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The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Umbrella Organizations of German *Volkskunde* during the Third Reich *

Abstract

A survey and summarization is presented here of the history, the disciplinary politics, and the folk ideology of those institutions that were conceived and promoted during National Socialism into Reich-wide umbrella organizations for German *Volkskunde* scholarship and folk-national cultivation: Der Verband deutscher Vereine für Volkskunde under the chairmanship of Prof. John Meier; Die Abteilung Volkskunde of the Reichsgemeinschaft für deutsche Volksforschung in the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) under Professor Adolf Spamer; Die Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft "Das Ahnenerbe" of the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler; and Die Dienststelle des Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) of the Reich Leader Alfred Rosenberg.

Key words: National Socialism — John Meier — Adolf Spamer
Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) — *Volkskunde*/folklore

THE institutional history of the discipline of German *Volkskunde* (folklore) during the Third Reich is both ideology and personal history; it is the history of careers of individuals, of organizations and ideas, of disciplinary and power-political objectives, of theoretical prerequisites, economic bases, as well as general cultural, political, and social development. This extremely complex scholarly history of German *Volkskunde* is concentrated in the history of its umbrella organizations.¹ It cannot be treated without considering the time before and after the "Thousand Year Reich." On the one hand, the very short twelve-year epoch of *Volkskunde* under National Socialism remains almost completely incomprehensible when its preliminary stages are not considered. On the other hand, it laid a foundation at least for the institutional establishment of the discipline of *Volkskunde* at universities and research institutes of those states which came from the German Reich, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and the Republic of Austria.

It is a fact that most of the scholarly folklore institutions of the three German-speaking countries of contemporary central Europe did not exist before the beginning of the Third Reich, that many were founded during this time and were reestablished in the postwar years (see *Volkskunde an den Hochschulen* 1986). Several questions arise, however. What was the eventual effect for scholarly theory resulting from the establishment of contemporary German-language *Volkskunde* institutionally during National Socialism? Which of the scholars who were influential or who collaborated with these institutions during the Third Reich were then employed in the discipline after the war, and which were not, and what were the criteria for the distinctions that were made in their regard? Which historically perverted objectives of the discipline, or attitudes and behavioral patterns of the scholars of our discipline, were continued through the institutions and personalities into the postwar years, and when, in what way, and by what means could they be transmitted? Why did a fundamental analysis of Na-

tional Socialistic folk ideology and its preceding period not appear in the Federal Republic of Germany until 20 years after the end of the war?² Why could this Munich meeting on "Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus" (GERNDT 1987; Dow 1987, 1988) not take place until 20 years after that? Why does a broad spectrum of established professional colleagues make taboo, suppress, and hide, now as before, *Volkskunde's* fascistic past and project its *Nestbeschmutzer-Syndrom* (nest-dirtying syndrome) paradoxically onto those who do not conform,³ those who find it necessary to bring up this past of the discipline in the interest of self-knowledge?

To give answers to these and related questions is the task of German and Austrian *Volkskunde*. Nearly 40 years after the downfall of the Third Reich it seems that the time has finally come to put this at the center of our scholarly endeavors, not in order to exercise a narrow-minded judgmental attitude, or to become the *Weltenrichter* (World Judge)⁴ of the historical happening and of those who took part, but rather in order finally to render an account for ourselves of the past, and thus also of the present, and for the future of our discipline, *Volkskunde*.

My topic of investigation takes up a central area of disciplinary development under fascism. Still, I can only give an incomplete overview of the development and the history of the effects of these folkloric umbrella organizations because of the limits of such a treatment for the proceedings of our meeting.⁵ We are dealing with those scholarly and political-party organizations that were conceived of during the Third Reich as Reich German umbrella organizations for a scholarly *Volkskunde* applied to the cultivation of the folk-nation. By omitting some of those institutions that did not appear so obviously in the limelight of scholarly history and that possibly had an adequate self-understanding, we end up with: Der Verband deutscher Vereine für Volkskunde [The League of German Societies for Folklore] under the chairmanship of Prof. John Meier; Die Abteilung Volkskunde [Department of Folklore] of the Reichsgemeinschaft für deutsche Volksforschung [Reich Community for German Folk Research] in the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) [German Research Community] under Professor Adolf Spamer; Die Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft "Das Ahnenerbe" [Research and Teaching Community "The Ancestral Inheritance"] of the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler; and Die Dienststelle des Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der gesamten geistigen und weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) [Office of the Führer's Commissioner for the Supervision of

All Intellectual and World View Schooling and Education of the NSDAP] of the Reich Leader Alfred Rosenberg, also called the Amt Rosenberg [Rosenberg Bureau] or the Reichsüberwachungsamt [Reich Overseeing Office].

Common to all of these umbrella organizations were their internal structure according to the *Führerprinzip*⁶ and their attempt to gain sole "leadership" of Reich and later *Großdeutsche* (Great-German) *Volkskunde*. It was a goal that was supposed to be attained through the creation or annexation (or political co-ordination) of disciplinary institutes, associations, leagues, journals, series, publishers, etc., as well as through the results of scholarly research applied to the folk-national cultivation of the broad masses of the public, even though this was not accomplished by even a single umbrella organization by the end of the Third Reich. On the contrary, this compulsive application and competition so characteristic of the "leadership chaos of the Führer state" (BOLLMUS 1970, 236) that took place in all the umbrella organizations against one another, interrupted only by occasional coalitions, were eloquent expressions of the existential and power-political pretensions to absolute predominance that were simply latent in the discipline and in the ideology.

Most of the scholars of the discipline took part in these conspicuous confrontations within the fascistic system, because of the vulgar, social-Darwinistic *Recht des Stärkeren* (survival of the fittest), so that almost everyone was professionally damaged by his opponents or personally persecuted. In the period after World War II this evil effect of the system was able to be used falsely as proof of a person's complete opposition to National Socialism. The small number of exceptions verifies the rule.⁷ This documents indirectly, even though not always absolutely, the affinity of the vast majority of the so-called bourgeois-national German folklorists to National Socialistic ideology, or to the NS world view conglomerate and to the behavior principles that resulted from it.

One of the most important sources of funds for all the umbrella organizations for almost the entire duration of the Third Reich was the Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft [Emergency Community for German Scholarship], or the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) [German Research Community] founded in 1920. Under National Socialistic direction it also brought to life another umbrella organization, although later, for reasons that will have to be clarified, it was dropped. The battle for power among the folklore umbrella organizations and interest groups also applied to the influence of the DFG and its distribution of funds during the early—and once

again in the later—years of National Socialism. The central German scholarly foundation was supposed to help secure the economic base of each of the folklore institutions in the entire German area, and thus it became a potter's wheel for political-disciplinary happenings.

The president of the Notgemeinschaft (DFG) during the Weimar Republic was the former Regal-Prussian Cultural Minister, His Excellency Dr Friedrich Schmidt-Ott. After the seizure of power in 1933 he offered himself to the National Socialists through a loyalty address to Adolf Hitler and the national goals of the party, shamefully rejected the failed democratic state, and offered to be of further use in his office (*Bericht der Notgemeinschaft* 12, 1933: 12). He was nevertheless deposed in 1934.

Schmidt-Ott had shown that he was open to folklore matters before 1933. On the basis of a proposal by John Meier, the chairman of the League of German Societies for Folklore and for many years the sole folklore advisor of the DFG, he founded the *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde* (ADV) in 1928 with a central office in Berlin that was directly under the control of the DFG. He thereby recognized the overall scholarly and national significance of the work being planned (MEIER 1947, 21; also LIXFELD 1989, 104–10). Here a staff of folklore workers was formed that had as its financial base DFG stipends, and that was for a while under the scholarly supervision of the League. It was from this central office in Berlin that the questionnaires were sent out, which were then employed through the help of over 30 regional offices of the ADV in German-speaking Europe. The disciplinary and political importance of this monumental scholarly undertaking, developed under the patronage of the DFG and the League, must not be underestimated. It formed a possible *Keimzelle* (seedbed) for a *Reichsinstitut* propagated a good decade prior to this by John Meier. Planned during World War I in 1917, this Institut für deutsche Volkskunde was to have the task of “keeping alive the folk-nation, cleansed in a fire of purification from distorted trash and an alien incrustation, and to develop it into higher forms.” It was to form “the central point . . . from which all attempts of a scholarly and folk nature for recognizing, preserving, and developing the German type and the German essence in an intelligent and warming way” were to emanate.⁸

Although Meier's *Reichsinstitut* plan was treated as “strictly confidential,” it most likely functioned as a preliminary model for the umbrella organizations that later developed and competed with one another. It could, however, not be developed from the League with the help of the scholarly foundation, since Meier was relieved of all his positions in the DFG about the same time as Schmidt-Ott.

After the "seizure of power by the National Socialists," John Meier attempted many tactical maneuvers to maintain and expand a dominant influence for his own umbrella organization on pan-German disciplinary politics. Thus, in 1933, after the revision of the by-laws, there was a unanimous decision for the *Führerprinzip* (with Meier as "Führer") and for *Selbstgleichschaltung* (self-imposed political coordination).⁹ And, "in order to strengthen the South German and National Socialistic elements," the influential ministerial officer and folklorist from Baden, Eugen Fehrle, was accepted onto the advisory board of the executive committee.¹⁰ Or there is a constant appeal to the state offices to establish *Volkskunde* firmly, under the direction of the League, through personnel and courses at the universities, technical institutes, and schools.¹¹

The most spectacular action was the founding in 1933 of the Bund für deutsche Volkskunde [Union for German Folklore]. After a lapse of a decade and a half it was John Meier's attempt during the Third Reich to establish the *Reichsinstitut* he had conceived of in World War I, in 1917. In contrast to the League, both corporative and personal members could join the Union, which then had to finance its scholarly folklore and folk-national cultivation activities through thousands of members. The Prussian Educational Minister and NS functionary, Bernhard Rust, was acquired as its patron. The chartering chairmen were John Meier, Otto Lauffer, and Hans Naumann; the first two were also personally allied as chairmen of the League. All together, about fifty scholars signed up as charter members. The list of names reads like a pantheon of German *Volkskunde* scholarship at that time (see pp. 145-46 in this issue).¹²

This *Bund* offered clear allegiance to National Socialism in its call for membership, and with the assumption of power *Volkskunde* had become a "public matter of the German nation." This was emphasized in the coming years through broad-based state promotion of the discipline. The *Bund* proclaimed—somewhat as an official avowal of bourgeois folklore scholarship—that "the world view foundations for National Socialism and the national movement" had been "prepared in the past through folklore research, as the names Jahn, Riehl, etc." prove (*Niederdeutsche Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 11, 1933: 255; see also LIXFELD 1989, 138-44). It is an assertion that should be investigated to determine its accuracy.

As John Meier himself admitted in 1947,¹³ the Bund für deutsche Volkskunde, this attempt by bourgeois-national scholars to place themselves through their own efforts at the pinnacle of *Volkskunde* during the Third Reich, was not a success. Under the totalitarian regime it

was doomed to failure. There were others with interests closer to those of the Party. The new president of the DFG in 1934 was the "old warrior" of the NSDAP, professor of physics and Nobel Prize recipient Johannes Stark. The new treasurer and vice president, and the one in a real sense responsible for humanities scholarship, was the "National Socialist of deed" (JACOBET 1965, 137 and 201 n. 169; HEIBER 1966, 840), or in the judgment of others, "the great National Socialistic political co-ordinator" of the scholarly foundation (HEIBER 1966, 793), Dr Eduard Wildhagen. Stark and Wildhagen—the latter was referred to as the "gray eminence" of the DFG—maintained good relationships with Reich Leader Alfred Rosenberg, the "chief ideologist" of the NSDAP. They designated him the Honorary President of the DFG.¹⁴ They believed that they had thus created an effective protective alliance against all competitors, and had secured financial support through the scholarly foundations for the Rosenberg Bureau, which had been founded in 1934 by an order of the Führer and was exceptionally active in cultural politics. The Rosenberg Bureau thus also had political and scholarly influence on the planning and funding of several Reich institutes. Of these, only one was actually realized: the Reichsgemeinschaft für deutsche Volksforschung [Reich Community for German Folk Research], with departments of Racial Studies, Pre- and Early History, Folk Speech, Settlement, and *Volkskunde* (HEIBER 1966, 802).

Stark and Wildhagen on 29 August 1934 appointed the Dresden and later Berlin Professor Adolf Spamer as scholarship director of the Department of Folklore (HEIBER 1966, 802). Contrary to all folklore "legends" (see WEBER-KELLERMANN 1984; WEBER-KELLERMANN and BIMMER 1985, 109–10), Spamer also had contacts with the Party, including with the Rosenberg office. There is little doubt that this helped in his being named Führer of the most important folklore umbrella organization at the time and the *Primus* of German *Volkskunde* scholarship.

Adolf Spamer was not only a member of subdivisions of the NSDAP, for example, as of 1 January 1934 the Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund (NSLB) [National Socialistic Teachers Union] (see JACOBET 1987), but was also director of scholarship of the Landesstelle für Volksforschung und Volkstumspflege im NSLB Sachsen [Regional Institute for Folk Research and Folk-National Cultivation in the NSLB Saxony] (*Mitteldeutsche Blätter für Volkskunde* 9, 1934: 153). At the same time he was director of the Landesfachstelle für Volkskunde im Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat [Regional Research Office for Folklore in the Reich Union Folk-Nation and Homeland] that came into being as

a result of the political co-ordination of the Sächsischer Verband für Volkskunde [Saxon League for Folklore] (*Mitteldeutsche Blätter für Volkskunde* 9, 1934: 99). The Regional Research Office was only a short time later changed into the Gaufachstelle für Volkskunde in der Abteilung "Volkstum und Heimat" der Nationalsozialistischen Kulturgemeinde (Gau Sachsen) [Gau Research Office for Folklore in the Department "Folk-Nation and Homeland" of the National Socialistic Cultural Community (Gau Saxony)].¹⁵ The Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat belonged to the NS-Gemeinschaft "Kraft durch Freude" [NS Community "Strength through Joy"] of the Reich organization leader of the NSDAP, Dr Robert Ley, and the NS Cultural Community to the office of Reich Leader Rosenberg.

In 1934 Adolf Spamer was the Führer of regional National Socialistic Party organizations in Saxony, which ultimately assisted in the cultural politics and the folk-national cultivation of the Rosenberg Bureau. Just like the latter, Spamer as chairman of the DFG department could now begin to expand "his" *Volkskunde* and folk-national cultivation—according to his definition they were one and the same—into the entire German-speaking realm. Spamer's hoped-for goal was the establishment of a Reichsinstitut für deutsche Volkskunde (SPAMER 1936), for which he skillfully expanded the Department of Folklore both actively and organizationally, also with the help of his folklorically engaged friend, Wildhagen.

The underpinnings of the effort that never materialized were: the "showpiece" of folklore, the *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde (ADV)* under Professor Wilhelm Peßler; the Landesstelle für Volksforschung und Volkstumspflege im NSLB (Gau Sachsen) under the NS functionary Dr Karl Ewald Fritzsich; the Landesstelle Kurmark für deutsche Volksforschung [Regional Institute Kurmark for German Folk Research] under the political leader of the Rosenberg Bureau, Dr Ernst Otto Thiele; and the politically co-ordinated Niederdeutscher Verband für Volkskunde [Low German League for Folklore], which was incorporated as a *Landesgruppe* (regional group) under Professor Otto Lauffer. In addition there was the Hauptstelle für Sinnbildforschung [Central Office for Symbol Research] under the SS officer Karl Theodor Weigel; the Zentralarchiv der deutschen Volkserzählung (ZA) [Central Archive for German Folk Narrative] under Dr Gottfried Henssen; the Volkskundliche Bestandsaufnahme der deutschen Archive [Folklore Inventory of German Archives] under Dr Hans Moser; and an impressive series of plans for further work and publications (SPAMER 1936). The workers were made up of an iridescent mixture of scholars, party functionaries, and dilettantes. The DFG finally financed every-

thing with about 160,000 Reichsmarks per year. There were also subventions of unknown amounts, mostly from state funding agencies. The Rosenberg Bureau added Dr Matthes Ziegler, the Reich Leader's specialist for *Volkskunde* and Religious Studies,¹⁶ as a DFG advisor for folk research;¹⁷ he was thus one of those who replaced John Meier.

With the active participation of Spamer, Wildhagen, and representatives of the Rosenberg Bureau, the Internationaler Verband für Volksforschung [International Association for Folklore and Ethnology] (CAMPBELL 1937), which was being developed in 1935, and its journal *Folk*, were now being promoted. Its business executive board was invited to a meeting in the DFG office in Berlin in April of 1936 (*Folk* 1, 1937: 17–23). The International Association included scholars of the discipline from those countries in Central and Northern Europe that were considered to be "Germanic." One of its purposes was to expand the questionnaire research of the *ADV* to include the "Germanic-Nordic" peoples as well as those in the Baltic countries (*Folk* 1, 1937: 21; BELLMANN 1937, 208). This expansion plan for the Department of Folklore never came about. After the demise of the Reich Community for Folk Research and the International Association for Folklore and Ethnology, the journal *Folk* also disappeared from the scene.

Spamer's later scholarly and personal difficulties with the Rosenberg Bureau, and principally with Matthes Ziegler, were the result of different theoretical conceptualizations on both sides. This came from the Rosenbergs' doctrinary insistence on their special folkloric ideological interpretation and the no less firm adherence by Spamer, "the Pope of *Volkskunde*," to his own definition of *Volkskunde*.¹⁸ In the German Democratic Republic after the war Spamer made reference to these quarrels in an attempt to make his opposition to National Socialism more believable (WEBER-KELLERMANN 1984 as well as JACOBET and MOHRMANN 1982). Spamer's resignation from the DFG office and the dissolution of the Department of Folklore were, however, not brought about in any way by the Rosenberg Bureau. They were a result of the everyday battle for power during fascism, with everyone against everyone else.

One of Rosenberg's competitors in the realm of cultural politics and world view, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, had understood how to staff appropriate positions in the Reich Educational Ministry of Bernhard Rust with officials he trusted. This circle of Himmler followers, aided by the participation of the ministerial officer, SS officer, and professor for Military Chemistry, Rudolf Mentzel (HEIBER 1966, 814–21), finally engineered one of those political intrigues so typical of

the Third Reich. It brought about the fall of Eduard Wildhagen, the mentor and friend of Spamer, as well as the subsequent demise of the DFG president, Johannes Stark (HEIBER 1966, 821–43, 848). His successor, Rudolf Mentzel, induced Spamer's resignation on 4 May 1937 and destroyed the "Führer-less" Department of Folklore of the Reich Community for German Folk Research by giving away its well-developed scholarly projects, including the *ADV*, the Central Archive [ZA], and the Weigel Symbol Archive. They went to the SS Ancestral Inheritance founded in 1935 by Heinrich Himmler (HEIBER 1966, 804; concerning the symbol archive, see BREDNICH 1985), but particularly to his ministerial and SS colleague, folklore professor Heinrich Harmjanz. Some of the workers in the Department of Folklore moved to the Ancestral Inheritance of the SS, some to the Rosenberg Bureau, some to other places.

The fall of the "gray eminence" of the DFG and the restructuring of its presidium in favor of the SS Ancestral Inheritance was perceived in the Rosenberg Bureau as "almost a catastrophe" (statement by Matthes Ziegler: BOLLMUS 1970, 94, 283 n. 209), because the financial subventions now flowed more sparingly into the Bureau and more plentifully into the competing Ancestral Inheritance. The Department of Folklore had nominally been an independent DFG establishment even though it was under the influence of the Party dogmatician, Rosenberg. The Rosenberg Bureau failed to gain from this previously undivided estate the most sought-after parts, for example, the *ADV*. About the same time, it lost the NS Cultural Community, which was dissolved by order of the Führer (BOLLMUS 1970, 100–101), in other words, an important institution for exercising direct cultural-political, folkloric, and folk-national cultivation influence on the broad masses. Against this background the subsequent founding of the Reich-wide folklore organizations can be understood.

As early as 5 January 1937 the first one was called into being, under the absolute direction of Rosenberg and the business direction of Matthes Ziegler. It was the [*Reichs*] *arbeitsgemeinschaft für deutsche Volkskunde* [(Reich) Working Community for German Folklore], with an increasing number of Gau working communities through the years.¹⁹ Of the many folkloric undertakings that document the Rosenbergian priorities, only two will be singled out: the First National Socialistic German Folklore Meeting, held in 1938 in Braunschweig (THIELE 1939; ZIEGLER 1939), which was quickly called to counter the Fifth Folklore Meeting held shortly before in Basel and Freiburg im Breisgau by the League of German Societies for Folklore; and the guidelines *Deutsche Volkskunde im Schrifttum* [German Folklore Publications]

published in the spring of 1938 by Ziegler and his colleagues. With these guidelines, Ziegler and his people subjected the entire professional world of *Volkskunde* to a doctrinaire, official party censorship and thereby spread a climate of existential terror. Included in the flood of "scholarly" judgments were the competing folklorists of the SS Ancestral Inheritance, among them its exponent, Heinrich Harmjanz. Shortly before, he had begun to publish the first portions of the usurped *ADV*, which he claimed as his and Erich Röhr's sole intellectual property by simply leaving out the names of the former workers (HARMJANZ and RÖHR 1937-39; see also HEIBER 1966, 804-805). He thus documents very impressively the political co-ordination (read: the intellectual thievery) that was made a working principle among National Socialists and NS folklorists (see n. 6). This was no less the case among colleagues in the Rosenberg office, and was only fought against in cases directed against them.

Of the folklore institutions of subsequent years only two will be mentioned: the Amt für Volkskunde und Fei ergestaltung [Office for Folklore and Celebration Planning], which arose in 1941 under the folklorist and political leader of the Rosenberg Bureau, Dr Hans Strobel, and the Lehrstätte für Fei ergestaltung [Teaching Post for Celebration Planning], which began around the end of the year 1941 under the NS functionary Thilo Scheller. With their life and calendar festivals they promoted an important area of Rosenbergian folklore and folk-national cultivation (see n. 1).

With the Führer's order of 29 January 1940, Reich Leader Rosenberg finally acquired the Hohe Schule der NSDAP [High School of the NSDAP], which was looked upon as the "central post for National Socialistic research, teaching, and education." This means that he was empowered to carry on the preparatory work for its establishment after the war, "especially in the area of research . . . and the library."²⁰ The institutional development and the theoretical-ideological founding of disciplinary divisions of the "High School" were thus approved. Rosenberg conceived of them as taking over the position occupied by German universities. During the years of "preparation" it exercised control over several outposts and institutes. On 5 June 1942 the largest of the subdivisions was founded, the Institut für deutsche Volkskunde, Rosenberg's *Reichsinstitut*. Dr Karl Haiding was named its director "for the duration of the war." At the time of its founding there were plans for a wartime budget of 400,000 Reichsmarks and from nine to at least thirteen research posts for various folklore canonical areas. Before the end of the Third Reich six were developed: the research offices Bäuerliche Lebensformen [Peasant Lifeforms] under

Dr Karl Ruprecht in Salzburg, Bäuerliches Handwerk [Peasant Handwork] under Dr Ernst Otto Thiele in Berlin, Deutscher Bauernhof [The German Farmstead] under Dr Erich Kulke in Schöneiche near Berlin, Deutsche Volkssprache [German Folk Speech] under Professor Bernhard Martin in Marburg/Lahn, Mythenkunde [Myth Studies] under Professor Karl von Spieß in Vienna, and Spiel und Spruch [Games and Sayings] under Dr Karl Haiding in the Monastery Rein near Graz (see n. 1).

Just like the party office of Reich Leader Alfred Rosenberg, the Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft "Das Ahnenerbe" of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler (KATER 1974 and OESTERLE 1987) included an impressive list of scholarly disciplines. Among the more than thirty teaching and research posts, and the research posts and institutes of the SS cultural organization at the end of the Third Reich, there were at least eight that can be considered folkloric in nature in the sense of the broad conceptualization of the discipline at that time. The memorandum of 1944 concerning the tasks and the construction of the Ancestral Inheritance²¹ lists them, their directors, their academic titles, and the SS rank: Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für germanische Kulturwissenschaft und Landschaftskunde [Teaching and Research Post for Germanic Cultural Science and Landscape Studies], Director SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr phil. habil. Otto Plaßmann, Extraordinary Professor at the University of Bonn; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für indogermanische Glaubensgeschichte [Teaching and Research Post for the History of Indo-Germanic Belief], Director SS-Obersturmführer Dr phil. habil. Otto Huth, Extraordinary Professor at the University of Straßburg, currently in the Waffen-SS; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für Runen und Sinnbildkunde [Teaching and Research Post for Runes and Symbols], Director Dr Wolfgang Krause, Ordinary Professor at the University of Göttingen, and SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl Theodor Weigel; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für Volksforschung und Volkskunde [Teaching and Research Post for Folk Research and Folklore], Director SS-Obersturmführer Dr Heinrich Harmjanz, Ordinary Professor at the University of Frankfurt am Main, currently in the field, and *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde*; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für Volkserzählung, Märchen- und Sagenkunde [Teaching and Research Post for Folk Narrative, Fairy Tales, and Legendry], Director, war casualty—currently unoccupied; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für germanisch-deutsche Volkskunde [Teaching and Research Post for Germanic-German Folklore], Director Dr Richard Wolfram, Ordinary Professor at the University of Vienna, currently in the Waffen-SS; Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für germanisches Bauwesen [Teaching

and Research Post for Germanic Construction], Director SS-Obersturmführer Dr Martin Rudolph, Docent at the Technical University Braunschweig, currently in the Waffen-SS; Forschungsstätte für indo-germanisch-deutsche Musik [Research Post for Indo-Germanic-German Music], Director SS-Untersturmführer (F) Dr Alfred Quellmalz, Berlin [(F)=Fachführer (Departmental Leader) of the Weapon SS].

The Research and Teaching Community Ancestral Inheritance is the theme of Anka Oesterle's study (in GERNDT 1987). I will thus limit myself to a few brief references, by means of which I will draw comparisons with the Rosenberg Bureau in order to clarify similarities and differences between the umbrella organizations in the League and in the Department of Folklore of the DFG.

Both the Ancestral Inheritance and the Rosenberg Bureau and their disciplinary departments were devoted to a strict scholarly *Volkskunde* as a result of the way they saw themselves. Their folklore workers had been educated for the most part by respected scholars and thus possessed professional competence. They were to occupy the most important positions of the scholarly discipline in the Reich. The number of dilettantes among them was relatively small. Even though their research areas corresponded completely to the traditional folklore canon, cooperation between overlapping disciplines was propagated, especially in racial studies, prehistory, and religious studies. The interdisciplinary goal was the systematic understanding of a presupposed ancient Germanic, Nordic-racial "high culture."

The Ancestral Inheritance and the Rosenberg Bureau competed with each other handily, and each viewed itself as the sole legitimate folklore umbrella organization. The founding of their disciplines, their *Reichsinstitute*, as well as their research projects, were all endowed with very large sums: the Ancestral Inheritance especially through the DFG, the Rosenberg Bureau for the most part through the Reich Treasurer of the NSDAP. During their political co-ordination, their incorporation of foreign institutions, and their constant attempt at "conquering" German (and foreign) universities, both proceeded with cynical brutality, which then shaped the behavior of many of their professional scholars, like Harmjanz and Ziegler.

The outbreak of World War II brought for both umbrella organizations a substantial strengthening of their influence and an expansion of their circles of action. Their activity was broadly recognized as "important for the war," and the competing Reich Community and the League were destroyed or reduced to meaningless positions. The Ancestral Inheritance and the Rosenberg Bureau now reached out to ethnic Germans and to conquered neighboring peoples, who were in-

cluded in folk research and in folk-national cultivation and were subjected to the power-political intentions of the ideologists of a Europe-wide Great-German Reich. Just how far the folklore posts and professional scholars had a part in the criminal abuses or misdeeds that were carried out, is found in the report by Anka Oesterle in her treatment of the Ancestral Inheritance (OESTERLE 1987).

It can be noted that the main political-disciplinary and ideological conceptual goals of the folklore leagues of John Meier and Adolf Spamer were the same as those of the Ancestral Inheritance and the Rosenberg Bureau: recognition of the national-political meaning of *Volkskunde*, its centralization and unified direction in an encompassing *Reichsinstitut*, its establishment in public universities and school systems, and its application to folk-national cultivation or folk education. Meier and Spamer deceived themselves into assuming that they were being called on as important scholars to carry out these objectives. Himmler and Rosenberg, for whom they in reality were working, took over their *Volkskunde*, which was superbly suited for the power-political goals of National Socialistic ideology.

The key words analyzed by Hermann Bausinger in 1965: "nation," "Nordic race," "Germanness," "peasantry," "organic," "superindividual," "symbol world," "belief in oneself," "reawakening" (BAUSINGER 1965, 198), fit the folk ideology and the folk research of all four umbrella organizations, with only the suspicious difference that the Ancestral Inheritance and the Rosenberg Bureau raised "their" *Volkskunde* to an unreal dimension. The "belief in oneself" and the "quasi-religious attempts" (BAUSINGER 1965, 194), in the case of Himmler and Rosenberg at least, turned into an ancient Germanic world of life and belief, the Nordic-racial "high culture" mentioned above, which was to be reawakened. This world was to be presented once again to the folk, through folklore and folk research, as a National Socialistic world view of the present, and in order to create the spiritual basis of this racially pure "religion" to enable the "master race" to rule over the Occident for a thousand years.²²

As is so often the case in the scholarly history of the discipline of *Volkskunde*, this twelve-year epoch of the Third Reich is not only filled with sensational innovations but also with threads of continuity that reach far back into the nineteenth century, and that do not cease at the threshold that marks the end of the war.²³ Intellectual complicity with National Socialistic *Volkskunde* cannot be denied for all those professional scholars who participated. Their "success" was obviously related to the catastrophe of the World War. Very soon after 1945 they suppressed, made taboo, and covered up the monstrous hap-

penings, and supported the defensive position of an unpolitical folklore put forward by the bourgeois-national majority of scholars.²⁴ They brought about a renewed establishment of their discipline at universities and research offices in the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and the Republic of Austria, utilizing an institutional basis created during the Third Reich and essentially protected during the postwar period. They assured the further existence of a scholarly discipline, perverted under National Socialism into a state ideology, and its one remaining umbrella organization, the League.²⁵ They also secured in this way their own professional careers, at least the majority of those who were still alive.

The old president of the likewise still surviving Notgemeinschaft, His Excellency Dr Friedrich Schmidt-Ott, might serve as an impressive personal example of continuity. The scholarly foundation named him Honorary President in the year 1949,²⁶ to follow Alfred Rosenberg, who had shortly before this been executed for crimes against humanity.

NOTES

* Translated by James R. Dow. This essay was originally delivered at the 1986 meeting of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde on the theme "Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus" in Munich. For the German original of this essay, see LIXFELD 1987b.

1. A more substantial treatment of this theme, including extensive literature and source material, is forthcoming in: *Gestalten und Tendenzen. Beiträge zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der deutschsprachigen Volkskunde in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Wolfgang Jacobeit, Hannjost Lixfeld, and Olaf Bockhorn, Berlin: Akademie Verlag (in preparation); and in an expanded English version with the title: *The Reich Institute for German Volkskunde. Concerning the History, Ideology, and National Political Objectives of the Folklore Umbrella Leagues during the Third Reich* (currently being translated for publication in the United States). Preliminary studies that have already appeared are: LIXFELD 1987a, 1989.

2. BAUSINGER 1965; see also EMMERICH 1968 and his response to the review of his book in EMMERICH 1971, 162-82, here 170-173, as well as JEGGLE 1970.

3. See the Marginalia "Bedenkliches, Nestbeschmutzer" by "Kas." in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of 11 October 1986, Foreign Edition No. 235, 44: "When someone accuses me of being a nest-dirtier, he assumes there is a nest—principally 'mine' or 'ours'—that manages to be pure and spotless. Anyone who has seen a nest from within, with feathers and food droppings, not to mention the lice and everything else, knows that this assumption is false." Ever since the publication of this present study, which included the "Marginalia" from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, this "nest-dirtying syndrome" has acquired unparalleled and virulent proportions. There have been comments, letters, and publications by folklorists from the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, and Austria, by those who carried out research during the Third Reich in *NS-Volkskunde* institutions as well as by other,

younger ones who are also involved in working up the NS past of the discipline. All of these reactions can only be analyzed psychologically, as Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich have attempted to do in their book *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* [The inability to be sad: Foundations of collective behavior] (MITSCHERLICH 1987), or Ralph Giordano in his *Die zweite Schuld oder von der Last Deutscher zu sein* [The second guilt or the burden of being German] (GIORDANO 1987).

4. For Wolfgang BRÜCKNER (1986a, 5) several researchers of fascism not only conceive of themselves "as historians, they are also acting out the role of World Judge on the stage of predetermined world views." The extent to which the concept of World Judge, which comes from Brückner's own research perspective, applies to the initiator himself, must be left open to discussion.

5. Everything else must be left to other studies now in press; see the entries in no. 1 above. For fundamental insights I am indebted to the important studies of the historians HEIBER 1966, BOLLMUS 1970, KATER 1974, BAUMGÄRTNER 1977.

6. Associations, leagues, universities, etc. were all "politically co-ordinated" by the National Socialists after the seizure of power in 1933; i.e., they were subjugated to the authoritarian leadership principle, or the "*Führerprinzip*," and without democratic self-determination by their members. In some cases these organizations pre-empted the "political co-ordination" ordered by the National Socialists by carrying out their own "self-imposed political co-ordination." See, for example, REIMANN 1984.

7. The difficult chapter has not yet been written on the persecution of folklore scholars during the Third Reich, i.e., those who openly represented either a world view or a disciplinary-theoretical or personal-ethical counterposition to *NS-Volkskunde* or to National Socialism in general. A start, supported by a high level of ethics and standing apart from the "nest-dirtying syndrome," can be found in the recent scholarship of JEGGLE 1988, 59-65. The means preferred by National Socialism for the suppression of a free expression of opinion—psychic terror—and the possibility of repeating a totalitarian regime of power in the present, with all its consequences for those who are alive and conducting research today, clearly must not be overlooked. Still, I cannot support the view of Jeggle, who claims there is "a dimension of illusion-poor insight into the possibilities and limits of scholarly behavior," one that is "illusion-poor because the demand for heroes cannot be legitimized in a scholarly way, only in a quasi-religious way" (JEGGLE 1988, 61), because in this way the ethical standard is lowered. I share even less the opinion of Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, who speaks about "the insurmountable task of judging the behavior of folklore scholars during the time of National Socialism" and who thereby negates a fundamental principle of serious historical research (WEBER-KELLERMANN and BIMMER 1985, 108), for there were folklore scholars who deserve our high regard for their actions and their fate. Only a few representatives need be named. There was Georg Schreiber of Münster, who was subjected to the unceasing and hateful terror of the fascistic regime (FRECKMANN 1987 and BAUSINGER 1965, 194-96). There was the mentor of the Munich resistance group "The White Rose," Kurt Huber, who was murdered by the Nazis (BAUSINGER 1965, 200-202). Will-Erich Peuckert lost his right to teach (DAXELMÜLLER 1987, 153), and Rudolf Kriss, who was condemned to death by the Folk Court but was freed from prison when the Allies marched in (KRIS 1948). There was also Adolf Reichwein, the resistance fighter who was executed for his part in the coup attempt of 20 July 1944 against Hitler, but he cannot be counted among the folklore scholars (KORFF 1978, 43). Many other attempts to designate people as "irreproachable" must be

viewed as problematic, as recently discounted, or as absolute nonsense (see WEBER-KELLERMANN and BIMMER 1985, 109–10 and OESTERLE 1987 and her divergent views of John Meier; see also BRÜCKNER 1983a and 1983b, who incorrectly stated in an obituary of his teacher Mathilde Hain that she was not a National Socialist, and BRÜCKNER 1984b, 72, where he extols Richard Beitzl as blameless during the Third Reich; see DOW and LIXFELD 1986, 13–14).

8. German Folksong Archive, Freiburg im Breisgau, Archive file J 189: "Creation of an Institute for German *Volkskunde*." I would like to thank the Deputy Director, Otto Holzapfel, for his kindness in making this *Reichsinstitut* plan available to me. See LIXFELD 1989, 110–15.

9. On the "*Führerprinzip*" and "self-imposed political co-ordination," see n. 6.

10. *Mitteilungen des Verbandes* 45, 1934: 13–16; concerning Eugen Fehrle, see ASSION 1985.

11. See, for example, *Mitteilungen des Verbandes* 45, 1934: 7–8, 17; 47, 1935: 15; 48, 1936: 7, etc.

12. On this Call for a Union for German Folklore, Inc., see *Niederdeutsche Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 11, 1933: 255–56 and pp. 144–46 in this special issue.

13. MEIER 1947, 26; Meier adds here that during the creation of the Union for German Folklore Dr G. Lüdtke contributed "in a substantial way." (Gerhard Lüdtke was the Director of the Walter de Gruyter and Co. publishing house in Berlin; he died on 6 March 1944. See *Geistige Arbeit* 11, Nos. 4–6, 1944: 1.) It is thus possible that the phraseology in the Call for a Union for German Folklore comes from the hand of Lüdtke and not from Meier. On the other hand, as chairman Meier retained for himself the final decision.

14. HEIBER 1966, 800. Concerning Alfred Rosenberg's role as "chief ideologist" of the NSDAP, see BAUMGÄRTNER 1977 and BOLLMUS 1989.

15. *Mitteldeutsche Blätter für Volkskunde* 10, 1935: 60. Concerning Spamer's leadership role in the meeting of the Gau Research Office 1935 in Plauen i.V., see *Mitteldeutsche Blätter für Volkskunde* 10, 1935: 65, 124–25.

16. KATER 1974, 141. Concerning Matthes Ziegler, his professional and political career, and the *Volkskunde* theory of the Rosenberg Bureau, see LIXFELD 1987a.

17. University Archive Jena, GDR. From the autobiography of Dr Matthes Ziegler, about 1940: "From 1 November 1935 to 1 December 1936 I was assigned by Reich Leader Rosenberg to the post of Folk Research in the German Research Community (DFG) and could thus gain a detailed overview of the material, personnel, and organizational questions in the areas of *Volkskunde*, prehistory, and racial studies." For his friendly assistance in locating this autobiography in a letter of 7 August 1986 I want to thank Wolfgang Jacobeit, Birkenwerder near Berlin, GDR. The predecessor of Ziegler as advisor for Folk Research in the German Research Community, from 1 July until November 1935, was the Indo-Germanist and rune scholar Helmut Arntz; see HEIBER 1966, 829–30.

18. For the confrontation between Ziegler and Spamer, which I have reported in a larger study, see n. 1; concerning Spamer's *Volkskunde* theory, see STROBACH 1987.

19. Gerhard Heilfurth, who was in postwar years the president of the German Folklore Society, reports as a contemporary on the first meeting of the Working Community for German Folklore (HEILFURTH 1937). In the period following World War II it was Gerhard Lutz who was the first folklorist to turn his attention to the Rosenberg Bureau (LUTZ 1983). Shortly before the 1986 Munich meeting on "*Volkskunde und Nationalsozialismus*" several other pieces of information were published on Mat-

thes Ziegler: BRÜCKNER 1986b and 1988d, and LIXFELD 1987.

20. POLIAKOV and WULF 1983, 131-64; on the "High School of the NSDAP," see BOLLMUS 1980.

21. National Archives, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.: Captured German Records microfilmed at Alexandria, Virginia T 175, EAP 161-b-12/111.

22. More detailed information will appear in a future study; see n. 1.

23. Concerning the conception of a new German *Volkskunde* of the present day, see DOW and LIXFELD 1986; JACOBEIT 1987, 1985; MOHRMANN 1989.

24. John Meier was likely the first to publish this "language control terminology" in a little work distributed in 1947 to the members of the League of German Societies for Folklore (see MEIER 1947, 27 and the reprinting of this text in the publication *Fünfzig Jahre Verband der Vereine für Volkskunde 1904-1954*, Stuttgart 1954, 26-27). In regard to John Meier and his complicity in National Socialistic disciplinary politics, see the studies by OESTERLE 1987 and 1988, STROBACH 1987, and the concluding portion of JACOBEIT 1987; see also the study by LIXFELD 1989 and the arguments and interpretations of historical facts presented by HOLZAPFEL 1989, 13-20, 37-73 to lessen the complicity of John Meier; see also HOLZAPFEL 1987a, 1987b.

25. The Verband der Vereine für Volkskunde renamed itself, under its new president at the beginning of the 1960s, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde.

26. *Bericht der Notgemeinschaft* from 1 March 1949 to 31 March 1950: 9.

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