Social Penetration and Police Action: Collaboration Structures in the Repertory of Gestapo Activities

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SUMMARY: The twentieth century was "short", running only from 1914 to 1990/1991. Even so, it will doubtless enter history as an unprecedented era of dictatorships. The question of how these totalitarian regimes functioned in practice, how and to what extent they were able to realize their power aspirations, has until now been answered empirically at most highly selectively. Extensive comparative research efforts will be required over the coming decades. The police as the key organization in the state monopoly of power is particularly important in this context, since like no other institution it operates at the interface of state and society. Using the example of the Gestapo's activities in the Third Reich, this article analyses collaboration structures between these two spheres, which made possible (either on a voluntary or coercive basis) a penetration of social contexts and hence police action even in shielded areas. It is my thesis that such exchange processes through unsolicited denunciation and informers with double identities will also have been decisive outside Germany in the tracking of dissident behaviour and the detection of conspiratorial practices.

I do not think it is too far-fetched to say that the century which is about to end will go down in history as the era of dictatorships. But a social history of this state-legitimized and -executed terror, let alone an international comparison on a solid empirical basis, is still a long way off. This is true in particular for the institution of the police, the key domestic organization of state power, which like almost no other operates at the interface between state and society and which in its development reflects the changing relationships between the two spheres.[1] At the moment we have only a fragmentary and selective grasp of the exchange processes which occurred at this interface, how societies in dictatorial regimes were

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[1] Brilliant, and with an extensive bibliography, is the article by Ralph Jessen, "Polizei und Gesellschaft. Zum Paradigmenwechsel in der Polizeigeschichtsforschung", in Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (eds), *Die Gestapo – Mythos und Realität* (Darmstadt, 1995), pp. 19–43 (hereafter *Gestapo*).

successfully policed,[2] and how beyond the guise of maintaining "law and order" – those classical topoi legitimizing police action – specifically defined opposition groups could be identified, controlled and eliminated. But how and to what extent the police penetrated society and how and to what extent sections of this society used the regime to rid themselves of those they disliked are by no means academic questions, merely showing up gaps in our knowledge; rather, they emphasize a highly political problem, a consequence reaching into the present and the future of that century-defining experience of unbridled violence and destruction.

When one examines the police of the Third Reich from this angle,[3] the social and scientific interpretation of its history immediately presents itself as an obstacle. For the propaganda slogan of "harmonization" (*Gleichschaltung*), suitably recast in the post-1945 theory of totalitarianism, supplied the interpretative framework which corresponded to the moral economy of the post-war Germans. The concept of the totalitarian state, which dominated society through an omnipotent secret police, clearly defined the roles, made the population into victims, and reduced the policing of society to a simple repressive relationship, to a one-way power relationship imposed from the top.[4] The decision by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal to condemn the SS and Gestapo merely – regrettably, as we now know – as "criminal organizations"[5] cemented this perspective and also reduced the number of repressive institutions. The criminal police (Kripo), the uniformed police, the judicial system and the army thus became almost normal state institutions, while the Gestapo was thus ostracized from society and as a supposedly unprecedented instrument of terror expelled into the dark realm of the SS.

[2] On this concept, see Alf Lüdtke, "'Sicherheit' und 'Wohlfahrt'. Aspekte der Polizeigeschichte", in Lüdtke (ed.), *"Sicherheit" und "Wohlfahrt". Polizei, Gesellschaft und Herrschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp. 7–33 (hereafter *Sicherheit*).

[3] For critical surveys of the research, see Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Auf dem Wege zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Terrors. Eine Zwischenbilanz", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 3–18; Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, "Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent? Gestapo, Society and Resistance", in David F. Crew (ed.), *Nazism and German Society, 1933–1945* (London, 1994), pp. 166–196; Robert Gellately, "Surveillance and Disobedience: Aspects of the Political Policing of Nazi Germany", in Francis R. Nicosia and Lawrence Stokes (eds), *Germans Against Nazism. Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich* (New York and Oxford, 1990), pp. 15–36; Gellately, "Rethinking the Nazi Terror System. A Historiographical Analysis", *German Studies Review*, 14 (1991), pp. 23–38; idem, "Situating the 'SS-State' in a Social-Historical Context: Recent Histories of the SS, the Police and the Courts in the Third Reich", *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), pp. 338–365.

[4] For a "classical" expression of this view, see William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi-Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town 1930–1935* (Chicago, 1965), p. 178.

[5] See *Der Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof Nürnberg 14. November 1945 – 1. Oktober 1946*, vol. 1 (Nuremberg, 1947), pp. 294–307; see also Bradley F. Smith, *Reaching Judgement at Nuremberg* (New York, 1977), pp. 158–167.

The advantage of this operation was obvious. This demonizing exclusion also shifted the burden of responsibility for what had happened. The more the Gestapo figured as the very incarnation of the dictatorship, the more it was endowed with the gifts of omniscience and omnipresence, and the more detached did the army of accomplices and fellow travellers appear.[6] What took place was a creeping process of social exoneration, in which the Gestapo gradually became the "alibi of the nation",[7] the proof of the claim that the Germans' willingness to follow was above all a result of their fear of persecution. And there arose a sharp antithetical opposition of dictatorship and population, which presented Germany as the "first occupied country",[8] which downplayed the social interaction and co-operation with the regime as well as the state police's structural reliance on collaboration. Historians in turn reproduced this picture into the present in their own way, by generally equating the intention and the outcome of state police activity, refraining from an analysis of practical operations, and often enough seeing the Gestapo through the distorting mirror of omnipotence. The Nazi propaganda claim of a perfectly functioning secret police, which tracked down the regime's opponents with unerring success,[9] was thus taken at face value and perpetuated in historical writing.[10]

[6] Seminal and with clearly didactic intentions, see Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt, 1946); Günther Weisenborn, *Der lautlose Aufstand. Bericht über die Widerstandsbewegung des deutschen Volkes 1933–1945* (Hamburg, 1953).

[7] Thus Gerald Reitlinger, *The SS. Alibi of a Nation 1922–1945* (London, 1956); in the subtitle to the German edition (Vienna, 1957) this is typically toned down to "Tragedy of a German epoch" [Tragödie einer deutschen Epoche].

[8] Friedrich Zipfel, "Gestapo und SD in Berlin", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, 9/10 (1961), p. 263.

[9] "Stapo sees, hears and knows everything" ["Stapo sieht, hört und weiß alles"] was, for instance, the title of an article in the Kiel-based *Nordische Rundschau* of 2 August 1933, which reported on the activities of the then around 25-strong Stapo branch in the Schleswig administrative district.

[10] For views that are analytically and empirically still at the level of the Nuremberg trial, see Edward Crankshaw, *Gestapo – Instrument of Tyranny* (London, 1956); Friedrich Zipfel, *Gestapo und Sicherheitsdienst* (Berlin, 1960); Jacques Delarue, *Geschichte der Gestapo* (Düsseldorf, 1964); Jochen von Lang, *Die Gestapo. Instrument des Terrors* (Hamburg, 1990); Rupert Butler, *An Illustrated History of the Gestapo* (London, 1992); Hans-Joachim Heuer, *Die Geheime Staatspolizei – Über das Töten und die Tendenzen der Entzivilisierung* (Berlin and New York, 1995); for positive exceptions regarding the range of activities, see Burkhard Jellonnek, *Homosexuelle unter dem Hakenkreuz. Die Verfolgung der Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich* (Paderborn, 1990); Alfons Kenkmann, *Wilde Jugend. Lebenswelt großstädtischer Jugendlicher zwischen Weltwirtschaftskrise, Nationalsozialismus und Währungsreform* (Essen, 1996); the transition from the Weimar political police to that of the Third Reich has been studied to some extent: see Shlomo Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD* (Stuttgart, 1971); George C. Browder, *Foundations of the Nazi Police State. The Formation of Sipo and SD* (Lexington, 1989); on Prussia, see Laurenz Demps, "Der Übergang der Abteilung I (Politische Polizei) des Berliner Polizeipräsidiums in das Geheime Staatspolizeiamt (1933/34)" (Ph.D.B., Humboldt University, Berlin, 1982) (hereafter *Übergang*); Christoph Graf, *Politische Polizei zwischen Demokra-*

"People were far more interested in the designs and plans than in the actual way this system operated", the Canadian historian Robert Gellately has aptly observed. "The pervasion of this perspective prevented questions about everyday police practices outside the camps and prisons from being raised; the overall social context was left unexamined."[11]

That the Gestapo was not the all-powerful arm of the Nazi state and by no means a unique phenomenon becomes clear, however, when its concrete activities are examined. "In addition to the difficulties with surveillance, there is the chronic lack of adequate resources at the various offices, which makes successful work almost impossible", the Stapo office in Düsseldorf complained in 1935, by no means untypically.[12] An analysis of the surveillance density (i.e. the number of officers as a proportion of the population under their charge) strongly underlines this. In Prussia in 1935 there was one Stapo officer for every 25,000 people,[13] and in the largely

tie und Diktatur. Die Entwicklung der Preußischen Politischen Polizei vom Staatsschutzorgan der Weimarer Republik zum Geheimen Staatspolizeiamt des Dritten Reiches (Berlin, 1983) (hereafter *Politische Polizei*); on Bavaria, see Shlomo Aronson, *Beginnings of the Gestapo System. The Bavarian Model in 1933* (Jerusalem, 1969); James Heard MacGee, "The Political Police in Bavaria, 1919–1936" (Ph.D., University of Florida, 1980); Martin Faatz, *Vom Staatsschutz zum Gestapo-Terror. Politische Polizei in Bayern in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik und der Anfangsphase der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur* (Würzburg, 1995) (hereafter *Staatsschutz*); on Württemberg, see Friedrich Wilhelm, "Die württembergische Polizei im Dritten Reich" (Ph.D., University of Stuttgart, 1989); on Hamburg, see Ludwig Eiber, "Aspekte des Verfolgungsapparates in Hamburg 1933/34", in Eiber (ed.), *Verfolgung-Ausbeutung-Vernichtung. Die Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen der Häftlinge in deutschen Konzentrationslagern* (Hanover, 1985), pp. 111–129; Helmut Fangmann *et al.*, *"Parteisoldaten". Die Hamburger Polizei im "3. Reich"* (Hamburg, 1987); for important observations on the process of "reichification" and "destatification", see Hans Buchheim, "Die SS – das Herrschaftsinstrument", in *Anatomie des SS-Staates*, 2 vols (Munich, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 13–212; on the polycratic conflicts, see Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf. Die Geschichte der SS* (Gütersloh, 1967); on the concept of the "racial police", see Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989* (Bonn, 1996); as yet there is no monograph on the Reichssicherheitshauptamt – even the best study thus far describes itself rightly as an "introduction" to its history: Johannes Tuchel and Reinold Schattenfroh, *Zentrale des Terrors. Prinz-Albrecht-Straße 8: Hauptquartier der Gestapo* (Berlin, 1987), p. 11; see also Reinhard Rürup (ed.), *Topographie des Terrors. Gestapo, SS und Reichssicherheitshauptamt auf dem "Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände". Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin, 1987); Michael Wildt, "Götzendämmerung. Das Reichssicherheitshauptamt im letzten Kriegsjahr", *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen*, 24 (1995), pp. 101–108; informative on the intermediate institutions during the war years is Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer. Himmlers Vertreter im Reich und in den besetzten Gebieten* (Düsseldorf, 1986).

[11] Robert Gellately, "Gestapo und Terror. Perspektiven auf die Sozialgeschichte des nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystems", in Lüdtke, *Sicherheit*, pp. 372–373.

[12] Situation report by the Düsseldorf Stapo branch for April 1935, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin-Dahlem (hereafter GStA), Rep. 90 P, nr. 80 H. 4; similarly the Dortmund branch in its situation reports for July 1934, June 1935 and February 1936, *ibid.*, nr. 76 H. 4, nr. 81 H. 3, and Bundesarchiv, Abteilungen Potsdam (hereafter BAP), R 58/1151.

[13] Staff levels at the Gestapo office and the Stapo branches as of 25 June 1935, GStA, Rep. 90 P, nr. 14 H. 1 and 2; see Elisabeth Kohlhaas, "Die Mitarbeiter der regionalen

urban and industrialized Saxony the ratio was one to around 10,500 people in 1936/1937.[14] On average a Gestapo officer had to monitor the population of a small town. Given these figures, the comprehensive surveillance and control of society remained no more than a fond totalitarian wish. This was true not only for Germany. On 1 January 1944, as the last surviving report indicates, the National Security Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA) estimated the Gestapo's total strength at 31,374 officers.[15] This was a definite numerical increase on its pre-war strength, but this figure is put into perspective when it is remembered that these officers were dispersed across almost the whole of Europe. So the state police presence in the various occupied territories was even thinner than in Germany itself. In the general-governorate of Poland, for instance, the Gestapo had 1,578 posts in 1940[16] and around 2,000 members of the Gestapo and Kripo were active there at the end of 1942.[17] In France there were around 2,200 German security police officers in December 1943, of whom only a quarter were trained criminal investigators and the remainder were emergency recruits who had just undergone a crash police-training course.[18]

That the Gestapo was nevertheless successful (albeit by no means exhaustively so) in tracking down and eliminating opponents can therefore not be put down to its internal structure. Its relative efficiency was not rooted in its own strength but was essentially derived from other resources.

Staatspolizeistellen. Quantitative und qualitative Befunde zur Personalausstattung der Gestapo", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 219–235.

[14] Memo from the Ministry of the Interior to the chief constables and Dresden Stapo branch, 19 February 1937, and staff plan for the Gestapo in Saxony in 1936, Bundesarchiv-Zwischenarchiv Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten (hereafter BA-ZA), ZR 724/2, f. 184–186.

[15] Memo from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (hereafter RSHA), February 1944, BAP, R 58/932, f. 14.

[16] Alwin Ramme, *Der Sicherheitsdienst der SS. Zu seiner Funktion im faschistischen Machtapparat und im Besatzungsregime des sogenannten Generalgouvernements Polen* (East Berlin, 1970), p. 149.

[17] Werner Präg and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (eds), *Das Diensttagebuch des deutschen Generalgouverneurs in Polen 1939–1945* (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 574; see also Czeslaw Madajczyk, *Die Okkupationspolitik Nazideutschlands in Polen 1939–1945* (Cologne, 1988), pp. 201–204; Werner Röhr (ed.), *Die faschistische Okkupationspolitik in Polen (1939–1945)* (Cologne, 1989); Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, "Von 'landfremden Eroberern' und autochthonen 'Hilfswilligen'. Überlegungen zu einer Sozialgeschichte der 'Gestapo-Herrschaft' in Polen", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 482–491.

[18] Bernd Kasten, *"Gute Franzosen". Die französische Polizei und die deutsche Besatzungsmacht im besetzten Frankreich 1940–1944* (Sigmaringen, 1993), p. 213; see also Marcel Hasquenoph, *La Gestapo en France* (Paris, 1987); Yann Stephan, *A Broken Sword. Policing France During the German Occupation* (Chicago, 1992); John F. Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France. The French Under the Nazi Occupation* (Oxford and New York, 1986), a case study of Clermont-Ferrand; David Pryce-Jones, "Paris unter der deutschen Besatzung", in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh (eds), *Kollaboration in Frankreich. Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur während der nationalsozialistischen Besetzung 1940–1944* (Frankfurt, 1991), pp. 23–42.

Leaving aside for the moment the contributions of other state institutions and party branches,[19] it was primarily already existing, but also had specially mobilized, collaboration structures, which offset the Gestapo's personnel deficits and gave it access even to sections of society intent on shielding themselves. Two complexes of complicity spring to mind here in particular, which functioned differently but had the same effect: denunciations by members of the public on the one hand, and reports by Gestapo-employed informers on the other. Both opened up private events to the state police and made society (relatively) transparent to the state institutions. While in terms of function both forms of collaboration helped to sustain the regime, they differed diametrically in terms of their penetration efforts, and to some extent also in terms of their intentions and motives. Thus denunciation was essentially the covert recruitment of the state to fulfil social needs; the activity of informers, on the other hand, was the covert recruitment of individuals and social groups with no apparent links to the regime to state-ordered purposes. In essence, society harnessing the state and the state harnessing society crossed here. A conceptual clarification seems required.

Until a few years ago denunciation was virtually a blank page in research terms.[20] But we now have some regional and local samples, which independently offer evidence of the overwhelming importance of unsolicited information provided by members of the public in the detection of specific crimes. Studies of Unterfranken (a region in Bavaria), Saarland, Krefeld and Schleswig-Holstein all show that (i) between 55 and 80 per cent of all charges laid under the "treachery" (*Heimtücke*) and "race defile" (*Rassenschande*) laws and of all charges of prohibited contact with "aliens" (*Fremdvölkische*) and of "listening to foreign radio stations" relied on private denunciations, and that (ii) this popular collaboration effort did not subside after the tide of the war turned but actually reached

[19] See Dieter Rebentisch, "Die 'politische Beurteilung' als Herrschaftsinstrument der NSDAP", in Detlev Peukert and Jürgen Reulecke (eds), *Die Reihen fast geschlossen. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus* (Wuppertal, 1981), pp. 107–125; Karl-Heinz Heller, "The Reshaping and Political Conditioning of the German Ordnungspolizei, 1933–1945: A Study of Techniques used in the Nazi State to Conform Local Police Units to National Socialist Theory and Practice" (Ph.D., University of Cincinnati, 1970); Peter Nitschke, "Polizei und Gestapo. Vorauseilender Gehorsam oder polykratischer Konflikt?", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 306–322.

[20] Until 1990, the only studies dealing with this issue were Martin Broszat, "Politische Denunziationen in der NS-Zeit. Aus Forschungserfahrungen im Staatsarchiv München", *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 73 (1977), pp. 221–238; Peter Hüttenberger, "Heimtückefälle vor dem Sondergericht München 1933–1939", in Martin Broszat *et al.* (eds), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, 6 vols (Munich and Vienna, 1981), vol. 4, pp. 435–526; Reinhard Mann, *Protest und Kontrolle im Dritten Reich. Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft im Alltag einer rheinischen Großstadt* (Frankfurt and New York, 1987), pp. 287–301; Robert Gellately, "The Gestapo and German Society. Political Denunciation in the Gestapo Case Files", *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (1988), pp. 654–694; Helga Schubert, *Judasfrauen. Zehn Fallstudien weiblicher Denunziation im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt, 1990).

a peak in 1943/1944.[21] This is all the more astonishing because there was no statutory duty to inform the police of alleged criminal acts, and, tellingly, Heydrich's project of a "people's information service" (*Volksmeldedienst*), including penalties for those who failed to report relevant information, was abandoned in 1939 on the grounds that it might undermine national solidarity.[22] What is more, precisely because the Gestapo was well aware of the private safety-valve function of anonymous denunciations, it consistently inveighed against them publicly.[23] To this extent denunciation was by no means a process managed or controlled from "above",[24] but more a tolerated phenomenon because it improved the organization's detection rate and gave practical foundation to its cherished aura of omnipresence.

The widespread willingness to inform – in 1937 17,168 people were reported for violations against the "treachery" law alone[25] – was thus well out of proportion to the official demand for such denunciations. But this public enthusiasm was doubtless stimulated by the fact that anonymous reports were not immediately dismissed and that new laws and regulations enshrined new threats and thus created incentives, aroused greed, offered foe images and removed barriers. Concretely, for instance, the ideologically propagated and politically practised notion that Jews had no

[21] On Unterfranken, see Robert Gellately, *Die Gestapo und die deutsche Gesellschaft. Die Durchsetzung der Rassenpolitik 1933–1945* (Paderborn [etc.], 1993), pp. 151–181 (hereafter *Gestapo*); Gerhard Paul, "Kontinuität und Radikalisierung. Die Staatspolizeistelle Würzburg", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 161–177; on Saarland, see Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, *Herrschaft und Alltag. Ein Industrierevier im Dritten Reich* (Bonn, 1991), pp. 229–234 (hereafter *Herrschaft*); on Krefeld, see Bernward Dörner, "Alltagsterror und Denunziation. Zur Bedeutung von Anzeigen aus der Bevölkerung für die Verfolgungswirkung des nationalsozialistischen 'Heimtücke-Gesetzes' in Krefeld", in idem, *Alltagskultur, Subjektivität und Geschichte. Zur Theorie und Praxis von Alltagsgeschichte* (Münster, 1994), pp. 254–271; on Schleswig-Holstein, see Gerhard Paul, *Staatlicher Terror und gesellschaftliche Verrohung. Die Gestapo in Schleswig-Holstein* (Hamburg, 1996), pp. 122–133; see also Christine Arbogast, "Von Spitzeln, 'Greifern' und Verrätern. Denunziantentum im Dritten Reich", in Thomas Schnabel (ed.), *Formen des Widerstandes im Südwesten 1933–1945. Scheitern und Nachwirken* (Ulm, 1994), pp. 205–221; Rita Wolters, *Verrat für die Volksgemeinschaft. Denunziantinnen im Dritten Reich* (Pfaffenweiler, 1996).

[22] Draft decree on the Volksmeldedienst, 18 September 1939, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BAK), R 43 II/1264a, f. 104–105; see Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation im NS-Regime oder die kleine Macht der "Volksgenossen"* (Bonn, 1995), pp. 20–21 (hereafter *Denunziation*).

[23] In the city of Gießen alone 17 articles were published in the daily press against "boasting" (*Angebertum*), etc.; see Jörg-Peter Jatho, *Das Gießener "Freitagskränzchen"* (Fulda, 1995), p. 42.

[24] That is Röhr's quintessential point, see Werner Röhr, "Über die Initiative zur terroristischen Gewalt der Gestapo – Fragen und Einwände zu Gerhard Paul", in Brigitte Berlekamp and Werner Röhr (eds), *Terror, Herrschaft und Alltag im Nationalsozialismus. Probleme einer Sozialgeschichte des deutschen Faschismus* (Münster, 1995), pp. 211–224.

[25] BAP, R 58/722, f. 77.

civil rights provided the specific framework for private denunciations in this sphere, while the input from "below" also revealed the conviction that "Jewish property" was little more than a collective fund which people could avail themselves of regardless of legal title.[26] At the same time it also meant that informers never operated under coercion and that alternative courses of action were always open to them. Thus, that caretaker at the University of Munich would not have been penalized in any way if he had said he had not recognized the people who hurled the last "White Rose" leaflets in the Lichthof.[27] And no one would have prosecuted Helene Schwärzel if she had not immediately reported the fugitive Carl Goerdeler when she recognized him in a country inn.[28]

Judging from what can be ascertained about the motives of informers, it seems clear that most of them were not primarily guided by ideological considerations, philosophical conviction or political loyalty. Rather, the conclusion presents itself that in most cases private conflicts were raised to a political-administrative level, that social animosity, business competition and personal rifts were given a subsequent political veneer.[29] Symptomatic of this is perhaps the wife of a Frankfurt regional-court associate judge who was jealous of her husband's friendship with two Jewish girls and asked the Gestapo "to evacuate the Jews to the east, so that her husband no longer had the opportunity to meet them". It would seem, then, that one did not have to be a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite to become implicated in the Holocaust. For, as the head of the Frankfurt Jewish Section reported, "The two Jewish girls, which were not registered as 'Jews' by either the National Association of Jews or by the Gestapo or by the residents' registration office but only became known to us from a verbal and telephone report, were sent to the east with the next transport".[30] Denunciation was thus invariably an act of public participation in the Nazi regime, a sharing of power from "below", which often enough revealed an explicit will to exclude and destroy.[31]

[26] See Robert Gellately, " 'A Monstrous Uneasiness': Citizen Participation and the Persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany", in Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies. The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Evanston, 1991), pp. 178–195; Brigitte Scheiger, " 'Ich bitte um baldige Arisierung der Wohnung [. . .]'. Zur Funktion von Frauen im bürokratischen System der Verfolgung", in Theresa Wobbe (ed.), *Nach Osten. Verdeckte Spuren nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp. 175–196.

[27] BA-ZA, ZC 13267/1; see also Klaus Drobisch (ed.), *Wir schweigen nicht! Eine Dokumentation über den antifaschistischen Kampf Münchner Studenten 1942/43* (East Berlin, 1977), pp. 119–121, 132–136; similarly, on the communist Knöchel group, see Beatrix Herlemann, *Auf verlorenem Posten. Kommunistischer Widerstand im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Knöchel-Organisation* (Bonn, 1986), p. 123.

[28] See Inge Marßolek, *Die Denunziantin. Helene Schwärzel 1944–47* (Bremen, 1993), pp. 32–35.

[29] For a summary, see Diewald-Kerkmann, *Denunziation*, pp. 136–149.

[30] Reminiscences by Heinrich Baab, Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden (hereafter HStAW), 461/30983/2, f. 160.

[31] For examples, see Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf (hereafter HStAD), RW 58/18693, 33287, 33726, 62308; Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Zwischen Denunziation und Roter Hilfe.

Voluntary denunciations by members of the public could never fully satisfy the needs of the Gestapo, however. For apart from the risks inherent in them – their randomness, unpredictability and often unreliability – denunciations had little to offer in terms of realizing the central tasks of a political police. They may have provided the key to detecting dissent in non-public spheres, but almost inevitably they could not expose the crime of "conspiracy to commit high treason". For resistance was typified by growing concealment and conspiracy, characteristics in other words which meant it could not be directly identified in its immediate social sphere. That is why the traditional police detection methods generally failed here, as did the voluntary and unsolicited efforts by members of the public. Usually willing informers only gained a sniff of resistance when (as in the "White Rose" case) it became public, or when (as in the cases of Thälmann, Leuschner and Goerdeler[32]) its protagonists had their pictures widely circulated on wanted posters. The resultant contributions from the public doubtless helped to locate the not insignificant tip of the illegal iceberg, but the base could not be exposed in this way. This required other methods.

In tracking conspiratorial opposition groups the Gestapo clearly followed the teaching manuals of the Weimar police: "Any crime fighter knows that probably the most difficult thing in criminal-police work is the successful execution of surveillance operations", Bernhard Weiß, Berlin's deputy police commissioner, recognized as early as 1928.[33] Hence it is hardly surprising that the Gestapo used this labour-intensive means of permanent shadowing at best very occasionally in the final stages of specific investigations, and that the failure rate was extremely high.[34] Instead the Gestapo took to heart another Weimar lesson: "Essentially", to quote Weiß again, "any political police that wants to execute its task successfully must use informers and 'grasses'."[35] This recipe – a perfect example of the end justifying the means – was also supposed to provide the key to eliminating the resistance.

Generally speaking (and this applies to all parties as well) these informers were not undercover agents who were sent into the opposition camp in disguise. Almost invariably they were people who were at home in the environment under investigation and had a certain standing in it. Their greatest asset was their intimate knowledge of the specific circum-

Geschlechterbeziehungen und kommunistischer Widerstand", in Christl Wickert (ed.), *Frauen gegen die Diktatur – Widerstand und Verfolgung im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Berlin, 1995), pp. 82–97.

[32] See Peter Przybylski, *Mordsache Thälmann* (East Berlin, 1986), pp. 26–28; Joachim G. Leithäuser, *Wilhelm Leuschner. Ein Leben für die Republik* (Cologne, 1962), p. 242; Gerhard Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1954), pp. 404–408.

[33] Bernhard Weiß, *Polizei und Politik* (Berlin, 1928), p. 101 (hereafter *Polizei*).

[34] See e.g. BA-ZA, ZC 13671, ZC 13820/1, ZR 770/4; Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BAB), NJ 1524/8, NJ 5669/1, NJ 7314, NJ 8054/1.

[35] Weiß, *Polizei*, p. 104.

stances and practices, the trust which people active in this environment showed them on the basis of their past, or at least their familiarity with their situation. It is probably this enigmatic reality of mass "betrayal" which turned the Gestapo's informers into a strangely neglected phenomenon, although one would have expected researchers to be intrigued by them.[36]

As we know, betrayal shames its victims, in that it invariably also puts the betrayed in a bad light and disavows previous social bonds. But, I suspect, it was precisely this which clashed with the morally uplifting dimension that was and is often typical of resistance studies, which could not be reconciled with its inherently legitimizing function in East and West, with the glorification of its subjects. As a result the phenomenon was there studied selectively and even minimized,[37] while, conversely, actual Gestapo research often presupposed the existence of whole armies of informers, without offering any empirical evidence.[38]

If we are to examine this collaboration structure at the interface between state and society more closely, we must first differentiate between various opposition groups, time cycles, recruitment lines and motivations. The communists had already been the object of close surveillance during the Weimar years, and the incipient Gestapo took over not only most staff of the Weimar political police and its files and card indexes, but also the informers who had served the Republic.[39] During the regime's consolida-

[36] For a methodologically highly questionable attempt, see Walter Otto Weyrauch, "Gestapo Informants. Facts and Theory of Undercover Operations", *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, 24 (1986), pp. 553–596; Weyrauch, *Gestapo V-Leute. Tatsachen und Theorie des Geheimdienstes* (Frankfurt, 1989); for an attempt at synopsis, see Klaus-Michael Mallmann, "Die V-Leute der Gestapo. Umrisse einer kollektiven Biographie", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, pp. 268–287 (hereafter *V-Leute*); for a critique of Weyrauch, see *ibid.*, pp. 272–273; on the activities of special intelligence offices, see Mallmann and Paul, *Herrschaft*, pp. 184–188, 215–223; Gellately, *Gestapo*, pp. 79–82; Franz Weisz, "Die Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizeileitstelle Wien 1938–1945. Organisation, Arbeitsweise, personale Angelegenheiten" (Ph.D., University of Vienna, 1991), pp. 409–434; Peter Brommer, "Zur Tätigkeit der Gestapo Trier in den Jahren 1944/45", *Jahrbuch für Westdeutsche Landesgeschichte*, 18 (1992), pp. 325–368.

[37] This criticism applies even to the few studies which devoted at least some attention to this phenomenon, e.g. Hans-Josef Steinberg, *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Essen 1933–1945* (Hanover, 1969), pp. 127–130; Gertrud Meyer, *Nacht über Hamburg. Berichte und Dokumente* (Frankfurt, 1971), pp. 81–102; Detlev Peukert, *Die KPD im Widerstand. Verfolgung und Untergrundarbeit an Rhein und Ruhr 1933 bis 1945* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp. 121–130, 372–381; Heribert Schüngeler, *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Mönchengladbach und Rheydt 1933–1945* (Mönchengladbach, 1985), pp. 79–106, 112–118.

[38] See, for example, Gerhard Schulz, *Die Anfänge des totalitären Maßnahmenstaates* (Cologne, 1974), p. 211; Adolf Diamant, *Gestapo Frankfurt am Main. Zur Geschichte einer verbrecherischen Organisation in den Jahren 1933–1945* (Frankfurt, 1988), p. 23.

[39] On Düsseldorf, see, for example, BAK, Z 38/218 and Staatsarchiv Münster (hereafter StAM), Generalstaatsanwaltschaft Hamm, 2840; on Bochum, see *ibid.*, 12601, 12602, 12423; on Hagen, see *ibid.*, oJ. 22/33; on Hamburg, see *Stiftung der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR* im Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter SAPMO), I 2/3/101; see

tion phase a second generation of informers was recruited from defectors. Disillusioned in their revolutionary euphoria, these people took the bull by the horns, as it were, keen to atone for their own past and at the same time using it to their advantage.[40] Such reversals of philosophical outlooks were not only the outcome of individual predispositions, more often than not they were coerced in detention. These turncoat illegals, who agreed to become agents or informers to regain or retain their liberty, formed a third group of this type of subversive, whose numbers were steadily replenished until the end of the war.[41] Heinrich Müller, later head of the Gestapo, had already decided in 1937 that "the fight against communism comes to a standstill when we have no informers"; hence he demanded that "every time a communist is arrested, we should consider whether the person would make an agent or informer".[42]

One of the most persistently cultivated myths is that informers were found only in the spectrum of communist resistance activities, while the social democrats are portrayed as upright and honourable people.[43] Integrity had its limits in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as well, and the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the lack of vision, financial problems, the strain of exile and of course the pressures in detention ensured that even leading members of the SPD agreed to work for the Gestapo. At least in former SPD strongholds like Berlin and Frankfurt and in the

also Johann Wachtler, *Zwischen Revolutionserwartung und Untergang. Die Vorbereitung der KPD auf die Illegalität in den Jahren 1929–1933* (Frankfurt [etc.], 1983), pp. 183–190.

[40] See, for example, BA-ZA, ZC 9049/1,2, ZC 13937/18, ZC 13938/4, ZC 13940/14, ZC 13945/32, ZC 15398/2, ZC 20052/11,12,13; BAB, NJ 2/3, NJ 1123, NJ 1487, NJ 5669/2, NJ 7314, NJ 9557/2, NJ 11217, NJ 15080, NJ 15641; BAP, P.St. 3/82, 94, St. 3/224/II, 948; SAPMO, I 2/3/58, 92, 104, 163, 316; HStAD, RW 58/10902, 27851, 34045, 45160, 49351, 55106, 60536; HStAW, 461/32640; StAM, Generalstaatsanwaltschaft Hamm, o.J. 950/33, 2258, 2420, 2458; Landesarchiv Speyer, H 38/1399, 1427; see also Bernd Kaufmann *et al.*, *Der Nachrichtendienst der KPD 1919–1937* (Berlin, 1993), pp. 283–290, 331–337.

[41] For examples, see especially BA-ZA, ZB 1515/3, ZC 3708/8, 9, ZC 13797, ZC 13936/8, ZC 13938/17, ZC 14162, ZC 14298, ZC 14299, ZC 15745, ZC 20052/13; BAB, NJ 1500/14, NJ 1563/2, NJ 1622/6, NJ 2562, NJ 10515; SAPMO, I 2/3/82, 92-102, 104, 105, 108, 109, 111, 131, 139-142, 162, 163, 165, 273, 285;. I 2/6/4; I 2/705/12; HStAD RW 35/12, RW 58/3735, 63625; HStAW, 461/32640; see Mallmann, *V-Leute*, pp. 268–271, 283–284; see also Regina Scheer, "Rambow. Spuren von Verfolgung und Verrat", *Dachauer Hefte*, 10 (1994), pp. 191–213; Johannes Tuchel, "Kontakte zwischen Sozialdemokraten und Kommunisten im Sommer 1944. Zur historischen Bedeutung des 22. Juni 1944", *ibid.*, 11 (1995), pp. 78–101.

[42] Minutes of a Gestapo working conference, 27–28 January 1937, BA-ZA, ZC 20052/13, f. 175–185.

[43] See, for example, Hartmut Mehringer, "Die KPD in Bayern 1919–1945. Vorgeschichte, Verfolgung und Widerstand", in Martin Broszat and Hartmut Mehringer (eds), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit*, 6 vols (Munich and Vienna, 1983), vol. 5, pp. 148–159; Mehringer, "Die bayerische Sozialdemokratie bis zum Ende des NS-Regimes. Vorgeschichte, Verfolgung und Widerstand", *ibid.*, pp. 347–351.

favoured SPD exile destinations of Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France and the Netherlands one can see a comparable (albeit relative) measure of secret police control and informers did inflict damage on a similar scale as in the Communist Party (KPD) underground.[44] This infiltration process probably started in the summer of 1932, after Papen's coup in Prussia, when the SPD was added to the list of enemies of the state to be spied out.[45] And although it only started to bite after Hitler gained power, the party executive as early as August 1933 adjudged the "informer danger" among the emigrant groups "so considerable that it poses a serious threat to all party activities".[46] Between then and June 1936 it published 17 lists, naming a total of 405 supposedly unreliable party members.[47]

While in parallel there was also a partial infiltration of exile groups beyond the left-wing parties,[48] the churches were not declared objects of secret police attention until much later. The RSHA did not order the creation of an apparatus along these lines until the autumn of 1941.[49] As the surviving personal files of Catholic informers show, blackmail played a

[44] See, for example, on Berlin, BAP, R. 58/491, P.St. 3/310; BA-ZA, ZB 7126/3, ZC 13819/16, ZC 13936/4, ZC 13940/10, ZC 13941/20; Frank Moraw, *Die Parole der "Einheit" und die Sozialdemokratie. Zur parteiorganisatorischen und gesellschaftspolitischen Orientierung der SPD in der Periode der Illegalität und in der ersten Phase der Nachkriegszeit 1933–1948* (Bonn, 1973), pp. 45–46; on Frankfurt, see HStAW, 461/30027, 32640; BA-ZA, ZC 13937/11, 12, ZC 13941/6; BAB, NJ 15494; Wolfgang Wippermann, *Das Leben in Frankfurt zur NS-Zeit*, 4 vols (Frankfurt, 1986), vol. 4, pp. 33, 56–59, 106–111; on exile, see BAP, R 58/3, 7; P.St. 3/42, 43, 62, 81, 116, 258–260, St. 3/323, 329, 332, 394, 946; BA-ZA, ZB 7068/12, ZB 7070/2, 5, 6, ZB 7126/3, ZC 10858/1, ZC 13262, ZC 13819/1, 9, ZC 13936/19, ZC 13937/6, ZC 13938/11, ZC 13939/1, 4, 17, 23, ZC 13940/16, 19, ZC 13941/6, 11, 32; BAB, NJ 9847, Oberreichsanwalt beim Volksgerichtshof, file Herbert Kriedemann; HStAD, RW 58/19540; Landesarchiv Saarbrücken, Oberster Säuberungsrat, V OSR 77/50, V OSR 153/50, St. 24/51; Marlis Buchholz and Bernd Rother, *Der Parteivorstand der SPD im Exil. Protokolle der Sopade 1933–1940* (Bonn, 1995), pp. xxvii, 29, 45, 78, 79, 89, 90, 105, 106, 151, 152, 154–156, 168, 176 (hereafter *Parteivorstand*); Bohumil Cerny, "Der Parteivorstand der SPD im tschechoslowakischen Asyl (1933–1938)", *Historica*, 14 (1967), pp. 175–218; Mallmann and Paul, *Herrschaft*, pp. 221, 222, 459; KPD Executive Committee (ed.), *In Sachen Kriedemann* (Frankfurt, 1949).

[45] File memo Landeskriminalpolizeiamt Berlin, 16 August 1932, GStA, Rep. 219, nr. 27, f. 3; see the 1932 membership lists of the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold, BAP, R 58/325, 343, 352, 455; see also Demps, *Übergang*, pp. 63–71; Graf, *Politische Polizei*, pp. 83–91; in Bavaria at least the SPD had already been under surveillance and infiltrated by the political police for some years, see Faatz, *Staatsschutz*, pp. 69, 327–328.

[46] Buchholz and Rother, *Parteivorstand*, p. 16.

[47] Friedrich Stampfer, *Drei Jahre Sopadearbeit*, p. 14, Archiv der sozialen Demokratie Bonn, Sopade-Emigration 165.

[48] See, for example, BA-ZA, ZC 13936/5, 13937/14, 15, 19, 21, 23, 32, ZC 13938/19; Jost Nikolaus Willi, *Der Fall Jacob-Wesemann (1935/1936). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Schweiz in der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Bern and Frankfurt, 1972), pp. 109–129; Herbert E. Tutas, *Nationalsozialismus und Exil. Die Politik des Dritten Reiches gegenüber der deutschen politischen Emigration 1933–1939* (Munich and Vienna, 1975), pp. 66–105.

[49] Ordinance by the RSHA, 24 October 1941, BAP, R 58/266, f. 75–77.

very minor role in recruitment. Instead, the voluntary commitment out of patriotic motives and even out of sympathy for national socialism was dominant, although this applied mostly to clergy.[50] Essentially their reports did little more than assess the mood among the other clergy and churchgoers or pass on pastoral letters and conference minutes, but on occasion the lethal potential of the informer flashed up here as well. Thus in 1944 a Catholic priest in the Aachen diocese was singled out for praise by the Gestapo for "preparing the ground for rounding up a Polish resistance movement in the Reich territory".[51]

Shortly before the churches, the army of foreign workers and prisoners of war, which increasingly kept the machines in the arms industry going, was declared a target of infiltration. The Gestapo special squads which combed the Soviet prisoner-of-war camps in 1941 for personnel to be eliminated had also been told to look out for potential informers.[52] Himmler's circular on how to counter the dangers involved in deploying foreign workers even raised the "extension of a counterintelligence service" among them as the Stapo branches' "most important task", since "this is the only way of identifying sources of trouble early and eliminating them before any damage is done".[53] As bait for recruitment scarce "luxuries" were used, especially spirits and cigarettes, which the RSHA supplied specifically for this purpose. Eastern workers were usually fobbed off with bread coupons.[54]

A similar exploitation of self-produced emergency situations can also be observed in the case of the Jewish population during the deportation phase. At least in Berlin there operated at the time a 20-odd-strong com-

[50] HStAD, RW 34/3, 33, RW 35/2, 8, 9; BAP, R 58/610, f. 6; Landesarchiv Saarbrücken, Stapo-Stelle Saarbrücken 5, 27, 40.

[51] Memo by Cologne Stapo branch, 5 May 1944, HStAD, RW 35/9, f. 247; see *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945–1966*, 22 vols (Amsterdam, 1969-1981), vol. 3, pp. 131–135; *ibid.*, vol. 12, pp. 742–779.

[52] Guidelines issued by the RSHA for Sicherheitspolizei and SD commandos stationed in prisoner-of-war camps, 17 July 1941, BAP, R 58/272, f. 68–72; see Alfred Streim, *Sowjetische Gefangene in Hitlers Vernichtungskrieg. Berichte und Dokumente 1941–1945* (Heidelberg, 1982), pp. 29–51.

[53] Ordinance issued by Reichsführer SS and chief of the German police, 7 December 1942, in Dienststelle des Generalinspekteurs in der Britischen Zone für die Spruchgerichte (ed.), *Beweisdokumente für die Spruchgerichte in der Britischen Zone* (Hamburg, 1947), p. 335; for other examples, see BAB, NJ 1434; Landesarchiv Schleswig, 358/7251; Josif Anatolovic Brodski, *Die Lebenden kämpfen. Die illegale Organisation Brüderliche Zusammenarbeit der Kriegsgefangenen* (East Berlin, 1968), pp. 217–218; for case studies, see Friederike Littmann, "Das 'Ausländerreferat' der Hamburger Gestapo. Die Verfolgung der polnischen und sowjetischen Zwangsarbeiter", in Angelika Ebbinghaus *et al.* (eds), *Heilen und Vernichten im Mustergau Hamburg. Bevölkerungs- und Gesundheitspolitik im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg, 1984), pp. 164–169; Uwe Kaminsky, "Fremdarbeiter in Ratingen während des Zweiten Weltkrieges", *Ratinger Forum*, 1 (1989), pp. 90–212.

[54] Minutes of a working conference at the Düsseldorf Stapo branch, 9 May 1944, HStAD, RW 36/12, f. 47–50; see also accounts Stapo-Stelle Kiel, Landesarchiv Schleswig, 455/20.

mando of Jewish "catchers" (*Greifer*), who did not have to wear the discriminating yellow star and had been provided with weapons and official papers. In the hope of saving themselves and their families from deportation, they hunted, individually or in small groups, other Jews who had gone into hiding.[55] On the other hand, the bourgeois and aristocratic elites who were behind the unsuccessful coup of 20 July 1944 largely escaped this form of infiltration, since until the assassination attempt the Gestapo did not consider them potential enemies. Paul Reckzeh, a doctor at the Berlin Charité hospital who exposed the Solf circle from the inside in late 1943, was, as far as we can tell at the moment, the only informer in this sphere.[56]

Moles of this kind were state listening posts in society, agents of the regime with a double identity, the Gestapo version of the Trojan horse, as it were. Regardless of whether they acted voluntarily or under coercion, they conducted a business at the expense of others. This established a permanent exchange between providers of information from opposition groups and officials of the new regime. The former made amends for their affiliation by exploiting their knowledge and their connections, while the latter accepted this "exchange of victims"[57] and sought to turn it to their ends and extend it. Anyone who committed this institutionalized breach of confidence secured their own survival but also found themselves in an almost schizophrenic dilemma. They remained at home in their accustomed environment, and in its conceptual and behavioural patterns, values and visions; but at the same time they constantly called the existence of

[55] Peter Wyden, *Stella* (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 143–243; *Und Gad ging zu David. Die Erinnerungen des Gad Beck 1923 bis 1945* (Berlin, 1995), pp. 112–115; Kurt Jakob Ball-Kaduri, "Berlin wird judenfrei. Die Juden in Berlin 1942/43", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, 22 (1973), pp. 196–241; Konrad Kwiet and Helmut Eschwege, *Selbstbehauptung und Widerstand. Deutsche Juden im Kampf um Existenz und Menschenwürde 1933–1945* (Hamburg, 1984), pp. 157–158; see also Wolfgang Benz, "Überleben im Untergrund 1943–1945", in Benz (ed.), *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933–1945. Leben unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft* (3rd ed. Munich, 1993), pp. 660–700.

[56] BA-ZA, ZC 14298; BAB, NSDAP-Zentralkartei, file Dr Paul Reckzeh; "SS-Bericht über den 20. Juli. Aus den Papieren des SS-Obersturmbannführers Dr. Georg Kiesel", *Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*, 2 (1947), H. 1/2, pp. 5–34; *Spiegelbild einer Verschwörung. Die Kaltenbrunner-Berichte an Bormann und Hitler über das Attentat vom 20. Juli 1944. Geheime Dokumente aus dem ehemaligen Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Stuttgart, 1961); see also Ulrike Hett and Johannes Tuchel, "Die Reaktionen des NS-Staates auf den Umsturzversuch vom 20. Juli 1944", in Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel (eds), *Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 377–389; Johannes Tuchel, "Die Sicherheitspolizeischule Drögen und der 20. Juli 1944 – zur Geschichte der 'Sonderkommission Lange' ", in Florian von Buttlar *et al.* (eds), *Fürstenberg-Drögen. Schichten eines verlassenen Ortes* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 120–131; Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand-Staatsstreich-Attentat. Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler* (4th ed. Munich, 1985), pp. 625–644; on the Solf circle, see Irmgard von der Lühe, *Eine Frau im Widerstand. Elisabeth von Thadden und das Dritte Reich* (Freiburg, 1980).

[57] On this concept, see Lutz Niethammer, *Der 'gesäuberte' Antifaschismus. Die SED und die roten Kapos von Buchenwald* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 51–55.

all this into question, and thus undermined and destroyed the world from which they came and in which they lived. For the resistance this corrosion of social reliability bore an ever-present element of surprise, in which presumed solidarity suddenly turned and ended in betrayal. Thus every friend could become an enemy, even though that person, if he or she were a coerced informer, did not harbour any feelings of enmity. Through their very existence agents and informers made the illegal underground into an impenetrable maze.

This should not revive the older perception of a secret agent standing at every street corner, however. Let us first consider some figures and ratios. The Stapo branch at Nuremberg-Fürth, responsible for the whole of northern Bavaria, an area with a population of around 2.7 million, had only between 80 and 100 informers at its disposal in 1943/1944.[58] The proportions were similar elsewhere. The Frankfurt Gestapo relied on around 100 informers,[59] and the Saarbrücken branch had only 50 in 1939.[60] In practice this meant that at least in these three cases the local Gestapo officers outnumbered the informers, in other words they could not cover the ground either. To put it rather pointedly, the use of informers was thus a key structural element in the repertory of Gestapo activities, but in practice it was a rather contingent phenomenon. These kinds of ratios alone are not sufficient especially in this sphere of policing a society. But although they show that informers were not a mass phenomenon, they do not reveal much about their qualitative coverage, about the relationship between informers' relatively small numbers and the potential efficiency with which they were deployed against opposition groups.

If their role is assessed in this light, an odd incongruity emerges. On the one hand most resistance groups of whatever hue were cracked through the use of informers, and this generally required only small numbers of people because their familiarity with the situation facilitated the spying.[61] But on the other hand there were, at least at certain times, whole regions and social contexts into which no informer penetrated. For instance, during the war the proscribed KPD's extensive reorganization efforts in Thuringia and the Mansfeld region were never infiltrated,[62] and in the regime's early

[58] Elke Fröhlich, *Die Herausforderung des Einzelnen. Geschichten über Widerstand und Verfolgung* (Munich and Vienna, 1983), p. 212.
[59] Affidavit by Johanna Narr, 1947, HStAW, 649/495, f. 107.
[60] Mallmann and Paul, *Herrschaft*, p. 215.
[61] For examples, see Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, *Milieus und Widerstand. Eine Verhaltensgeschichte der Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Bonn, 1995), pp. 409–417; Mallmann, "Konsistenz oder Zusammenbruch? Profile des kommunistischen Widerstandes 1933–1945", in Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann (ed.), *Anpassung, Verweigerung und Widerstand. Soziale Milieus, Politische Kultur und der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland im regionalen Vergleich* (Berlin, 1997) (forthcoming).
[62] On Thuringia, see Ruth Bahmann, *Magnus Poser. Lebensbild eines Kommunisten* (Jena, 1981), pp. 54–77; Gerd Bergmann and Werner Berkes, *Zur Geschichte des antifaschistischen Widerstandskampfes 1933–1945 in Stadt und Kreis Eisenach* (Eisenach, 1980), pp.

years a number of successful escapes from prisons and concentration camps involving dozens and sometimes hundreds of outside helpers were never uncovered.[63] So informers were a powerful weapon to take out the resistance, but they were anything but a pervasive phenomenon. An example may clarify this discrepancy: in the autumn of 1943 there were 155 slave-labour camps with more than 100 inmates in the Stapo's Düsseldorf region, but the organization had informers in only 107 of them.[64] Thus only 69 per cent of these camps were supervised from the inside. Bearing in mind that by no means all who agreed to work for the Gestapo really functioned as informers, the actual coverage is likely to have been less than 50 per cent.

These forms of collaboration were no invariable cages of obedience. The structures of subordination could well remain purely formal. For although many informers merely wanted to do business with relationships which no longer counted, some of those who were blackmailed with the protective-custody order saw a chance of at least holding on to their freedom. They tried to "outmanoeuvre"[65] the Gestapo and thus to subvert the commitment they had undertaken.[66] They understood their signing up for the regime – with hindsight their actions can be interpreted as such – almost as a protective shield, which allowed them to associate with their

55–62; Paul Kuhn, "Der antifaschistische Widerstandskampf in Gotha", in Helmut Leuthold (ed.), *Gotha. Zur Geschichte der Stadt* (Gotha, 1975), pp. 99–125; memoirs Hugo Meister/Gotha, SAPMO, I 2/3/141, f. 141–149; memoirs Wilhelm Arnold/Jena, *ibid.*, EA 21; on the Mansfeld region, see Karl-Heinz Leidigkeit *et al.*, *Gegen Faschismus und Krieg – Die KPD im Bezirk Halle-Merseburg 1933 bis 1945* (Halle, 1983), pp. 385–411, 464–493; memoirs Robert Büchner/Eisleben, SAPMO, EA 120; memoirs Otto Gotsche/Lützkendorf, *ibid.*, EA 291.

[63] See, for instance, Hans Beimler, *Im Mörderlager Dachau. Vier Wochen in den Händen der braunen Banditen* (Moscow, 1933); Erich Wiesner, *Man nannte mich Ernst. Erlebnisse und Episoden aus der Geschichte der Arbeiterjugendbewegung* (4th ed. East Berlin, 1978), pp. 198–211; Bruno Retzlaff-Kresse, *Illegalität-Kerker-Exil. Erinnerungen aus dem antifaschistischen Kampf* (East Berlin, 1980), pp. 94–115; Joseph C. Rossaint and Michael Zimmermann, *Widerstand gegen den Nazismus in Oberhausen* (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 107–108; Elke Imberger, *Widerstand "von unten". Widerstand und Dissens aus den Reihen der Arbeiterbewegung und der Zeugen Jehovas in Lübeck und Schleswig-Holstein 1933–1945* (Neumünster, 1991), p. 192.

[64] Register of Ostarbeiterlager in the Düsseldorf Stapo region, undated/autumn 1943, HStAD, RW 36/10, f. 102–114; similarly, a memo by the Trier Stapo branch, 14 March 1944, Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz 662, 5/13, pp. 161–162.

[65] For an early example, see Josef Koch (= Sepp Schwab), *Der Kampf gegen Spitzelei und Provokation. Die Methoden der Politischen Polizei im faschistischen Staat* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1935), p. 39.

[66] KPD instruction, May 1935, BA-ZA, ZC 20052/13, f. 113–115; third RSHA report on the Nationalkomitee "Freies Deutschland", 16 September 1944, SAPMO, NL 76/157, f. 57–65; similarly, BAP, R 58/517; BAB, Oberreichsanwalt beim Volksgerichtshof, files Hermann Amter und Willy Goldberg; BA-ZA, ZB 7112/3, 4, 6, ZC 13937/17; SAPMO, I 2/3/142, 163; HStAD, RW 58/41189, 59779; HStAW, 461/30027, 30069, 32640.

former comrades with impunity and quasi-legally.[67] That this playing for time also carried the risk of "two-shouldered intelligence work" the Gestapo realized full well.[68] Yet it had to concede time and again that there were branches "which have informers on their books who cannot be justified on the basis of the information they provide".[69] And it had to acknowledge in the summer of 1942 that "Judging from the frightening dearth of incoming reports, it seems that some branches barely maintain links with left-leaning circles any more".[70]

The concept of the net may be commonly used in this context, but in that case it must be said that it had many holes and gaps. But at the same time the downside of the informers' scope for self-determination should not be forgotten. As long as they were considered reliable, they could make virtually any accusation, which could then condemn the accused person to the concentration camp for ever. They could also, of course, use such fictions deliberately to compensate for the absence of any real information and lost contacts, either to remain in receipt of state police payments or to get rid of those who knew of their role.[71] In this way they gained the power over life and death. What is more, precisely because the Gestapo knew it was treading on thin ice, as it were, this fuelled the fear of a security risk and led to that brutalization which during the final phase of the war culminated in full-blown massacres.[72]

As these observations aim to show, the Gestapo was far more than an institution. Rather, it stands as a metaphor for a multifaceted functional

[67] On Kassel, see for example a memo by the Prussian department of state, 26 April 1936, GStA, Rep. 90 P, nr. 3; on Dortmund, see Kurt Klotzbach, *Gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Widerstand und Verfolgung in Dortmund 1930–1945* (Hanover, 1969), p. 214; on the background, see Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen Ludwigsburg, 414 AR 304/85/8; on Leipzig, see BA-ZA, ZC II 19; see also Mallmann, *V-Leute*, pp. 285–287.

[68] Memo from the Cologne Stapo branch to the Sicherheitspolizei inspector, 16 January 1945, HStAD, RW 34/31, f. 46–47.

[69] Circular by the Düsseldorf Stapo branch, 13 April 1942, *ibid.*, RW 36/12, f. 40–41.

[70] Circular by the Düsseldorf Stapo branch, 2 June 1942, *ibid.*, f. 31–32; similarly, an RSHA report, 15 January 1941, BAP, St. 3/68, f. 10–14 and an RSHA memo, 31 January 1942, *ibid.*, St. 3/70, f. 449.

[71] See, for example, HStAD, RW 58/15891, 31059; BAK, Z 38/414.

[72] See Bernd-A. Rusinek, *Gesellschaft in der Katastrophe: Terror, Illegalität, Widerstand. Köln 1944/45* (Essen, 1989); Michael Jäger, *Gestapomord in Kassel-Welheiden, Karfreitag 1945. Erinnerungen an ein vergessenes Verbrechen aus den letzten Tagen der NS-Herrschaft* (Kassel, 1987); Michael Keller, *"Das mit den Russenweibern ist erledigt". Rüstungsproduktion, Zwangsarbeit, Massenmord und Bewältigung der Vergangenheit in Hirzenhain zwischen 1943 und 1991* (Friedberg, 1991); *Dortmund. Karfreitag 1945 – Die Massenerschiessungen in der Bittermark und im Romberg-Park* (2nd ed. Dortmund, 1970); Karl Otto, *Unsterbliche Opfer ... Arbeitermord der Gestapo am 27. März 1945 in Neunkirchen* (Chemnitz, 1949); Herbert Obenaus, "Die Erschießungen auf dem Seelhorster Friedhof in Hannover im April 1945", *Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter*, NF 35 (1981), pp. 233–274; Fritz Kiltau and Paul Krämer, *Drei Tage fehlten zur Freiheit. Die Nazimorde am Kirchberg, Bensheim – März 1945* (Frankfurt, 1986).

mechanism, in which some sections of the public made considerable contributions to the establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship. In reality the interface between state and society was not a clear-cut demarcation line, but the site of complex processes of reciprocal penetration and recruitment, a sphere of rampant collaboration structures which documents the reciprocal dependence of power and complicity. The patterns of cooperation described here formed key components of a web which on the one hand exerted state power within social contexts and achieved the penetration of even intimate family spheres and insulated resistance circles, and on the other hand enabled parts of society to use the regime to further their particular interests and strengthen their positions in the shadow of the (supposed) victors. What becomes visible in place of the old conception of the national socialist tyranny is plebiscitary terror, which illustrates that the exercise of power was not a one-way street but an interaction on a rough terrain.

This conclusion is not tantamount to mitigating the Gestapo's guilt. That it was a "criminal organization" is beyond question and is much more easily provable than at the time of the Nuremberg trials. Nor is this conclusion tantamount to universalizing responsibility and blaming everyone, as it were. But it does mean questioning the still widely held view that a dictatorship is defined by omnipotent power and a subjugated society. It points instead to the interdependence between both spheres, to the chemistry between them, and focuses on the contributions, interests and impulses from society and the deficits, dependencies and inducements from the state. But it also implies doubts about the tenability of the paradigm of the controlling or supervising state, and raises the question whether they should not be complemented or perhaps even replaced by the perspective of a "self-surveilling society".[73]

Orwellian conditions, permeated with the spectre of a thought police, do not need video cameras or listening devices; surveillance and bugging can be managed perfectly well without high-tech equipment. Those state control techniques for which "1984" has become a metaphor could rely on tried as well as contrived collaboration structures, on contributions from "below", which were mostly voluntary and made for selfish motives, but often also coerced under threat of sanctions. Although the Gestapo doubtless possessed extraordinary powers and potential to threaten, in a comparative perspective it is not – and this is my thesis – a *casus sui generis*, a phenomenon unique in all its key aspects, but an exaggerated variant of state repression and social penetration.

One can surmise that exchange processes between the state and society as described above occurred and occur between all kinds of individuals and institutions, even outside dictatorial regimes. In occupied France, for

[73] Robert Gellately, "Allwissend und allgegenwärtig? Entstehung, Funktion und Wandel des Gestapo-Mythos", in Paul and Mallmann, *Gestapo*, p. 67.

instance, between 3 and 5 million denunciation letters were sent by members of the public to the Vichy authorities or even direct to the Gestapo. These were often aimed at discrediting neighbours, colleagues and relatives.[74] And the bitter sentiment that "one is only ever betrayed by one's own" also circulated in the French resistance.[75] Similarities seem to emerge, but this remains a hypothesis that will have to be exhaustively tested before it can be verified or falsified. This calls for comparative supranational research, a task which will have to be taken on in the coming years if national historical images are to converge in a new Europe and not remain stuck in often hollow resistance myths.

Considerations of this kind will doubtless contribute to the loosening of rigid perpetrator-victim categorizations. They thus become blurred, but it is to be hoped that they also force us to conduct a closer examination, to analyse constellations of power and to investigate control within the framework of social practice.[76] In his last book the Italian writer and Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi left us an essay in which he analyses the microphysics of power in the concentration camps. He talks of a "grey zone" (also the essay's title) "with indistinct outlines which both separates and connects the realms of rulers and servants". He warns against the "manichaean tendency, which shuns intermediate zones and avoids complexity. It tends to reduce the flow of events in human history to conflicts, conflicts to duels, to 'us' and 'them' fights, between Athenians and Spartans, Romans and Carthaginians". He urges "a closer investigation of the space that separates the victims from the persecutors (not only in the Nazi camps!)".[77] I believe that such an approach would also prove very fruitful in the comparative study of modern dictatorships.

[74] André Halimi, *La Délation sous l'Occupation* (Paris, 1983), p. 7.

[75] Oscar Reile, *Geheime Westfront. Die Abwehr 1935–1945* (Munich and Wels, 1962), p. 382; examples in Philippe Aziz, *Au service de l'ennemi. La Gestapo française en province* 1940–1944 (Paris, 1971); Aziz, *Le Livre noir de le Trahison. Histoires de la Gestapo en France* (Paris, 1984); see also BAB, R 70 Frankreich/36, R 70 Elsaß/1, 6, R 70 Lothringen/11–13; on German-occupied Poland, see Wlodzimierz Borodziej, *Terror i Polityka. Policja niemiecka a polski ruch oporu w GG 1939–1944* (Warsaw, 1985), pp. 84–98; see also BAB, R 70 Polen/81, 123, 143, 194, 195, 197.

[76] For important contributions on this aspect, see Alf Lüdtke, "Herrschaft als soziale Praxis", in Lüdtke (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis. Historische und sozialanthropologische Studien* (Göttingen, 1991), pp. 9–63; Lüdtke, "Funktionseliten: Täter, Mit-Täter, Opfer? Zu den Bedingungen des deutschen Faschismus", *ibid.*, pp. 559–590; Lüdtke, "Wo blieb die 'rote Glut'? Arbeitererfahrungen und deutscher Faschismus", in Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993), pp. 221–282; also stimulating is Thomas Lindenberger, "Alltagsgeschichte und ihr möglicher Beitrag zu einer Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR", in Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen (eds), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Göttingen, 1996), pp. 298–325.

[77] Primo Levi, *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten* (Munich, 1990), pp. 33–68, quotations on pp. 33, 37, 39.