1937, p. 21.

Deutschland, der Schutzwall europäischer Kultur gegen asiatische Überschwemmung.

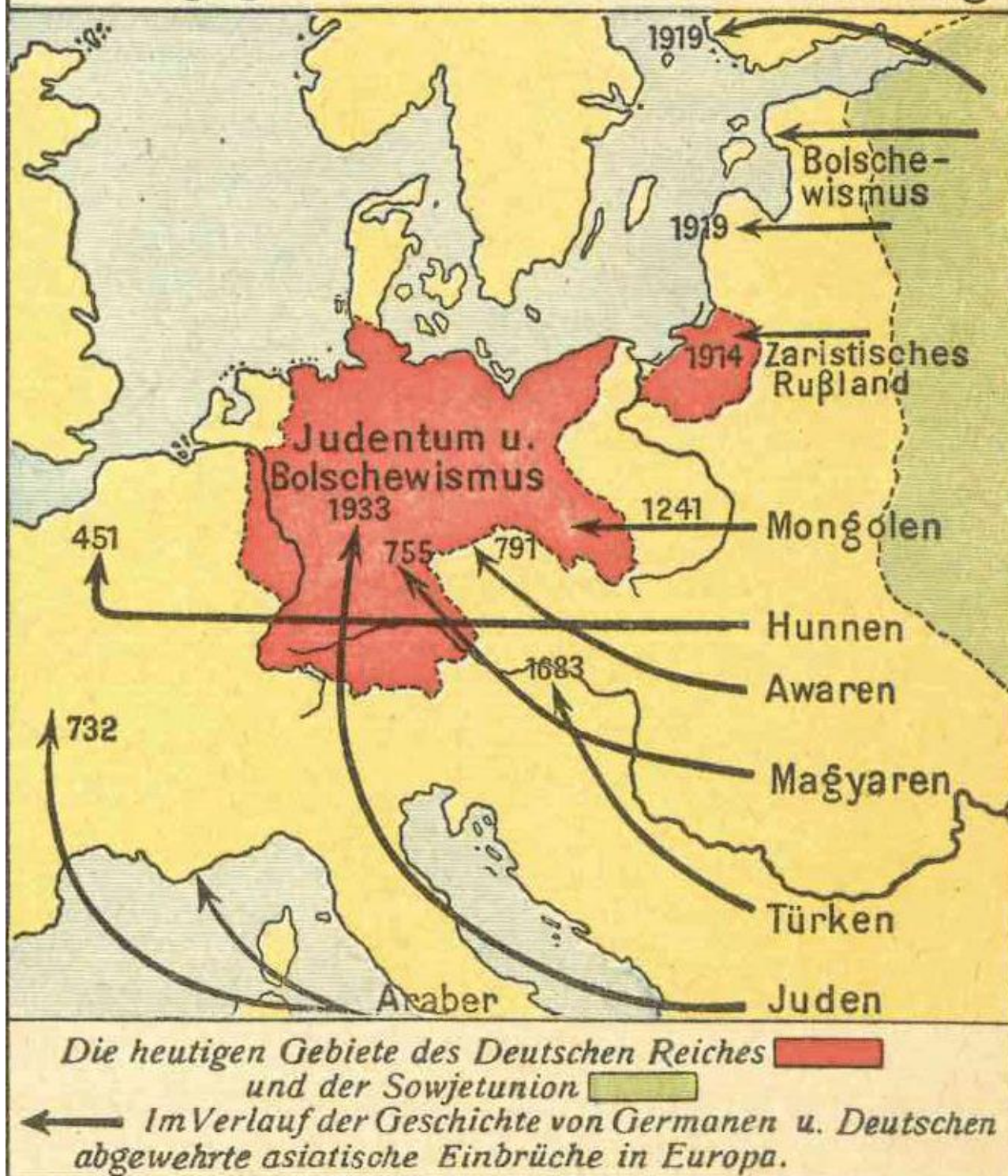


Figure 10: "The German Reich and its enemies", in: Putzger 1937, p. 1.

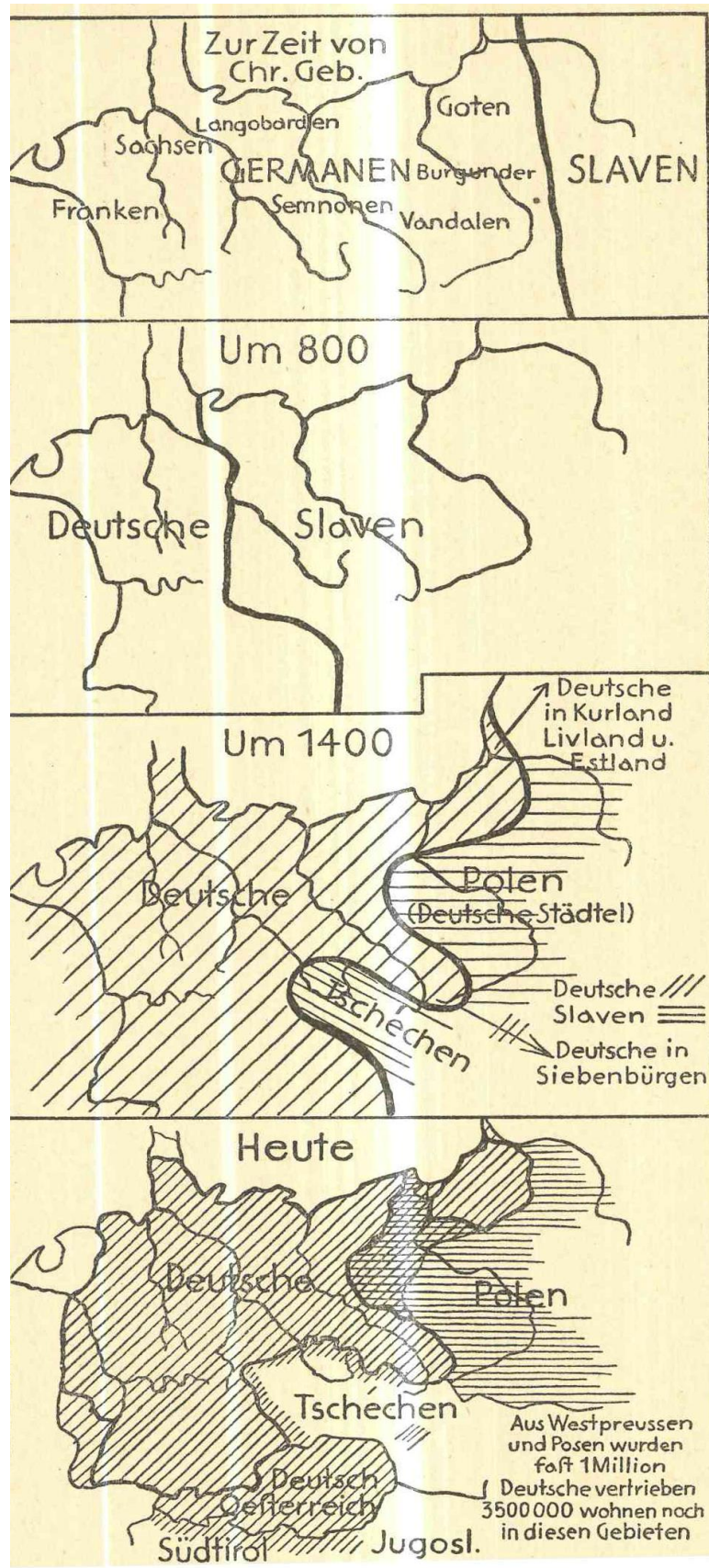
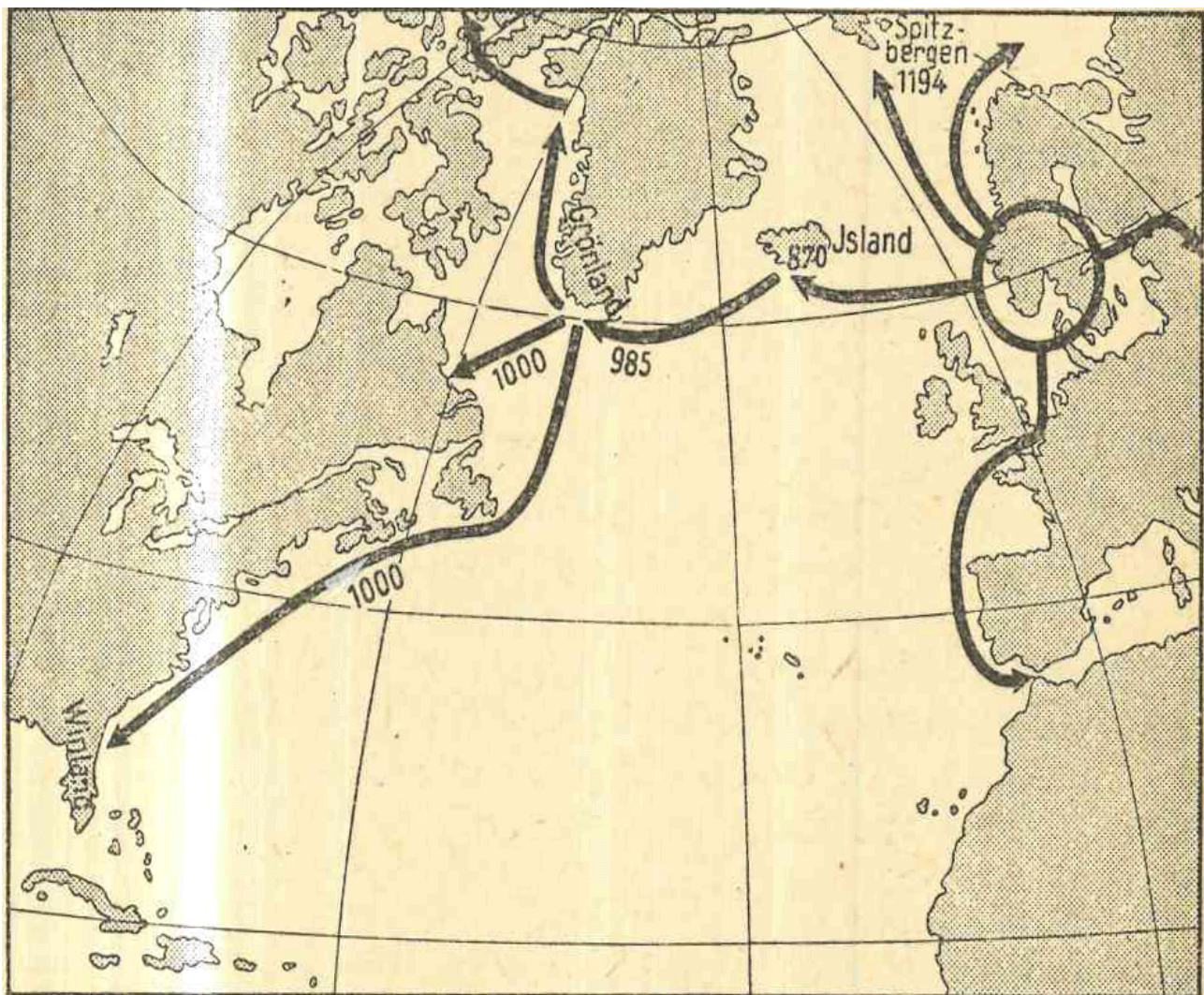


figure 11: "German geopolitical situation in Europe from the *Urogermanische Zeit* to 1940s", in: Haacke 1942, p. 76.



14. Die Entdeckung Amerikas durch die Wikinger.

figure 13: "The Wikinger discover America", in: W. Gehl, *Deutsche Geschichte in Stichworten*, Breslau 1939, p. 32.

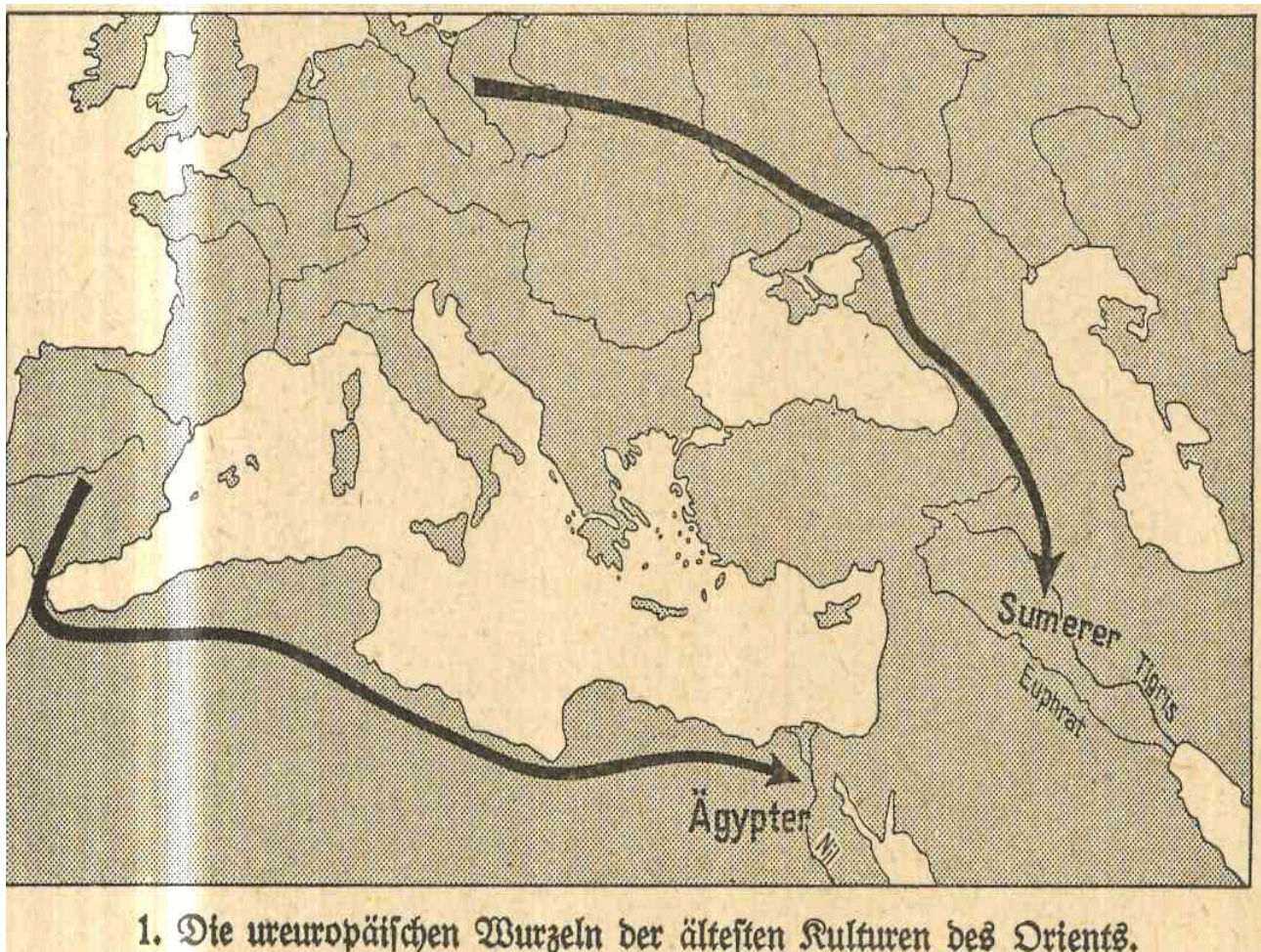


figure 14: "The European (Germanic) influence on the oldest Oriental Cultures", in: W. Gehl, *Geschichte der Antike in Stichworten*, Breslau 1942, p. 2.

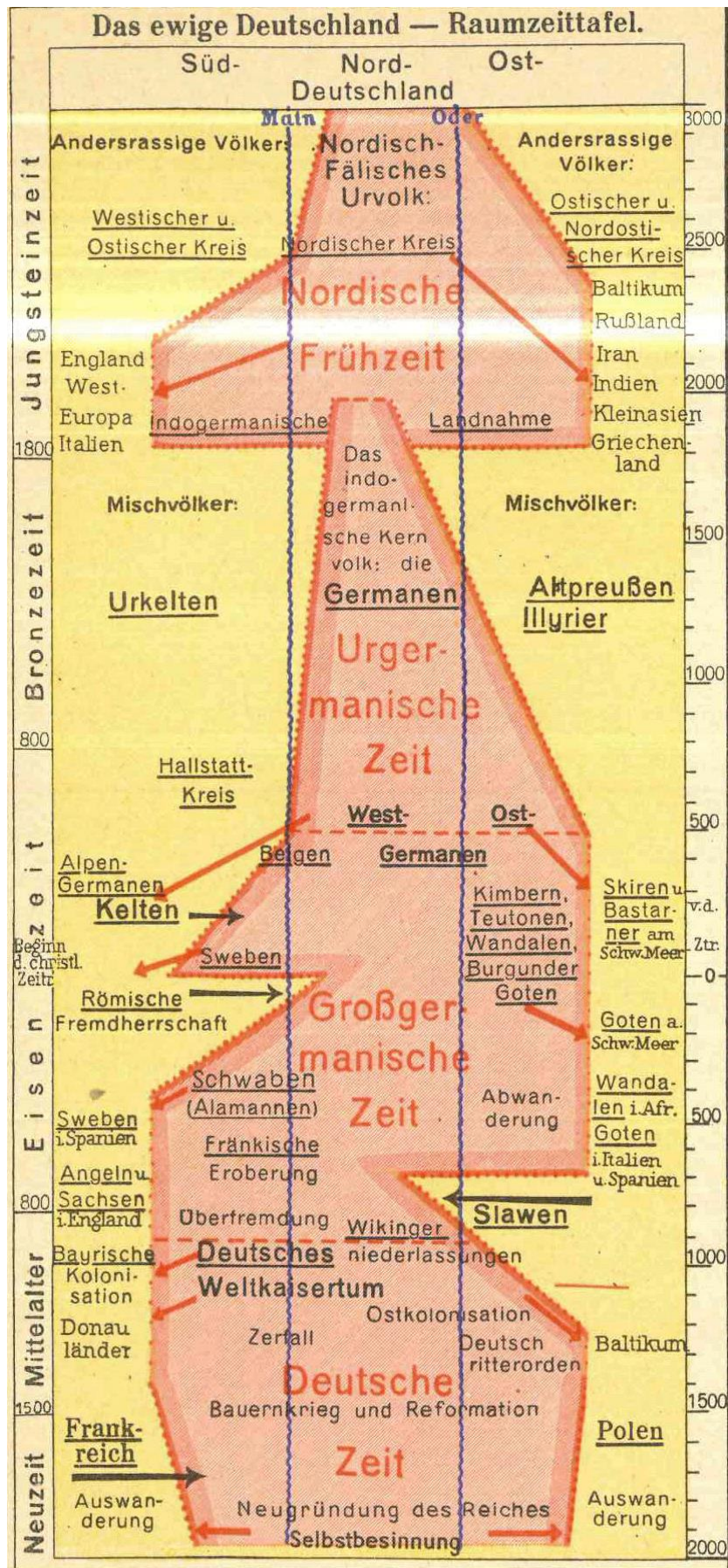


figure 15: "Forever Germany", in: Putzger 1937, p. 1

Tables

Table 2, Types of <i>Volksschulen</i> in National Socialist Germany.	p. 25
Table 2, Subdivision of the 1940 German <i>Volksschulen</i> according to the class gender.	p. 25
Table 3, NSLB <i>Fachschaften</i> organization.	p. 28
Table 4, Representation of the Nazi German Society as described by the 1939 <i>Richtlinien</i> .	p. 34
Table 5, History Subjects in the <i>Volksschulen</i> after 1939.	p. 52
Table 6, Kossinna's periodization.	p. 77
Table 7, Medieval History Topics in <i>Volksschulen</i> textbooks during the Regime.	p. 79
Table 8, Nehring textbook editions before and after the 1 st January 1933.	p. 82
Table 9, New Periodization and Classic Periodization Comparison.	p. 85
Table 10, New Periodization.	p. 86
Table 11, Racial pyramid in <i>Volksschulen</i> historiography.	p. 109
Table 12, 1939 <i>Erziehungsministerium</i> Richtlinien and following regional directives.	p. 160

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