

National Socialist Language as Exemplified by the SS Propaganda Unit Kommando Adria: Combat Propaganda Platoon of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers

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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that language is political and thus accomplishes political action, this article analyzes Nazi occupation propaganda in occupied northeastern Italy for the period from November 1943 to January 1945¹. Using the example of written language of the SS propaganda unit “Kommando Adria,” which has hardly been considered in research, and which was deployed in the Adriatic Littoral, a differentiation is made between internal communication and propaganda directed outward². Central questions of the analysis are: What linguistic means did the Adria Kommando use to accompany the German occupation regime? How did internal communiqués differ linguistically from the propaganda produced for the widest possible public? And finally, to what extent did language specifics exist for the multi-ethnic area inhabited equally by Italians, Slovenes and Croats

1. CONTEXT NAZI PROPAGANDA

«The victory of an idea will be all the more possible the more comprehensively the propaganda has worked on the people as a whole and the more exclusive, tight and steady is the organization that practically carries out the struggle»³.

¹ H. Kämper, A. Plewnia, *Sprache in Politik und Gesellschaft. Perspectives and Approaches*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2022.

² Comparative to this method: Raul Hilberg, *Sources of Holocaust research. An analysis*, Chicago, 2001.

³ A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Munich, 1936, pp. 653-655.

Hitler's roadmap to power, formulated in "Mein Kampf" in 1925, clearly defined the functions of propaganda and the demands on it. In interplay with the still insignificant Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), it was to achieve political milestones, each of which imposed different conditions on the broad impact of propaganda: first, the recruitment of members; second, the overthrow of existing structures; third, the establishment of a new state; fourth, its expansion. As a structure of rule, the interplay of propaganda and violence was fundamentally aimed at the permanent recruitment of active and passive members. While this concept was effective domestically among large parts of the German population until 1933 and ultimately remained so until 1945, the National Socialist occupation regime lacked any basis abroad (apart from Austria and German-speaking enclaves of the former Habsburg Empire)⁴. From September 1943 onward, Nazi propaganda experts in Italy and parts of the former Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had to address the German occupation not as foreign rule but as a common defense of Europe against a Bolshevik threat.

The German oppression of Italians, Slovenes and Croats in the so-called Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland (OZAK) was characterized by terror and intensive propaganda. The high significance of propaganda in National Socialism (NS) was due, first, to the establishment of the NSDAP as a mass party and Hitler's assumption of government in this context. Second, Joseph Goebbels, with the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (RMVP) founded less than two months later in March 1933, succeeded in rapidly gaining control over all media and cultural life in Germany⁵. Third, in August 1938, Goebbels concluded an agreement with Wilhelm Keitel, the head of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), whereby "propaganda warfare was recognized as an essential means of warfare on a par with armed warfare"⁶. The propaganda companies (PK) established by the RMVP were integrated into the Wehrmacht, first on a trial basis and then systematically. War correspondents, fighting soldiers and journalists at the same time, were praised by Goebbels as a National Socialist invention and strictly distinguished from war correspondents, although Benito

⁴ With the July 1932 election, the NSDAP advanced to become the strongest party in the Reichstag with 37.4%, followed by the SPD with 21.6%. In parallel, the number of NSDAP members grew from about 100,000 in 1929 to about 850,000 in 1933 and about 8.5 million in 1945; H. A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen. German History 1806-1933*, München, C.H. Beck, 2020, pp. 515-516.

⁵ K. Dussel, *Wie erfolgreich war die nationalsozialistische Presselenkung?*, in: «VfZ», n. 4 (58), 2010, p. 546; cf.: C. Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus*, Berlin/New York, 2007, p. 4.

⁶ BArch: R 55/197/4; quoted from: D. Kohlmann-Viand, *NS-Presspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die ‚Vertraulichen Informationen‘ als Mittel der Presselenkung*, Munich/London/New York/Paris, Saur, 1991, p.48.

Mussolini is said to have served as a certain role model because he reported on the war as a soldier and editor-in-chief of the *Popolo d'Italia* in 1915⁷.

The PK man is not a reporter in the conventional sense, but a soldier. In addition to his pistol and hand grenade, he carries other weapons with him: the film camera, the Leica, the drawing pencil or the writing pad. He has been trained in the troops, he lives as a soldier among soldiers⁸.

In the middle of the war, Hitler strengthened Keitel's influence on the Wehrmacht propaganda units in February 1941 to the effect that they were directly subordinate to the OKW, but the RMVP continued to be responsible for the staffing⁹. This did not change until the beginning of 1943, when the new office of Chief of Propaganda Troops in the OKW under Hasso von Wedel was completely reorganized as an independent branch of the Wehrmacht. This development documented the fundamental importance of propaganda (as a weapon) in war¹⁰. It was not until 1944 that a reduction in personnel began in the Wehrmacht propaganda troops, which at their peak numbered 15,000 men. It was not until the Russian campaign and the first deployment of Waffen SS units that separate SS propaganda units came into use. While the Wehrmacht propaganda units were gradually disbanded at the end of the war, on May 2, 1945, Standartenführer Gunther d'Alquen, as head of the SS propaganda units, was given overall command of the propaganda units¹¹.

The diverse and competitive propaganda structures also formed in the Operationszone Adriatisches Küstenland in the northeast of the country with the German occupation of Italy in September 1943. OZAK was largely governed by the SS, with Obergruppenführer Friedrich Rainer as Supreme Commissioner and his former companion Gruppenführer Odilo Globočnik as Höherer SS- und Polizeiführer (HSSPF). In the Adriatic Littoral, General Ludwig Kübler, as head of the local Wehrmacht units, represented the third power entity. On Gauleiter Rainer's staff, which was exclusively Austrian and had been brought from Carinthia, Obersturmführer Karl Lapper headed the Propaganda Main Office¹².

⁷ BArch: R 55/600/11, quoted from: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁸ Goebbels, quoted from: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

⁹ Hitler's order, 10.2.1941, quoted in: O. Buchbender, *Das tönende Erz. Deutsche Propaganda im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart, Seewald Verlag, 1978, p. 24; Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 39; P. Longeric, *Propagandisten im Krieg. Die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop*, Munich, de Gruyter, 1987, pp. 109-125.

¹⁰ M. Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945. Organizations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany*, London et al., Faber and Faber, 1979; Dussel, *op.cit.*, p. 543.

¹¹ BArch: R 55/603/130, quoted in: Kohlmann-Viand, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

¹² Karl Lapper: party and SA member, former propaganda chief first of the NS youth movement then of the Gau of Carinthia; BA Koblenz, RMVP, R 55/JN 600, Akten 104/110, 8/9 October 1943; F.

After Rainer's visit to Berlin in November 1943, Himmler approved the establishment of the propaganda unit Kommando Adria for OZAK as a sub-division of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers. Hauptsturmführer Franz Hradetzky was appointed head of the unit, who, in consultation with Lapper, increasingly gained influence over "civil propaganda" in addition to organizing "combat" and "active" propaganda¹³.

The Kommando Adria provided the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper Deutsche Adria Zeitung (DAZ) and was the publisher of the quadrilingual weekly Adria Illustrierte (AI) as well as of the papers Libertà, La Voce di Furlania, Sloboda, Svoboda, San Giusto, Nova Fronta, and of posters, exhibitions, training booklets for German and allied soldiers, for leaflets scattered among the enemy during combat operations with paper grenade launchers, and scatter slips. Without letting the threads out of his hands, Rainer's propaganda apparatus served the structures of the OKW, RMVP and SS, which were used in parallel to establish regional coverage.

With regard to the development of Nazi propaganda, it should also be noted that, since the beginning of the war, it has contained changing enemy images and contradictions in propagandistic core statements, which were ultimately balanced out by the mythically exaggerated cult of Hitler as "savior". According to Cornelia Schmitz-Berning in her analysis of the vocabulary of National Socialism, the Nazi language reacted to political upheavals, for example, by introducing numerous neologisms, but in the end offered much less originality than modified what already existed. For example, in the context of wartime and labor service, the term "human material" was used to mean "the people available to the Führer and the party for the realization of their goals"¹⁴. Ironically, the first evidence of the use of the term human material can be found in Karl Marx's Capital as early as 1867 and, at the turn of the century, as a central concept of "racial hygiene"¹⁵.

The National Socialists' active language policy described a cultural turning point¹⁶. Media such as daily newspapers, high-circulation magazines and the

Albanese, "Rallegratevi della guerra temete la pace!" *Note sulla propaganda nazista nel Litorale Adriatico 1943-1945*, in: «Qualestoria», n. 1 (25), June 1997, p. 179; M. Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik*, Munich, de Gruyter Saur, 2003, p. 96, p. 130.

¹³ Franz Hradetzky (*1906 in Klagenfurt), doctor of law, since 1930 in the NSDAP, since 1932 judge, since 1935 in the SS, 1938-39 Kreisleiter in Leibnitz, 1939-43 in Carinthia, 1942-45 in Villach, on Himmler's personal staff, since November 1943 head of Kommando Adria; BAArch Berlin: DZA Potsdam, Film Nr. 6305, Aufn. 3831390; SS-Versch. Prov. film no. 6310, record 3837901; Pers. staff RFSS, film no. 1695, record 2551805.

¹⁴ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 399.

¹⁵ Ivi, p. 402.

¹⁶ V. Klemperer, *LTI. Lingua Tertii Imperii. Die Sprache des Dritten Reiches*, Leipzig 1991; D. Sternberger, G. Storz, W. E. Süskind, *Aus dem Wörterbuch des Unmenschen*, Hamburg, Claassen, 1957.

radio (“Volksempfänger”), became multipliers of Nazi ideology. The linguistic-ideological basis of all this content was formed by binding language regulations, which Goebbels announced or ordered before the representatives and correspondents of German newspapers during his daily Reich press conferences held in the Ministry of Propaganda since July 1933.

Goebbels’ systematic interventions in the use and meaning of language were divided by Jürgen Wilke into 23 categories, ranging from a ban on publication and communication, to a command or request to refrain, to permission¹⁷. From 1933 to the beginning of the war, about 15,000 language orders were issued, and about 60-80,000 more by the end of the war. According to Konrad Dussel, these instructions were implemented without any gaps, so that no “resistance or even renitence [was] to be expected - to say nothing of open resistance”¹⁸. Wilkes and Dussel’s work therefore also dispel the widespread postwar myth that German journalists offered resistance between the lines while working in the “gleichgeschaltet” media. On the contrary, as the linguistic driving force of the regime, they implemented all the language regulations from the RMVP one-to-one in their newspapers and magazines. Three examples of Goebbels interventions:

1. “The phrases *Catholic people, church people, Protestant people* are to be avoided at all costs. There is only one German people.” (11.8.1936)
2. “It is requested not to misuse the word *propaganda*. *Propaganda* is, in a sense, a legally protected term in the sense of the new state and should not be used for derogatory things. So there is no *atrocit y propaganda*, no *Bolshevik propaganda*, but only atrocit y agitation, atrocit y campaign, etc. In short - propaganda only when for us; agitation when against us.” (28.7.1937).
3. “*brave* only for German soldiers.” (11.9.1939)¹⁹;

The Nazi regime implemented a language policy that reintroduced, erased, reinterpreted, or replaced terms. Their (non-)application was taken into account via the RMVP in the entire public cultural sector as well as in ministries and authorities, in encyclopedias, dictionaries, encyclopedias, school textbooks, scientific literature, fiction, etc.²⁰ How rigorously this standardized language was imple-

¹⁷ J. Wilke, *Press Instructions in the Twentieth Century. Erster Weltkrieg, Drittes Reich, DDR*, Cologne, 2007, pp. 115-117; Dussel, *op.cit.*, p. 553.

¹⁸ H. Odermann, *Die vertraulichen Presseanweisungen aus den Konferenzen des Nazi-Propagandaministeriums*, in: «Zeitschrift f r Geschichtswissenschaft», n. 13, 1965, p. 1367.

¹⁹ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

²⁰ E.g., the “Political ABC of the New Reich,” “The ABC of National Socialism,” or the “Pocket Dictionary of National Socialism”; Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. XIV.

mented was also shown by corrections in “Mein Kampf”, in which the words fanatical or fanaticism were replaced if they had negative connotations (e.g., “fanatical savagery of Judaism”). After all, according to official language, “*fanaticism* had become the highest qualification of a National Socialist in the *Third Reich*”²¹.

2. SS COMMAND ADRIA: COMBAT PROPAGANDA PLATOON OF THE SS STANDARTE KURT EGGERS

The personnel of the SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers were trained in Berlin Zehlendorf. They were Waffen-SS soldiers who were also journalists and reported on (their own) battles, which they documented and published via articles, photos and films. The original task of the SS Propaganda Unit, founded in 1940, was to accompany the media presence of the Waffen-SS as a new weapons carrier with as much publicity as possible. In this way, they effectively competed with the propaganda companies of the Wehrmacht. With regard to the efficiency of SS propaganda, Goebbels is said to have called for its reduction during the early Russian campaign, since the Waffen SS units had only made up 5% of the Eastern Army, but to the displeasure of the OKW, they accounted for 30-40% of all war reports in the German media²².

The SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers did not receive its name until October 1943. It was formed in 1940 as a war correspondent company, upgraded to a war correspondent detachment in August 1941, and to a Standarte (regiment) in December 1943. Kurt Eggers was the former editor of “Das Schwarze Korps” who was killed in action for the 5th SS Panzer Division near Kharkov in August 1943. The founder and head of the propaganda unit from beginning to end was Gunter d’Alquen²³.

The Kommando Adria subdivision was set up in 1943 to operate in the multi-ethnic and partisan-ridden area of OZAK, to carry out “the elaboration and implementation of all propaganda measures in accordance with the instructions of the Supreme Commissar and Higher SS and Police Leader”²⁴. Central, according to Hradetzky, was the “enlightenment about German politics and

²¹ Ivi, p. 8.

²² W. Augustinovic, M. Moll, «Gunter D’Alquen. Propagandist of the SS State», in: R. Smelser, E. Syring, *Die SS. Elite under the Skull. 30 Lebensläufe*, Paderborn, 2000, p. 106.

²³ Gunther d’Alquen (* 14.10.1910), at last 30.1.1937 SS-Standartenführer, holder of the golden badge of honor of the NSDAP, chief editor for “Schwarzes Korps”, since 1939 Waffen-SS, since 1940 head of war reporting SS; Augustinovic, Moll, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-118.

²⁴ Other subunits of SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers: Scorpion (West), Südstern (Italy), Nordstern (North), Wintermärchen (East and North); Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (ARS): F2/III/361.

warfare (as distinct from fascism), about the goals of Bolshevism and gang leadership, about their economic, religious and personal attitudes.” As the partisan warfare increased, the focus then shifted to “calls to defect, the proclamation and explanation of the amnesty, reports of success, and accounts of the general gang warfare.”²⁵

Hradetzky reported that the unit had consisted of three men in November 1943 and in the summer of 1944 had included “50 Reichsdeutsche Führer, Unterführer, and men” and “150 national auxiliaries”²⁶. The commando squad stationed in Trieste was in charge of a total of five operational squads stationed in the urban centers of Trieste, Fiume, Pola, Gorizia, and Udine. The Command Squad was in charge of the technical organization, administration, production of leaflets, posters, photos, drawings and films. The outreach squads were responsible for disseminating the material, holding meetings and speeches, reconnoitering the mood within the population and the troops, and advising the command squad. Furthermore, the task structure of the Adria Kommando differentiated between press, broadcasting and operations squads.

Six members of the press unit, including the editor-in-chief and five editors, were with the Deutsche Adria Zeitung, which appeared daily in German from January 14, 1944, to April 29, 1945, as the newest member of the series of German occupation newspapers²⁷. Six other members of the unit performed the same duties at Adria Illustrierte, which appeared weekly as a quadrilingual revue (German, Italian, Slovenian, Croatian) from April 22, 1944, to April 28, 1945. Four members of the radio crew worked as permanent employees at the Trieste radio station, which had belonged to the Milan EIAR station during the fascist period, was first assigned to the Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft in Vienna with the German

²⁵ Hradetzky, 26.6.1944: “Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944,” in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

²⁶ Organigram Kommando Adria: Obersturmführer Franz Hradetzky (unit commander), O.stmrf. Hermann Pirich (main DAZ chief), U.stmrf. Wilhelm Henke (deputy; main chief AI), O.scharf. Hanns Schneider-Bosgard (deputy), O.scharf. Josef Schifko (head of film), O.scharf. Otto Jung (head of company propaganda), O.scharf. Otto Schreiber (head of Adria Verlag), O.scharf. Walter Döring (head of DAZ), O.scharf. Werner Schilf (head of shortwave broadcasts), O.scharf. Hermann Fischer (Einsatzgruppenführer Trieste), O.scharf. Werner Sauer (head of Prop. Gruppenstab Ost), U.scharf. Wilibald Janzowski (head of Adria Verlag), U.scharf. Hans Adolf Blau (Adria Verlag), U.scharf. Hans Rathmann (liaison to Wehrmacht), U.scharf. Heribert Huber (church and culture officer), U.scharf. Josef Offergeld (head of training), Oberwachmeister Roman Zenzinger (illustrator); Hradetzky to Globočnik, 22 Oct. 1944, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

²⁷ Krakauer Zeitung, Deutsche Zeitung in Norwegen (Oslo), Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden (Amsterdam), Brüsseler Zeitung, Pariser Zeitung, Deutsche Zeitung in Kroatien (Agram), Deutsche Nachrichten in Griechenland (Athen), Donauzeitung (Belgrade), Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland (Riga), Kauener Zeitung, Revaler Zeitung, Deutsche Ukraine-Zeitung (Luzk), Minsker Zeitung and Deutsche Adria Zeitung (Trieste); S. Burmistr, *Die „Minsker Zeitung“. Selbst- und Fremdbilder in der nationalsozialistischen Besatzungspresse*, Berlin, Metropol Verlag, 2014, p. 85.

occupation, and then broadcast its own program as an independent station. The station engaged in intensive political work, using secret transmitters to influence opponents and intercepting enemy intelligence.

Popular as a media format because of its music program and the daily (news) broadcasts, some of which lasted several hours, also in Italian, Slovenian and Croatian, the radio seemed to have had the greatest impact. The DAZ, which all mayors of OZAK were required to receive, appeared only in German, but it contained all of Rainer's orders, which were not only important for survival in view of the curfews that had to be observed, but also because of the food rations for the population that were declared here every week. The AI seemed to be more popular as a print format because of its large-format picture reports including subtitles in four languages, also because the articles always had a local reference and focused on the local ethnic groups as allies at eye level.

Further personnel of the Adria Kommando were propagandists who agitated covertly in local businesses. In a propaganda school, Italian, Slovenian and Croatian informers were trained as national employees. Their task was to spread rumors via the Whispering Propaganda campaign. Temporarily, it was also possible to use airlifts, which dropped leaflets and wrote slogans in "skywriting", e.g. "Work is honor, (...) Amnesty, Run over!"²⁸.

On March 2, 1944, the higher SS and police leader Globočnik ordered Hradetzky to submit a brief report to him daily at ten o'clock on the activities of his unit²⁹. This circumstance and the personnel development of 200 men recorded by Hradetzky for that time described the point in time from which the Kommando Adria might have been fully operational and indispensable as a political factor for Rainer and Globočnik. However, since complete daily reports are only available for Einsatz-Trupp Fiume and because Hradetzky had recorded the central contents of all five Einsatz-Trupps from February 1944 to January 1945 in largely unbroken monthly reports and expanded them to include the results of the command's work, they form the object of investigation for the analysis of internal SS communication³⁰.

3. SPEECH ANALYSIS

The objects of investigation used for the present linguistic analysis have not yet been edited, nor have they been processed historically or linguistically. This ap-

²⁸ Hradetzky, 24.6.1944: „Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944“, in: ARS, F 201/III/1.

²⁹ ARS: F201/II/1; cf. Federal Archives (BArch), RS4-1121.

³⁰ Hradetzky's monthly reports are as follows: 15 Nov 1943 to 1 Apr 1944, February to mid-June 1944, July 1944; 15 Oct-15 Nov 1944, 15 Nov-15 Dec 1944, 1 to 31 Jan 1945.

plies to Hradetzky's internal reports as well as to articles written by members of his unit in the DAZ. It does not apply to the analysis of central terms of the Nazi language, which most recently were investigated by Heidrun Kämper or Cornelia Schmitz-Berning. In this respect, the following language analysis is based on researched terms, which are used for the discussion of new research material³¹.

4. INTERNAL COMMUNIQUE'S: HRADEZKY'S MONTHLY REPORTS TO RAINER AND GLOBOČNIK

In order to gain a better understanding of Hradetzky's eight to twelve page monthly reports, to understand the range of tasks of the Adria Kommando and the language of internal communication, the following is a content-quality analysis of annotated excerpts from five reports covering the period from February 1944 to January 1945.

[February to June 1944] The propaganda situation in the given period was parallel to the military one. [...] Aircraft - Ju 87 and secondly a Me 109 - [...] were used 21 times and dropped more than 2,000,000 leaflets from their drop bombs. One aircraft was lost in an attack by five British fighters, and the two occupants, including one of the command's photojournalists, died heroically. [...] The five task forces, mostly 5-7-men strong, distributed the propaganda material independently and often on individual trips in the enemy territory [...] to the German and national units [...]. In the process, the squads had contact with the enemy 15 times, which resulted only in wounds on our side, but 12 enemy casualties³².

Hradetzky's activity report was linguistically determined by action and demarcation from the enemy. Quantitatively, therefore, the term enemy stands out. He openly balanced his own losses, which were to be outweighed by the emphasis on heroic death or the enemy superiority of English fighters as well as the number of enemies killed. The broader context provides insights into the work of the Kommando Adria, which operated in the hinterland and relied on direct contact with the population. Each task force had a loudspeaker truck as well as at least one armored vehicle. In addition to announcements and speeches, posters were posted in central village squares or the churches, and leaflets, issues of *Adria Illustrierte* or language-specific propaganda material were distributed. The use of aircraft was rare because of British air superiority. The partisans dominating the hinterland were mainly supplied with weapons

³¹ Klemperer, *op.cit.*; Sternberger, Storz, Süskind, *op.cit.*; Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*

³² Hradetzky to Globočnik, 24.6.1944: "Report on propagandistic combat operations in the period from February to mid-June 1944," in: ARS, F 201/III/1, pp. 1-3, here p. 1.

and propaganda material by air or submarine by English units, but successfully produced their own material for the oppressed Slovenian population since the fascist domination of the area from 1919/20³³. The early and anti-fascist resistance of the Slovenes registered a lively influx from the Italian side since the German occupation of Italy, especially by military personnel who wanted to escape arrest and deportation by the Wehrmacht³⁴.

[July 1944] The total figures of the material distributed and self-produced so far are: 8,500,000 leaflets, 300,000 brochures, 100,000 posters, 750,000 postcards. During the last three months, Kommando Adria has suffered the following losses during propaganda operations: 5 dead, 4 missing, 11 wounded. [...] 20 cultural events took place in the province of Friuli. [...] 35,000 visitors were recorded. These choirs and orchestras, which have been set up so far, have a combined membership of about 900. [...] The 12 new soccer teams held 40 soccer games and sporting events during Sundays in the various localities. In the month of July, 102 new recruits for the active land protection can be recorded³⁵.

Irrespective of the unverifiable figures for distributed printed material, their own losses show the importance that the warring parties attached to propaganda. Interesting for the Udine area was the German cultural propaganda, which pushed for an - today recognized - independence of Friulian (language, traditions, etc.) in distinction to Italian. Music enjoyed a high popularity value. The aforementioned orchestras and popular songs served to strengthen the identity of the multi-ethnic groups of the OZAK, which, from the point of view of the occupiers, could be better controlled, especially by setting themselves apart from one another. In this context, the sporting competition was also relevant, which was intended to provide a certain distraction but, like other propaganda, relied on mobilization and the influx of war volunteers in German uniforms.

[15.10.-15.11.1944] Of decisive importance for the propaganda of the reporting period were the facts that Germany survived the collapse crisis predicted for it in October and that the enemy side expected the end of the war to be postponed until next year. For the enemy propaganda this resulted in a considerable loss of confidence, for the German propaganda some favourable moments [...]. The propaganda of the gangs and the resistance movement emerged again with a flood of writings. [...] The motives for leaflet propaganda were again the military events: the reconquest of Belgrade, the

³³ M. Kacin-Wohinz, *Gli sloveni della Venezia Giulia*; D. Sardoč, *L'orma del Tigr. Testimonianza di anti-fascista sloveno*, Gorizia, Centro isontino di ricerca e documentazione storica Leopoldo Gasparini, 2006.

³⁴ M. Wedekind, *Nationalsozialistische Besatzungs- und Annexionspolitik in Norditalien 1943 bis 1945. Die Operationszonen „Alpenvorland“ und „Adriatisches Küstenland“*, Munich, de Gruyter, 2003, p. 51.

³⁵ Hradetzky, 5.8.1944: „Kurzgefasster Arbeitsbericht des Komandos Adria für den Monat Juli 1944“, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

advance of the Soviets in the Balkans [...] the imminent liberation of the Adriatic coastal land [...]. On the other hand, newspapers also distributed in the province of Pola with pictures of captured German generals in the USSR, prisoner-of-war officers in Paris and thousands of captured German soldiers in France had some effect.

News about the advancing Allies, the successive breakthrough of the Gothic Line, and the offensive, which stagnated from the fall onward, was a daily topic for the OKW on the front page of the DAZ. The focus of these reports, however, was on the “defensive successes,” the “enemy losses,” and Germany’s own use of “new weapons.” Details of the German defensive situation, thousands of prisoners and surrendered generals, as recorded here by Hradetzky, appeared in this openness only in internal communiqués. The listing of various enemy camps in a single sentence also contradicted Goebbels’ language regulation of November 20, 1942, which permitted reporting only from the “enemy side,” since “the recognition of various enemies leads only too easily in weak and insecure characters to the beginning of doubts about one’s own right”³⁶. The same applies to the term enemy propaganda, which did not comply with the language regulation of 28.7.1937, which required the use of the term enemy agitation.

The specific interest that the propaganda of the Allies had shown towards the Adriatic coast until recently seems now to have given way to clear indifference. [...] The enemy propaganda of the period under review was therefore produced almost exclusively by the internal resistance movements or gangs, which, in view of the constantly worsening circumstances for the gangs, again recorded a further drop in their level. [...] Through the personal appointment of the Archbishop of Udine, action could be carried out in close collaboration with the clergy, who [...] worked with evident success for the population. [...] In summary, German propaganda can be described as quite active. It is now on the point of having put the enemy propaganda on the defensive by and large [...]³⁷.

In fact, the Allied offensive in Italy was stalled at the turn of 1944-45. The British active in OZAK were partly withdrawn to Greece. Although the Resistenza was extremely active in northern Italy, the German units in OZAK managed to hold the position in the urban area until early May 1945. The fact that Italian as well as Slovenian church representatives were an active part of SS propaganda work at this time shows, on the one hand, the contemporary real fear of the Soviet army, which, on the other hand, had already been targeted by fascist propaganda in Catholic Italy long before. However, Hradetzky’s conclusion that he had gained

³⁶ Hitler, *op.cit.*, p. 129, quoted from: Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 230.

³⁷ Hradetzky to Rainer and Globočnik, 27 Dec 1944: propaganda report of 15 Nov-15 Dec 1944, in: ARS, F201/II/AS 1618.

the upper hand did not correspond to reality, neither from a propagandistic nor from a military point of view.

[January 1945] The enemy agitation in the operation zone, which had experienced a low in December, increased again somewhat in the reporting period. In addition to the usual bandit leaflets [...] produced by the peel-off method, there were various propaganda leaflets and newspaper copies [...] in Cyrillic script, obviously hauled in with the purpose of influencing the anti-Communist Serb units stationed in the coastal country. [...] In the second half of January, the dropping of leaflets in German by the RAF increased considerably. [...] The Adria Kommando's own propaganda endeavored to maintain the lead it had achieved over enemy agitation in the coastal country³⁸.

Hradetzky's latent euphoria is countered by looking at the content between the lines and instead reveals the drastic situation shortly before the end of the war: Allied air supremacy, strong partisan activity, stranded allies fleeing westward, and slogans of perseverance. To his own superiors, Hradetzky underscored authenticity, illustrating the ideological importance of the SS as the "fanatical" backbone of National Socialism. It is certain that SS propaganda remained active until the surrender.

In terms of content, Hradetzky's reports appear relatively authentic. Undoubtedly, his information on the mood of the military and the population was subjective, because it always represented an assessment of the author and never included a sense of injustice apart from Nazi ideology, i.e. it was written faithfully to the line. Overall, he summed up the work of his unit. Structurally, his monthly reports were based on those of the five task forces from Trieste, Fiume (Rijeka), Udine, Gorizia and Pula (Pola), which in turn reflected the ethnic characteristics on the ground and strove to strengthen them in the sense of *divide et impera*³⁹. For Rainer and Globočnik, Hradetzky's information was essential. They provided mood pictures from the (major) cities of the occupied territory, from the ranks of their own and allied troops, from factories and from the streets. At the same time, the unit's detachments operated mainly in remote areas, where they regularly came into contact with the enemy, identified partisan positions, collected enemy propaganda, and were thus able to prepare military situation reports on the situation in the rear.

³⁸ Hradetzky to Rainer, 8 Feb 1945: "Activity Report of the Adriatic Command from 1 to 31 January 1945", in ARS, F 201/III/1, pp. 1-8, here pp. 1-2.

³⁹ Trieste was mostly Italian with a strong Slovenian minority, Fiume/Rijeka Croatian with a strong Italian minority, Udine Italian but always demarcated by Nazi propaganda as Friulan, Gorizia Slovenian and Pola Croatian; M. Cattaruzza, «Alle frontiere dell'impero: il litorale asburgico», in: Istituto di Studi Europei del Friuli Venezia Giulia, *L'Adriatico mare di scambi tra oriente e occidente*, Pordenone, Concordia Sette, 2003.

5. ARTICLE OF THE ADRIA KOMMANDO IN THE DAZ

As a counterpart to Hradetzky's internal monthly reports, one newspaper article per month is used for the same period from February 1944 to January 1945, each published by a member of the Kommando Adria in the *Deutsche Adria Zeitung*. Of this total of twelve articles, four are examined in terms of content and quality. For the quantitative evaluation in the final part of the paper, all twelve articles are taken into account, which in terms of their total length roughly correspond to Hradetzky's monthly reports (about 12,500 words each).

[February 1944; "Trieste Communist Leader"] So this was the infamous Marega, the ex-Communist leader of Monfalcone, who now tried his luck as a gang leader? [...] It should only be mentioned that he finally ended up as a promising agitational force [...] at the Lenin School in Moscow [...]. But we also know only too well from our own struggle for our Germany the deeper causes that drove such people into the arms of Bolshevism [...] so nothing can mislead us in the belief that our will and action will one day convince all of Europe. And because we know this, we do not hesitate to give bread and work to people like Marega in Germany, so that he has the opportunity to see for himself and experience directly what the worker is up against with us⁴⁰.

The author of the article, Obersturmführer Hermann Pirich, chief editor of the DAZ, used the arrest of the resistance fighter Ferdinando Marega to transfigure his life into a story of Bolshevik failure. Marega, who was one of the founding members of the resistance group Brigata Proletaria in Monfalcone, was murdered in German custody in 1944⁴¹. This fact deconstructs Pirich's core statements, which attributed an integrative character to National Socialism, but which de facto excluded dissidents and murdered them by the millions. Pirich's article thus exemplifies the discrepancy between Nazi propaganda and occupation reality in OZAK as well.

[May 1944; "training castle of land protection"] On Sunday, the inauguration of the SS training castle Duino took place by the higher SS group leader and lieutenant general of the police Globočnik. In the future, the best of the Landschutz will be prepared in Duino for their fight against Bolshevik gangs in terms of weaponry and ideology. [...] They want to prepare there for the fight against those elements who have invaded or threaten their homeland with robbery and Bolshevik misery. [...] Are not these very men of land protection called to arms to save the culture of our continent from the

⁴⁰ H. Pirich, *Der Fall Marega. Die Erlebnisse des Triester Kommunistenführers*, in: «DAZ», 8.2.1944, p. 4.

⁴¹ Istituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di Liberazione (IRSML): Fondo Riccardo Giacuzzo, Busta 3, fascicolo 63; cf. L. Gramith, *Liberation by Emigration: Italian Communists, the World War, and West-East Migration from Venezia Giulia, 1945-1949*, Morgantown (WV), West Virginia University, 2019, pp. 87-88.

onslaught of the steppe? [...] German soldiers who have seen Russia with their own eyes will describe to them the conditions in the Soviet country [...]. Thus, in addition to the mastery of weapons, the first prerequisite for the successful conduct of a battle is the recognition of the danger that threatens from the enemy⁴².

The author of the article, Oberscharführer Walter Döring, editor of the DAZ, initially suggested that the training at Duino Castle was only given to the best candidates of the so-called Landschutz. In fact, according to Rainer's decree of December 7, 1943, all Italians of the newly defined cohorts were obliged to perform military service under German command. To present the forced recruitment of Italians and Slovenians as a voluntary act on the one hand and to call it "Landschutz" on the other hand was an attempt to gloss over the systematic oppression and exploitation of the population. With regard to Döring's article, it is also necessary to specify that the SS primarily trained Slovenes in Duino Castle. The formation of a Slovene land guard, in turn, posed a problem for the Italian authorities, who had forcibly suppressed Slovenes since the end of World War I and with the award of Venezia Giulia to Italy.⁴³ While Döring in his article promoted cohesion in the sense of the Nazi concept of Europe, he passed over the parallel forced policy of division that the occupiers deliberately pursued towards the individual ethnic groups. This also applied to the ideological and, in particular, anti-Bolshevik indoctrination to which the trainees in Duino were subjected in addition to the military drill by the SS.

[June 1944; "Soviet Soldiers"] You saw the prisoners this morning, the Unterscharführer began, and you looked into fear-distorted, helpless, childishly absent faces. You heard them begging submissively [...]. Were they still the same soldiers as they had been an hour before, when they burst out of the woods against us with animalistic roars? [...] In such hours the boundlessness of the Russian soul, which can be brutal and childishly simple-minded, becomes apparent to us [...]. No idea, no fanaticism burned in their hearts to pull them up, no own initiative let them act. [...] He is so dumb in his thinking, [...] that he has forgotten to carry out an act out of his own decision. [...] Experience proves that we can successfully oppose the robot masses with the better weapons, the superior use of these means of war and the courageous, determined individual fighter⁴⁴.

Döring's distancing from Russian soldiers in this article is based on the concept of the foreign race, which became central in Nazi racial doctrine only after the

⁴² H. W. Döring, *Schulungsborg des Landschutzes*, in: «DAZ», 16 May 1944, p. 4.

⁴³ The Italian prefect and collaborator Bruno Coceani recorded in his memoirs that Slovenes trained in Duino controlled, interrogated and also arrested Italians in Gorizia; B. Coceani, *Mussolini, Hitler, Tito alle porte orientali d'Italia*, Bologna, 1948, p. 157.

⁴⁴ H. W. Döring, *Sowjetische Soldaten*, in: «DAZ», June 24, 1944, p. 1.

invasion of Poland⁴⁵. The dehumanization of those who were then murdered by the millions was systematically pursued by Nazi propaganda. Pejorative animal symbolism towards Jews had been a tradition since the 19th century and was successively applied in the Nazi regime to Jews, Poles, Russians and Communists, who were discriminated against and degraded to so-called subhumans⁴⁶. Here, Döring faked a conversation between a freshly drafted soldier and a battle-hardened soldier who seemed to be passing on paternal values of experience, but was actually trying to construct a racial-biological superiority that legitimized the killing of “foreign peoples.” SS propagandists like Döring transferred this message to the so-called Bolshevik gang warfare in the Adriatic coastal region.

[January 1945; “One Year DAZ”; Foreword Rainer] Today, as a year ago, the goal of the journalistic work of the “Deutsche Adria Zeitung” remains unchanged: to strengthen our will to fight and thus to contribute to the final victory [Endsieg] crowning the struggle of young Europe against the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist enemies of the world. [...] [Main article Pirich] From the beginning we saw our primary task in pouring out in the written word, without phrases, that strength which we receive anew from the Führer and his idea of a better Europe. [...] For hardly any area in Europe needed this calming and balancing force more than the Adriatic coastal region, where four peoples are crowded together in a small area and almost each in the endeavor to be blessed according to its own facon [...]. Our staff has long since included Italians, Slovenes and Croats, and this circle [...] is as firmly convinced as we are of the European task that the Reich, as the only organizing power, has to fulfill here at present⁴⁷.

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the DAZ, Rainer published a greeting on the front page, which was supplemented by the aforementioned Pirich and editor-in-chief of the newspaper. Both became unusually clear despite the other – little squeamish – contents of the DAZ concerning the duty to have to continue the ideologically justified war. In view of the foreseeable defeat in the war, the pressure on the German and allied soldiers was increased with two references to Hitler. In addition to the well-known enemy combination of the Jewish-Bolshevik-capitalist enemies of the world, which was seldom so openly emphasized in the DAZ, the buzzwords “final victory” and “Europe” were given special emphasis. The Nazi concept of Europe was synonymous with the wartime goal of establishing “a new Europe with new borders - drawn according to National Socialist economic interests - and graduated dependence of the unfree

⁴⁵ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁶ M. Urban, *Von Ratten, Scheißfliegen und Heuschrecken: judenfeindliche Tiersymbolisierung und die postfaschistischen Grenzen des Sagbaren*, Konstanz (et al.), Halem Verlag, 2014.

⁴⁷ H. Pirich, *Versuch einer Bilanz; with Rainer's foreword: Ein Jahr „Deutsche Adria Zeitung“*. The greeting of the Supreme Commissioner, Gauleiter Dr. Rainer, on its first birthday, in: «DAZ», January 14, 1945, p. 1.

satellites under the suzerainty of the German Reich⁴⁸. How distant this goal was underscored by the emphasis on the term *Endsieg*, which had already been in use during World War I, was used by Goebbels in 1933 for Hitler's assumption of power, and in the course of World War II underwent a semantic shift from certainty of victory to resignation. In fact, Rainer and his staff departed OZAK for Carinthia on April 28. One day later, the last issue of the DAZ was published. On May 3, OZAK surrendered the last German troops in Trieste.

6. QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION (SUMMARY)

For the quantitative evaluation of the subjects of the study, 110 terms were determined, which were mainly based on the pool of terms discussed in Schmitz-Berning, and in some cases more specific in order to be able to take into account possible peculiarities for the Adriatic coastal area. Accordingly, Hradetzky's monthly reports and articles published by members of the *Adria Kommando* in the DAZ were reviewed for frequency in the use (frequency) of these 110 terms. The terms were subdivided and selected along the seven categories of enemy images, Nazi ideology, military, race OZAK, allies, and persons.

[Enemy Concepts] Central to Hradetzky's internal monthly reports was the aforementioned friend-enemy structure. He used or contextualized terms such as *bandit(s)/gang(s)* 35 times, *enemy(s)* 13 times, *Englishman(s)* 9 times, *Bolshevist(s)/Bolshevism* 8 times, *traitor(s)* 3 times (including two "traitorous Englishmen"), *Anglo-American* 3 times, etc. The sum of all enemies combined to the enemy side resulted in 93 uses.

In the published articles of the DAZ, however, the use of terms was clearly different: *bandit* was used only 3 times, *enemies* 28 times, *English* 24 times, *Soviet Russians* 24 times, *Bolsheviks* 21 times, *Terror(isten)* 10 times, *Anglo-Americans* 3 times, and so on. The sum of all enemy terms here amounted to 192 uses.

Accordingly, Hradetzky placed a clear emphasis on the so-called *bandits*, while the published SS reports tended to follow the official linguistic regime and spoke of enemies, albeit with similar frequency as *Bolsheviks*, *Soviet Russians*, or *British*. Neither used the official language of the "enemy side." Thus, the DAZ articles retrieved more than twice as many enemy images as the internal reports.

[Nazi Ideology] From the repertoire attributable to Nazi ideology, Hradetzky mentions *work and propaganda* 53 times, *Deutsch(e)/Germany* 25 times, *Volk* 24 times, *politics/political* 14 times, *SS* 7 times, but *National Socialism*, *Comrade*, or *Europe* not once.

⁴⁸ Schmitz-Berning, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

The DAZ articles use German most frequently in this category (77 times), followed by Volk (37), Arbeit and Politik/politisch (24 each), SS and Propaganda (21 each). Europe (22) and comrade (18), two terms that Hradetzky did not mention, also played a not insignificant role here in the sense of allied ethnic groups.

[Military] Hradetzky's military component turned out to be lower than expected, with the terms Einsatz (35 times), Krieg (5), Truppe (4), and Waffe (2) used most often, although he reported primarily on war in terms of content. In contrast, the DAZ articles most frequently mentioned the terms war (57), tank (38), soldier (35), weapon (25), front (24), combat (21), and troop (16). In this respect, the DAZ operated close to military personnel, who also constituted the newspaper's main group of recipients.

The remaining categories of race, allies, OZAK and persons are summarized briefly due to the low frequency of their keywords. Of importance is the fact that racial-political aspects played almost no role in either of the objects of investigation, although the DAZ regularly published anti-Semitic and racist articles⁴⁹. The terms race, Aryan, Jew, blood, etc. did not appear at all in Hradetzky's work, whereas in the selected DAZ reports only Rainer spoke of Jews once and the term blood, which was used seven times, always appeared in the context of war and not race. Local terms did show a certain frequency, e.g. Adria (22), Triest (13) or Landschutz (13), but in this respect they did not differ from other occupation newspapers and thus did not develop their own language specifics. Contrary to existing research opinions, it is interesting to note that German propaganda did not prominently ignore the Italians, but nevertheless clearly demarcated them from fascism⁵⁰. In the category of allies, the keyword Italy/Italian(s) was used 12 times by Hradetzky and 51 times in the DAZ articles. In the category Persons, Mussolini was not mentioned at all by Hradetzky. In the DAZ articles, he appeared twice, as often as Badoglio and Eisenhower, with Stalin mentioned four times, Churchill ten times and Hitler eleven times.

Both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis have shown that between internal communiqués and published propaganda, first, there were definitely linguistic differences with regard to the (non-)use of terms and the frequency of their use; second, official language regulations were not always adhered to, but were mostly implemented consistently; third, the conceptual-ideological congruence was so high and deviations so marginal that the implementation of the Nazi language had also become a lasting reality for the OZAK and their population;

⁴⁹ DAZ, Nr. 2 (1) 15.1.1944, S. 3; DAZ, Nr. 10 (1) 23.1.1944, S. 2; DAZ, Nr. 48 (1), 1. März 1944, S. 1; DAZ, Nr. 92 (1) 15.4.1944, S. 1; DAZ, Nr. 123 (1) 16.5.1944; DAZ, Nr. 138 (1) 1.6.1944, S. 2; DAZ, Nr. 188 (1) 21.7.1944, S. 1.

⁵⁰ E. Collotti, *L'occupazione tedesca della Venezia Giulia in un rapporto della propaganda nazista*, in: «Studi storici», vol. IV, n.3 (July-September 1963), pp. 521-537.

fourth, regional specifics hardly played a role in the uniformity of the Nazi language; fifth, the discrepancy between propaganda content and occupation reality must be understood as considerable.

In summary, the quantitative method has certain weaknesses. For example, within the DAZ, the use of the term *bandit* was absolutely standardized for articles that directly concerned the OZAK. In this respect, the articles written by the Adria command stand out because they name multiple enemy images - also contrarily to Goebbels' rules of language. On the one hand, this is surprising because the chief editor of the DAZ belonged to the Kommando Adria. On the other hand, however, it reflected the aforementioned competition between the various national socialist players. In the end, Rainer and his propaganda experts Lapper and Hradetzky succeeded in taking all instances into account. However, neither Hradetzky's reports nor the DAZ articles consistently implemented Goebbels' language rules. Moreover, Nazi propaganda was unable to conceal the vast discrepancy between propaganda content and occupation reality, as the Marega case, for example, may have shown already at the time.

The extent of implemented violence as a fundamental factor of the National Socialist occupation and terror regime was concealed by Nazi propaganda, especially with regard to the arbitrary mass murders of the civilian population and those committed specifically by the SS, although violence was omnipresent as a theme in the coverage of the war and the struggle against Tito's partisans. The concentration camp Risiera di San Sabba, installed in the city of Trieste, where several thousand people were murdered and from where several tens of thousands were deported to extermination camps, remained unmentioned⁵¹. Also, in internal reports, the NS racial ideology played only a subordinate role, but conversely and as shown above, it was an integral part of the propaganda canon of the *Deutsche Adria Zeitung*. In this respect, the quote by Kämper mentioned at the beginning can be supplemented to the effect that not only language is political and carries out political action, but also contents deliberately suppressed by language.

⁵¹ E. Apih, *Risiera di San Sabba: guida alla mostra storica*, in: «Quaderni didattici», (9), 2000; A. Scapelli, *San Sabba. Istruttoria e processo per il Lager della Risiera*, Milano 1988.