

## **OPPONENTS AND CRITICS**

### **Criticisms of Steiner and anthroposophy**

**Dr. A. Anderson**

#### **Introduction**

An increased awareness of Rudolf Steiner has developed in recent decades, due especially to the prominence of the Steiner schools, and also of bio-dynamic agriculture. But this higher public profile has resulted in the rise of negative attitudes to him. There are several reasons for this. If people encounter anthroposophical ideas in a haphazard way, this can easily lead to misunderstandings, especially if some isolated statements are encountered without some orientation in the over-all nature of anthroposophical ideas. These ideas are alien to modern attitudes, because they come from an extraordinary, clairvoyant source. Another cause of misunderstanding is that people can encounter sectarian attitudes amongst Steiner circles; in other words, a narrow-minded interpretation of his ideas.

But another cause of the hostility towards Rudolf Steiner comes from ideological quarters. The writer Peter Staudenmaier is a prominent critic. His schooling was at the Jesuit Marquette High School, after which he entered the Jesuit Marquette University in Milwaukee, USA, where he now works. The hostility of the Jesuits towards anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner during his lifetime is well-known. Steiner himself once read out a threat from this Order that had been brought to his attention, a threat to burn down the Goetheanum. It appears that this hostility is just as visceral and offensive today as then. The website [www.thebee.se](http://www.thebee.se) demonstrates that Staudenmaier literally makes up offensive statements, to achieve his goal of stirring up hostility to Steiner.

The three main accusations against Rudolf Steiner are that of racism, anti-Semitism and a kind of proto-Nazi attitude. To even discuss these accusations is distasteful to people who regard Rudolf Steiner very highly, as a deeply moral and profoundly enlightened person. But it is necessary to consider these accusations.

#### **Racism**

In addition to all the above factors that create hostility, it is the case that there are a number of statements made by Rudolf Steiner which are socially controversial, and which indeed contravene today's understanding of what constitutes racism. Consequently, all people who are positive towards Rudolf Steiner have to recognize that in his works there are statements which have to be defined as racist in today's world. These statements breach the values and understandings of many people of today; although Rudolf Steiner would not at all agree to have his teachings defined in this way. He would no doubt view racism differently.

As I mentioned in the Rudolf Steiner Handbook, one also notes that there are many long-term students of anthroposophy, people of integrity from different ethnicities, such as Chinese, African, South American, Indian and Japanese who do not consider him to be a racist, they find his teachings acceptable. We can note that Steiner once stated that the true Christian is that person who views every human being, of any ethnicity, as having the spark of the divine in them.

Anthroposophical ideas involve a more complex and more nuanced approach to life than is usually to be found in western society, because it factors in a vast multi-layered cosmos. Whereas

today's view of what constitutes racism derives from humanistic views on life. So the conclusions drawn from this kind of mindset will inevitably conflict with the complex multi-nuanced view in anthroposophy. In anthroposophy there are very different ideas about deeper life-questions than what is found in humanism.

This kind of mindset is ill-equipped to accurately assess a world view so different as that of Rudolf Steiner's. For this includes repeated lives on Earth, wherein human souls return to different ethnicities, but are themselves not ultimately part of any ethnicity. Then there is the influence of many ranks of spiritual beings in the evolving of humanity. The anthroposophical worldview also includes the pivotal German concept of *Werden* and *Entgehen*, that is, the coming into being and the going out of being; whether clothing fashions, plant species, entire nations or philosophical ideas.

The modern world has a certain way of being, and has created principles upon which systems of governance, of entertainment, economic policy, environmental impact, etc are based, as well as principles that define racism or non-racism. And these are all bound to be incompatible, to some extent, with the anthroposophical view on these areas of life, as is evident from Steiner's views of education, agriculture, medical therapy, etc. So in this context, it is quite simply true that some of Steiner's statements fail to meet the criteria needed today to be regarded as non-racist. But this is also true of quite a number of other people with good-will to all humanity, who were educated in the late 19th century.

So it is inevitable that there will be criticism of various passages from Rudolf Steiner. Often these are taken without regard for, or awareness of, his deeply ethical nature and immense social conscience. For example, criticism has been made of Rudolf Steiner's teachings about the evolutionary cycles which demarcate the flow of history. In this aspect of anthroposophy, only specific civilisations are mentioned as leading the evolutionary changes that have occurred in the time from about 7,000 BC to the present time; these are called the post-Atlantean ages. This is seen by some critics as favouring some cultures over others in the flow of history; and that is in fact, on the surface, the case.

Rudolf Steiner would reply that it is not really a question of 'favouring' any one culture over any other but of reporting what his seership disclosed. He would no doubt request that this fact be respected and be given some credence. His view on history is not Eurocentric nor German-biased as some critics claim, for the most advanced cultural progress in these zodiac ages since the downfall of Atlantis, were Indian, then Persian, then Egyptian-Mesopotamian, then Greco-Latin, and then Anglo-European, but later will be Slavic and then American. But precisely this overview of history is seen as racist, since in fact all these cultures are predominantly from the same race (i.e., these do not include Asia or Africa or the American peoples for example).

So how can a supporter of Steiner respond to this? Anyone who can discern the spiritual integrity of Steiner, as evidenced in his teachings on ethics and spirituality, is aware that he was certainly not a person who harbours dislike, and encourages hostility of, people based on their racial characteristics. Those who study Steiner carefully, encounter ideas which have a profoundly spiritual nature. But this argument is of little weight with those who cannot, or do not want to, see the integrity of Steiner.

For example Steiner mentioned, in what amounts to a direct and total breach of modern anti-racism criteria, that the colour of the skin itself is an expression of various etheric and astral energies, and that these give a specific tone to the way the human mind manifests. It is true that when he was talking about this, he emphasized that the worthiness of the human being itself, of

any racial origin, is not the theme, and is not being assessed in his lecture. But despite these words, any person today in assessing Steiner's works against the modern definition of racism, has no option other than to conclude that they are to be defined today as racist; for logically viewed, this is simply the fact of the matter. And students of Steiner need to note this fact well.

There are quite a number of statements in his Complete Works which have been clearly established as contrary to what constitutes non-racist attitudes. Students of Steiner have to conclude that Steiner would not agree with today's definition of racism – but that is no help at all in dealing with critics.

Hence for both non-anthroposophists and anthroposophists alike, when engaged in a conversation with a person of today, this is the social reality. Here is the crux of the problem; the view of what constitutes racism today is obviously not what Steiner would agree to. So no dialogue is going to resolve this impasse. Any attempt by anthroposophists to argue with people outside anthroposophy that there is no racism in Steiner's works – as racism is understood today – is as pointless as trying to convince people today that sun spots are the manifestation of the laggard Spirits of Form, or the 'eighth sphere' exists and is the malignant aspect of the moon.

The anthroposophist can certainly assert that Rudolf Steiner was not racist in the sense of harbouring aggressive hatred of other ethnic groups. And one can argue that some of his remarks on this subject, and indeed other subjects, reflect the language of 100 years ago, which is certainly very different to today's ways of speaking. But that is almost a self-defeating action, as he is understood to be beyond the normal state of 'the common man'.

The situation is complicated by hostile Internet articles in which a false and defamatory impression of Steiner is given to the world. For example, the following sentence from Rudolf Steiner is put onto the Internet,

“Negroes” are “decadent” and they “completely cut themselves off from the spiritual world”.

When read as given, this is offensive and racist; but standing alone like this, it is deliberately misleading. These words were carefully cut out of a lecture about the finer points of linguistics. The lecture explored the spiritual effect of vowels and consonants on the etheric and astral bodies, and how our speech has an effect upon the Dead. (!) In the lecture here Rudolf Steiner is explaining a subtle, technical anthroposophical view about linguistics, namely that when people think verbally, in what he calls a 'substantivist' way, they cut themselves off from the spiritual world (here he means the souls of the Dead). He then comments that,

“Those people who are falling behind, and who experience the verbs in a very nominal or substantivist way, such as the Africans, are thereby cutting themselves off completely from the spiritual world (the Dead).” (emphasis mine)

Obviously this passage is part of a complex anthroposophical elucidation, which has nothing to do with contempt for other ethnicities, he mentions the black people as one of various ethnicities that are being 'substantivist'. So seen in its true context, it is not the hostile racist aggression as implied in the above misleading version. It is however unacceptable in today's world.

The other often-quoted statement to damn Rudolf Steiner in regard to African people is,

“The French are committing the terrible brutality of moving black people to Europe ... It has an enormous effect on the blood and the race [of the French] and contributes considerably toward French decadence.”

And here the student of Steiner is facing a difficult situation. This passage is actually ambiguous; it might mean what critics say it does, namely that migration of Africans to France is wrong, and is harming the French nation. But equally, because again this is a passage about the subtleties of linguistics, it might mean that Steiner is condemning the racist crime of the French (and other European nations) in using the African slave trade. The French colonial empire was huge, encompassing some 13 million km<sup>2</sup>, especially in north Africa. And at its peak in late 18th century, ten million African slaves were traded per year. The suffering inflicted upon these slaves is unimaginable, and it appears, in this ambiguous text, that Steiner is condemning the brutalising effect upon the French themselves from trading in slaves.

But since the passage is ambiguous, it raises the possibility of a negative view of the African people being expressed here; this is the way that opponents of Steiner use it. So, socially viewed, these words have no place in today's world, it is simply regrettable that they were ever published.

Another example of a reference which in today's world is offensive and probably illegal, and yet is not any way falsified is,

“The remaining human bodies belonged to the races that had become decadent and were falling into decline. The good souls left the bodies of these races and rose up to higher races. This was the reason that the lower races had fewer and fewer descendants, while the higher races had more and more.”<sup>1</sup>

There are quite a number of statements of this sort in his Complete Works, which in some lectures may include a reference to the dying out of a specific contemporary ethnic group. Our modern view of racism, formed without initiation wisdom, has to condemn these ideas as racist; there is no other option. To anthroposophists, these views derive from what Steiner saw with his initiatory clairvoyance in higher worlds, they were not formed from earthly prejudices and assessment. A main feature of this part of his worldview is that there are ethnicities which are new and upcoming, and others that are old and dying away, as also occurs with plant and animal species. But in such statements as the above, Steiner is speaking from what he experienced as a seer, as he beheld the archangel responsible for a nation or an ethnic group.

He reports in his lectures about what he beheld in spiritual realms. For example, he also reported how the group-soul of the mountain goat species in the astral plane is heard uttering a kind of groaning sound, knowing that its time of incarnation on the Earth is drawing to a close.<sup>2</sup> Hence it is expected that the fertility, and thus the number of mountain goats, will gradually decline. But this is not said because Steiner was prejudiced against, or discriminating against, the mountain goat species; it is said because this is what he observed. He also spoke of how the Celtic nation disappeared from history in early Medieval times, losing any wars it was involved in, because its archangel, the folk-spirit of the Celts, was taking up a different task and would no longer need a human national group on the Earth.

Another such statement, which today is completely racist, is this,

---

<sup>1</sup> From Reading the Pictures of the Apocalypse: sixteen lectures, GA 104A, pp. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Answer to a question, from 2. Feb. 1908, not yet published.

“One can only understand history and all of social life, including today's social life, if one pays attention to people's racial characteristics. And one can only understand all that is spiritual in the correct sense if one first examines how this spiritual element operates within people precisely through the color of their skin.”

Now the very first thing to say here is that Steiner also said elsewhere that to understand history, you must first of all understand the zodiac energies operative at the time, or the influence of the Dead upon the living is a major factor. So the above statement is not as absolute as it is made to appear by critics. But because this statement is so directly opposed to the very core of today's anti-racism views it is in fact now, far too late, censored by Steiner publishers. But ill-willed or genuinely concerned critics can use this to unfairly align Steiner with hate-filled racist people.

Steiner however, was once again speaking from his unique clairvoyant perspective, and not fulminating against people based on their colour. We shall briefly note here, for the sake of clarity only, what Steiner meant about his idea of skin colour having an influence on consciousness. In this lecture he teaches that the ways that the different colours in the skin absorb the sunlight, determines subtly the soul's relationship to the triune astral body; that is, thinking, feeling and will. So he correlates Asians to feeling, the Europeans to the thinking and the Africans to the will. In effect, looking at the various lectures of Steiner where race is mentioned, it is clear that he did not view races as each having the same qualities, but as having different qualities. And that is clearly wrong to today's understanding of social ethics.

Steiner spoke about the different astral and etheric qualities to be found in different races on the Earth, and how this depended upon the cosmic influence active in them, whether the sunlight or various astrological energies. In other words, he viewed the different races as astrologically derived. So they are expressions of the influences of the various planets and hence each has its especial characteristics, just as the planets have. If he concluded that a particular race was therefore naturally inclined to this or that spiritual task, then he said so, even though this implies that other planetary streams (i.e., race) are of less capacity for a particular task.

It seems that to Steiner it was not the case that all races are equal in all human talents, but each has its especial abilities and qualities, sometimes superior and sometimes inferior to that of the other groups. And this perspective is directly racist – as we define it today. There are also various statements from Steiner which one would now never make because, in the changed world of today, they are offensive. Indeed how he expected people back in his time to respond to these statements, or how he expected future generations to respond, is unknown. For example this statement,

“White mankind is still on the path of absorbing spirit more deeply into its essence. Yellow mankind is on the path of preserving the period when the spirit was kept away from the body, when the spirit could only be sought outside of the physical human being.”

However, prior to saying this – and hostile critics don't tell you this – he specifically cautions that these remarks are not in any way about the intrinsic worth of individual people, rather they are about the specific characteristics of a race. But obviously that would still create a lot of problems if one were to be so sectarian today as to defend these words as non-racist. What he goes on to say is that, owing to the way the skin colour (and planetary influences) work, Westerners can bring spiritual ideas down into the material world, whereas the Asian people are not inclined to do this. But the result of this is, he taught, that in the future after the Western world has damaged its own existence through ahrimanic materialism, the spirituality of the Asian people will play a

vital role in humanity's future welfare. Again here is a clear-cut case that such statements as these are directly in breach of the principles of anti-racism, as developed in the modern world.

But the situation for the enquirer is made still worse, when aggressively hostile opponents put other selected extracts from this lecture onto the internet, to cause potent offence. For example, they have used a translation of a sentence in this book, that takes his words into a nasty dimension,

“...in Asian people, owing to the skin not being white, their spirit takes on a *demonic* character...”

The fact here is that, Steiner used the German word ‘dämonisch’, which has two meanings. It can mean ‘demonic’, but it also is used in many other places by him to mean ‘elemental’ as it obviously does here: see the Appendix. Likewise, the German word for ‘spirit’ used here (Geist) also means mind or intelligence. Here Steiner is obviously referring to the intelligence, not the eternal spirit of the Asian person. So the sentence is saying, when translated correctly,

“In Asians... owing to the skin not being permeable, as it is not white, the intelligence takes on an elemental character...”<sup>3</sup>

Of course this statement must also be immediately condemned as racist today, as it firstly gives skin colour an inherent significance, and secondly it appears to put the Western people higher than the Asian people, even though the meaning is somewhat unclear. In some obscure way it is about the complex and subtle interaction of physical, etheric and astral forces of the human being, with either elementals or with astral spirits. It contains an implication about skin colour, human intelligence and elemental beings, and how the intelligence can be subject to either etheric, astral or devachanic energies. Yet, with regard to the same theme of the Asian and the Westerner, Steiner specifically mentions in various lectures the “great spiritual teachers” of China, Lao-Tze and Confucius. And in contrast to the above quote especially, he also forecast that many of the finest spiritual people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be born in China! And he taught that as a consequence,

“Spiritual treasures will pour forth from China into the world stage... and ...western humanity will realize that they are unable to grasp these spiritual products by the pedantic way of thinking common in the west...”<sup>4</sup>

So the western world (or, in terms of discussion of races, the white race) will have an inferior capacity relative to the Chinese people, in the area of spiritual understanding. But again this statement too needs to be condemned today as racist, for it discriminates against the white people, (Steiner's own race) and also has a racial basis. That is, it has a racially based premise, and this is forbidden and despised today. And again another similar statement by Steiner must be condemned today as racist, namely that if the western world does not take up what he calls the three-folding of society, meaning a new way for society to govern itself, “it shall undergo a decline, and then a {progressive} future for the world shall arise from the Asian cultures.”<sup>5</sup> This statement, in today's viewpoint, is another racially discriminatory statement, now against the western world.

---

<sup>3</sup> GA 174b, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> These souls were once students of the great Persian prophet, Zarathustra, about 650 BC.

<sup>5</sup> GA 191, lecture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1919.

It is also true that Steiner often emphasised that the individual human soul or spirit is never really part of a particular race; it incarnates into varying races, and hence any person in any race can manifest whatsoever skill or talent that he or she possesses, regardless of the astral influences active in that race. But it is so important for anthroposophists to realize that this concept itself is still very much racist as one understands racism today, because it implies that the general populace of a given ethnicity are less able to achieve something than people of another group.

Such views of Steiner's as we have discussed here, cause wide offence. Consequently, teachers and others who work with anthroposophical ideas, need to realize that such ideas have to be disowned. They are not put forward by responsible anthroposophists, as they are offensive to contemporary ethics in today's global village, and should not have been published. It appears to many alert anthroposophists that Steiner was not seriously disturbed as to the fact that, within about five decades after his death, some of his comments on this topic would be condemned as racist. Presumably he felt the need to speak of these themes as a specific challenge to his audience to grasp what he was saying – or to reject his message. Or possibly, he never thought that all of his words would be published without any thought as to their suitability for posterity. It was not his intention that a "Complete Works" be published; Marie Steiner was persuaded to do this in her mature years. But she thought that various texts were to be kept private; a later generation decided, unwisely, to simply publish everything.

The dynamic is very clearly shown by the way Steiner related to his lecture cycle on the Mission of Folk-Souls. This is one of only three lecture-cycles which he personally edited (partially) prior to publication, and which he mailed to a Cabinet Minister in the Austrian government, as part of his approach to explaining the threefolding of Society, during World War One. This book is today pointed out by critics as a particularly offensive work, some even want it to be banned, because it specifically refers to differing degrees of evolution of various ethnicities in the world.

It is also true that there are many statements in Steiner's works which, in a certain sense only, argue against racism. In most of these cases, he takes the perspective that the races will one day all disappear, as humanity becomes one common race. For example,

“As we evolve from the fifth into the sixth and then into the seventh epoch, the ancient connections of race and blood will be increasingly lost. Humanity will become freer of physical ties in order to form groups from the aspect of the spirit. It was a bad habit in theosophy to speak of races as if they would always remain. The concept of race will lose its meaning in the near future, which means over the next few thousand years.”

These views fail to meet the key criteria for non-racism, as they imply that humanity needs to be free of races, of any sort. The theme of Steiner and racism is thus quite a potent one, owing to the complexity and unusual nature of the anthroposophical worldview itself, and the conflict between a world view based on a scientific approach and a worldview based on spiritual seership.

Summing up, Steiner teachers and others have to make it clear that they do not themselves harbour or advocate racism, and the worldview upon which their work is based, does not include those parts of Rudolf Steiner's teachings which people understand to be racist. They reject any passages in Steiner's works which we define today as racist. One has to find ways to genuinely reassure people in the community that high ideals of ethics and conscience motivate one's work ethic, and one does not take up or make use of ideas which are repugnant to the community. One can also make it clear that one rejects old social and racial assumptions, quite common in the attitudes of most people 100 years ago, which today we have outgrown.

## **Nazi-ism**

Another outcome of Rudolf Steiner's ideas becoming better known in recent decades is that various historians, and also aggressive opponents of Rudolf Steiner, have discovered the very serious fact that some German anthroposophists from the early 20th century were involved in Nazism, and furthermore that this fact has been covered up in some anthroposophical circles, to this day. Most of these people are now deceased; they grew up in the Hitler time, and pathetically failed to discern how evil Nazism was, even when directly confronted by its brutality. Some German anthroposophists (long since deceased) even gave moral support to Otto Ohlendorf, who agreed to carry out the task from Himmler to exterminate Jews and others in the Ukraine; a total of 90,000 were consequently killed under his command.

But this dismal situation, which was once wide-spread in Germany, is now history. This situation reveals just how important it is to distinguish between Rudolf Steiner and his so-called students. Unfortunately, these Nazi-admiring pseudo-anthroposophists of the past, including some who were guilty of war crimes in the Third Reich, make it possible today for people of ill-will towards Steiner, to try to draw links between the anthroposophical worldview and Nazi ideas, via internet articles. An absurd and defamatory situation, given that there were also many Jewish people amongst Steiner's own students, and today there are people who are Jewish by upbringing and nationality, who are anthroposophists.

But additionally, since anyone can define himself or herself as an anthroposophist, it is the case that there are some people today who consider themselves to be anthroposophists, who hold to either extreme right wing or extreme left wing views. Such people will deny the horrific mass murdering by the Nazis of Jews, Gypsies and others, (including an estimated 260,000 psychiatric patients, who were simply exterminated). This also reveals again just how important it is to distinguish between Rudolf Steiner and some of his so-called students.

So in regard to Nazism, it is said on the internet for example that the infamous Nazi criminal Rudolf Hess "was an anthroposophist" (!). But considering the very nature of anthroposophy, that is a ridiculous and, so to speak, libellous statement. No-one who advocates or inwardly supports anti-Semitism or mass murder or institutionalized state persecution of minority groups can ever be in a true sense an anthroposophist. Yet, some 30 years ago, this author came across two people in Germany who thought that they were genuine anthroposophists, but also thought that Adolf Hitler was "a good guy" until the attempt on his life in 1942, when he became "a bad guy". (!!)

These persons had presumably dismissed the years and years of violence, mass killings and brutality from their minds, and ignored the entire nature of Hitler's politics of hate. And once again I have to emphasize that such bad attitudes as these two men had, results from their own stupidity; it has nothing to do with Rudolf Steiner. Similarly with Hess, and some other Nazis, there was an interest in bio-dynamically grown food. This interest was just like the Nazi's interest in Richard Wagner, and the Edda, etc. They were carrying out their own negative agendum of interest in cultural things. But in so doing they were associating a good cultural heritage in the minds of the world outside Germany, with the attitudes of a Nazi.

One has to realize that Steiner was a very well known name in Germany. So Nazis heard about Steiner, but so did Catholics, Communists, Quakers, yoga teachers, circus clowns, accountants and every other category of persons. And some of these people may well have played around with one or other idea that they encountered from him. A simple way to make this point very clear is to recall, taking an example from religion, that Judas Iscariot took a keen interest in Jesus – but for his own extremist political reasons.

But as regards Rudolf Steiner himself, there is of course, not the slightest truth, nor even sanity, in linking him to the Nazi movement. The evidence for the repulsion felt by Rudolf Steiner to Nazi-ism and the danger he felt he was in from it is everywhere. For example, as Anna Samweber reports, when the Munich Putsch occurred in November, 1923, bringing Adolph Hitler nearer to achieving power, Rudolf Steiner stated that this meant that he would soon be forced to leave Germany.<sup>6</sup> Which is precisely what he then did, closing down the premises in Berlin and becoming confined to Dornach; only setting foot in Germany on a few more occasions, to speak to the staff at the new Waldorf school in Stuttgart. Such was the antagonism from the Nazis against him. And it would be absurd and vicious to assert that this simply proves that Hitler was showing hostility towards a fellow traveller.

### **Anti-Semitism**

It is on the public record that Steiner had many Jewish friends and students, and he was a live-in tutor in the household of a Jewish businessman between 1884 and 1890. Right back in 1881 he wrote an article attacking a vile and very prominent anti-Semite, Eugen Dühring, calling his views 'barbarian' and 'hostile to culture'.<sup>7</sup> And he also wrote a series of articles for the Journal published by the Berlin "Society to repel Anti-Semitism", in which he attacked the anti-Semitic ideas circulating around. He called the special discriminatory legislation against Jewish people, found in various European countries "statutes for slavery".<sup>8</sup> This journal, founded in 1890, was the most significant periodical in the struggle against anti-Semitism, with a host of prominent people behind it, including Jewish and Christian historians, lawyers, writers, publishers and politicians.

Indeed one or two of the small Executive Committee of the Anthroposophical Society, formed in 1912/13, were Jewish people. And one of the keynote lectures given at the time of the founding Conference of the Anthroposophical Society was given by a prominent Jewish anthroposophist, A.W. Sellin. The lecture was about the magnificent Jewish mystical text, the Zohar, and this lecture was then published by the anthroposophical publishing house, owned by Marie Steiner.<sup>9</sup> We will briefly note the hostile use made of Steiner's statements about the desirability of the Jewish people, as a political entity, "disappearing". This of course has nothing whatsoever to do with the 'final solution' of the later, evil Nazis.

Steiner spoke words to this effect once or twice, and he did this directly to Jewish associates or his students – but he was speaking from the viewpoint of his esoteric Christianity. He wanted to communicate that he was not in favour of Zionism, an attitude which he openly discussed with enthusiastic Zionists. Steiner saw as the best future course, the merging of Jewish people into their wider community in whatever land they lived in, and not the separating out into a separate Jewish state, awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. So he meant disappearing as a political entity, not as individuals in a particular religion. This view came from various anthroposophical reasons, including that Steiner had perceived that this Messiah had already come into the world, some 2,000 years ago. In any event, it was also the case back in the first two decades of the 20th century, that his many Jewish students and associates regarded him as a kindly, respectful person. But of course Steiner's viewpoint here will be offensive to many Israelis, since their state has

---

<sup>6</sup> Anna Samweber, *Aus meinem Leben*, Vlg. Die Pforte, Basel, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> GA 38, *Briefe Rudolf Steiners* (Correspondence of Rudolf Steiner) p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> GA 31, p. 395.

<sup>9</sup> A.W. Sellin, *Die geisteswissenschaftliche Bedeutung des Sohar*, Philosophisch-Theosophische Verlag Berlin 1913.

come into existence, two decades of Steiner's death. But to the people whom they displaced in Palestine, making them virtually homeless, it would be seen in a positive light. So again this is a viewpoint and a theme which probably no contemporary anthroposophist would discuss.

The assertion that Rudolf Steiner was somehow a dangerously nationalist German, who therefore was also a person who hated Jewish people, is entirely false. An example of such hostile nonsense, using in part falsified data, assembled in a misleading way, is found in the internet writings of the Jesuit-influenced P. Staudenmaier. A typical sample of how this opponent writes to convince people of actual malignancy in Rudolf Steiner is,

“The passages in {Steiner's autobiography}, *The Course of My life* on his relationship with Heinrich von Treitschke, for example, are straightforwardly admiring of this towering figure on the German right, who was the foremost intellectual ally of militant anti-semitism (Treitschke coined the Nazi slogan “The Jews are our misfortune”). Steiner never so much as mentions Treitschke's infamous stance on the ‘Jewish question’.”

So how can people who work with anthroposophy relate to such statements? Firstly, we can note that it is an error to state that this nasty ideologue, H. von Treitschke (1834-1896), coined the expression “The Jews are our misfortune”, and was thereby a primary anti-Semite. For Treitschke states that he heard this phrase, not coined it. Intense episodes of anti-Semitic feelings and pogroms had occurred in Germany and much of Europe for centuries, so there was no “need” for Treitschke to coin a phrase of this kind. Back in 1819 as part of a wave of anti-Jewish sentiment, Jews were heckled with the words, “Hep, Hep, Jews drop dead!” or the catch-cry, “Death and destruction to the Jews”.<sup>10</sup> Those who know the history of the Jews in Europe will be well aware that such expressions were in use for centuries. Anti-Jewish violence occurred in 1819 and again 1830, 1832 and 1835 (Rhineland) then in 1844 (Breslau) and 1847 and 1850.<sup>11</sup>

And as regards this phrase mentioned by von Treitschke, it was not referred to until page 18 of his 20 page article, written in 1879, that he refers to the Jews and reported that this expression was encountered wherever he travelled in Germany in the 1870's.<sup>12</sup> The main thrust of the article was the need for a strong Germany, with regard to the political aspirations of other nations. The background to this article was the social turmoil created by the industrial revolution, which caused widespread unemployment and a radical change in the distribution of wealth. The potential anti-Jewish sentiment had been stirred up amongst the disenfranchised, and led to this catch-cry that Treitschke reports.

Staudenmaier leaves out the fact that there simply were much more potent enemies of the Jews in the latter part of the 19th century than Treitschke; just as the great Jewish historian, Dr. Heinrich Graetz in his excellent multi-volume 2,000 page *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden*, (*Popular history of the Jews*) makes clear. These volumes give a detailed and blood-chilling account of the anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and make reference to events and people up to 1888. In these volumes, (which were republished in 1923), he does not even mention Treitschke, even though it was in response to Graetz's earlier writings that Treitschke wrote

---

<sup>10</sup> Dr. H. Graetz, *Volkstümliche Geschichte der Juden* in drei Bänden; 1923 Bd. 3, pp. 625, 626.

<sup>11</sup> C. Hoffmann, W. Bergmann, *Exclusionary violence: antisemitic riots in modern Germany*, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> H. von Treitschke, *Unsere Aussichten* (Our Views) in the *Preußische Jahrbücher* Bd.44, 1879, S. 559-576, and see also Yaacov Ben-Chanan, *Deutsche Traditionen judenfeindlichen Denkens*, 1197, Wiesbaden, Hessischen Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.

another anti-Jewish tract.<sup>13</sup> It is however true that the Nazis later used this expression, but that was 50 years later. Dr. Graetz, like Rudolf Steiner, was much more concerned about the founders of the new and ominous movement, known as anti-Semitism. Rudolf Steiner directly attacked this anti-Semitic movement in articles that he wrote against them in the public media.

Secondly and very seriously, it is directly false to state that Steiner's autobiography makes "straightforwardly admiring" remarks about Treitschke; and it is especially untrue when all of Steiner's remarks about this person are considered. For the opposite is true, Steiner directly criticized him, in print. In his autobiography, Steiner points out the lack of social interaction ability in this person. He reports how unpleasant and self-opinionated this man was,

"He {Treitschke} could do no other than assess everything he experienced with a potent undertone of personal antipathy or liking".....Because he could not hear any objections to his thoughts (being somewhat deaf), he strongly felt the value of what he himself thought."<sup>14</sup>

In other words, the impression the reader gets from Rudolf Steiner's autobiography is that Treitschke was an egoist, an unpleasant, extremely opinionated person. And, long before Rudolf Steiner wrote his autobiography, he wrote in an article in 1899, reviewing a book by Treitschke, that "Treitschke was a fanatical historian and could only view those who were not like him as stupid people." (GA 31 p. 337) So much for the false statement by Staudenmaier of Steiner "straightforwardly admiring" him. If the Internet could be prevented from circulating malicious material about great people our world would be a much better place.

Thirdly, therefore it is utterly false and socially unhealthy to thereby link Steiner via his remarks about this man to the later anti-Semitic evil of Nazism, since Steiner reports that Treitschke was obnoxious. But in fact we need to briefly examine two further issues here. One is the absurd accusation that Rudolf Steiner was a right-wing nationalist already in the 1880's and 1890's, thereby preparing the way for the later Nazi movement. And the other is that many anthroposophists of earlier decades were Nazis (but virtually all deceased by 2013). And as a further associated accusation here, it is said that many German anthroposophists have blatantly ignored this fact, or even worse, were quite relaxed about this. These last two accusations actually seem have a lot of truth in them, so they will be assessed later.

But first, to the accusation that Rudolf Steiner was a dangerously pro-German nationalistic person. This grotesque accusation arises from either misunderstanding or ill-willed antagonism to Steiner's teachings. For his ideas have their own spiritual integrity. Hostile accounts tell of Steiner's association with German cultural institutions which supported the German-speaking world. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Steiner did work culturally as a writer and magazine editor. But misleading articles tell readers of "several dozen articles" written in the late 19th century, of a very unwholesome, nationalistic kind. The truth is however, that some hundreds of articles were written by Rudolf Steiner in that time, filling 2,500 pages! Most were about non-political cultural themes, such as theatrical performances, etc, whilst some other articles fervently attacked anti-Semitic activity.

---

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Graetz had the ability to see the essential elements in history; his comments on Martin Luther's very positive remarks about Jews, despite Luther at times being bad-tempered about the Jews, is an example of this; vol. 3, page 202, 1923 edition.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Mein Lebensgang*, pps.155-156, Taschenbuchausgabe 1975.

But the most important point here is that Rudolf Steiner, in writing positively about German cultural movements and individuals, whether in his own magazine or as a contributor to various other cultural platforms, was attempting to guide any German feelings of patriotism in the right direction. He was acting out of his unusual spiritual perceptions. In particular he perceived, amongst the various archangelic beings who guide the nations, that the Folk-spirit of the German-speaking peoples had the intention of nurturing the higher thinking life on into the future, for some 2,100 years; in the fine tradition of Friedrich Schiller, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Novalis, and many others (including, one could say, himself). So Rudolf Steiner, in articles encouraging German language usage and culture in Austria, or other cultural issues, was seeking to support the great spiritual-cultural potential that had already existed in central Europe for many centuries from this Archangel.

He was concerned about attempts, whether well-intentioned, unthought-out or malignant, to undermine this noble influence and supplant it with influences that were burdensome to this archangel. As he said in a lecture in 1915, the German Folk-spirit has another 2,100 years of activity yet to unfold, wherein it would seek to encourage the development of higher spiritual thinking. (GA 83 p.157) And this length of time takes us through to the beginning of the Age of Aquarius, when a wonderful cultural blossoming can be expected to occur, amongst the Slavic peoples (i.e., Russians) of that future epoch (not the German people).

### **Nazism and some anthroposophists: a disgraceful past episode**

Now we need to note, as mentioned earlier with regard to Nazism, that some German anthroposophists were amongst the many Germans who were supportive of Nazism. But we have seen that Rudolf Steiner was viewed as an opponent of Nazism by Hitler and Rohm, etc; and by his profoundly spiritual nature and his anthroposophical teachings, Steiner was directly opposed to this political movement. So any suggestion of any common viewpoints between Nazism and anthroposophy is absurd and objectionable. So-called anthroposophists who were admirers of Hitler were obviously morally blind in this regard, and uninformed about, or deliberately blind to, the hostility of the Nazis towards Steiner. Genuine anthroposophists regard the appointment in 1933 of Adolf Hitler to the position of Chancellor as a spectacular victory for evil powers. This is because Steiner had predicted the advent of a high spiritual influence coming from the ether to do the reappearing of Christ in the years 1930-1933; but the rise of Hitler occurred instead.

But we also noted that what people do with the freely available teachings of Steiner is another thing; I mentioned above two men who were indeed Nazi sympathizers. And it is here that ill-willed or ill-informed people can indeed present damning evidence of Nazism in regard to some anthroposophists, but **not** to Rudolf Steiner. Although they will try to link it back to him. So what is going on here? Is it really true that some German “anthroposophists” were Nazis? The answer is yes, and yet also no – in so far as “an anthroposophist”, properly defined, could never be a supporter of Nazi criminality, to whom Jews, Poles, Slavs, and some Gypsies were only fit for mass destruction. Likewise somewhere in the world today some “anthroposophists” (who are not ideally anthroposophists), may become involved in some immoral or illegal activity. In other words, those people who genuinely reflect in their personal life and political views, the highly spiritual and deeply ethical views that arise from anthroposophy, can never be pro-Nazism or involved in criminal behaviour of any kind.

But leaving this ideal aside, sadly the reality in Germany before and after WWII was that a number of German “anthroposophists” were indeed supportive of the Nazis or even active members of the brutal, fanatical SS. (Although as we have just noted, any such persons are not truly anthroposophists, ideally viewed.) Firstly, we need to note that all such persons have passed

away, so the topic is now of historical interest; there are no cells of discreet Nazis who belonged to the Third Reich anywhere in anthroposophical circles. However one needs to bear in mind that when opponents of anthroposophy declare various German anthroposophists to have been Nazis, this can be a distorted statement. For many good Germans found themselves compelled to join the Party, or else face dire consequences. Some indeed made a point of being positive towards leading Nazis, specifically to protect the innocent. A case in point is an anthroposophist who was a member of the Nazi Party, Franz Michael Geraths (1901-1966) but who was responsible for approximately 100 mentally and physically challenged people under his care. Only by his pretence of being a 'buddy' with the local Nazi authorities could he keep these people from being killed. His actions, inspired by his anthroposophical ethics, meant that he became the only institution in the Third Reich for the mentally challenged, whose residents were saved from extermination by the SS. The SS were the brutal fanatics loyal to Hitler who rounded up Jews to immediate execution, or sent them to the concentration camps, which were manned by the SS.<sup>15</sup>

However, many people in Germany and elsewhere were alerted in 2004 to an astonishing and appalling situation with regard to one organisation associated with anthroposophy, which had two officials, back in the 1930-40's who were criminally involved with the Nazis; this is the Christian Community church. This church was founded with the help of Rudolf Steiner and is dedicated to bringing a renewal of the Christian sacraments and message to the public. Its priests have no affiliation to any political movement or dubious organisation.

In the Third Reich many decent Germans were required to associate with the Nazi government for their own survival. But various German Protestant churches and historians pointed out that the most influential member of the Christian Community church, for some 30 years, Friedrich Benesch, was a fanatical Nazi, from Romania. Since this became known a decade ago, hostility prevails amongst many enquirers into anthroposophy. The negative attitudes in the public intensified after 2007 when the Christian Community church issued a biography of this man, praising him. So any one who represents anthroposophical ideas in the world today, has to adopt a position in regard to this matter.

The biography, *Friedrich Benesch Leben und Werk*, by H-W. Schroeder, does indeed mention that Benesch was "a fanatical Nazi" (theoretically) in Romania and does recount official facts about his membership of the Nazi party and his application to join the SS. He makes it clear that the church, in 1947, had no idea that this new recruit had been a Nazi. It also briefly formally notes that there was a Nazi campaign of terror against the Jews of Romania. But the author, a high-ranking member of the church, concludes that "one can completely exclude any involvement of Benesch" in the atrocities that occurred in his area during the war; he was only theoretically involved. And Schroeder also concludes that "one can indeed now say with certainty that" in view of the terrible tragedy that occurred in Romania regarding the Jews, "after the war, this destroyed all the Nazi ideals that Benesch had earlier entertained". The cleric offers no proof for this conclusion. Whereas historians and people associated with other churches, drawing on official German Government holocaust records, conclude, as does any objective person, that the above conclusions by the biographer are very incorrect.

The situation regarding the war-time activity of SS member Benesch was entirely consistent with the actions of other SS criminals; actions in accordance with the terrible purpose of the SS. A major task of the SS in the Romanian-Hungarian area, and anywhere else in the Third Reich, was to exterminate Jews and other unwanted minorities. Indeed various researchers point out that in

---

<sup>15</sup> In the memorial to Herr Geraths, in *Mitteilungen aus der anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland*, 20. Jhrg., Weihnachten 1966, p. 279-80.

regard to the brutal crimes of the SS, the wartimes files about Benesch (in Berlin's Centre for Nazi War Crimes) and the implications of Benesch's documented fanaticism, mark him out as a perpetrator of war crimes.

For it is known that Benesch had eagerly applied to join the armed SS and was made a member in 1939. Members of the SS were those fanatical soldiers who were prepared to die to protect their Fuhrer, and were used to carry out the slaughter by guns and by gassing-vans of vast numbers of Jews, Poles, some itinerant gypsies, and handicapped people and various other groups. They would commit whatever crimes Hitler or Himmler dictated, and their victims number in many millions. The SS were much more significant than the Gestapo, who were a form of police force; the SS thugs manned the concentration camps and carried out the 'ethnic cleansing'. It is in particular the fact that Benesch also helped set up two other closely associated Nazi organisations in his area for killing purposes that makes the above conclusion by the church biographer offensive.

One of these organisations, as the historian Dr. Regina Reinsperger states, the 'Deutsche Mannschaft' was designed to further assist the SS men perpetrating the holocaust against Jews that was ordered by Himmler, in the process of the Nazification and Aryanization of Rumania-Hungary. The other organisation Reinsperger points to, as set up by Benesch and other Nazis, was the VDU (Association of German People in Hungary); a terrorist militia group. Its task was to exterminate any actual Germans in the area who were opposed to the goals of Nazification. This involved hunting down such civilians (in their own homes or elsewhere) and killing them. So one may indeed conclude that Benesch helped arrange and perpetrate the atrocities committed by the armed-SS in the Hungarian/Rumanian town of Birk and the surrounding area, the Siebenbürgen, and probably further afield. But let's go back a little to see the real nature of this person.

That Benesch has already joined the Nazi Party in 1928, and stayed in it whilst brutal atrocities were being committed by the Third Reich from the 1920's into the 1940's is a serious sign. And yet he was - in his own disturbed mind - also an anthroposophist at this time (!) In fact Benesch had also personally witnessed the atrocities of the infamous Kristallnacht in Berlin, but this did not sway him from his fanatical devotion to Hitler. And as Reinsperger points out, already other early signs were very bad in respect of Benesch. In 1933, (when Hitler became the Chancellor), Benesch wrote an article about the cultural-political difficulties occurring in his native Hungary/Romania from the viewpoint of a fanatical Nazi, seeking to institute the Nazification program. He incorporated official Nazi phrases into his article. But the church biographer, Schroeder, failed to note this fanatical missionary work for Hitler.<sup>16</sup> But that is the least of the failings of Schroeder. The real facts about this man, not mentioned in the church's official biography, are blood-chilling. In 1934, he also joined the radical Nazi-allied DVR (the German people's party of Romania) which changed its name in 1940 to the Nazi Party of German people in Romania.

Then in 1939, Benesch eagerly joined the brutal SS and as he was waiting for his application to be approved, he proudly signed his name on documents as "F. Benesch, applicant to the SS". (!) This is another sign of a fanatic involved in committing atrocities, since that was precisely the task of the SS. Indeed Benesch was known as the "grey eminence" in his town of Birk, from the colour of this SS uniform which he proudly wore, despite being a priest in a Protestant church. The fanatical Benesch had also joined Heinrich Himmler's Aryan cultic Artamanen system and consequently, he forced the anti-Semitic racial purity and Aryan social laws of that system onto

---

<sup>16</sup> „Der Nationalsozialismus in Siebenbürgen“ by Dr. Regina Reinsperger (German internet article)

the suffering people of Birk.<sup>17</sup> As one of Benesch's own students from Birk, who later became an historian, recorded from his own experiences and that of many others, Benesch's actions instituted "a reign of terror on the town."<sup>18</sup>

In fact in the Siebenbürgen area of Hungary/Romania, Benesch became a very important member of the SS; he was the official representative of Robert Gassner, leader of the brutal VDU (Association of German People of Hungary). The VDU was a Hungarian-Rumanian organization designed to increase membership of the SS. Gassner was another priest who was also, like Benesch, a fanatical Nazi. Gassner stated the following blasphemy; "As I am a National Socialist, I must know that our leader Adolf Hitler is, both before and after Christ, the greatest {of these two men}." (!!) <sup>19</sup>. Historians have concluded that Benesch, as a senior colleague and helper of Gassner, was heavily involved in his violent SS campaign.<sup>20</sup>

But what does this mean, that Benesch was in the VDU; is it important, did the VDU achieve anything? The holocaust historian, Thomas Spannenberger, reports in Government sponsored war crimes research publications, that in 1942, 10,000 members of the VDU **were placed at the service of the armed SS**. Spannenberger also reports that after the VDU succeeded in swelling the numbers of the SS, "the persecution of the Jews occurred with such speed and in such numbers as had never happened in this area of Hungary-Romania ever before". <sup>21</sup> Benesch, as a leading official in the organization, was efficient at what he did.

The historians who have investigated these events, report that in the 1940's, the SS soldiers, of which Benesch was a senior member, rounded up the Jews in the Siebenbürgen area and forced them into ghettos. Spannenberger reports from an eyewitness account, that Benesch was in fact the commanding officer of the SS troops carrying out the internment order in this area, on one occasion (at least). After a few weeks in a derelict building, during which hundreds of them died, the Jews were taken by these SS officers from the improvised ghettos and put onto 'special' trains. Benesch and his colleagues had thus already killed hundreds of Jews in the initial phase of their actions.

These Jews were then despatched by the trains either directly to Auschwitz or to Theresienstadt where, after a while, they were often sent by train on to Auschwitz or other concentration camps; these became death camps or work camps depending on the health of the victims. Of the 15,000 Jewish children sent to Theresienstadt, (from all parts of Germany) only 100 were alive after the war. In the work camps the majority died from the harshness of the regime. In the Siebenbürgen area, some 120,000 Jews lived before the war, but only 5% survived their deportation by the SS and the VDU to these concentration camps.<sup>22</sup> Historians have concluded that Benesch was amongst the SS criminals whose actions lead to the death of about 110,000 Jews (and an unknown number of Gypsies), since this area was the centre of his jurisdiction, and such ethnic-

---

<sup>17</sup> Reported in the Susanne Dienesch „Birker Heimatbuch“, (Birk Hometown book) 1996 self-published.

<sup>18</sup> Johann Böhm, Hitlers Vassallen der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien vor und nach 1945, Vlg. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2006, p. 130. Townsfolk in Birk were well aware of Benesch's skill with a rifle (or his SS pistol); he was a deadly shot. Often on a Sunday morning before the Divine Service, he would shoot wild animals for the table, as reported by Dr. Regina Reinsperger in *Lebenslauf F. Benesch.*)

<sup>19</sup> In his German, "Wenn ich Nationalsozialist bin, dann muss ich wissen, dass unser Führer Adolf Hitler vor und nach Christus der größte Führer ist."

<sup>20</sup> See for example, N. Spannenberger, Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944 unter Horthy und Hitler, published by Vlg. Oldenbourg, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Norbert Spannenberger, Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn, p. 327-328.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Reinsperger, Der Holocaust in Siebenbürgen, German internet article.

cleansing crimes were the specific duty of SS personnel.<sup>23</sup> But it does not stop there. In his old age, as various historians report, an unconcerned Benesch (reminiscing about his past) recounted to young people how he participated in building up the Hungarian-Rumanian “Deutsche Mannschaft” organisation.

Any informed historian of the Holocaust is appalled again. Because, as we noted earlier, the task of this organization, which eventually numbered 2,500 men was, unknown to his young audience, to assault or kill opponents of the Nazis in the Siebenbürgen region.<sup>24</sup> Many reports of how they carried out their terror sheds light on Benesch’s nature. For example, the daughter of an anti-Nazi Rumanian, Mathias Schmidt, who lived until the 1980’s, reported the terror that came upon her life when SS troops in association with the Deutsche Mannschaft invaded their house and executed her father, using hand-grenades and bayonets. And likewise, the children of another anti-Nazi German Rumanian, Johann Lehoczky, reported after the war a similar home invasion by these thugs and the use of hand grenades to execute their father.<sup>25</sup>

So how does a representative of anthroposophy respond to all this? One has to be aware that after the war, thousands of SS killers had to flee Germany or somehow melt back into the landscape, hiding their involvement in the mass killings to avoid arrest by the Allies. Apparently, when Benesch applied to work for this church in 1947 he hid his Nazism, so his employers were unaware of this criminal past. Many of the SS fled to South America, but some like Benesch, put on the cloak of a respectable career. It goes without saying that he never taught or espoused Nazism, as a priest and lecturer of this church. But naturally, genuine and sincere anthroposophists totally affirm the opinion of all outraged members of the wider public, that such a criminal can never be capable of properly grasping anthroposophical texts, even if he later on did actually regret his crimes of the war years, as the church pleads. But the theory put forward by the church biographer is undermined by the post-war actions of Benesch.

For after all, he was a person who also had been – in his own disturbed mind – an anthroposophist, and also a priest in a German protestant church, and simultaneously a member of the Nazi party (from free choice) and then later also a fanatical member of the SS, and involved in genocide, on several fronts. To a genuine anthroposophist, a person with a war record such as Benesch’s, was an aggressive anti-Semite, a criminal. His fate at Nuremberg, if his actions had been known to the authorities at that time, would quite possibly have been the death penalty. To an informed anthroposophist this makes the books and lectures of Benesch, in which he is interpreting the deeply spiritual teachings of Steiner, extremely dubious (in fact, offensive).

Indeed it is the incompetent theories of Benesch that destroyed one of the most important elements of Rudolf Steiner’s life work. This concerns the core anthroposophical theme that the cosmic Christ is the guiding spirit of the planet, and that it is the task of this being to oversee the life-process in the two hemispheres. And from this insight, seasonally-based festivals, following each hemisphere’s own yearly cycle could be formed as a way to build a basis for a spiritual understanding of ecology. His superficial and erroneous interpretation, which twists Steiner’s teachings to get the required result, has been accepted as the definitive assessment of this theme by the leaders of the church ever since.

---

<sup>23</sup> And Benesch’s mother-in-law had after all, appealed directly to Himmler for employment for Benesch when he was between jobs, since her husband (his father-in-law) was a leading Nazi academic who advised Himmler and Hitler on formulating their Aryan racial theories.

<sup>24</sup> N. Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen...* . p. 290, et al.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Holzträger, in *Erinnerungslücken und Verschweigen*, [www.halbjahresschrift.homepage](http://www.halbjahresschrift.homepage).

Indeed the leaders of the Christian Community continue to regard Benesch highly, even after the revelations of his vile past; their admiration being based on his post-war work for their church, for they like to believe that he was innocent and insist that he committed no crimes. Although in a lecture given in 1984, he described Nazism as “the worst kind of Darwinism”, this is a very mild (and strange) form of criticism. In that same lecture he also referred to “the many fascists whom he himself personally knew in Italy, Germany and Romania”, and he said that “they were all glowing idealists”. (!!)<sup>26</sup> This is another sign of him not having any conversion from the evil, anti-Semitic view of the Third Reich, for he must have specifically gone to meet the Italian Fascists after the war, to enjoy their comradeship; as people could not travel across national borders during the war years.

The above statement from Benesch who, as a senior participant in the SS’s activity of preparing Jews of the Siebenbürgen for their death en masse, shows that he has not grasped the utterly evil nature of a mindset that feels ‘idealistic’ about annihilating ethnic groups from one’s ‘fatherland’. This kind of deliberate inner blindness or self-destroyed conscience is typical of such people; a similar type to Benesch was Rochus Misch, Hitler’s aide for 5 years, working right next to him in the Berlin HQ’s, facilitating the decisions of the Third Reich, with all of its horrendous consequences. Mosch, who died in 2013, declared that “It was a good time with Hitler, I enjoyed my work and was proud to work for him.”<sup>27</sup>

On a philosophical level, Benesch, as the most prominent Christian Community priest, was presumably the primary force behind the publication of falsified versions of Steiner’s lectures, to the benefit of the church. The effect of these is to reinforce membership of the church by creating the impression that anthroposophists should be integral to its Sunday service. And for a fellow priest during the official celebration in honour of (!) Benesch in 2007, to refer to him as a “modern saint”, is appalling.<sup>28</sup> Added to this is the fact that, when considered with anthroposophical expertise, Benesch’s interpretation of Steiner’s teachings can be conclusively shown to undermine important teachings of Rudolf Steiner. For he naturally had no capacity to grasp the depth and spirituality of Rudolf Steiner’s teachings. The case of Friedrich Benesch shows that people of little capacity for discernment of any kind could mingle Nazi ideology with their own weird version of anthroposophy.

But the antagonism in Europe and elsewhere, with regard to the Christian Community church, in regard to the Benesch case, was intensified when it became known that another fanatical Nazi, Werner George Haverbeck, was also employed as a priest in the church. Haverbeck joined up with the Nazis in 1920’s, and became involved heavily with Hess and eagerly served Himmler, who needed the fanatical SS troops to carry out atrocities against Communists, Jews, and other minorities. The demoniac Heinrich Himmler personally commended and promoted Haverbeck, and assisted him financially in 1935, when he made him an officer in the SS. But Haverbeck later proved incapable of the steely, disciplined behaviour necessary for efficient brutality; so Himmler wrote a letter to him, dismissing him, reluctantly, on these grounds.

---

<sup>26</sup> In the magazine, Die Flensburger Hefte, 9-1994, page 80.

<sup>27</sup> In R. Misch’s book is Der Letzte Zeuge (The last witness).

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Reinsperger: Hundertjahrfeier für Friedrich Benesch.

On a Sunday morning lecture of this celebratory occasion, a priest Mechthild Oltmann-Wendenburg stated in deep earnestness, that “Benesch was a modern saint”, and “all saints were deeply embedded in their times.” (Am Sonntag Vormittag folgte noch ein Vortrag der Pfarrerin Mechthild Oltmann-Wendenburg aus Berlin. Sie berichtete, dass sie zum Freundeskreis Benesch gehört habe .....Und dann meinte Frau Oltmann-Wendenburg in tiefem Ernst, Friedrich Benesch sei ein moderner Heiliger. Alle Heiligen seien ja „tief in ihre Zeit eingedrungen“.)

That Haverbeck, after the war, was accepted into the priesthood of the Christian Community is shocking. The inner blindness of its leader, Emil Bock, in employing him (presumably Bock did not know his Nazi past) together with Benesch is disturbing. And what is more, after the war, Haverbeck, as a priest in the Christian Community, provided pastoral care to the Nazi mass murderer Otto Ohlendorf before his execution in 1951. However, it is also true that Haverbeck was eventually dismissed from the church as being unsuitable to the profession.

And again the case of Ohlendorf arises here, because widespread outrage exists in Europe now, after it became known that Emil Bock, the head of the Christian Community, wrote a letter of sympathy on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1948 to Ohlendorf, when he was awaiting execution. It is quite possible that Bock was deceived into believing the complete myth that Ohlendorf had valiantly tried to save some Jews. Perhaps Ohlendorf may have been in danger of execution himself, if he refused to carry out Himmler's orders of mass murder, but it is also true that he had worked directly for years with the infamous, evil Reinhard Heydrich. It was Heydrich who organised and enforced particularly savage attacks on Jews and left-wing opponents, and who was considered the leading Nazi most likely to succeed Hitler as Chancellor. And Heydrich valued Ohlendorf so highly that he would resist any arrangements from other officials in the Third Reich for Ohlendorf to be sent elsewhere to work.<sup>29</sup>

So in brief, all of the above shows that in the Christian Community, in times now gone by, anthroposophists found it hard to perceive whether there was deep spirituality or in fact criminal personality traits in a prominent person in their ranks. But of course, the same thing will have happened to secular institutions in the German community as Nazis took up work in companies and public office.

But now, one needs to note that these distressing facts concern a few anthroposophists who lived in the early 20th century and who died out by the middle or late 20th century. All the priests of this church today are dedicated to the gospel message and are totally opposed to any form of extreme political behaviour, including right-wing extremism. But the leadership of the church does need to confess to a major ethical failing in denying the evil nature of Benesch, and in continuing to advocate his superficial interpretations of Steiner today.

But finally, we need to note clearly that critics trying to connect genuine anthroposophical people today with such Third Reich criminal behaviour and attitudes as Benesch's are being absurd. And furthermore, back in the Third Reich, there were many anthroposophists in Germany who despised Hitler, and many who were incarcerated or met their death at the hands of the Nazis. And these people would have fiercely condemned people like Benesch as morally criminal, non-anthroposophists.

The correct attitude to Hitler in the light of anthroposophy is that he was a demoniac, and that some form of counterfeit folk-spirit, namely an ahrimanic entity, was using him. Benesch was a criminal, a fanatical devotee of the ahrimanic influence that swept over Germany in those decades. It is through Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy that a most valuable understanding of how to spiritually oppose the evil is offered – to those with discernment.

---

<sup>29</sup> „Der Nationalsozialismus in Siebenbürgen“ by Dr. Regina Reinsperger.

## APPENDIX

### Not demonic but elemental

The word 'dämonisch' goes back centuries in the German language, and entered it from the ancient Greek, where it means good spirit beings. But in the European languages it also came to mean elementals or nature spirits. Thus the meaning of the word gnome, in German 'Berggeist', is given in older dictionaries as "dämon montanus". But later on it also came to mean bad spirit beings. So it now has two meanings in the German language: bad spirits or neutral elemental energies. Friedrich Schiller used it in the good elemental sense, "...nicht in Athen und Rom allein wurden dämonische, göttliche männer gebohren", which means, "It was not only in Athens and Rome that divine men with elemental power, were born."

In Rudolf Steiner's usage it is often used to mean the presence and or the efficacy of good astral-etheric elemental energies. For example, he says when speaking of the Evening Review of one's day, that "sensitive souls experience something which projects up beyond the normal memories, which the person has not experienced, but rather it arises out of the previous soul experiences of the day in an elemental ('dämonisch') way. (GA 198 p. 31) When he was speaking of the Nibelungen saga, he mentions that if one contemplates the older sagas, then one can grasp something of the elemental ('dämonisch') nature of Brunnhilde, and then we can also comprehend how in the events of the Nibelungen saga there is something great, significant..." (GA 161 p. 175) When he spoke about the archangelic Folk-spirits he mentions that "thereby something enters into the nation's consciousness which manifests in an elemental ('dämonisch') way." (GA 174 p.142) And speaking of Joan of Arc in whom high spiritual forces were active as she was born in the time of the Holy Nights or Yuletide, he said, "...she is a kind of somnambulist, under the influence of that which one could refer to as elemental ('dämonisch')..." (GA 51 p. 255)

