

Playing Dangerous Games with History or a Review of Selected Nazi Myths

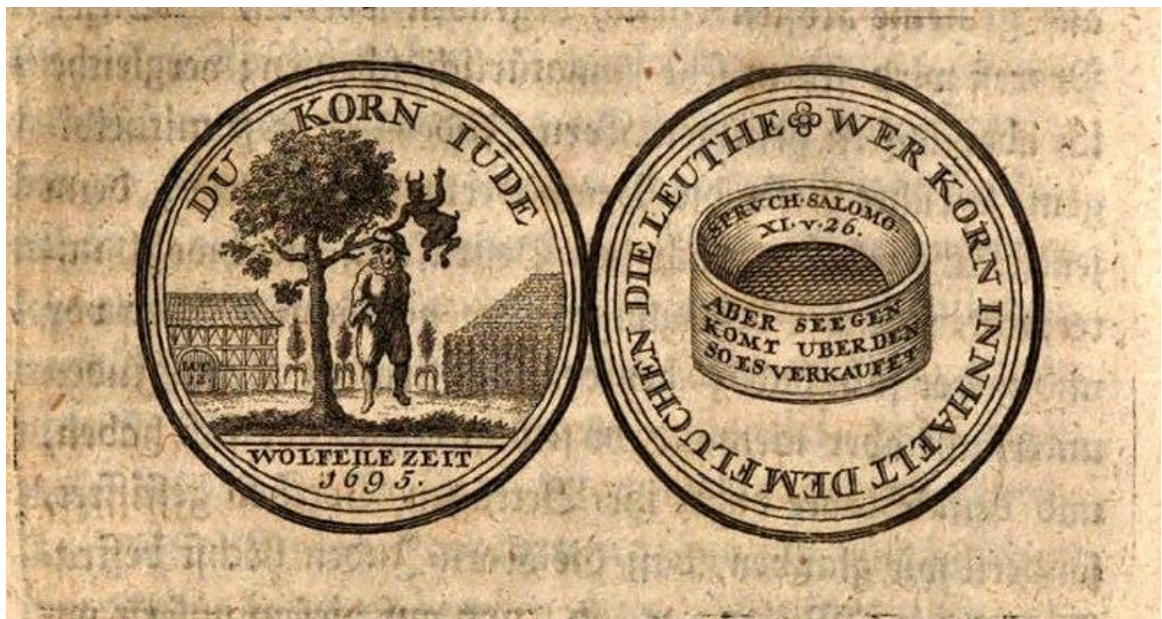
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Sources

Source A

An 18th-century drawing showing the front and back sides of a popular anti-Semitic medal made by the German medallist Christian Wermuth (1661–1739).

A reproduction of a Kornjuden medal of 1695; taken from Johann Albrecht Philipp, *Der vertheidigte Korn-Jude* (Berlin 1765), p. 105 [accessed 3.12.2020]. Available on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kornjudenmedaille.jpg>



Translation:

Front: The inscription above the image: 'You grain Jew*'; below: 'A long time 1695'

Back: 'People curse those who amass grain.'

* *Kornjude* (the grain Jew in German). This was a very common, especially in modern times, insult concerning speculators in grain (considered the main indicator of wealth), money lenders and entrepreneurs, in general people dealing with profitable

financial operations. The term originated in anti-Semitic attitudes, as it was primarily Jews who were associated with trade. Repeated particularly in times of crises, natural disasters and food shortages, the insult was based on stereotypes.

Source B

The heading and a cartoon from the German propaganda weekly *Der Stürmer* (The Striker) published by Julius Streicher. This was a preeminent anti-Semitic journal, attacking Jews in every aspect of life, known particularly for its satirical cartoons and free manipulation of facts. The weekly featured pseudoscientific sociological, biological and historical texts supposedly proving Nazi ideas. Frequently, events from the remote past were used combined with anti-Semitic material in various forms. The journal was published in the years from 1923 to 1945.

A detail from the *Der Stürmer* weekly of July 1933. The subheading reads *Der tote Jude* (the dead Jew).

Der Stürmer, No. 30, July 1933, p. 1 [accessed 3.12.2020].
Available on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:
https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Der_St%C3%BCrmer_Juli_1933_Schlagzeile.jpg



A cartoon published on the front page of *Der Stürmer* weekly.



Der Stürmer, No. 9, February 1940, p. 1 [accessed 3.12.2020]. Available on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:01940_0660_\(2\)_Der_St%C3%BCrmer.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:01940_0660_(2)_Der_St%C3%BCrmer.jpg)

Source C

In the Middle Ages, some features of Jews came to the fore for which later both Christians and non-believers would criticise them, features stemming from the close ties between Jews and money and which – as proved by a lexical study, made the terms 'Jew', 'money lender' and 'miser' to be treated as synonyms. [...] specialising in lending money with interest can be explained by external factors, having little in common with the Jewish character. It should be noted that by prohibiting usury, canonical law forbade Christians to lend money with interest even to fellow Christians, regardless of the rate. One should conclude that Jews were most helpful in medieval society when in need of credit. [...] It is undoubtedly this specialisation that anti-Semites use the most against Jews [...].

François de Fontette, *Historia antysemityzmu* (translated from Polish, original French title 'Histoire de l'antisémitisme') (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Siedmioróg, 2010), pp. 42–44.

Source D

Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 [an excerpt]

The Reich Citizenship Law

§ 2

(1) A Reich citizen is a subject of the state who is of German or related blood, and proves by his conduct that he is willing and fit to faithfully serve the German people and the Reich. [...]

(3) A Reich citizen is the sole bearer of full political rights in accordance with the law. [...]

Nuremberg Race Laws translated from *Reichsgesetzblatt I*, 1935, p. 1146 [accessed 24.11.2021]. Available from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws>.

Source E

[...] the doctrine of Hitlerism took the idea of racial struggle as the engine of the historical process. 'History is racially oriented – race is the main factor, it is the essential motor of history.' This concept – in the words of A. Zand – is the foundation and starting point of a whole series of dogmas instilled in students, the essence of which can be reduced to two fundamental ones: 1) European culture is the work of the Nordic, that is Germanic race; 2) certain races have greater rights than other, less valuable races and can destroy them. The other idea in the Nazi teaching of history, besides racism, is the 'idea of nationhood', from which stems the view of the mission of Germany, uniting all races of Germanic origin. The implementation of this idea must therefore take place by means of a conquest of those countries in which the German population is a minority. [...] the German teacher must reject all objectivity in the teaching of history. [...] In the opinion of A. Zand, instead of teaching native and universal history reliably and objectively, the German school creates myths, because racial ideology, Nordic-Germanic historiosophy and the Great German idea can only be believed in, but it is impossible to discuss it scientifically. [...]

The detailed content of the teaching of native and universal history should be permeated by the idea of the superiority of the Germanic-Nordic race [...]. Internal conflicts and defensive or offensive wars are to be presented as the result of race struggle – the only factor determining the course of the historical process.

[...] the task of the German history teacher is to educate the future citizen in such a way that he will be: 1) an active and useful member of the Nazi party, that is, of the state; 2) racially conscious; 3) proud of belonging to the German people. [...] fundamental importance is attached to thoroughly acquainting the student with the internal history of Germany in the years 1918–33. The key event of this period, from the point of view of the political and propaganda interests of the regime, is the Treaty of Versailles; the appropriate interpretation of which is supposed to demonstrate the betrayal of national interests committed by the leaders and founders of the Weimar Republic. In German schools, therefore, subjects such as 'the bleeding borders of our state', 'the Austrian fraternal tribe cannot return to the motherland', 'millions of

Germans are threatened with extermination outside the Reich' and 'the struggle for German equality' are dealt with in history lessons in close connection with this issue.

Jan Janiak, *Nauczanie historii w III Rzeszy w opinii polskiej publicystyki pedagogicznej z okresu dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [History teaching in the Third Reich as seen by Polish educational commentators of the interwar period; in Polish], *Acta Universitatis Lodzianis. Folia Historica* 1990, no. 38 [accessed 3.12.2021]. Available from the University of Łódź Repository:

http://dspace.uni.lodz.pl:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11089/15130/fh38Jan_Janiak107_132.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Source F

A cartoon showing Philipp Scheidemann¹ and Matthias Erzberger² stabbing the German army in the back with a knife.



Der Vorwärts, 3. Mai 1924 [accessed 3.12.2020].
Available on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stab-in-the-back_cartoon_1924.jpg

¹ Philipp Scheidemann – a German politician (Social Democrat). He proclaimed the establishment of the Weimar Republic.

² Matthias Erzberger – a German writer and politician. He headed the German delegation during the truce talks held in Compiègne in November 1918.

Source G

[...] Good fortune began to leave the Germans with strikes breaking out in Berlin on 28 January, reaching as far as the Ruhr region. Seven hundred, thousand workers abandoned work and combat army units were used to suppress the riots. [...] in the country, hardly anyone knew the truth about the front and the hundreds of thousands of German soldiers taken captive by the Allies or avoiding combat in any way possible. Fed with propaganda about the undefeated army, the Germans had no idea that Ludendorff, terrified of seeing the army's disintegration and the disproportionate size between the forces, had already begun efforts to make a truce in August. When the defeat on the front was sealed, the revolution was a god send for the generals, removing the blame from their poor decisions. [...] Soon Ludendorff together with Hindenburg created a myth of fratricidal backstabbing, dealt to the indomitable by cowards. Capitalists joined Jews and communists on the list of renegades [...]. The myth about the backstabbing caught on among war veterans looking for culprits responsible for their frustration relating to the trauma and senseless deaths of millions of their fellows.'

Piotr Bożejewicz, *I wojna światowa: Czy Niemcy przegrali przez „cios w plecy”?* [The First World War: Did the Germans lost due to the 'stab in the back?'; in Polish], 30.3.2019 [accessed 3.12.2021]. Available from *Rzeczpospolita*: <https://www.rp.pl/Historia/303289936-I-wojna-swiatowa-Czy-Niemcy-przegrali-przez-cios-w-plecy.html>.

Source H

'Aryans come from heaven,' Heinrich Himmler proclaimed and the young traveller Ernst Schäfer stood silent not really knowing what to say. One of the most powerful people of the Third Reich, SS Reichsführer lived in a world of pseudoscientific fantasies.

In 1935, together with two others, he established the Ahnenerbe Institute. Through historical, geographical and archaeological research, the organisation was to prove Germans' supremacy over the rest of the world. Himmler's people also collected documents related to trials of witches, were interested in parapsychology and allegedly searched for the Holy Grail and for traces of Atlantis [...] Legends abounded later about the expedition organised by Schäfer. They said that the travellers searched through Tibetan monasteries looking for age-old writings and tried to reach

Shambala – a mythical land inhabited by people who knew how to protect the earth from bad spirits. They were even supposed to have found Vimāna, i.e. a flying vehicle described in ancient epics, and bring it to Germany. 'Yet the truth about the expedition is banal,' insists Łukasz Orlicki from the *Odkrywca* monthly. 'It was simply a scientific expedition. Himmler took its participants under his wing as they were looking for funding opportunities. And back then in Germany it was the only solution possible,' he adds. [...] Obviously, Schäfer and his people did not resemble the ominous individuals who wore a skull and crossbones on their uniforms, yet the results of their work were not always noble. They contributed to the development of the crazy racial theory, which find its finale in the death camps. It took one of them directly to Auschwitz. There, he pointed to more than a hundred people 'with unique racial features'. They were all moved to a camp in France and gassed, while their prepared skulls and skeletons enriched the collection of the Institute of Anatomy of the Reichsuniversität Straßburg.

Łukasz Zalesiński, *Jak hitlerowcy poszukiwali „rasy panów” w Tybecie* [How the Nazis looked for the 'master race' in Tibet; in Polish], 23.4.2021 [accessed 13.8.2021]. Available from Podróże Onet: <https://podroze.onet.pl/ciekawe/tybet-niemiecka-wyprawa-ss-do-tybetu-w-1938-r/yv2flmv>.

Source I

'And so Silesian Piasts were a juicy bit for Nazi propaganda.' As Professor Maroń reports, Nazi scientists were writing profusely about the achievements of Henry II the Pious in the fight against the 'yellow threat' from the East. They called the prince a 'German, at seven eighths' and a 'descendant of the Germanic' founders of the state of the Poland, According to Professor Dziurla, information circulated in Wrocław that Nazi researchers wanted to have a look at the mortal remains of Henry II the Pious from a racial angle. After 1945 they have never been found. One of the theories suggests that the bones removed from the sarcophagus were lost during the war in a fire at the Wrocław Anthropology Institute. Professor Dziurla emphasises that the information has not been confirmed. So his remains could have survived somewhere. 'The question is whether they had been placed at the institute or taken to Berlin for the purposes of *Rassenkunde*, that is Nazi anthropological studies aimed to prove that the Piasts came from the Nordic race?' Professor Dziurla wonders.

Adam Węglowski, *Kryminalne zagadki Legnicy* [Criminal secrets of Legnica; in Polish], 15.5.2011 [accessed 3.12.2021]. Available from Focus.pl: <https://www.focusnauka.pl/artykul/kryminalne-zagadki-legnicy?page=2>.