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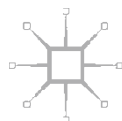
Dangerous Language — Esperanto
under Hitler and Stalin

Written by

Ulrich Lins

Translated by

Humphrey Tonkin



Dangerous Language — Esperanto under Hitler and Stalin

“This book gives a carefully supported account of a crucial aspect of the Esperanto movement’s history, focusing on political repression by totalitarian regimes, especially those of Hitler and Stalin. It also sheds light on opposition elsewhere and is eye-opening for anyone interested in language policy and global communication.”

—Ulrich Ammon, *Emeritus Professor of Germanic Linguistics at Duisburg-Essen University, Germany*

Ulrich Lins

Dangerous
Language —
Esperanto under
Hitler and Stalin

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Translated by Humphrey Tonkin

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Editorial Note

Transliteration from Russian and Ukrainian is based on the Library of Congress system. To make it easier on the reader, in Russian family names the ending ‘ii’ has been changed to ‘y’, and soft signs and diacritics have been omitted. In the footnotes and bibliography, however, I have followed standard Library of Congress transliteration. In references, in general, a translation is added only if the original is not in Roman script; names appear in the form used in the publication in question.

For individuals from East Asian countries the family name appears first, and the given name follows.

In the notes the full title of a book is indicated only in the first reference in the chapter in question; in subsequent notes it appears in abbreviated form. For frequently cited works (among them *EdE*, *EeP*, *PVZ*), see the list of abbreviations and, of course, the bibliography. Only in exceptional cases are electronic sources indicated (links were last checked on 28 September 2016) In the case of journal articles, the title of the periodical is normally followed by the volume number and year of publication. Where pagination extends over the entire volume, I have not indicated the specific issue in which the article appears.

U.L.

Preface

Every book has its history, this one included. Its earliest draft was published in 1973 by the publisher l'omnibuso in Kyoto, Japan. This version, little more than a pamphlet, had a tiny print run, but a year later its contents were printed as a section in the volume *Esperanto en perspektivo*. In 1975 an expanded version of the first edition appeared in Japanese translation, the work of Kurisu Kei. It was published in Tokyo by Iwanami.

In 1988 a new, completely rewritten text was published—the result of several years of research in a vast array of source material.¹ It was my desire to make an original contribution to research on the 100-year history of Esperanto, devoting particular attention to a specific aspect of that history—an aspect long neglected, indeed regarded as something of a taboo, even among Esperantists. The topic was the opposition and persecution that Esperanto encountered for political and ideological reasons. I wanted to describe the fate of the adepts of a language that, over the decades, police, censors, nationalist ideologues and assorted dictators had denounced as ‘dangerous’.

So I did not deal with the ‘internal’ history of the Esperanto movement so much as with the hostile reactions that Esperanto and its speakers

¹ It was published, in agreement with the Universal Esperanto Association, by the German publisher Bleicher, and reprinted in 1990 in Moscow by Progress Publishers. In 1988 a German-language version also appeared, and this was followed by translations into Italian (1990), Russian (1999), Lithuanian (2005) and Korean (2013).

had endured from political regimes and ideologies, particularly Nazism and Stalinism. Likewise, it was not enough simply to limit the story to a description of the ways in which Esperanto had been attacked: it was important to present the arguments of its opponents and analyze the motives that prompted political regimes of very different character to harass the movement for Esperanto. Such motives could derive from fundamental ideological positions or from concrete political interests. In this same connection, I also tried to shed light on the attitudes of the movement itself, and of individual Esperantists: without an awareness of the origins of the language, the motives of Zamenhof, the modes of recruitment and the theory and structure of the movement, we can hardly hope to achieve an understanding of why Esperanto became such an object of persecution.

New information, particularly archival material, has come to light since the 1988 edition and the fall of the Berlin Wall in the following year. So the present version of the study is different again. For the English-language version, I have expanded the story into two volumes, the first dealing with the persecution of Esperanto speakers and the suppression of the language in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, and the second describing the underlying causes of the demise of the language in the Soviet Union and its revival, first in Eastern Europe and then in Russia itself, after the death of Stalin and the gradual decline of the ideas we associate with Stalinism.

The extraordinary story of Esperanto's encounter with twentieth-century dictatorship raises many questions—questions that I attempt to address in this study. What was it that was so provocative about Esperanto? Was it the very existence of Esperanto as an international language or primarily the way in which it was used in practice? What was the political and social milieu in which Esperanto canvassed for its goal of a second language for all people? What role was played by adaptability and self-confidence in dealing with governments from which the movement hoped for support but which it nevertheless had no wish to rely on? What was the relationship between a 'neutral' language on the one hand and 'idealistic' enthusiasts on the other? How did the Esperantists relate to supporters of other goals aimed at worldwide solidarity, like pacifists, socialists and communists? And how did the Esperantists react to the—often

unexpected—conflicts with their opponents? What lessons did they carry away from the persecutions concerning their own definition of the Esperanto movement?

To explain the difficult position of Esperanto on the battlefield of ideologies and power interests, I have tried to clarify the political development of the countries in question, particularly Tsarist Russia, Germany, the Balkan countries, China and Japan, and the Soviet Union. I hope that in this way I can shed some light on the history of the decades since 1887—from a different perspective. My basic intention has been precisely that: to show how much suspicion, hatred and resistance has been generated by an effort to establish non-discriminatory interpersonal communication—an effort which was often identified with specific groups (Jews, communists, petty bourgeois) but in fact represents a self-sufficient integrative internationalism and, as such, refuses to conform to the usual categories. Thus the history of the persecution of Esperanto might stimulate conclusions that go beyond the subject of Esperanto—conclusions that maintain their validity in the present time.

Thus, the revised Esperanto edition² on which this English translation is based takes into account numbers of newly discovered documents, among them materials from the Soviet NKVD to which Russian researchers had access as of 1990 for a (limited) time. I have also tried to take into consideration relevant studies that have appeared in various countries and languages over the past 25 years. At the same time, I have decided to reduce the length of some chapters, for example in the section on the Soviet Union, and also discussion of persecutions of Esperantists aimed primarily at their political activities, for example in parts of Eastern Europe, and in China and Japan.

My research has benefited greatly from material preserved in the German Federal Archive in Berlin, including papers newly available following German reunification. For several years my work has been assisted by consulting the Hector Hodler Library in Rotterdam, the Planned Language Collection and Esperanto Museum of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, and the library of the Japanese Esperanto Institute in Tokyo. Also extremely helpful has been my easy access to the University Library

² *La danĝera lingvo*, Rotterdam: Universala Esperanto-Asocio, 2016.

and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Library, both in Bonn. I remember with particular thanks the fact that Teo Jung, before his passing in 1986, presented me with collections of Esperanto periodicals from the 1920s and 1930s and that Kurisu Kei put at my disposal particularly valuable material on the Soviet and Japanese Esperanto movements. I am grateful to SAT and Eduard Borsboom who allowed me to consult unpublished letters to and from Eugène Lanti. In addition to those mentioned, I owe thanks to many people, among them former Soviet citizens, who provided me with information and clarifications that helped in the preparation of the present text. The names of many of these individuals are mentioned in the footnotes. Finally, I am grateful to all those who helped in the technical preparation of the book.

I cannot begin to measure the constant support provided by my wife Akie and from which the present study has greatly benefited. And I am very grateful to Professor Humphrey Tonkin, who has long taken an interest in publishing an English version of the book and who has devoted himself to the task of translating it with unmatched care and enthusiasm. My thanks go also to Ulrich Becker, who has hunted down references to English-language translations of works cited.

October 2015

U.L.

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Abbreviations

ASE	Asocio de Sovetiaj Esperantistoj (Association of Soviet Esperantists)
BEA	Bulgara Esperantista Asocio (Bulgarian Esperantist Association)
<i>BIL</i>	P.E. Stojan, <i>Bibliografio de internacia lingvo</i> (Geneva: UEA, 1929; reprint Hildesheim & New York: Georg Olms, 1973)
BLEA	Brita Laborista Esperanto-Asocio (British Workers' Esperanto Association)
CK	Centra Komitato (Central Committee)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EAĈSR	Esperanto-Asocio en Ĉeĥoslovaka Respubliko (Esperanto Association in the Czechoslovakian Republic)
<i>EdE</i>	L. Kókény & V. Bleier (ed.), <i>Enciklopedio de Esperanto</i> (Budapest: Literatura Mondo, 1933–1934, reprints 1979 and 1986)
<i>EeP</i>	Ivo Lapenna and others, <i>Esperanto en perspektivo. Faktoj kaj analizoj pri la Internacia Lingvo</i> (London & Rotterdam: UEA, 1974)
EKRELO	Eldon-Kooperativo por Revolucia Esperanto-Literaturo (Publishing Cooperative for Revolutionary Esperanto Literature)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GEA	Germana Esperanto-Asocio (German Esperanto Association)
GLEA	Laborista Esperanto-Asocio por la Germanlingvaj Regionoj; Germana Laborista Esperanto-Asocio (German Workers' Esperanto Association)
GPU	Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie (State Political Directorate, i.e. the Soviet secret police 1922–23)

xiv Abbreviations

IAREV	Internacia Asocio de Revoluciaj Esperanto-Verkistoj (International Association of Revolutionary Esperanto Writers)
ICK	Internacia Centra Komitato de la Esperanto-Movado (International Central Committee of the Esperanto Movement)
IEL	Internacia Esperanto-Ligo (International Esperanto League)
IPE	Internacio de Proleta Esperantistaro (Proletarian Esperantist International)
ISA	International Federation of the National Standardizing Associations
ISE	Internacio de Socialistaj Esperantistoj (Socialist Esperantist International)
IWA	International Workingmen's Association
JEI	Japana Esperanto-Instituto (Japanese Esperanto Institute)
JEL	Jugoslavia Esperanto-Ligo (Yugoslav Esperanto League)
KP	Komunista Partio (Communist Party)
LEA	Laborista Esperanto-Asocio (Workers' Esperanto Association)
LKK	Loka Kongresa Komitato (Local Congress Committee)
<i>LPLP</i>	<i>Language Problems and Language Planning</i> (periodical)
<i>MEH</i>	L.L. Zamenhof, <i>Mi estas homo</i> , ed. Aleksander Korŝenkov (Kaliningrad: Sezonoj, 2006)
MEM	Mondpaca Esperantista Movado (World Peace Esperantist Movement)
n.	note
NDEB	Neue Deutsche Esperanto-Bewegung (New German Esperanto Movement)
NKVD	Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennykh del (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
n.s.	new series
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
OGPU	Ob'edinënnoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie (Joint State Political Directorate, i.e. Soviet secret police 1923–1934)
Orig	<i>Iom reviziita plena verkaro de L.L. Zamenhof. Originalaro</i> , ed. Ludovikito (= Itō Kanzi), 3 volumes (Kyoto: Ludovikito, 1989–1991)
PEK	Proleta Esperanto-Korespondanto (Proletarian Esperanto Correspondent)
PIDE	Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado (International Police and State Defense, i.e. Portuguese secret police)
<i>PIV</i>	<i>Plena Ilustrita Vortaro de Esperanto</i> (Paris: SAT, 1970)

PVZ	Ludovikito (= Itō Kanzi, ed.), <i>Plena verkaro de L.L. Zamenhof</i> , 58 volumes (Kyoto: Ludovikito, 1973–2004)
REGo	<i>Rusia Esperanto-Gazeto</i> (Russian Esperanto Journal)
RSDLP	Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office)
SA	Sturmabteilung (the paramilitary wing of the NSDAP)
SAT	Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (Worldwide Non-national Association)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst, the Security (Intelligence) Service of the SS
SEJM	Sovetia Esperantista Junulara Movado (Soviet Esperantist Youth Movement)
SEU	Sovetlanda Esperantista Unio (Soviet Esperantist Union), as of 1927 Sovetrespublikara Esperantista Unio (Esperantist Union of the Soviet Republics), the main organization of Soviet Esperantists; in Russian: Soiuz Ĕsperantistov Sovetskikh Stran (Soiuz Ĕsperantistov Sovetskikh Respublik)
SS	Schutzstaffel, the central organization of the police and security service in Nazi Germany
SSOD	Soiuz sovetkikh obshchestv druzhby i kul'turnoi sviazi s zarubezhnymi stranami (Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries)
SSR	Socialist Soviet Republic
UEA	Universala Esperanto-Asocio (Universal Esperanto Association)
UK	Universala Kongreso de Esperanto (World Congress of Esperanto)
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics
VOKS	Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kultur'noi sviazi s zagranitsei (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries)

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Part I

A Suspicious New Language

1

The Emergence of Esperanto

Zamenhof and the Origins of Esperanto

The author of Esperanto belonged to a persecuted people. Lazar Zamenhof, who in 1887 published his project for an international language, was a Jew living in the Russian Empire, whose four million Jewish inhabitants made up about half of worldwide Jewry.¹ This population continued to suffer discrimination to a degree that the majority of their fellows in Western Europe already regarded as a thing of the past. Zamenhof's birthplace was Białystok, where Jews, living alongside Poles, Russians, Germans and Belarusians, constituted a majority.² Each group had its own language and regarded the other groups with suspicion. It was in this environment that Esperanto came into being. As Zamenhof explained in a long letter to the Russian Esperantist Nikolai Borovko:

¹ David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 30 (situation in 1880).

² In 1897, there were 47,783 Jews living in Białystok, namely 75 % of the total inhabitants: Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Białystok and Its Diaspora*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 14 (see Kobrin's comments on Zamenhof at pp. 52–4).

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In a city like this, more than anywhere, a person of an impressionable nature feels the heavy misfortune of language difference and becomes convinced at every step that difference of language is the sole, or at least the principal, factor that divides the human family and separates it into hostile camps.

For this reason, wrote Zamenhof, he decided that ‘when I was grown up, I had to eliminate this evil’.³

When this letter was published in 1896, the first Esperantists were ‘deeply heart-stricken’;⁴ later, it was often publicly cited as a clear explanation of Zamenhof’s motives and as a particularly convincing reason for the need of an international language. The letter presented the author of Esperanto as an altruistic advocate of understanding across all national antagonisms, as a person full of modesty and idealism, for whose goals it would be hard not to show respect.

Unknown for four decades, however, was another of Zamenhof’s letters, written in 1905 to the Frenchman Alfred Michaux. In this letter, Zamenhof put particular emphasis on his Jewish origins and the connection of all his ideals to his membership of ‘that ancient, much suffering and struggling people whose entire historical mission consists [...] in the union of the nations and the goal of “one God”’. Zamenhof asserted that if he ‘were not a Jew from the ghetto, the idea of the unification of humankind’ would not have occupied him so insistently. No one, he asserted, could feel the need for a ‘nationless language, neutrally human’, as strongly as a Jew.⁵

We need not see a contradiction between the two letters. They reveal thoughts that came to Zamenhof in different stages of his life. When, as a young man, he worked on his project for an international language, it is unclear whether he considered the specific usefulness of the language to Jews. His family background did not immediately cause him to discuss the circumstances that drove him to such missionary

³Orig II 923 (the letter to Borovko was published in 1896, but we do not know when Zamenhof actually wrote it). On Białystok, see Maimon (1978), p. 17 and following.

⁴Itō Kanzi (1982), p. 103.

⁵Letter to Michaux, 21 February 1905, Orig II 1436–46 (quotations pp. 1437–38). The letter to Michaux and other letters and statements important to an understanding of Zamenhof’s thought are conveniently brought together in *MEH* (this quotation: pp. 99–106).

zeal. The family, which, as of December 1873, was living in Warsaw, was assimilationist, confident in the further improvement of the legal situation of Jews. His father, a teacher of German,⁶ identified with the intellectual movement known as *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment, and cultivated the hope that ideas of equality would finally prevail also in Russia. Lazar therefore grew up not in the traditionalist atmosphere and suffocating poverty of the Jewish ghetto, but in the circle of that minority of bourgeois and intellectual Jews who saw the way to emancipation as lying in maximum integration into the surrounding society.

In truth, Marcus Zamenhof, Lazar's father, seems a typical representative of the modern urban Jews of Russia. His goal was to be a loyal citizen of the Russian state; he regarded himself as a Russian whose Jewishness was confined to the practice of the Jewish religion, and who desired that his children be allowed to advance in society through access to all available educational opportunities. Characteristic of his point of view is the surviving report on the inauguration of a new synagogue in Białystok in 1868. On that occasion Marcus delivered a Russian-language address in which, alluding to earlier persecutions, he expressed his thanks to Tsar Alexander II 'for his just laws and good decrees' and called on Jews to embrace the spirit of the new, liberal era: 'We should no longer distance ourselves from our brothers the Russians, among whom we live, but share with them, equally, all the rights of this country, for our happiness and well-being.'⁷

Lazar's childhood advanced under the influence of this desire for integration. He himself later remembered that he 'had a passionate love for the Russian language and the whole Russian realm' and that he 'dreamed of one day becoming a great Russian poet'.⁸ Languages in general became his hobby. For a while he hoped to revive one of the ancient languages⁹ and

⁶In Białystok, Marcus Zamenhof taught in a state school for Jews. Later he became one of three Jews working in Warsaw as secondary school teachers. See Korjenkov (2011), pp. 32–3, 41–3.

⁷Maimon (1978), p. 31.

⁸Orig II 1442. Compare the statement of Vladimir Jabotinsky, a later Zionist leader, on his loving relationship with Russian culture (1903): Slezkine (2004), p. 69. In his youth Jabotinsky learned Esperanto. See also Künzli (2010), pp. 79–80.

⁹Orig II 923.

also thought about the reintroduction of Hebrew as a spoken language.¹⁰ In the end, however, he ‘began vaguely dreaming of a *new*, created language [“*nova*, arta lingvo”].¹¹ His imagination may well have been stimulated, early on, by the legend of the Tower of Babel, of the time when humans could still communicate with one another freely. How might the condition introduced by the fall of the tower be overcome? Characteristic is the comment of 1908 by the mature Zamenhof regarding the biblical story: ‘The consequence of the Tower of Babel has now become the cause: once, confusion of languages was a punishment for sin; now the confusion of languages is the cause of the sin.’¹²

At the end of 1878, when Zamenhof was still in secondary school, the first project of a ‘lingwe uniwersala’ was ready. He and a group of friends happily recited, very much under the influence of the educated ideas of human brotherhood, the first poetic lines in the new language:

Malamikete de las nacjes
 kadó, kadó, jam temp’ está!
 La tot’ homoze in familje
 konunigare so deba!¹³

But at this time Zamenhof still hesitated to go public with his project: ‘Anticipating only mockery and persecution, I decided to hide my work from everyone.’¹⁴ He finished secondary school in the summer of 1879 and left for Moscow to study medicine. He was there when, in March 1881, Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by anarchists; it is no exaggeration to say that this event had vital consequences for Zamenhof’s future activities. Following the assassination, the political atmosphere in Russia degenerated rapidly, particularly for Jews. In April pogroms began. They spread across large parts of Russia and lasted for over a year,

¹⁰ [Isidore Harris], ‘Esperanto and Jewish ideals: Interview for the *Jewish Chronicle* with Dr. Zamenhof’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 6 September 1907, pp. 16–18 (esp. p. 16).

¹¹ Orig II 924.

¹² According to Maimon (1978), p. 66, citing an article in a Hebrew journal in 1947, Zamenhof made this comment to the Yiddish writer A. Litvin. In 1889 Zamenhof named the confusion of languages ‘one of the great misfortunes of humanity’: Orig I 243.

¹³ Orig II 926.

¹⁴ Orig II 927.

finally resulting in the greatest sustained persecution hitherto suffered by the Jews in the modern era. What made these pogroms even more significant was the fact that they not only displayed the cruelties of the ignorant but were accompanied by the silent and even direct approval of the Tsarist authorities.

Among the Jews of Russia the disillusionment accompanying this new explosion of anti-Semitism was particularly profound. The policies of the murdered Tsar had brought a number of changes for the better—changes which, especially among the more assimilationist Jews, encouraged widespread hope for the gradual achievement of equality of rights. But now, in 1881, the Russian Jews were made painfully aware that anti-Semitism was by no means exterminated and that their efforts to assimilate had encountered insuperable barriers. Many were persuaded of the need for a collective Jewish renaissance—and the search for a solution to the Jewish problem not through adaptation to a hostile environment but through a national rebirth that would restore to the Jews a territory of their own. In many Russian cities, beginning in the winter of 1881–82, groups emerged which, calling themselves Hovevei Zion,¹⁵ spread the idea of reviving a Jewish state in Palestine. A stimulus to this new, pre-Zionist movement came primarily from the brochure *Autoemancipation!* of Leon Pinsker,¹⁶ a Jewish physician in Odessa. Pinsker had formerly been an ardent supporter of Haskalah, but in 1881, his hopes of continuing progress toward harmonious coexistence between Jews and Russians definitively dashed, he changed his view radically, beginning to argue among his fellow Jews that their salvation could consist only in self-sufficiency, national solidarity and the reacquisition of a territorial base.¹⁷

Zamenhof, now experiencing the rise of anti-Jewish feelings in Moscow, was also raised, as we have seen, in the ethos of those intellectuals who were most shocked at the return of anti-Semitism. It is in this light that we read his bitter observation in the letter to Michaux: ‘I grew convinced that my love [for the Russian language and the Russian realm] was repaid with hate.’ He added that people who claim a monopoly on the proper

¹⁵ Friends of Zion. The movement was also named Hibbat Zion (Love for Zion).

¹⁶The brochure appeared in German in Berlin in September 1882.

¹⁷Vital, *Origins*, pp. 122–32.

definition of Russian-ness saw in him the Jew ‘only a *foreigner without rights*’. Thus, Zamenhof was pushed back into his Jewishness, and as a consequence felt himself moved to help first those whom people ‘hate, look down on and oppress’—his Jewish brothers and sisters.¹⁸ While he was still in Moscow he worked on a grammar of the Yiddish language,¹⁹ and it was also in Moscow that he was caught up in the idea of founding a colony ‘in some uninhabited part of the world’, from which an independent Jewish state might in due course emerge.²⁰

In August 1881 Zamenhof returned to Warsaw to continue his studies. Shortly thereafter, the unexpected occurred: at Christmas a pogrom was launched against the Warsaw Jews. This event had the definitive effect of causing Zamenhof to focus his attention on the Jewish problem.²¹ The resurgence of anti-Jewish activity politicized the hitherto non-political student.²² He joined the ranks of the pioneers of the colonizing movement and in February 1882 founded, along with other Jewish students, the first Zionist society in Warsaw.²³ In the following years, primarily up to 1884, Zamenhof actively participated in the debates about reconstruction of the old Israel or creation of a new homeland for Jews, among other things contributing articles to the Russian-language Jewish weekly *Razsvet* (Dawn), published in Saint Petersburg.²⁴

But Zamenhof’s activities, intense though they may have been, did not last long. Little by little, even as he prepared himself for a career as an eye doctor, he began to doubt whether Zionism would ever bring a solu-

¹⁸ Orig II 1442. The observation was, however, made in the context of his description of his childhood in Białystok.

¹⁹ See Ewa Geller, ‘Die vielfach verkannte *Jiddische Grammatik* des Ludwik Zamenhof’, in Marion Aptroot and others (ed.), *Leket: Yidishe shtudyes haynt! Jiddistik heute! Yiddish Studies Today*, Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf University Press, 2012, pp. 393–414.

²⁰ In his interview for *The Jewish Chronicle* Zamenhof recounted that he proposed such a plan in a meeting of 15 of his fellow students: Maimon (1978), p. 168.

²¹ According to Privat, however, Zamenhof began to return to his language project as early as August 1881. See Privat (2007), p. 48.

²² Stephen M. Berk, *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881–1882*, Westport CT & London: Praeger, 1985, p. 127.

²³ Maimon (1978), pp. 101, 169. In August 1883, this student group joined the general society of Hibbat Zion in Warsaw and soon became the most active of all the groups: Vital, *Origins*, p. 152.

²⁴ Zamenhof at first pleaded for settlement in the USA, because in the USA cosmopolitanism was in effect guaranteed, while Palestine, if needed, ‘would not be lost for us’. Later he was converted to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. The contributions to *Razsvet* were most recently translated in *MEH*, pp. 5–26 (quotation p. 21).

tion to the Jewish question, and to wonder whether he had the right to devote so much energy to his own people while leaving aside concerns for humanity as a whole. As he wrote to Michaux, from his earliest childhood his thoughts had always been ‘dominated by the “*human*”, but because of the wretched state of my people, there often awoke in my heart the idea of the “*patriot*” who struggled with the “*human*”’.²⁵ In the year 1887 this conflict was decided in favor of ‘the human’: Zamenhof completely discontinued his activities on behalf of a territory for Jews,²⁶ devoting himself instead to the language which he presented to the public in that year under the pseudonym ‘Doktoro Esperanto’. In the two decades that followed, his thoughts were dominated by the idea of a worldwide, neutral language that might erase not only hatred and persecution against Jews but ‘all national hatreds’.²⁷ It was not that Zamenhof stopped thinking about the Jews: he maintained his efforts to help the oppressed Jewish people, and it is evident that these efforts helped drive the enthusiasm that he dedicated to Esperanto. But the desire to help the Jews was now firmly embedded in the broader desire to contribute to the pacification and unification of all humanity.

Yet Zamenhof’s inner thoughts are barely reflected in the ‘First Book’ (*Unua Libro*), as his initial 1887 publication on the language came to be known. Its introduction expresses the idealism of its author only moderately, primarily emphasizing practical arguments. It draws attention to the waste of time and material goods caused by the need to learn several foreign languages, noting how useful it would be if all people needed to depend only on the knowledge of two languages—their own, and the newly proposed neutral, international language. Linked to this practical argument were more idealistic formulations: Zamenhof asserts that the ‘differences among languages present the essence of the differences and reciprocal enmity between nations’,²⁸ and he speaks of the special utility that a neutral language would have in countries with multilingual populations, thereby revealing that he was inspired by and continued to think about the

²⁵ Orig II 1441.

²⁶ Zamenhof also came to the conclusion that a return to Palestine was an unrealizable dream. He did not join the great Zionist movement of Theodor Herzl, founded in 1897.

²⁷ Orig II 1433.

²⁸ Orig I 84.

situation in Russia. His choice of the pseudonym ‘Esperanto’, soon to be adopted for the language itself, reinforced this idealism.

That the language project was able to come into being at all is due, however, primarily to the practical side of Zamenhof’s thinking. In the First Book he declares, ‘An international language, like all national languages, is a social possession, and the author renounces forever his personal rights to it.’²⁹ In his ‘Second Book’ (*Dua Libro*) of 1888 he specifies that ‘I do not want to be the *creator* of the language; I only want to be its *initiator*.’³⁰ He believed that Esperanto ‘must live, grow and advance according to the same laws as those by which all living languages are elaborated’;³¹ he did not wish ‘to create, for his personal pleasure, the entire language from head to toe’.³² Expressing for the first time the idea of the development of an international language on the basis of collective use, independently of personal authority, Zamenhof assigned to human society and to everyday practice the task of judging, sustaining and developing Esperanto.

Birth Pangs: The Tsarist Censor

However benign Zamenhof’s idea of a language by which ‘the peoples would come together as a single family’³³ might be, first he had to overcome the barrier of censorship. Ironically, his father was himself part of the bureaucracy whose task it was to shield the citizens from knowledge regarded as undesirable by the Tsarist regime. The teacher Marcus Zamenhof was also employed, beginning in 1883, as censor, with responsibility as of 1885 for Hebrew and Yiddish publications. He pursued this task with the unshakable rigor of an assimilationist Jew; the Jewish authors and editors of Warsaw feared his pedantic attention to detail.³⁴

²⁹ Orig I 82.

³⁰ Orig I 138.

³¹ *Aldono al la ‘Dua Libro de l’ Lingvo Internacia’* (1888), Orig I 190.

³² Orig I 188.

³³ First Book (*Unua Libro*), Orig I 83.

³⁴ Maimon (1978), pp. 143–9, 151–9; Holzhaus (1969), pp. 7–18.

For the son, however, his father's position had its evident advantage when in 1887 he asked permission to publish a prospectus on his project for a new language. Marcus Zamenhof persuaded his colleagues responsible for Russian-language publications to approve his son's work, characterizing it as 'benign nonsense'.³⁵ Permission to print was given on 2 June 1887, and the additional permission needed for distribution on 26 July. Thus was born the 40-page Russian-language booklet by which the youthful dreams of Lazar Zamenhof had their first concrete result. Editions of the so-called First Book followed in Polish, French, German, English, Hebrew and Yiddish, to be followed by further teaching materials in the language. By 1891 the numbers had reached 33 Esperanto textbooks in 12 languages.

The author asked the readers of the First Book to sign and return a slip of paper promising that the signer would learn the language if it turned out that ten million other people did the same. But, rather than merely promising, most interested readers started learning right away. By September 1889 Zamenhof was able to publish a first address list of 1000 people who had learned the language, the vast majority of them living in the Russian Empire. In this compilation we can see the beginning of efforts to organize the Esperantists, and, given that Russian society came late to defining a path to industrialization, also a political challenge—at least in the eyes of a regime habitually wary of spontaneous interest groups, even if their aims were entirely innocuous.³⁶

The Russian State Historical Archive in Saint Petersburg contains 130 Tsarist administration dossiers concerning Esperanto publications from 1887 to 1917. As a study by the Leningrad Esperantist S.K. Khvorostin, based on these documents, reveals,³⁷ Zamenhof's earliest publications sailed smoothly through the censorship process, probably because the

³⁵Z. Adam (Adam Zakrzewski), *Historio de Esperanto 1887–1912*, Warsaw: Gebethner & Wolf, 1913 (reprinted Warsaw: Pola Esperanto-Asocio, 1979), p. 10.

³⁶Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 543. On Tsarist censorship generally, see Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804–1906*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. See also Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, *The Tsars and the Jews: Reform, Reaction and Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia, 1772–1917*, Chur, Switzerland: Harwood, 1983.

³⁷Hvorostin (1972): 37–46, 79–88; see also Holzhaus (1969), pp. 274–317. On the development of the Esperanto movement under censorship in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, see the Russian-language study by D.V. Vlasov, *Ĝesperanto: polveka tsenzuro* (Esperanto: a half-century under censorship) Moscow: Impeto, 2011, and also his *Istoriia primeneniia esperanto v Rossii:*

authorities still regarded the activities of this language creator as a negligible and therefore not impermissible affair. But by the autumn of 1888 Zamenhof ran into the first significant setback when he unsuccessfully petitioned to publish a weekly journal for the growing numbers of learners of Esperanto.³⁸ The head of the Chief Administration for the Periodical Press, Evgenii Feoktistov, recommended to Viacheslav Pleve, at the time the deputy minister for internal affairs, that he rejects the petition on the grounds that ‘there is no one in the censorship office who can review publications in newly invented languages’. Pleve agreed.³⁹

At the same moment Zamenhof found himself in something of a crisis. In September 1888 his father was dismissed from his position as censor and risked also losing his job as teacher. Marcus Zamenhof had already attracted the disapproval of his superior in Saint Petersburg, Nikandr Ziusmen, head censor of Yiddish and Hebrew publications, because he allowed the publication in a Yiddish periodical of a satirical poem protesting against the pogroms (1887). Shortly thereafter, when the Hebrew-language periodical *Hazefirah* (Red Dawn) in Warsaw published an article about the deleterious effects of too much wine on the intellectual capabilities of the individual, Ziusmen, known for his excessive drinking, declared the article ‘an offense against the Tsar’ and Marcus Zamenhof, forced to take the blame, lost his position.⁴⁰ Only by payment of a large sum of money did he succeed in avoiding more drastic consequences.

For the son, obliged to support the father financially, a period of burdensome years ensued. As a young ophthalmologist, he tried to achieve professional stability in a number of locations. Because the ill fortune of his father also put an end to helpful contacts with the Warsaw censorship office, Zamenhof now found himself more frequently engaged in struggles with the bureaucrats. In a 6 June 1891 letter, Zamenhof wrote that the provincial censorship committees refused to engage with Esperanto-related publications and required that all such permissions be sent to Saint

Pechat', radioveshchanie, pereziska, samizdat (History of the application of Esperanto in Russia: press, radio, correspondence, *samizdat*), Moscow: Impeto, 2014.

³⁸ Facsimile and Esperanto translation in Holzhaus (1969), pp. 292–305, 310–12.

³⁹ Hovorostin (1972), p. 38; Holzhaus (1969), pp. 306–13.

⁴⁰ Maimon (1978), pp. 152–6. Korjenkov (2011), pp. 51–4, questions Maimon's analysis.

Petersburg.⁴¹ A strange ambivalence characterized the policies of the Saint Petersburg Chief Administration. In the period 1891–92, Zamenhof was unsuccessful in publishing a new book or republishing an old one, but at the same time, thanks to the favorable attitude of the censor for foreign affairs, Etienne Geispits, it proved possible to import Esperanto-language publications from other countries into Russia—among them the principal publication of the emerging international movement, *La Esperantisto*, published in Nuremberg as of 1 September 1889.

In April 1892, the Russian ministry for internal affairs approved the first Esperanto society in Russia, *Espero*, in Saint Petersburg. In the following two years the still tiny movement went through its first internal crisis. Wishing to move beyond personal responsibility for the language, in January 1893 Zamenhof proposed that the subscribers to *Esperantisto*⁴² form an International Esperantist League; to them he later presented a project for reforms in the language, partly under pressure from Esperantists who remained unhappy about the slow dissemination of Esperanto and blamed it on structural weaknesses in the language. A vote was taken, and a clear majority of subscribers declared themselves opposed to any linguistic changes. This in turn put an end to the plan for an international organization. Yet for the expansion of the movement the abandonment of reforms proved a stabilizing factor, and Zamenhof himself went out of his way to demonstrate that Esperanto was suitable just as it was, also for literary projects. His translation of *Hamlet*, published in 1894, ‘enjoyed an incomparable influence and was more effective for the propagation of the language than even the cleverest theoretical exhortations’.⁴³

From 1894 to 1899, Esperanto publications were allowed to enter Russia from abroad, and, on presentation of a petition to the office that censored foreign publications, that office also allowed the printing of a few items in Russia itself.⁴⁴ As Khvorostin summarizes the situation, the Tsarist censor had not formulated a clear position on Esperanto: ‘Permission or refusal depended on the arbitrary decision of a given censor.’⁴⁵

⁴¹ Letter to Vladimir Majnov, Orig I 411.

⁴² The definite article was dropped from the title of the journal as of April 1892.

⁴³ Waringhien (1990), p. 18.

⁴⁴ Ĥvorostin (1972), p. 39.

⁴⁵ Ĥvorostin (1972), p. 38. On experiences with the Tsarist censorship we also have the remembrances of the Russian pioneers Gernet and Deviatnin: L. Ivn, ‘Ad fontes. Intervjuo kun k-do V. Gernet’, *Sennacieca Revuo* 4/8 (1926–27): 166–7. On obscurities in the interview, see Cankó

Even if sporadic, obstacles always existed for the Russian Esperanto movement. But suspicion, pettiness and denials could not prevent Esperanto from finding more and more support in Russia. The early pioneers were primarily urban intellectuals, among them many doctors, teachers and writers—people whom we might collectively characterize as the educated elite in a reactionary country. They sought in the language of Zamenhof—as Drezen explains—‘a certain relief from the grey monotony of social life in the Tsarist dictatorship’. Drezen adds that ‘all Esperantists in this oppressed land, devoid of all signs of political freedom, were to some degree idealists, dreaming of high ideals quite different from the crude reality around them’.⁴⁶ Although Zamenhof had put Esperanto at the service of everyone, regardless of national or social background, and did not explicitly work for the support of the powerless, it was precisely these people who felt themselves specially called. Nothing reveals more strikingly the fact that in Russia Esperanto was particularly attractive to members of minorities than the high percentage of Jews among the first Esperantists.⁴⁷

In their discontent at the conditions in Russia—a discontent that emerged particularly among intellectuals, after the assassination of 1881 put an end to the efforts for political and social reforms—and at the same time in their vague hope for a new order arising from a moral rebirth of humankind rather than from revolution, the Russian Esperantists bore a distinct resemblance to the disciples of Leo Tolstoy—that is, to people who advocated non-violent resistance to wrongdoing by creative individuals equipped with a sense of religious responsibility but rejecting the external forms of religion. If radicals reproached Tolstoy for undermining young people’s faith in revolution, they must surely have regarded most Esperantists as hopelessly naïve in their belief that through a common

Murgin, ‘Lumo sur iom nebulitan epizodon’, *Bulgara Esperantisto* 46 (1977): 8–9; V.N. Devjatnin, ‘El rememoroj de malnova esperantisto’, *La Nova Etapo* 1 (1932): 125–7.

⁴⁶ Drezen (1931b), pp. 85–6.

⁴⁷ Cf. David L. Gold, ‘Towards a study of possible Yiddish and Hebrew influence on Esperanto’, in István Szerdahelyi (ed.), *Miscellanea Interlinguistica*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1980, pp. 300–67 (esp. pp. 311–12). According to Garvía (2015), p. 76, of the 919 Russians listed in the first address list (1889) 64 % lived in the so-called Pale of Settlement. Esther Schor has observed that in this address list almost 200 of these Esperantists had Jewish names (personal communication, 4 March 2015). According to statistics kept by the Soviet Esperantist Union (SEU), the percentage of Jews among its members exceeded 11 % (*Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 [1932]: 71). The total for the whole population was only 2.4 %.

language all people would become brothers and that all social evils would simply disappear. According to Vladimir Gernet,⁴⁸ there were even people who learned Esperanto because they considered it a gift that God had given to Christians so that, with its aid, they could spread Christianity among the multilingual pagans.⁴⁹

Tolstoy himself, quite early on, in 1889, expressed his support for Zamenhof's work, later repeating these affirmations of support on various occasions and allowing the translation of his works into Esperanto without royalties. In 1894, two periodicals in Odessa published an extensive letter from Tolstoy, which concluded as follows:

I have many times seen that people maintained hostility towards one another simply because of mechanical obstacles to reciprocal understanding. Thus the learning of Esperanto and its propagation are undoubtedly a Christian endeavor, which will help in the creation of the Kingdom of God—that endeavor that is the principal and singular goal of human life.⁵⁰

Perhaps because of this letter the relations between the Tolstoyans and the Esperantists grew close. On 15 January 1895, the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs communicated to the Chief Administration for Press Affairs that it had acquired information to the effect that some disciples of Tolstoy planned to transform the journal *Esperantisto* into an organ for the dissemination of the ideas of their master.⁵¹ Indeed, in February the staff of the publisher Posrednik (The Intermediary), which, under the vigilant eyes of the censor, was trying to popularize Tolstoy's thought, had launched a column in *Esperantisto*. The column was dedicated 'primarily to the idea of peaceful spiritual development and the union of all people and of every living thing in a single worldwide fraternity based on the principles of Moderation and Love, which reject violence and superstition'.⁵²

⁴⁸ Gernet, a pioneer of Esperanto in Odessa, was expelled from the university and arrested for anti-government activity.

⁴⁹ *Ivn*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ Letter of 9 May 1894, printed in *Esperantisto* 5 (1894): 99–100; *PVZ* III 182–3. Cf. Boris Kolker, 'Lev Tolstoj kaj la Internacia Lingvo', *Esperanto* 71 (1978): 172–5.

⁵¹ Text of the (secret) document in G. Demidiuk, "'Esperanto – vovse ne iazyk!'" ('Esperanto is in no way a language!'), *Izvestiia TsK SESR* 6 (1928): 330–3 (citation p. 332).

⁵² *Esperantisto* 6 (1895): 27.

Posrednik began its cooperation with *Esperantisto* with a contribution by Tolstoy himself, ‘Reason and Religion’,⁵³ which contained unorthodox and anti-authoritarian ideas, even if presented in a quiet and unprovocative manner:

But the will of God is known, not by some extraordinary miracle, the writing of the law by the finger of the Deity on stone tablets, with the compilation by the aid of the Holy Ghost of an infallible book, or by the infallibility of any holy man or collection of men, but only by the use of reason by all men, transmitting both by deed and by word, one to another, the consciousness of truth that ever more and more elucidating itself to them.⁵⁴

The same issue carried the news that an organization had been founded in Amsterdam ‘whose members refuse to pay levies by the state’;⁵⁵ and for the March issue Posrednik contributed a long article on the Sino-Japanese War, which, alluding to Buddhist religious leaders in Japan who ‘are turning to the armed forces to encourage them to butchery’, pointed out that governments need wars ‘to distract and seduce the people’.⁵⁶

But the cooperation with the Tolstoyans, barely begun, hit the Esperantists hard. In April 1895, the publication of Tolstoy’s ‘Reason and Religion’ caused the censor to prohibit the further entry of the journal *Esperantisto* into Russia. As a result, the journal, suddenly losing three-quarters of its almost 600 subscribers, was forced to cease publication in August of the same year.⁵⁷ Feeling that he shared responsibility for this mishap, Tolstoy at once intervened with the authorities and in fact

⁵³The article is in the form of a letter from Tolstoy to Anna Germanovna Rozen, 8 December 1894. It appears in L.N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 67, pp. 274–7.

⁵⁴‘Reason and Religion’, in Leo Tolstoy, *Essays and Letters*, trans. Aylmer Maude, London: Grand Richards, 1903, p. 159. Cf. *Esperantisto* 6 (1895): 28–30 (citing p. 30); Holzhaus (1969), pp. 284–5.

⁵⁵*Esperantisto* 6 (1895): 31.

⁵⁶*Esperantisto* 6 (1895): 44, 48.

⁵⁷PVZ III 215-220; Holzhaus (1969), pp. 285–6.

succeeded in having the ban on importing the periodical canceled. But the action came too late to prevent the journal's demise.⁵⁸

This incident was no routine matter. After the censorship administration, tipped off by the political police, moved against *Esperantisto*, the police then sent instructions to the local gendarmes to investigate those persons secretly reading and circulating the forbidden issue.⁵⁹ Clearly, this object of state surveillance was no longer seen as some harmless curiosity, the hobby of impractical idealists who hardly merited the attentions of the censor, but as a movement which, while still small in numbers, seemed to have allied itself with advocates for social reform through religion.

From now on, the Esperantists were engaged in an uphill battle to prove their sociopolitical loyalty to the authorities and counter suspicions that the language served conspiratorial goals. Often, such self-defense was to no avail: the censor refused permission to publish an Esperanto journal even when the petitioners promised to publish a parallel text in Russian. Between June 1899 and October 1904, only on rare occasions were Esperanto publications printed in Russia or allowed entry from abroad; during these years the Tsarist government intensified its persecution of revolutionary movements, or movements it deemed revolutionary. Not until 1904, for example, were the Lithuanians allowed to publish books or other printed matter in their mother tongue, and they could encounter Esperanto only by way of a textbook printed in Tilsit (Germany) in 1890 and smuggled into Lithuania.⁶⁰

⁵⁸In December 1895 in Uppsala, a new journal, *Lingvo Internacia*, was launched. Until the First World War it was the principal organ of the Esperantists. Later, in 1912, Posrednik published a booklet containing several of Tolstoy's works in Esperanto translation.

⁵⁹Ivan Kulakov, 'Leo Tolstoj, Esperanto kaj rusia ĝendarmaro', *Paco*, 1983, GDR edition, pp. 31–2 (including a reproduction of the instruction to the local gendarmes in Voronezh).

⁶⁰The author was the Catholic priest Aleksandras Dambrauskas (Dombrovski), condemned in 1889 to five years' internal exile in northern Russia for forbidding his Catholic pupils from obeying an order to attend services in the Russian Orthodox church. Until his death in 1938 he played an outstanding part in the Esperanto movement and general cultural life of Lithuania: J. Petruelis, 'Unuaj esperantistoj en Litovio', *Horizonto de Soveta Litovio*, 1971, 2: 14; Kl. Naudzius, 'Ĉu vere peripetioj?', *l' omnibuso* 9 (1972), 6 (52): 4. See also A. Dombrovski, *Malgrandaj pensoj pri grandaj demandoj. Artikolaro kaj literaro*, Kovno: Sokolovski & Estrin, 1908.

Westward Advance

While the Russians continued to work in extremely difficult conditions, in other countries the Esperantists had already laid the foundations for a movement whose strength was such that the maneuvers of the authorities in a single country, even one as big as Russia, could not decisively threaten its existence.

This foundation was laid in the politically and economically more developed countries of western Europe—by people who did not feel themselves observed at every step by an autocratic regime, and whose lives passed more tranquilly, without the prospect of bloody conflicts within their own country. In the mid-1890s a new period began in the history of Esperanto, the so-called French or promotional period. Its most notable representative was the somewhat mysterious Louis de Beaufront,⁶¹ who founded the Society for the Dissemination of Esperanto (Société pour la propagation de l'Espéranto) and, as of 1901, published, by way of the publishing house Hachette, the first textbooks easily accessible to the larger public. De Beaufront became the first conscious propagandist for the language: he introduced modern methods of systematic advertising and little by little succeeded in attracting to the movement people who saw in Esperanto a practical tool for international relations in a capitalist era. They were not wrong to name him 'the ancestor of all French Esperantists and new Esperantists generally'.⁶²

Thanks to the activities of De Beaufront, by the beginning of the twentieth century the practical applicability of Esperanto had so advanced that the young movement could soon calculate among its ranks several influential figures in French scientific life. Among them were the mathematician Carlo Bourlet (who won the support of the publisher Hachette and the influential Touring Club de France), the philosopher Émile Boirac, the linguist Théophile Cart, the military general and ballistics specialist Hippolyte Sebert and the aviation pioneer Ernest Archdeacon. These new recruits were attracted to Esperanto not to escape a suffocating intellectual

⁶¹ It was only after the Second World War that it was discovered that his real name was Louis Chevreux. See T. Carlevaro, 'La enigmo de Beaufront', *Literatura Foiro* 7 (1976), 37/38: 10–13; Marcel Delcourt & Jean Amouroux, 'Grandeco kaj dekadenco. Fino de mito', *Literatura Foiro* 7 (1976), 40: 6–7; 8 (1977), 41: 12.

⁶² *Lingvo Internacia* 10 (1905): 372.

atmosphere or to contribute to the calming of national conflicts: such rhetoric of fraternity, adopted by Russian Esperantists against the background of interethnic hatred under the Tsar, was entirely foreign to them. The highly idealistic, almost sectarian characteristics of the early movement had now lost their dominance.

In fact, the French intellectuals were of an entirely different type from the quaintly idealistic Tolstoyan brethren. They had little in common with the physician Aleksandr Asnes, who in 1906 bitterly described himself as one of the ‘miserable Russian slaves’, or with the Polish zoologist Benedykt Dybowski, once condemned to death for participating in the Russian rebellion of 1863–64,⁶³ or the repeatedly arrested Jewish lawyer and writer Leo Belmont, a popular Esperanto orator,⁶⁴ or the young Czech worker and Esperanto pioneer František Vladimír Lorenc, who in 1893 fled the persecution of the Austrian police by taking ship to Brazil,⁶⁵ or the Slovak Tolstoyan Albert Škarvan, against whose arrest for refusing military service in 1895 well-known personalities from all Europe protested.⁶⁶ Unlike the Slavs and Eastern European Jews, the French had no liking for sentimental speeches about human brotherhood, nor did they consider Esperanto an aid in the battle for national or social emancipation. They were people who recognized in Esperanto ‘the legitimate fruit of their common faith in the progress of civilization and in the sovereignty of reason’.⁶⁷ On the basis of this conviction they succeeded in making the language respectable among members of the higher levels of West European society.

Historians of Esperanto have frequently emphasized the difference between the Russian and French points of view—between the idealistic pioneering spirit of the early days and the later emergence of more practical

⁶³ Maksimiljano Blassberg, ‘D-ro Benedikto Dybowski’, *Esperanto* 19 (1923): 201–2. Dybowski was ultimately condemned to several years of exile in Siberia.

⁶⁴ His real name was Leopold Blumental. See Banet-Fornalowa (2003), pp. 14–71.

⁶⁵ Kamarýt (1983), pp. 13–20.

⁶⁶ Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 466; Pavel Rosa, *Situacio de Esperanto en Slovaka Socialisma Respubliko*, Bratislava: Asocio de Esperantistoj en Slovaka Socialisma Respubliko, 1977, pp. 2–5. Škarvan, together with the Russian N.P. Evstifeev, published the first Esperanto textbook for Slovaks, that is a Slovak translation of *Fundamento de Esperanto* (1907).

⁶⁷ Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 3.

considerations. However accurate this may be as a general observation, it would be wrong to put too much emphasis on this contrast between east and west. We must remind ourselves that Zamenhof created not only a foundation for idealistic understanding but also a foundation for the practical application of the language. He did not adhere only to the guiding principles he had formulated in 1887–88: in 1898, at the moment when Esperanto first began to attract the attention of the French and other western Europeans, he wrote an essay which can only be described as an attempt at a theoretical justification for Esperanto's practical role.

In this document, entitled 'The Essence and Future of the Idea of an International Language', Zamenhof reassuringly points out that Esperanto should not be confused with a *worldwide* language: it neither negates nor seeks to destroy national languages. He seems to be distancing himself from the most enthusiastic Esperantists by excluding the possibility that humankind might somehow flow together to form a single people through Esperanto; on the contrary, such an outcome would occur only through 'changing people's convictions and opinions'. Stressing the important practical advantages of a neutral means of communication, Zamenhof even went so far as to declare that 'pursuit of an international language should not exclude even blind and hotheaded chauvinism'.⁶⁸

In August 1900 de Beaufront read part of this treatise to the congress of the French Association for the Advancement of Science, held at the same time as the Universal Exhibition. At first people believed that de Beaufront had written it himself.⁶⁹ In any event, we can consider this text, which was so influential on later learners of Esperanto, as expressing the shared opinion of Zamenhof and de Beaufront as to the most suitable way to advocate for Esperanto in France at the beginning of the twentieth century.

⁶⁸ Orig II 981. In this work Zamenhof also makes a passionate plea for consideration of the principle of social equality, contrasting Latin, the language of the higher classes, with Esperanto, a language accessible within a few months to 'even the poorest and least educated peasants' (Orig II 1008).

⁶⁹ Possibly Zamenhof himself intentionally led people to believe that this was so: Itō Kanzi (1982), p. 109; see also Korjenkov (2011), p. 140. The document appeared first under the pseudonym Unuel, in *Fundamenta Krestomatio* (1903), later reprinted in Orig II 973–1026. On its significance see Marc Bavant, 'Kritika retrorigardo al la "tezo" de *Esenco kaj estonteco*', in Blanke & Lins (2010), pp. 415–25.

On the other hand, we should recognize that the opportunities for the practical use of Esperanto were for a long time so limited that even in western Europe the movement had to rely on the idealism of its members. Among the pioneers of Esperanto in the countries of western Europe there were many who would in no way subscribe to an all-encompassing concern for the practical profit to be derived from the language. Felix Moscheles, the first president of the London Esperanto Club, was a well-known figure in the pacifist movement, in his role as president of the International Arbitration and Peace Association. In Germany, the banker Georg Arnhold, one of the principal supporters of the German pacifist movement, also provided material help to Esperanto. And among the first Esperantists in France was Gaston Moch, who in 1894 retired from the army to devote himself to the cause of peace, democracy and human rights.

Even de Beaufront, generally regarded as a prototype of the purely practical Esperantist, declared himself 'a strong supporter of ideas of peace'. But all his activities were characterized by efforts to avoid, at all costs, the confusion of Esperanto with pacifism. To justify this point of view, he used the argument that Esperantists and pacifists are both generally regarded 'as naïve utopians' and that if both marched hand-in-hand they would only 'double [...] the difficulties in the way of success'.⁷⁰

If we look for reasons for the caution behind de Beaufront's warnings, we can find them in the still recent memory (to which he alluded) of the fate of the journal *Esperantisto* in 1895 and the tense political climate prevailing in France in the years when the Esperanto movement was taking its first steps. Beginning in 1894, the nation was sharply divided by the question of whether Alfred Dreyfus was a traitor or the innocent victim of anti-Jewish agitation. The Dreyfus affair split France into two camps: on the one hand the supporters of the army, the aristocracy and Catholicism, along with the conservative middle class, united in their opposition to the principles of the French Revolution and the claims of reason; and on the other hand the non-clericalists, the socialist workers and all who believed

⁷⁰L. de Beaufront, 'El Francujo', *Lingvo Internacia* 2 (1897): 145–8 (quoted from p. 147). René Lemaire made a similar argument: 'Le mouvement espérantiste et le mouvement pacifique', *L'Espérantiste* 1 (1898): 86–8, 111–3.

in democracy and human rights. Furthermore, the unjust condemnation of Dreyfus marked a turning point in the history of Jews living in western Europe: up to this point they had had faith in the idea of emancipation and integration within the larger society, but now they were forced to recognize that such assimilation was opposed by a newly ascendant anti-Semitism, which they had believed confined to Eastern Europe. Thus, for the journalist Theodor Herzl there could no longer be any other solution than the founding of a Jewish state, for whose establishment he called, under the direct impression of the Dreyfus affair, in 1896.⁷¹

De Beaufront launched his magazine *L'Espérantiste* and founded the Society for the Dissemination of Esperanto in January 1898; in the same month, fanned by the well-known *J'Accuse* of Émile Zola, the passions for Dreyfus grew stronger and stronger. Because the dispute over withdrawal of the verdict also polarized the French Esperantists,⁷² they could find common ground only by an awareness that to advance Esperanto they needed to keep the language and the movement separate from political tensions. And de Beaufront was not alone in this belief. Also Moch, himself Jewish, who became active in the *Dreyfusard* Human Rights League, clearly argued in 1905 for the complete separation of pacifism and Esperanto, repeating arguments earlier used by de Beaufront.⁷³

If, then, we wish to summarize the viewpoint of the French Esperantists, we must recognize not so much a lack of idealism⁷⁴ as a unifying conviction that the fragile movement would die if it did not maintain its 'complete neutrality on all questions on which people disagree'.⁷⁵ A good illustration of the degree to which this attitude contrasted with the more aggressive stance of the East European Esperantists was the debate in 1905 over the Worldwide Esperantist League. The League was Zamenhof's first effort to

⁷¹ His well-known work was also published in Esperanto translation as *La juda ŝtato. Provo de moderna solvo de la juda problemo*, Budapest: Literatura Mondo, 1934.

⁷² Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 24, claims that de Beaufront and Bourlet were opposed to Dreyfus, while Sebert, Moch and Émile Javal defended him.

⁷³ 'Ĝeneralaj observoj pri la regularo [de Societo Esperantista por la Paco]', *Espero Pacifista* 1 (1905): 26–27. According to Moch, it was dangerous 'to present to the people a double "utopia"'.

⁷⁴ Listed among the members of the Esperantist Society for Peace, founded in 1905, are the leading French Esperantists Boirac, Bourlet, Cart, Chavet, Fruictier, Grosjean-Maupin, Javal, Sebert and Michaux.

⁷⁵ 'Ĝeneralaj observoj', p. 27.

free himself from personal responsibility for Esperanto's future development. Two opposing views collided, one characterizing the French position and the other that of the Slavs. De Beaufront opposed the proposal to found an international organization, pointing to the wide differences in national traditions and the resulting risk of arousing the suspicion of governments, because the Esperantists had already been 'proclaimed a danger to our [national] languages and to popular patriotism'.⁷⁶ Kazimierz Bein,⁷⁷ of Poland, on the other hand, doubted 'that the governments of a few countries would persecute us', if an international league of Esperantists were founded. In his view, governments were capable of telling the difference between green (the color of Esperanto) and red. 'Like the bull in the ring, they are frightened only by the color red.' Even if 'in a given country members of the league are persecuted', that should not detain the Esperantists from founding the league, said Bein, finally asking whether 'just because there are countries like prisons, we should all wear chains?'⁷⁸

In the summer of 1905, during the first congress of Esperantists, in Boulogne-sur-Mer, the project for a Worldwide League was voted down. Despite the enthusiasm among congress participants for the unique experience of untrammelled communication of 'people with people', the idea of an international organization was still beyond reach—in part because of personal jealousies among the leading French Esperantists, but also because of their general preference for assigning the first responsibility for recruitment to activities within the individual countries, rather than unnecessarily provoking the authorities through a supranational organization of Esperantists. On the other hand, to make a clear distinction between the language itself and anyone's personal ideals, and to guard it against the intrusion of outside ideologies, the congress approved the so-called Declaration on the Essence of Esperantism⁷⁹—a document that for

⁷⁶L. de Beaufront, 'Pri la Tutmonda Ligo Esperantista', reprinted in *La neforgeseblaj kongresoj*, Kyoto: Ludovikito, 1984, pp. 42–8 (quotation p. 42). We should note, however, that the reasons for de Beaufront's opposition were more complicated: see Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, pp. 143, 156, 166 and following.

⁷⁷Bein (pen name Kabe), one of the greatest Esperanto stylists, was exiled for several years as a young man because of anti-Russian activities. (In 1911 he left the Esperanto movement.)

⁷⁸Kongresinto (Pierre Boulet), 'La Kongreso en Boulogne-sur-Mer', reprinted in *La neforgeseblaj kongresoj*, pp. 72–100 (quotation p. 91).

⁷⁹Text in *EeP*, pp. 418–20.

the most part remains valid for the organized Esperanto movement down to today. The Declaration described Esperantism as ‘the effort to disseminate throughout the world the use of a neutral language’ and firmly stated that ‘All other ideas or hopes that a given Esperantist links with Esperantism are his purely private affair for which Esperantism is not responsible.’ The Declaration said nothing about the service of Esperanto to world peace.⁸⁰

An Esperanto of Ideas

The French effort to pursue a strategy strictly limited to the language itself was undoubtedly a wise position—to extricate the Esperantists from the condition of a powerless minority of idealistic dreamers, to avoid limiting the attractiveness of Esperanto to the downtrodden, to disseminate the language among the practical-minded middle class of Europe and to deprive the governments of any easy pretext for persecution. At the same time, the French rationalism in no way excluded the possibility that people of the most diverse world views might adopt Esperanto—people who did indeed connect it with their ideals or their more or less realistic ideas. While the French leadership emphasized Esperanto’s utility for commerce, tourism and science and found a responsiveness in those circles, as of 1905 more and more of the people joining the movement saw Esperanto as a way of advancing their political struggle, namely pacifists, socialists and anarchists.⁸¹

Such people found in Esperanto something that could support them in advancing their idealism: they had before them the model of Zamenhof himself.

We have seen how Zamenhof supported the movement’s strategy of keeping Esperanto accessible to as many people as possible, regardless of

⁸⁰ Leo Belmont proposed including such a reference. The Declaration did indeed contain the suggestion that Esperanto ‘could serve as a pacifying language of public institutions in those countries where various nations fight internally over language’—a formula that was aimed in the first instance at the situation in the Russian Empire.

⁸¹ Also, there were always many who ‘with E[speranto] completed their collection of manias: spiritism, opposition to alcohol or sex or vivisection’: Waringhien (1959), p. 405.

their national origin or political or religious convictions. He did not want only minority groups to support it: he wanted to win over the majority. On the other hand, Zamenhof continued to ruminate on the problem of the Jews. Esperanto was offered to everyone, but it was impossible to forget its origin as a means of protest against the discrimination of a minority. In one of his explanations of the reasons for creating his language, Zamenhof said that he felt it necessary to have a language ‘which on the one hand would not be the exclusive property of a given nation, but on the other might be freely used by oppressed people lacking a language’.⁸² In other words, Esperanto should be entirely neutral, but at the same time it might have a special utility for the Jews.

From Zamenhof’s letters we know how much he was preoccupied with the search for a solution to the Jewish problem. To his friend Abram Kofman he wrote: ‘For as long as the Hebrews have no *language* they will be obliged in practice to play the role of “Russians”, “Poles” and so on—they will be forever looked down on and the Jewish problem will never be solved.’⁸³ Equally upsetting was the religious isolation of the Jews,⁸⁴ and in his letters he confessed that in fact Esperanto represented only part of his ideals. In addition to the neutralization of conflicts by way of language, he also dreamed of the ‘creation of a moral bridge by which all peoples and religions might be unified as brothers’. The realization of this plan through ‘a neutrally human, philosophically pure religion’ was for him a kind of fulfillment of the historic mission of the Jews, ‘which both Moses and Christ dreamed of’.⁸⁵ In 1901 Zamenhof tried to publish his contribution to the solution of the Jewish question, a Russian-language booklet under the title *Hilelismo*,⁸⁶ in which he proposed that, to ‘neutralize’ the divisive effect of religious difference (and to overcome the religious nationalism of the Jews)

⁸² Harris, ‘Esperanto and Jewish ideals’, p. 16.

⁸³ Letter of 28 March 1901, Orig II 1208.

⁸⁴ Zamenhof believed that the unique ‘religious nationalism’ of the Jews barred them from ‘all intercommunication with the surrounding world’: *Hilelismo* (1901), Orig II 1154.

⁸⁵ Letter to Michaux, 21 Feb. 1905, Orig II 1438, 1440.

⁸⁶ Gomo Sum (= Zamenhof), *Gillelizm. Proekt resheniia evreiskago voproza*, Saint Petersburg: Sklad’, 1901. Reprinted, with an Esperanto translation, by Adolf Holzhaus, Helsinki: Fondumo Esperanto, 1972. French translation (by Pierre Janton): Lazare Louis Zamenhof, *Le hilelisme: Projet de solution de la question juive*, Clermont-Ferrand: Université Blaise-Pascal, 1995. ‘Hilelismo’ is derived from Hillel, a Jewish sage of Jerusalem (c. 30 B.C.–10 A.D.).

humanity should agree to accept the principles of ‘Hillelist belief’, namely an acknowledgment of the idea that, in listening to the voice of conscience, one could discover the laws of God.⁸⁷

The booklet was not distributed,⁸⁸ nor did Zamenhof ever speak in public about the special importance of Esperanto for the Jews. His comments were confined to personal letters that became known only after the Second World War.⁸⁹ He was always reluctant to put too much emphasis on his own ideals, aware that the movement was vulnerable simply by virtue of the fact that he was a Jew. He did not wish to put the dissemination of Esperanto in danger, and he also feared that the public would not believe that a Jew working for the unity of humankind could possibly be doing so out of altruism.⁹⁰ A wish to help his unfortunate fellow Jews was a constant in Zamenhof’s life, but he remained uncertain as to the best way of doing so, often feeling torn between solidarity with the Jews and an inclination toward humanity as a whole (Fig. 1.1).⁹¹

On the other hand, by the middle of the first decade of the new century it seemed that the movement was stable enough in several countries and no longer needed to depend on the person of Zamenhof. The successful first congress of 1905, which all Esperantists seemed to regard as the exhilarating culmination of their efforts up to that point, caused him to feel that one of his dreams was already realized and that, going forward, he could dedicate himself to uniting people across religions. At the opening of the congress he recited his ‘Prayer under the Green Flag’ (*Preĝo sub la verda standardo*), by which he sought to express the ‘natural religion of the human heart’ (*naturan religion de la homa koro*).⁹² The ovation that he received after the presentation of the Prayer took the French leadership by surprise. They neither anticipated that Zamenhof

⁸⁷ Waringhien (1990), p. 66.

⁸⁸ On the significance of Hillelism, also its echo among Jews, see Korjenkov (2011), pp. 157–73.

⁸⁹ The extremely revealing letter to Michaux, for example, appears only in corrupt form in *EdE* (pp. 579–82); cf. G. Waringhien, ‘Enkonduko’, in Maimon (1978), p. 9.

⁹⁰ Orig II 1439.

⁹¹ Letter to Émile Javal, 24 Sept. 1905, Orig II 1601–2. The split between a particularist and universal orientation constitutes a basic dilemma in Jewish culture: see S.N. Eisenstadt, *Jewish Civilization: The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Perspective*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992.

⁹² Letter to Michaux, 5 Jan. 1905, Orig II 1420.



Fig. 1.1 Lazar Zamenhof, by Robert Kastor c. 1905. Text: ‘When the peoples can freely understand one another, then they will cease to hate one another.’

would speak like ‘a Jewish prophet’⁹³ nor foresaw the almost religious atmosphere that reigned in the congress.

Even the Jewish Esperantists among the French tried to slow Zamenhof down; they felt little in common with the eastern Jews and, in any case, they were confident that, following the rehabilitation of Dreyfus in 1906, people would no longer dare to question their connection to the French nation. Émile Javal, Zamenhof’s friend, pointed out to him that Hillelism had no chance of acceptance in France; if people felt that it was still necessary to hide Zamenhof’s Jewish ancestry ‘as long as the great struggle was still not won’, it was all the more dangerous, not to say fatal, to talk about Hillelism.⁹⁴ Reacting to Javal’s warning, Zamenhof assured

⁹³ So called by Bourlet, according to Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 175.

⁹⁴ Letter from Javal, 15 Oct. 1905, PVZ X 197. As Javal also wrote, ‘We needed admirable discipline to hide your origins from the public.’

him that he would ‘act very cautiously’ and would not publicly campaign for Hillelism until he was ‘fully certain that such a step would not have a negative effect on Esperanto’.⁹⁵

But a new wave of pogroms that shook many parts of Russia in October 1905 spurred Zamenhof to wait no longer. In January 1906 there appeared anonymously in *Ruslanda Esperantisto*, the article *Dogmoj de Hilelismo*;⁹⁶ a revised version followed in March in the form of a brochure entitled *Homaranismo*.⁹⁷ If the name ‘Hillelism’ indicated how much Zamenhof was still inspired by a primary desire to eradicate discrimination against Jews, the newly adopted term ‘Homaranismo’ was more suitable to characterize the proposal that all peoples and religions, retaining their specificities, might come together ‘on a basis neutrally human, on principles of reciprocal fraternity, equality, and justice’ (*sur fundamento neŭtrale-homa, sur principoj de reciproka frateco, egaleco kaj justeco*).⁹⁸

Although Zamenhof removed the conspicuously Jewish elements in his project, making it possible to see Homaranismo as essentially similar to the ‘religion of humanity’ (*religion de l’humanité*) envisioned by Auguste Comte,⁹⁹ for the most part the Esperantists reacted to it with skepticism, not to say disapproval, because they saw it as irreconcilable with their own religious beliefs or because they feared that their language movement would take on a mystical character.¹⁰⁰ Zamenhof defended himself against his critics, but he soon admitted that his ‘neutral religion’ was not suitable for linguistically homogeneous countries like France but was ‘destined [...] only for countries of diverse ethnicities’.¹⁰¹ He also conceded that Homaranismo, though based on Esperanto, could not be

⁹⁵ Letter to Javal, 25 Oct. 1905, Orig II 1614.

⁹⁶ Orig II 1673–82.

⁹⁷ Orig II 1695–1705. The brochure appeared in Saint Petersburg in two languages, once again anonymously.

⁹⁸ Orig II, p. 1695.

⁹⁹ Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 258; Forster (1982), p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ A. Dombrowski, ‘Kelkaj rimarkoj pri hilelismo’, *Ruslanda Esperantisto* 2 (1906): 49–50; ‘Kio do estas la homaranismo’, *Ruslanda Esperantisto* 2 (1906): 133–5, reprinted in *La neforgeseblaj kongresoj*, Kyoto: Ludovikito, 1984, pp. 134–6, 139–44; L. de Beaufront, in *L’Espérantiste* 9 (1906): 65–7, 86, partially reprinted in Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, pp. 257–8, 262, 277–8. For Zamenhof’s replies see: Orig II 1729–39, 1768–71.

¹⁰¹ Letter to Javal, 23 April 1906, Orig II 1723. Likewise, another letter to Javal, 15 Aug. 1906, Orig II 1778.

required of Esperantists and that the Esperanto movement could therefore not be officially identified with such a doctrine.

In June 1906, Zamenhof was shaken by news of a savage pogrom in his birthplace Białystok. Even so, at the insistent requests of Sebert and Javal, he gave up on even mentioning Homaranismo in his address to the Second World Congress, in Geneva. But, as of that year, he publicly advocated for a minimal agreement among the Esperantists on what ought to constitute the ideological basis of Esperanto. In the Geneva address, he alluded, for the first time, to what was henceforth understood, if never clearly defined, as the ‘internal idea’ of Esperanto, namely that in the current militant phase of the movement, the Esperantists should be inspired to action ‘not by the thought of practical utility, but by the thought of [...] fraternity and justice among all peoples’ (*frateco kaj justeco inter ĉiuj popoloj*).¹⁰²

Zamenhof refused to remain silent on the truth merely because speaking the truth might be interpreted by outsiders as provocation:

a colorless official speech would be a major sin on my part. I come to you from a country where at present millions of people are struggling for freedom, for the most basic human freedom, for the *rights of man*.¹⁰³

Furthermore, he also insisted that Esperanto should not cater only to self-serving interests, since the ideas behind it were far more important:

If we, the first fighters for Esperanto, are forced to forgo all our ideas, we will indignantly tear up and burn everything we have written on behalf of Esperanto; we will painfully destroy the work and the sacrifice of a lifetime, we will cast aside the green star [the badge of Esperanto] that we wear on our breast, and we will cry in disgust: ‘With such an Esperanto, devoted only to the goals of commerce and practical utility, we desire nothing in common!’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Orig II 1787.

¹⁰³ Orig II 1783. Zamenhof referred to pogroms in, among other places, Białystok and the Caucasus.

¹⁰⁴ Orig II 1787.

Perhaps no other utterance of Zamenhof was later more often cited than this one. In fact, the speech in which it occurred was intended as a counterbalance to the Declaration on the Essence of Esperantism, which recognized the legitimacy of the use of Esperanto for any and every purpose. A similar modifying character can be attributed to the Declaration on the Neutrality of Esperanto Congresses,¹⁰⁵ which was voted and approved in Geneva. This new declaration, along with Zamenhof's speech,¹⁰⁶ defined neutrality in a way that did not call for silence on controversial issues, but encouraged the use of the congresses as a forum to discuss everything that would help bring the peoples of the world together.¹⁰⁷

Zamenhof's insistence that Esperanto be more than an aid to commercial relations, and his overt condemnation of opportunism, served to stimulate many Esperantists—not to become adepts of Homaranism, but certainly to interpret their work for Esperanto as also a struggle for an idea. The forms of this idealism varied. Some people might anticipate that the internal idea would be disseminated all the more easily 'the less we talk about it' and recommend that Esperanto be disseminated only as a language—yet at the same time be aware that its success 'would be more than the victory of a language'.¹⁰⁸ Such may have been the feeling of the leaders of the Kovno Esperantist Society in Lithuania in 1910, among whom were 'high-ranking officers of the Tsarist army, Jewish business-people, a German factory-owner, a Catholic priest' all of whom 'despite the atmosphere of religious and national intolerance then prevailing, were linked by Esperanto'.¹⁰⁹

Alternatively, people could emphasize a link to the internal idea, drawing strength from their role as disciples of Zamenhof and 'better Esperantists'. Still others saw themselves called on to put Esperanto at the service of some 'outside' ideology, particularly socialism. In Geneva in 1906 the first meeting of Esperantist 'Reds' was held, and in 1907

¹⁰⁵ *Oficiala Gazeto Esperantista* 1 (1908/09): 216–7; Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 287–8.

¹⁰⁶ He elaborated further on the role of the congresses in his speech in Cambridge (1907): Orig III 1928–34.

¹⁰⁷ See Forster (1982), pp. 95–101.

¹⁰⁸ *Vortoj de profesoro Th. Cart*, Jaslo: Esperantista Voĉo, 1927, pp. 103, 107–8.

¹⁰⁹ Vitas Adomėnas, 'Unua esperantisto en Litovio' [on A. Dambrauskas, see above, p. 17, note 60], *Litova Stelo* 1 (1991), 1: 17.

the revolution-minded *Internacia Socia Revuo* was launched, an international anarchist congress passed a resolution favoring Esperanto,¹¹⁰ and in June young Chinese progressives in Paris began the weekly journal *Xin shiji* (New Century) with the Esperanto subtitle *La Novaj Tempoj* (New Times). This journal, along with anarchism, brought Esperanto to an underdeveloped China as yet another of the admirable acquisitions of western thought.¹¹¹ In another part of the world, in Chicago, in 1908, the first Esperanto translation of the Communist Manifesto appeared.¹¹²

We could argue that the political expectations of many Esperantists were firmly and effectively reproduced in an article that appeared, somewhat clandestinely, in the context of a linguistic discussion. These expectations were expressed by the Polish linguist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay:

The existence of such a world language linking all humanity will tear from the megalomania of nations and states its sharp and poisonous fang. The struggle for world dominance and the destruction of other nationalities will be neutralized and paralyzed by the world language. An international auxiliary language will contribute to the pacification of humanity far more than all the conferences organized by assorted exterminators and oppressors who hypocritically discuss questions of peace while at home they hunt people down with all the more fervor and persecute subject peoples and their languages.¹¹³

At around the same time, in the years 1907–08, Esperanto went through its biggest crisis to date. To gain international, authoritative support for Esperanto, Zamenhof allowed his language to be assessed by a committee. The committee consisted of 12 eminent linguists (among them

¹¹⁰ *Internacia Socia Revuo* 1 (1907), 8/9: 24. See also the report presented to the congress (in Amsterdam): Émile Chapelier & Gassy Marin, *Anarchists and the International Language Esperanto*, London: Freedom Press, 1908.

¹¹¹ Müller & Benton (2006), pp. 48–55.

¹¹² Karolo Marks kaj Frederiko Engels, *Manifesto de la Komunista Partio*, trans. Arturo Baker, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1908.

¹¹³ J. Baudouin de Courtenay, ‘Zur Kritik der künstlichen Weltsprachen’ (1907), reprinted in Reinhard Haupenthal (ed.), *Plansprachen. Beiträge zur Interlinguistik*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976, pp. 59–110 (quotation p. 105). In 1915 the Tsarist police briefly arrested Baudouin de Courtenay over a brochure in which he criticized the suppression of national minorities.

the aforementioned Baudouin de Courtenay) and was convened by Louis Couturat in the name of the ‘Delegation for the Adoption of an International Auxiliary Language’, which Couturat initiated in 1900 during the Paris Exhibition. Louis de Beaufront attended the committee’s meetings as Zamenhof’s representative. But, instead of defending Esperanto, de Beaufront quite unexpectedly called for changes in the structure of the language, recommending a project of reformed Esperanto known as ‘Ido’. Later he claimed that he himself was the author of Ido. A wave of indignation at this ‘treachery’ swept across the Esperanto movement, causing Zamenhof to break off all relations with the committee. A group of leading Esperantists switched to Ido, but most of the ‘Esperantist people’ remained faithful to Esperanto, so that within a few years Ido no longer presented a threat to Zamenhof’s language. Consciousness of Esperanto’s practical utility, along with the need for discipline as a prerequisite for the progress of the movement, proved stronger than any inclination to accept the advice of theoreticians concerning linguistic reforms. The crisis proved that Esperanto was already so firmly rooted in society that ‘from artificial language it had been transformed into a living language’.¹¹⁴

One product of the Ido crisis was the first worldwide organization of Esperantists, the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), founded in 1908 by a Swiss 21-year-old, Hector Hodler. Hodler’s initiative was a reflection of the Esperantists’ preference, in the wake of the Ido crisis, to abandon reforms in the language in favor of immediate action to insert it into practical life. Sidestepping discussion of an international organization based on national Esperanto societies, Hodler established an association consisting only of individual members and offering them various services assisted by a worldwide network of so-called Delegates.

By founding UEA, Hodler aimed to inaugurate a new period in the history of Esperanto, namely that of the actual use of the language. The time when the exclusive concern was propaganda for the language was, he declared, over. He labeled as anachronisms those ‘who, imagining that Esperanto’s success will come unexpectedly, through intervention by

¹¹⁴Ĵirkov (1931), p. 30. On the Ido schism see Waringhien (1948), vol. 2, pp. 3–152; Waringhien (1980), pp. 149–64; Forster (1982), pp. 110–41; Gordin (2015), pp. 134–48.

some outside authority, separate it from their everyday life and regard it simply as a hobby'.¹¹⁵

Equally significantly, Hodler defined for the movement an ideology—one more realistic than Zamenhof's Homaranismo yet less optional than the 'internal idea'. For him, Esperantism was, unlike a purely linguistic movement, 'principally a social, constructive, and progressive movement'.¹¹⁶ He distinguished between an Esperantist in the sense of the Declaration of Boulogne-sur-Mer and a member of UEA—an *esperantiano*, a member of the Esperanto community, who sees in this community (*Esperantio*) a model for future humanity, linked internationally in solidarity and cooperation.¹¹⁷ UEA's 'practical internationalism', Hodler explained, could bring more concrete results for the improvement of relations among peoples than 'those individuals who constantly talk about brotherhood among peoples but make no serious effort to realize their aspirations, even partly, in real life'.¹¹⁸ In contrast to traditional internationalism and pacifism, which 'merely try to facilitate relations among the *nations*' but 'create nothing *above* them', Esperantism should form the vanguard of a new, positive phase of internationalism, bringing people together and ignoring nationhood, language and race.¹¹⁹

UEA's combination of idealistic impulses and practical services was a major force in the successful expansion of the Esperanto movement before and after the First World War. By 1914, UEA already had more than 7000 dues-paying members.

¹¹⁵ H. Hodler, 'Kompreni kaj apliki', *Esperanto* 5 (1909), 53 (20 April): 1.

¹¹⁶ H. Hodler, *Esperantism*, Geneva: Universala Esperantia Librejo, 1911, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ Privat (1927/1982), vol. 2, p. 72.

¹¹⁸ H. Hodler, 'La agado de U.E.A.', *Esperanto* 8 (1912): 242.

¹¹⁹ H. Hodler, 'La socia signifo de U.E.A.', *Esperanto* 6 (1910), 78 (20 May): 1.

2

War and Its Aftermath

Obstacles Prior to the First World War

At first, the main obstacle to Esperanto's dissemination was simply doubt about its survival. What Zamenhof offered to the world was only one of the many proposals for a new language that appeared almost annually, though generally they did not move much beyond the stage of a single small publication. We should also remember that at the end of the nineteenth century the idea of an international language, perhaps supported in principle by a majority of informed people, was compromised by the sudden rise of the language project Volapük in the 1880s and its equally sudden fall.¹ Consequently, public disillusionment, commercial and scientific skepticism and the indifference or mockery of the linguistic establishment were the principal obstacles confronting the first adepts of Esperanto.

But when the language began to emerge as a social reality, when it actually penetrated wider circles of society, and, particularly, when its users revealed a tendency to connect with movements for emancipation and revolution, this largely passive attitude gave way in some circles to opposition

¹ See Garvía (2015), pp. 21–56.

and direct hostility. How many seeds of conflict with the external world were carried by Zamenhof's seemingly somewhat naïve and innocent vision soon became apparent—for example to the Esperantists of Russia.

Later, the concern of its French pioneers to avoid all connection between Esperanto and pacifism and to remain as silent as possible on the Jewishness of its author demonstrated how important it was to guard against provoking the nationalistic and anti-Semitic prejudices rampant in the French bourgeoisie following the Dreyfus scandal. On the other hand, and in contrast to Russia, the French Esperantists still had plenty of room in which to advance their arguments and expand their movement, such that Boirac felt able to note at the end of 1906 that the prejudices against an artificial language were weakening and that 'in almost all civilized countries the name of Esperanto is well known and no longer provokes mockery'.² And in October 1905 Javal contentedly noted that out of 700 newspaper articles appearing after the Boulogne congress, only one mentioned that Zamenhof was a Jew.³

However, nationalist emotions hampered the Esperanto movement to a far greater extent in neighboring Germany. There, the language was accepted with greater hesitancy than in France. At the time, the German Reich was energetically engaged in trying to join the club of imperialist powers. Its rulers sought to neutralize the social disturbances brought on by rapid industrialization by accelerating the country's commercial expansion across the world. These efforts, along with a latent awareness that the Germans achieved their unification not by revolution from below but by pressure from above, produced a characteristic mixture of assured self-confidence in the new role of world power and not entirely repressible feelings of envy toward the established imperialist states, Britain and France. In particular, the widely held opinion that the Germans suffered from a deficit of national pride and therefore had to protect themselves particularly carefully against internationalist and anti-German machina-

² Letter to Zamenhof, 9 Dec. 1906, Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 323. He added: 'we should not forget that the opponents of Esperanto are still many and influential, particularly in the upper levels of society'.

³ Letter to Zamenhof, 15 October, 1905, PVZX 197. On the other hand, an anti-Esperanto publication in 1907 spread the assertion that Esperanto 'is a new instrument of *social disintegration* adopted by the Jews': Ernest Gaubert, *La sottise espérantiste*, Paris: Les Éditions Nouvelles, p. 24.

tions was not without influence on the development of the Esperanto movement in Germany.

Although the journal *Esperantisto* and the first important literary publications in Esperanto were published in Nuremberg in the years before 1895, Esperanto expanded into Germany only slowly. An article in the popular magazine *Die Woche*,⁴ published in mid-1902, helped to move Esperanto forward; its author was the well-known Austrian pacifist Alfred Hermann Fried, who in the following year published an Esperanto primer for German speakers.⁵ Not until 1906, when strong national societies were already operating in other countries of Europe, was the German Esperantist Society, as of 1909 the German Esperanto Association, established. However, as early as 1908 the Germans were able to host the fourth World Congress in Dresden, during which Goethe's *Iphigenia* was performed in Zamenhof's translation—an event that won over many skeptics in Germany because of the mellifluousness and powers of expression revealed by the translation.

Memories of the Volapük fiasco may well have been one of the reasons why the German public only hesitantly developed an interest in Esperanto. But it was not only doubts about the practical possibilities of the international language that explained Germany's tardiness. A few weeks after the founding of the Society, the editor of its journal *Germana Esperantisto* confessed that a certain resistance, more significant than mere ignorance or prejudice, hampered the cause of Esperanto. This resistance came not 'from the majority, not from the masses', but from 'a strong, powerful and influential' category of people, namely those 'who consider all international sympathy to be dangerous and opposed to national interests', causing them to judge an international language 'more severely'.⁶ As one of the leaders of the German movement observed at the end of 1912, the press 'has, until recently, and with rare unanimity, dismissed the Esperanto movement or remained completely silent about it'.⁷

⁴ Alfred Hermann Fried, 'Eine internationale Hilfssprache', *Die Woche* 4 (1902), 26: 1197–9.

⁵ Alfred H. Fried, *Lehrbuch der Internationalen Hilfssprache 'Esperanto'*, Berlin-Schöneberg: Esperanto-Verlag, 1903. Fried was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1911.

⁶ J.B., 'Esperanto kaj internaciismo', *Germana Esperantisto* 3 (1906): 88–9.

⁷ Ernst Kliemke, 'Kulturmalsagaĵoj. Glosoj al la mondlingva Movado', *Germana Esperantisto* 9 (1912), edition A, p. 162 (translated from *Der Vortrupp*, 1912, Sept.).

German Esperantists were especially attacked by those newspapers that saw themselves as guardians of ‘true’ patriotism. The substance of these attacks showed three primary traits. First, they began with a pseudo-scientific biological approach to language. For example, the chemist Wilhelm Ostwald, who maintained that language was no more than a technical mode of communication and that national languages were too imperfect to serve the needs of international scientific exchange, was reproached by reference to the highly developed and richly nuanced German language and its unique spirit.⁸ This attitude can also be assigned to the category of popular prejudices against artificial, unnatural languages. Even the cry that Esperanto would be ‘culturally destructive’⁹ if introduced into schools was a hardly surprising reaction among the German middle class, which clung to its sentimental devotion to German culture through this period of rapid social change.

Secondly, and indicative of downright hysteria, was the designation of Esperanto by a German newspaper, only a little over 20 years after the arrival of the language in the world, as ‘an instrument for the eradication of the German language’.¹⁰ Ostwald was severely admonished for campaigning for Esperanto in the USA instead of dedicating himself to the dissemination of the German language.¹¹ And, finally, a quarterly review in 1912 sounded a battle cry ‘against Esperantism, that excrescence of exalted internationalism’.¹²

These three principal forms of criticism—that Esperanto was not a real language; that it threatened the German language; that behind it lay the clandestine forces of internationalism—are compressed into a single short passage in the Berlin *Deutsche Tageszeitung* in 1907:

Even natural scientists lack the sense that our mother language is a distinct and natural growth; this renders understandable the incredible barbarity of Herr chemist-professor Ostwald, who is capable of enthusing over such a

⁸ Kurt Schubert, ‘Deutsche Sprache und Esperanto’, *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, 1912: 648–52. On Ostwald’s opinion see, for example, Wilhelm Ostwald, *Die internationale Hilfssprache und das Esperanto*, Berlin: Möller & Borel, 1907, pp. 16–17. Ostwald, Nobel laureate in 1909, initially supported Esperanto; in 1908 he went over to Ido.

⁹ *Ostholsteinische Zeitung*, 10 June 1911; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 8 (1911): 150.

¹⁰ *Berliner Beamten-Zeitschrift*, 5 May 1911; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 8 (1911): 151.

¹¹ Schubert, p. 651.

¹² Schubert, p. 652.

laughable fraud as the language Esperanto—something thought up by a half-caste and driven by hatred against the German language.¹³

This obsession with feelings of inferiority directed against the older world powers, the British and the French, was manifested by the nationalist press in, for example, the assertion that Germans were particularly vulnerable to the dangers of Esperanto because they did not possess the same national pride displayed by other peoples.¹⁴ One magazine explained that other nations, when speaking Esperanto, maintain their esteem for their own language, but this was not so for Germans because they were always so easily impressed by anything foreign.¹⁵ Esperanto was feared as a cunning instrument to oppress the Germans—as a great international danger possibly capable of reducing the German language to the level of a mere insignificant dialect.¹⁶

If the German Esperantists replied that Esperanto was a neutral means of communication offering no special privileges to any nation, the argument had no effect, because the nationalists sought increased privileges for the German language, in line with the rising global status of German commerce and industry. So there was no way to expect understanding from that quarter for the idea of dismantling language discrimination through Esperanto. On the contrary, they demanded that the smaller states deal with the great powers in the languages of the great powers rather than their own less influential languages—and certainly not in Esperanto. The smaller nations grew enthusiastic about Esperanto because its victory would bring them equal bargaining rights with the representatives of the major languages of world trade—and for the Germans that would be ‘economic suicide’.¹⁷

The more the language spread, the more it became evident that the antipathy of its opponents related less to Esperanto’s structural weaknesses as a language than to its political and ideological agenda. An explicit distinction was made between the *creative achievement* of Zamenhof, whose

¹³ 22 February 1907; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 4 (1907): 42.

¹⁴ *Alldeutsche Blätter*, 17 August 1912; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 9 (1912), edition A, p. 152.

¹⁵ Sautter, ‘Noch einmal die deutsche Sprache und Esperanto’, *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, 1913: 758.

¹⁶ *Wartburgstimmen*, 1913, Oct.; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 10 (1913), edition A, p. 164.

¹⁷ Alfred Geiser in *Das Deutschtum im Ausland*, 1912: 652–4 (quotation p. 654).

technical quality was not contested, and the *goals* of the Esperantists, which had to be fought against at all costs. Such a distinction, for example, was made by Albert Zimmermann, a member of the board of the influential German National Union of Commercial Employees, who began a multi-year campaign against Esperanto with a book published in 1915 that saw the language primarily as an obstacle to German commercial expansion across the world.¹⁸

Calling Esperanto the most dangerous to date of all projects for a ‘global language’ and considering it an idea in itself unhealthy and profoundly anti-nationalist, Zimmermann confesses that he ‘assumes that Esperanto is as perfect as one has a right to expect’, and that he is opposed only to Zamenhof’s goal, which in his opinion merits as much condemnation as the efforts of ‘latinizers’, pacifists and campaigners for the emancipation of women.¹⁹ Zimmermann bases his judgment of Esperanto exclusively on its usefulness or lack of usefulness to the German nation.

This ‘great power’ attitude among opponents of Esperanto was accompanied even before the First World War by an element of anti-Semitism. Early in 1913, the pan-German *Staatsbürger-Zeitung* named ‘all such efforts to invent a new international language [...] a madness and a crime against humanity, an intellectual chimera’; the newspaper maintained that Esperanto, as the work of a Jew, was not suitable for Christian Germans. It went on to refer to the language as ‘this Jewish world language’.²⁰ Such attacks on Esperanto nonetheless remained limited to the pages of specific newspapers and did not lead to official actions by the authorities against the Esperanto movement. They could also not prevent the organized Esperantists from reaching an estimated 8000 in the year 1914.²¹

On the other hand, the adepts of Esperanto in Germany were obliged—far more than those of France—to take care to eliminate from

¹⁸ Zimmermann (1915); Zimmermann & Müller-Holm (1923). The Union, founded in 1893, did not admit Jewish members; see Iris Hamel, *Völkischer Verband und nationale Gewerkschaft. Die Politik des Deutschnationalen Handlungsgehilfenverbandes 1893–1933*, Frankfurt a.M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1967.

¹⁹ Zimmermann (1915), p. 3.

²⁰ 4 January 1913 and 15 January 1913; quoted in *Germana Esperantisto* 10 (1913), edition A, pp. 19, 41.

²¹ *EdE*, p. 191.

their promotional efforts anything that might raise the suspicions of the nationalist press.²² This requirement explains their frequent protestations that Esperanto was not directed against German interests, or that it was not Esperanto but the learning of foreign languages that threatened German identity.²³ A few German Esperantists protested at the implied antipathy to other nations manifested in these attacks, describing themselves as people who found rational and not especially enthusiastic internationalism fully reconcilable with love of the fatherland.²⁴ But others maintained a curious neutrality, asserting that ‘pacifists, chauvinists or socialists’ should be equally welcome in the movement.²⁵ Some even bowed to this nationalist fever, distancing themselves from those who used Esperanto for ‘anti-German’ goals.²⁶ The journal *Germana Esperantisto* in 1913 declared the Universal Esperanto Association on ‘the wrong track’ because it was concerned with politics—more precisely because its vice president called on Esperantists to take action against the lies and misrepresentations about Esperanto in the chauvinist press in various countries.²⁷ Such criticism of UEA not only illustrates the obstacles facing the German Esperantists in their work in Germany but also shows the degree to which the efforts of Hector Hodler and the other UEA leaders collided with the realities of a world on the brink of war.

However, the obstacles to their activities Esperantists in Germany faced pale by comparison with those existing in Russia. In 1904, the year before the first Russian revolution, the censorship showed signs of easing, making it possible to publish Esperanto journals. After the revolution,

²² Also the pacifists, themselves virtual pariahs in Wilhelm’s Germany, hesitated to reveal their sympathies for Esperanto, afraid of provoking protests on the part of the nationalists that the pacifists were undermining the German language and culture: Chickering (1975), pp. 129–30.

²³ ‘Deutschtum, Esperanto und die Volksschule’, *Sächsische Schulzeitung* 81 (1915), 41: 606–7. On Esperanto as a ‘national shield’ against the German tendency to glorify foreign cultures, see Emil Bausenwein, *Was geht den Deutschen das Esperanto an?* Haida: La Marto, 1913, p. 10.

²⁴ Friedrich Ellersiek, ‘Staatsbürger und Esperantisten’, *Germana Esperantisto* 10 (1913), edition A, pp. 18–19.

²⁵ Breiger, ‘Rückblick auf das Jahr 1913’, *Germana Esperantisto* 11 (1914), edition A, p. 2.

²⁶ G.H. Göhl, *Esperanto. Eine Kulturforderung und ihre Erfüllung*, Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1914, p. 102.

²⁷ Editorial note in *Germana Esperantisto* 10 (1913), edition A, p. 171. See also Th. Rousseau, ‘UEA kaj ŝovinismo’, *Esperanto* 9 (1913): 267–8.

the conditions for recruitment improved, and thus the ability to increase the membership of Esperanto groups.

But the authorities continued to regard the Russian Esperantists with suspicion. Although they avoided social and political topics, of the kind that might give the censors a pretext for again slowing the movement, the publications of the Esperantists left no doubt about their position that ‘Esperanto is not a goal but a tool’, and that the movement had to be based on the struggle for democratization, attention to ‘disseminating education among the masses’ and the battle against ‘national exclusion’.²⁸ Between the lines they took the opportunity, whenever it presented itself, to criticize the current conditions in Russia. In the autumn of 1905 the censor disallowed the publication in *Ruslanda Esperantisto* of the contribution ‘Rachel and Leah’ by the publicist Aleksandr Yablonsky²⁹; the article compared the biblical story of Jacob, who received Leah as his wife instead of Rachel whom he loved, with the national Duma (parliament) given to the people instead of a democratic constitution.³⁰

At the time, the Esperanto movement had already made considerable progress in other countries where the strict thought control practiced by the Russian bureaucracy was unknown. As a consequence, the Saint Petersburg censor increasingly intervened to stop foreign publications in Esperanto from entering the country if their content was considered dangerous. The Esperanto novel *Paŭlo Debenham*, by the German-British writer Heinrich Luyken, was blocked in 1912 because of a reference to the ‘unhappy country’ Russia and its ‘unhappy peoples’.³¹ A similar fate befell several books of political or religious character.

If censorship softened somewhat, on the other hand there was an increase in incidents that revealed that the ruling classes and their servants, the police, regarded activity for Esperanto strictly in terms of internal security. In 1906, a police officer appeared in a meeting of Esperantists in Vladivostok and ordered them not to speak publicly about Esperanto.³²

²⁸ V. Bitner, ‘Al laboro!’, *Espero* (Saint Petersburg), 1908: 51.

²⁹ See the notice in *Ruslanda Esperantisto* 1 (1905): 102.

³⁰ Hovorostin (1972), p. 84.

³¹ H.A. Luyken, *Paŭlo Debenham*, London: British Esperanto Association, 1911 (reprinted Saarbrücken: Iltis, 1990), p. 8; Hovorostin (1972), p. 85.

³² *Ruslanda Esperantisto* 2 (1906): 157

We might note, though, that in the same city in 1909 there was an Esperanto circle in operation among political prisoners.³³ Particularly at the provincial level, occasional denunciations of Esperantists occurred. In 1911 the police chief in Petrokov ordered that street signs with Esperanto texts be removed because people did not understand them.³⁴ And also, apparently only because of Esperanto activity, the representative of UEA in Kronstadt was arrested; he was kept in jail for over a month and subsequently was refused permission to continue living in the city.³⁵

Despite these continued obstacles, new recruits, both intellectuals and working people, were attracted to Esperanto. With the growing strength of the revolutionary movement, the police turned increasing attention to radical elements among the Russian Esperantists. In 1912 a circular of the Tsarist Okhrana (secret police) warned of the activities of revolutionary Esperantists in Paris, whose Russian sympathizers were the subject of a recent report by a special agent.³⁶ Less than 20 years after the authorities had first drawn attention to the use of Esperanto among the Tolstoyans, Zamenhof's language was increasingly feared as a vehicle for the most dangerous thought. When in 1913 an Esperantist from the Caucasus asked permission to publish an 'international language bulletin', the request was refused because 'Esperanto, having appeared among worldwide socialists, will become ... a means for spreading harmful ideas among the people'.³⁷

Other than among the Russian Esperantists, police surveillance or direct harassment was directed at Esperantists only in a few economically less developed countries. Among the earliest was an incident in 1907 on the Greek island of Samos, at that time an independent principality. Shortly after the founding of an Esperanto club in the capital, two lawyers, perhaps in jest, persuaded a local villager that Esperanto was a form of freemasonry and had anti-religious goals. The overwrought villager succeeded in convincing several neighbors in a nearby village that these impious Esperantists had to be pun-

³³ de Bruin (1936), p. 19.

³⁴ *Esperanto* 7 (1911): 281.

³⁵ *Esperanto* 7 (1911): 285.

³⁶ G. Demidjuk, 'Ĉirkaŭ la interna ideo. Historia skizo', in Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, *Jarlibro* 5 (1926): 181–96 (esp. pp. 192–3); de Bruin (1936), p. 20.

³⁷ Ĥvorostin (1972), p. 83.

ished. Some 30 countryfolk, armed with sticks, pitchforks, clubs and axes, marched on the Esperanto society's meeting place, where, finding nobody present, they broke the frame of Zamenhof's portrait, ripped up books and broke the furniture. They clamored for the death of the Esperantists. In the end, yielding to the entreaties of the people, the ruling prince ordered the society's dissolution because 'public order was undermined'.³⁸

More serious incidents were reported from China, where apparently the propaganda of Chinese anarchists in Paris marked Esperantists in several Chinese locations with the stigma of activities against the state. In December 1911 the leader of the Esperanto group in Mukden was threatened with arrest as a revolutionary guilty of adoring Tolstoy and Esperanto; he was able to escape punishment only by fleeing the city. Another leader in China was killed by an unknown assailant, after which the mayor declared that 'Esperanto will cause a revolution'.³⁹ In October 1913 several German-language newspapers reported that in the Hungarian town of Székesfehérvár the chief of police had forbidden a publicity meeting of Esperantists, apparently on the grounds that they were using a 'thieves' language'. Questions were raised in the Hungarian parliament. It was not clear whether the police chief had prevented the meeting because it had to do with Esperanto or because it was not announced in the proper fashion. But he himself later confessed that he had warned the Esperantists not to use Esperanto as a secret language that their employers could not understand.⁴⁰

The impression that could be conveyed by these examples, namely that at the time Esperanto was irrevocably linked to or associated with 'leftism', nonetheless requires some adjustment. Two facts weigh against the simplistic notion that in the years before the First World War there was a clear dividing line between progressive Esperantists on the one hand and reactionary opponents on the other. First, the people learning the

³⁸ A. Stamatiadis in *EdE*, p. 201; *La Ondo de Esperanto* 4 (1912): 145–6. In September 1907, the prohibition was lifted, and three years later the parliament of Samos unanimously voted for the compulsory teaching of Esperanto in all the schools on the island.

³⁹ *Esperanto* 8 (1912): 41; K. Ch. Shan (Sheng Guocheng), 'Letero el Ĥinlando', *La Ondo de Esperanto* 4 (1912): 57.

⁴⁰ *Germana Esperantisto* 10 (1913), edition A, pp. 165–6, 184; *Internacia Socia Revuo* 7 (1913): 287–8.

language were for the most part apolitical, and the movement at that time was firmly in the hands of individuals whom a convinced socialist would have regarded as ‘class enemies’. Secondly, the established workers’ parties for the most part paid no attention to the Esperantists and only exceptionally supported them or even opposed them. Efforts by the French socialists Jean Jaurès and Édouard Vaillant to put on the agenda of the Socialist Congress in Stuttgart (1907) a proposal that Esperanto be used in official announcements of the Brussels-based International Socialist Office collapsed, primarily because of the opposition of the German social democrat Paul Singer.⁴¹

For a while the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party even prohibited any mention of Esperanto in their party newspapers, particularly the official organ *Vorwärts*, and when in 1914 the Ninth German Esperanto Congress took place in Leipzig, while the local middle-class press reported on it favorably, the Social Democratic *Leipziger Volkszeitung* ridiculed Esperanto.⁴² A Russian worker complained in 1913 that his superiors considered Esperanto ‘a superfluous affair’ and that they feared that ‘the workers will be distracted from their urgent priorities’.⁴³ Likewise, the Dutch socialist Willem van Ravesteijn called the Esperanto movement a ‘bourgeois folly’ and propaganda for the language among the workers ‘a dangerous little game’.⁴⁴ But there were examples of an opposite kind. Thus, the Czech social democrats passed a highly favorable resolution on Esperanto at their tenth congress in 1911.⁴⁵ On the occasion of the Eighth World Congress of Esperanto in Krakow in 1912, the local branch of the Polish Social Democratic Party organized a large

⁴¹ *Internacia Socia Revuo* 1 (1907), 3: 15–16, 6: 16, 8–9: 24, 10–11: 15; 3 (1909): 63; *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Stuttgart, 18. bis 24. August 1907*, Berlin: Vorwärts, 1907, p. 23. Jaurès and Vaillant also presented to the congress a proposal for a resolution stating that, in the event of an outbreak of war, the proletariat should stage a massive strike and rebel against the authorities; the German August Bebel violently opposed this radical proposal, which ultimately failed to attract a majority.

⁴² *Germana Esperantisto* 9 (1914), edition A, p. 109.

⁴³ *Internacia Socia Revuo* 7 (1913): 260.

⁴⁴ *De Tribune* (Amsterdam), 20 June 1908; quoted in *Fraterco* (The Hague), 1908, 3 (Sept.): 1, and *Internacia Socia Revuo* 2 (1908): 111.

⁴⁵ The German and Austrian social democrats, on the other hand, sharply rejected Esperanto. See Bahr (1978), p. 232 and following.

demonstration of socialists from various countries.⁴⁶ The Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta himself learned the language;⁴⁷ the Japanese Ōsugi Sakae in 1907–08 led an Esperanto course in Tokyo for, among others, Chinese students,⁴⁸ and his Chinese comrade Liu Shifu, from 1913 until his physical exhaustion in 1915, published the important Chinese- and Esperanto-language journal *La Voĉo de la Popolo*, which also served as a propaganda tool for Esperanto.⁴⁹ In truth, the beginnings of Esperanto in China were almost inseparably linked with the revolutionary struggle. Yet the fact remains that before the First World War left-wing elements in general were unable to make the Esperanto movement theirs.⁵⁰ Even the German chauvinist press, avidly searching for proof of Esperanto's danger, barely developed the argument that the language, in addition to undermining German culture and business, might be accompanied by the ideologies of class warfare.

If the authorities in the Tsarist territories and a few other countries attributed danger to the young language and accordingly erected barriers to its dissemination and slandered its devotees, for most people this probably came as a great surprise. They had difficulty understanding why interest in Esperanto would encounter such hostility, and why the potential overthrow of governments could possibly be imputed to it. Those who learned Esperanto were simply following Zamenhof's call for peace among all humankind; they merely wanted to contribute to the idea that everyone, without taking away anything from anyone else, should make use of a neutral means of communication. It was the old dream of a united humanity in a new form—one not so far from reality, given the

⁴⁶ Report in *Internacia Socia Revuo* 6 (1912): 105–8. On the same occasion there appeared *Politika Malliberulo*, a special Esperanto-language issue of the Polish journal *Więzień Polityczny*, whose goal was to make world public opinion aware of the terrors in Tsarist Russia.

⁴⁷ See E. Lanti's interview with Malatesta in 1924: *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 10 (51): 5. In the early issues of *Internacia Socia Revuo* (in 1907) Malatesta was listed as an editorial collaborator.

⁴⁸ Miyamoto Masao, *La morta suito. Oosugi Sakae, anarkiisto-esperantisto*, Kyoto: l'omnibuso, 1984, pp. 31–6. Two letters by Ōsugi were published in *Internacia Socia Revuo* 2 (1908): 20, 70–1.

⁴⁹ Its Chinese-language title was *Minsheng*. It was the first anarchist journal published in China; all of its 34 issues regularly included pages in Esperanto. After Liu Shifu's death in 1915 the journal continued publication, with interruptions, until 1921. On its significance, see Müller & Benton (2006), 45–73 (esp. 56–8).

⁵⁰ For their part, the socialist Esperantists admitted that this was so. See the 1912 quotation from *La Kulturo* (Prague) in de Bruin (1936), p. 9.

scientific and technological developments of the early years of the century, which seemed to increase awareness of the need for an international language. But, regardless of the modest gains so far in the realization of this dream, apparently Esperanto had already violated taboos.

Esperanto at the League of Nations

Zamenhof died in April 1917. Five years earlier, during the Eighth Congress in Krakow, he put aside his role as the ‘official head’ of the movement, announcing that he would regard himself from then on as an ordinary Esperantist.⁵¹ He wanted freedom to continue developing his ideas for uniting humanity not only through language but in other ways as well.

In parallel with the Tenth Congress, set to take place in Paris in August 1914,⁵² Zamenhof was planning ‘a congress on a neutrally human religion’.⁵³ In 1913, in pursuit of this goal, he published (no longer anonymously) a new version of his ‘political-religious faith’, a pamphlet entitled *Deklaracio pri Homaranismo*,⁵⁴ in which he called for ‘free faith’ members of different religious groups to come together in ‘a community free of ethnicity and doctrine’.⁵⁵ He explained that, to eliminate interreligious hatred ‘we can leave everyone fully free to enjoy the faith or ethical system that they have had up to now, but we must unite them through a common *externality*’.⁵⁶

However, faced with strong opposition from the French leadership, Zamenhof had to abandon his plan. Between them, the French intellectuals, and him, the Eastern European Jew, lay an unbridgeable divide. Nor was this changed by the reality that in Zamenhof’s final years the universalist element in his thought had almost completely subordinated

⁵¹ See the text of the ‘abdication’ speech, Orig III 2542–5.

⁵² The congress was canceled because of the declaration of war.

⁵³ Orig III 2563–9.

⁵⁴ Orig III 2582–9.

⁵⁵ Orig III 2588. By ‘free faith member’ (‘liberkredano’, or in other contexts ‘neŭtralisto’) Zamenhof understood the tolerant, non-dogmatic religious believer.

⁵⁶ Letter to Bourlet, 24 February 1913, Orig III 2570.

the Zionist inheritance. In 1914 he refused membership in a planned Hebrew Esperanto Association on the grounds that he had no wish to align himself with nationalism, even if, on this occasion, it was the more than pardonable nationalism of an oppressed people.⁵⁷

The hesitant response that greeted his religious ideas⁵⁸ may have contributed to Zamenhof's increasing warnings about the dangers of nationalism and his emphasis on moral and political principles.⁵⁹ This tendency was already evident in a memorandum, 'Peoples and an International Language' (*Gentoj kaj Lingvo Internacia*), submitted in 1911 to the Universal Races Congress.⁶⁰ Later, during the war, in a 'Call to the Diplomats' (*Alvoko al la diplomatoj*, 1915) Zamenhof insistently advocated the principle that every country 'morally and materially, and with fully equal rights, belongs to all its offspring'. He stressed that peace could not be expected to come from territorial changes but required the erasure of national chauvinism.⁶¹ Zamenhof, who had long stressed the religious roots of anti-Jewish persecution,⁶² finally understood that 'the true barrier dividing contemporary humanity is not so much language or religion, as in the past, but blind devotion to nationhood'.⁶³

Zamenhof's pleas, predictably, fell on deaf ears. At the end of his life he was not only obliged to listen to the admonitions of a Russophile newspaper in Warsaw to the effect that he was a 'dangerous internationalist'⁶⁴ but also to endure the heart-rending realization that even the

⁵⁷ Letter to Wilhelm Heller, 30 June 1914, Orig III 2655–7. But Zamenhof repeated his position that the Jews 'are most in need of a neutral language', expressed sympathy for the plan and offered to help with advice. It was anticipated that the first meeting of the association would take place in Paris; a new effort to found a 'Worldwide Esperantist Hebrew Association' was made in 1922. At about the same time as the plan was presented to him, Zamenhof reacted sharply to an anti-Jewish article appearing in *Pola Esperantisto*: letter of 16 July 1914, Orig III 2663–6; cf. Korjenkov (2011), pp. 273–5, 279.

⁵⁸ A partial fulfillment of Zamenhof's ideal can be found in modern ecumenical thought and practice.

⁵⁹ Cf. Waringhien (1980), p. 74.

⁶⁰ Orig III 2398–2410; English text ('International Language') in Gustav Spiller (ed.), *Inter-Racial Problems: Papers from the First Universal Races Congress Held in London in 1911*, London: P.S. King, 1911 (reprint New York: Citadel Press, 1970), pp. 425–32.

⁶¹ 'Post la Granda Milito. Alvoko al la Diplomatoj', Orig III 2687–92 (quotation p. 2689).

⁶² Cf. Waringhien (1948), vol. 1, p. 258.

⁶³ Waringhien (1980), pp. 74–5.

⁶⁴ Privat (2007), p. 133.

Esperantists were infected by chauvinistic fever. The French, Germans and Italians all distributed leaflets in Esperanto defending the positions of their warring governments. Even the British Esperantists, until 1912 model internationalists, bowed to the trends of the moment, accusing the Germans of ‘misusing’ Esperanto for propaganda purposes—‘that universal auxiliary language, offered to us by our big ally Russia, cradled by our friend France’.⁶⁵ In Germany, Wilhelm Ostwald drastically redefined his position: instead of pleading for an international auxiliary language, in 1915 he publicly supported work on a simplified German language, ‘Weltdeutsch’, to be taught in countries occupied by German troops.⁶⁶

Still, the Universal Esperanto Association succeeded in resisting the waves of nationalism. Exploiting the location of its headquarters in neutral Switzerland, UEA used its system of local representatives to organize extensive relief work during the war, conveying correspondence between citizens of hostile countries and delivering food, clothing and medicine.⁶⁷ In parallel with this practical demonstration of international solidarity, Hector Hodler, UEA’s founder and director, continued his efforts to formulate a set of basic principles for the Esperanto movement. His idealism, based on knowledge and of developments in international politics, was, unlike Zamenhof’s, entirely free of even the appearance of mysticism. From July 1915 to February 1917, Hodler published a series of articles in *Esperanto*, UEA’s monthly journal, under the title ‘The Problem of Peace: New Directions’ (‘La pacproblemo: Novaj vojoj’), in which he sketched out his ideas for the restructuring of the postwar world. Primarily because of these articles, directed against ‘interstate anarchy’, *Esperanto* was barred, as of 1916, from importation into France; the military censorship attributed to the journal ‘an unfavorable influence on those fighting at the front’.⁶⁸

Hodler anticipated a further growth in collectivist tendencies after the war, a sharpening of class warfare and a greater readiness of governments

⁶⁵ Haimin Wung-Sung (2011), pp. 11, 13.

⁶⁶ Krajewski (2014), pp. 56–9, 62. Even before the outbreak of the First World War it was evident that scientists tended to favor their own national language (English, French, German) over an artificial language: Gordin (2015), pp. 159–63; Garvía (2015), pp. 105–6.

⁶⁷ *EeP*, pp. 365–7.

⁶⁸ Jakob (1933), p. 18.

to consider proposals for supranational cooperation and arms control.⁶⁹ In this formation of the future international order Esperanto would have a new role. He labeled as an illusion the belief that governments would accept the language on any kind of moral grounds. He saw clearly that the language would have no chance of general application without certain basic preconditions: not just an armistice, but a strong desire for internationalism. The Esperantists ‘should be the embryo of these future elites’ who could build on the ruins of nations a new, international dwelling.⁷⁰ ‘National freedom, democratic rule, an international league among states’—these were the needs of the present.⁷¹ Thus Hodler in certain respects anticipated the principles that American president Woodrow Wilson would later present to a broader public.⁷²

Hodler was not destined to live to see the realization of any of these ideas: he died, short of his 33rd birthday, in March 1920. But, thanks to him, UEA had established itself, in the eyes of the Esperantists, as *the* representative of the Esperanto movement—a role all the more important because, with the founding of the League of Nations, the movement for the first time had a respected partner on the international scene. Hodler provided the theoretical guidelines for the Esperantist position in the post-war period, when hope for an era of more secure peace grew on every side.

Hodler analyzed the importance of the founding of the League of Nations, particularly from the point of view of the Esperanto movement, in the following terms:

We all know that the League will prove viable only if it brings together not only governments, through legal means, but principally peoples, in a spirit of reciprocal understanding. Lacking an international neutral language, the

⁶⁹ H. Hodler, ‘La socio post la milito’, *Esperanto* 13 (1917): 73–5; reprinted in Jakob (1928), pp. 146–57.

⁷⁰ H. Hodler, ‘Super’, *Esperanto* 11 (1915): 3; reprinted in Jakob (1928), p. 103.

⁷¹ H. Hodler, ‘Nova spirito’, *Esperanto* 13 (1917): 113; reprinted in Jakob (1928), p. 162.

⁷² Edmond Privat, ‘La verko de H. Hodler’, *Esperanto* 16 (1920): 102. In 1915–16 Hodler also composed an extensive French-language essay on the peaceful organization of the peoples, which remained unpublished; see the biographical sketch by Eduard Stettler, in Jakob (1928), pp. 48–9. One chapter in the essay, ‘La justice internationale et le problème de l’arbitrage’, appeared in *Les Documents du Progrès. Revue internationale* (Lausanne) 10 (1916), Jan.: 280–96. Hodler also contributed to the journals *La Voix de l’Humanité* (Lausanne) and *Demain. Pages et Documents* (Geneva).

peoples remain completely alienated from one another, even if they are theoretically linked by interstate conventions. So from the League of Nations the Esperantists hope for early recognition of the necessity of a common means of understanding.⁷³

We should look, then, at how the Esperanto movement sought to present its wishes to the League of Nations and examine whether the League fulfilled the expectations that Hodler, and not only Hodler, defined as the precondition for its successful operation. The horrendous butchery of the war put an end to the belief, on the part of worldwide public opinion, in warfare as a means of solving international conflicts. As a result, much faith was placed in the League of Nations. UEA took this as a good opportunity to demand an intergovernmental agreement on the introduction of Esperanto in schools. The Association had an enthusiastic advocate in the person of the publicist Edmond Privat, who worked for the League in the years 1920 and 1921 as an interpreter and from 1922 to 1927 served, first, as counselor to the Persian delegate, and later as his deputy.⁷⁴ Privat went to the same school as Hodler; after Hodler's death he took over as editor of the journal *Esperanto*.

In December 1920, on Privat's initiative, 11 delegates (from Belgium, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Haiti, India, Italy, Persia and South Africa)⁷⁵ presented a draft resolution to the First Assembly. Drawing attention to the language difficulties 'that hinder direct relations among the peoples' and expressing the hope that 'the children of all countries should, henceforth, know two languages: their mother language and an easy means of international communication', the draft included a request to the League's secretary-general that he prepare a report on the results of the teaching of Esperanto in the public schools of member states.⁷⁶

This proposal exemplifies the idealistic hopes placed on the League principally by the less powerful and non-European states. But at the

⁷³ H. Hodler, 'Novaj perspektivoj', *Esperanto* 15 (1919): 58; reprinted in Jakob (1928), p. 88.

⁷⁴ See the special issue 'Edmond Privat 1889–1962' of *Revue neuchâtelaise* 11 (1968), no. 43/44.

⁷⁵ The signatories supported the project as private individuals rather than on behalf of their respective delegations. Among them were Edvard Beneš (Czechoslovakia), Wellington Koo (China) and Carlos Restrepo, former president of Colombia.

⁷⁶ Quoted in *Esperanto* 16 (1920): 221.

same time it attests to the insufficient wariness of the proposers, who completely underestimated the degree of opposition that this near-revolutionary proposal would encounter—particularly from one of the great powers. Privat himself later confessed that it was a tactical error to present so early in the game the most controversial of possible proposals, namely the introduction of Esperanto into schools.⁷⁷

The Second Commission, which took up the proposal on 16 December, removed part of it, namely the expressions of hope already mentioned, and accepted the rest of the text by ten votes to one (France). Two days later, when the Belgian Senator Henri La Fontaine⁷⁸ reported the resolution to the Assembly, he was greeted by strong protests from Gabriel Hanotaux, the French delegate. Hanotaux, historian, member of the French Academy, former minister of foreign affairs, angrily denounced the recommendation. Encountering no objections from his intimidated fellow delegates, Hanotaux launched himself into an eloquent defense of the honor of the French language, ‘which has a history behind it [...] and which has the right to defend its position against new creations’.⁷⁹ He succeeded in forcing a decision to table the matter without discussion.

To understand the context of Hanotaux’s outburst, we should note that after the war, in which France was among the victors, there ensued what was called ‘the battle of the languages’.⁸⁰ When, early in 1919, a decision was taken to introduce English as a second official language in the Paris Peace Conference, the language problem rapidly became an issue. In the League of Nations French continued to be used in the first instance, but France recognized such bilingualism as a break with tradition. Already on the defensive because of the growing prestige of English, France saw in the proposal to examine the current global condition of Esperanto a further threat to the position of the French language as the classic language of diplomacy, even though the draft resolution on Esperanto was not aimed

⁷⁷ Edmond Privat, ‘Esperanto ĉe la Ligo de Nacioj’, *Esperanto* 51 (1958): 57–9 (esp. p. 57).

⁷⁸ The socialist Henri La Fontaine was one of the founders of the Union of International Associations and president of the International Peace Office. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He was a strong supporter of Esperanto.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Panchasi (2009), p. 147.

⁸⁰ Ray Stannard Baker, President Wilson’s press secretary (1922), quoted in Panchasi (2009), p. 140.

at changing the arrangement of working languages in the League.⁸¹ Before this reversal, Privat was apparently barely aware of France's position. Now, the Esperantists and the delegates sympathetic to their cause were obliged to recognize how the poorly prepared proposal had immediately fallen victim to such vigorous opposition—because, as Maurice Rollet de l'Isle, president of the French Society for the Dissemination of Esperanto, explained in a December 1920 letter to Privat, 'I am astonished that you are surprised by this hostility, since here [in France] we have long encountered the most violent hostility from the Quai d'Orsay'.⁸²

Indeed, Hanotaux's initiative should have come as no surprise; even before the war Esperanto was playing a role in discussion of Anglo-French bilingualism. In 1905 the French government began to increase its funding for the dissemination of the French language in the world, driven to such action by the growing importance of English.⁸³ At the same time, the French intelligentsia were campaigning for recognition of the French language as a more suitable auxiliary language for Europe.⁸⁴ On the one hand, Esperanto was considered insufficiently strong to halt the progress of English; on the other, it was seen as a competing hindrance to French. The writer Marcel Boulenger in 1910 blamed the Esperantists for seeking, in agreement with Germans and internationalists, 'to deprive French of its role as a language perpetually universal'. He pronounced the pioneer of automobiles and aviation, Ernest Archdeacon, who was an enthusiastic publicist for Esperanto, disqualified to discuss linguistic issues and, in the same breath, 'a traitor to the fatherland'.⁸⁵ In the same year the anti-Semitic writer Émile Gautier specifically reproached Zamenhof for creating not only a language but also a 'super-nation' intent on dominating the world.⁸⁶ It was therefore consistent with past practice that prime

⁸¹ Outsiders, however, hardly surprisingly, imputed to the project the goal of introducing Esperanto into the League. See *The New York Times*, 19 December 1920, reprinted in Ulrich Becker (ed.), *Esperanto in The New York Times (1887–1922)*, New York: Mondial, 2010, p. 219.

⁸² Letter of 30 December 1920; quoted in Huber (1973), p. 43. (The headquarters of the French ministry of foreign affairs is located on the Quai d'Orsay.) In general on the anti-Esperanto position of the French government in the early 1920s, see Panchasi (2009), pp. 135–59.

⁸³ Lescure (1999), pp. 262–3.

⁸⁴ For example the linguist Albert Dauzat (1912), according to Lescure, p. 269.

⁸⁵ Lescure, p. 267.

⁸⁶ Lescure, p. 413.

minister René Viviani refused in 1914 to provide government support for the planned (but ultimately abortive) World Congress in Paris.⁸⁷

Both before and after the war the French found themselves facing a dilemma. When they argued for French as the official auxiliary language in international relations, they naturally incited the opposition of other nations.⁸⁸ At the same time, such pushback upset those French who claimed the natural worldwide superiority of their language and had no wish to see it reduced to the level of competing with other national languages. This dilemma offered an opportunity for the Esperantists, who, often with protestations of strong emotional links to the French language, argued that the international auxiliary language should be artificially created and ‘not be a language of national identity’.⁸⁹ While they were able to convince a few people, frequently they met with a wholly negative reaction; Esperanto presented a clear threat to the view that universality could originate in a national language, namely French—and hence a threat to what constituted the very foundation of French identity. Thus, Esperanto risked trivializing the international vision of the French.⁹⁰

On the other hand, France always had its share of strong supporters of Esperanto. Accordingly, after the war, and also because of the growing strength of the left, circumstances appeared favorable for Esperanto in the fight at the League of Nations. After Hanotaux’s attack the friends of Esperanto did not give up but instead prepared themselves better. In September 1921, on the occasion of the Second Assembly, the proposal was again brought forward, on this occasion supported by the delegates of Albania, Belgium, China, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Finland, India, Japan, Persia, Romania, South Africa and Venezuela.⁹¹ This time there was a report from the deputy secretary-general Nitobe Inazō, of

⁸⁷ Lescure, p. 264.

⁸⁸ Guérard (1922), pp. 22, 31.

⁸⁹ André Baudet, Paris Chamber of Commerce (1921), quoted in Panchasi (2009), p. 152.

⁹⁰ Lescure (1999), p. 270.

⁹¹ The Polish delegate also gave his support, with the reservation that the proposal should not lower the prestige of the French language. It is notable that all the Asian member-states supported the proposal, with the exception of Siam, which probably feared offending France. See Masatoshi Matsushita, *Japan in the League of Nations*, Ph.D. thesis, New York: Columbia University Press, 1929 (reprint New York: AMS Press, 1968), pp. 51–2.

Japan,⁹² on his participation in the 13th World Congress of Esperanto in Prague.⁹³ His impressions were favorable: he noted that ‘the congress participants were typical seriously minded and intelligent members of the middle class’⁹⁴ and he also gave sympathetic emphasis to the ‘internal idea’ of Esperanto. In the published part of his report, Nitobe, somewhat against his will (‘I personally dislike to speak of the working population as a separate class’) drew attention to the enthusiastic participation of working people in the Esperanto movement:

While the rich and the cultured enjoy *belles lettres* and scientific treatises in the original, the poor and the humble make of Esperanto a *lingua franca* for their exchange of views. Esperanto is thus becoming an engine of international democracy and of strong combination. This interest of the masses must be taken account of in a rational and sympathetic spirit when making a study of this question of a common language.⁹⁵

This time the Assembly supported the proposal for a survey. In January 1922 the secretary-general distributed a circular to member states inviting them to report on the state of Esperanto instruction in the schools.

While the report was being compiled, France, whose newly formed government of January 1922 was dominated by the right, intensified its campaign against Esperanto. The use of Esperanto was forbidden in meetings attended by French officials.⁹⁶ The French ambassador in Berne, Henry Allizé, who regularly reported on activity in support of Esperanto at the League of Nations, informed his superiors in March 1922 that an ‘international conference on the teaching of Esperanto in schools’ was to take place in the Palais des Nations in Geneva. He regarded its program as ‘dangerous’:

⁹²Nitobe, educator, Quaker, pacifist, and a well-known advocate for accord between East and West, was deputy secretary-general from May 1920 to December 1926; later he became a member of the Japanese Chamber of Nobles. His best-known work is *Bushido: The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought*, Tokyo: Shōkwabō, 1900, translated into many languages.

⁹³A full version of the report appears in Nitobe (1998).

⁹⁴Nitobe (1998), p. 65.

⁹⁵Nitobe (1998), p. 77.

⁹⁶Huber (1973), p. 59.

By teaching children an artificial and neutral language without traditional connections and without national evocations, the goal is, according to Dr. Zamenhof himself, ‘to create separation between language and fatherland, in the same way as religion and the state are separated’. Esperanto is becoming [...] a fundamental enemy of the national languages [...]. It represents a mystique of revolutionary destruction.⁹⁷

Allizé drew particular attention to Edmond Privat, the principal defender of Esperanto in Geneva. Privat was not popular among French diplomats. Until the end of 1921 he was prohibited from entering France, and after that date he received a visa only with difficulty.⁹⁸ The principal reason was probably because Privat made himself unpopular with his wartime articles in *Le Temps* and *L’Humanité*, in which he argued for Polish independence, and hence against the interests of Russia, an ally of France. On the present subject, Allizé presented Privat as a person who, in contrast to the customary propaganda about the commercial utility of Esperanto, at least ‘has the merit of fully unmasking the true nature of Esperanto, namely its service of the interests of communism and anti-patriotism’.⁹⁹

The conference took place in April 1922 and was a great success. Teachers from 28 countries and official delegates of 16 governments were in attendance; the opening plenary was addressed by the League’s secretary-general, Eric Drummond. Shortly afterwards, the government in Paris launched a direct counter-offensive. On 3 June 1922, Léon Bérard, the minister of public education, issued a circular in which he ordered that classrooms in French public schools should no longer be provided for courses in Esperanto. Bérard drew attention to the ‘dangers’ attendant on the teaching of Esperanto; he saw a threat to education in the Latin cultures ‘in the development of an artificial language seductive in its facility’. He continued:

⁹⁷ Quoted in Lescure (1999), p. 694. Several of Allizé’s formulations later reappeared in Bérard’s decree.

⁹⁸ Huber (1973), pp. 60–2. On the context see Lescure (1999), pp. 695–9; Privat (1963), pp. 75–8; Mohammad Farrokh, *La pensée et l’action d’Edmond Privat (1889–1962). Contribution à l’histoire des idées politiques en Suisse*, Berne: Lang, 1991; Tomasz Chmielik, ‘Edmond Privat (1889–1962) kaj lia agado por la sendependiĝo de Polujo dum la unua mondmilito (1914–1918)’, in Hauptenthal (2011), pp. 59–97. A summary article on Privat appears in Künzli (2006), pp. 539–46.

⁹⁹ Quoted by Lescure (1999), pp. 698–9.

The French language will always be the language of civilization and at the same time the best means for disseminating an incomparable literature and serving the expansion of French thought.

International organizations with headquarters in other countries are trying to develop relations among groups of Esperantists in various countries. [...] the goal of such propaganda is not so much simplifying linguistic relations among the peoples as suppressing the reason for the existence of national culture in child and adult alike. These groups are aiming at the Latin spirit and, particularly, the French genius.¹⁰⁰

This decree was particularly encouraging to the enemies of Esperanto on the extreme right. Their attacks repeated much of what was already circulating before the war, but in the meantime their conspiracy theories had been updated. One such anti-Jewish and anti-German author, presenting Esperanto as an instrument for foreign subversion, discovered that it was particularly attractive to ‘propagandizers of the Bolshevik revolution for the annihilation of civilization, as in Russia’.¹⁰¹ For the Esperantists, Archdeacon concluded that Bérard ‘had declared total war on Esperanto’¹⁰²—all this because, in his view, Esperanto might somewhat reduce the inferiority of the working classes and mollify international hatred. In their support, the Human Rights League reproached Bérard for inflicting damage to the left through his decree. Bérard defended himself by asserting that international Esperanto congresses displayed ‘hostility to the French language’. He denied any political intent, although his arguments and those of his supporters proved the opposite.¹⁰³

A few weeks after publication of Bérard’s circular severely limiting the activities of the French Esperantists, the League of Nations secretariat

¹⁰⁰ The text of the circular appeared in *Le Monde espérantiste* 15 (1922), 3 (125): 18. On the reactions of the French press see A. Fréchas, ‘Les gens d’esprit’, *Le Monde espérantiste* 15 (1922), 4 (126), pp. 25–8.

¹⁰¹ L.G. Montixile, ‘L’espéranto’, *La Nouvelle Revue*, 1922, 15 July: 167–71 (quotation p. 168); cf. Lescure (1999), p. 705.

¹⁰² Quoted in Lescure, p. 707.

¹⁰³ The text of the letter from Bérard to the Human Rights League appeared in *Le Monde espérantiste* 16 (1923), 1 (129): 1; cf. Panchasi (2009), p. 155. In May 1923, Bérard declared Latin a compulsory subject in secondary schools; this decree was canceled by his successor. Later Bérard became a member of the French Academy and (under the Vichy regime) ambassador to the Vatican.

completed its report *Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language*.¹⁰⁴ The report offered an extensive overview of the worldwide spread of Esperanto. Its conclusion noted that:

Language is a great force, and the League of Nations has every reason to watch with particular interest the progress of the Esperanto movement which, should it become more widespread, may one day lead to great results from the point of view of the moral unity of the world.¹⁰⁵

At the Third Assembly in the autumn of 1922, the Fifth Commission studied this favorable report. The British Hellenist, Gilbert Murray, representing South Africa, was among those expressing sympathy for Esperanto. But the French delegate, Georges Reynald, declared that he had received instructions to oppose any world language other than French. While Reynaud's arguments were relatively moderate, the Brazilian delegate, Raul do Rio Branco, in an extended speech, which he afterwards had printed and distributed privately,¹⁰⁶ inserted into the discussion ideological accusations of the crudest kind. He condemned Esperanto as a 'language of derelicts and communists, without traditions, without literature, without intellectual value', and asserted that in Brazil Esperanto was taught only in Sergipe, 'the least civilized' state in his country.¹⁰⁷

After three days of discussion a compromise solution was achieved. The report was officially approved as a League document, but with the fifth part, containing conclusions and recommendations, deleted. The question of teaching the language in schools was transferred to the Commission for International Intellectual Collaboration.

Lord Robert Cecil, a friend of Esperanto, warned the Commission to remember that a world language was needed not only by intellectuals but above all by the people themselves.¹⁰⁸ But in truth this forum was conceivably the least suitable place to deal with the question of Esperanto—a language which (as Nitobe emphasized favorably and Rio

¹⁰⁴ The report appeared in pamphlet form in several national languages.

¹⁰⁵ *Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language*, Geneva: League of Nations, 1922, pp. 31–2.

¹⁰⁶ *Contre l'octroi du patronage de la Société des Nations à l'Espéranto*, Geneva, 1922.

¹⁰⁷ Quotations from the summary in *Esperanto* 18 (1922): 166.

¹⁰⁸ *Esperanto* 18 (1922): 167.

Branco feared) was not primarily a means of communication for intellectuals. The Commission, established in May 1922, consisted initially of 12 members. Its stated goal was education for international solidarity and strengthening the League's influence in the service of peace. In fact, however, according to Privat, 'it was obliged to limit its activities by concerning itself only with university and library cooperation. More humane fields were too controversial'.¹⁰⁹

Before such a Commission, the supporters of Esperanto accordingly found themselves in a hopeless position, facing political pressure from France and the prejudices of intellectuals. The chairman, the French philosopher Henri Bergson, privately assured Privat of his sympathy, but he was obliged to subordinate his personal opinion to the instructions that he received from Paris.¹¹⁰ Esperanto's chief opponent turned out to be the Swiss member Gonzague de Reynold, professor of history and French literature at the Universities of Berne and Fribourg. Although he focused his public criticism on the linguistic inadequacy of Esperanto and argued for the Latin language 'familiar to Catholics and intellectuals', he was evidently more disturbed by the fact that—as he wrote privately—'behind Esperanto or Ido lurks an internationalist and revolutionary mysticism'.¹¹¹

The degree to which the problem extended beyond the framework of linguistic discussion was alluded to—more elegantly than by Rio Branco—by the Frenchman, Julien Luchaire, who was (under Bérard) general inspector of public instruction. He contested the assumption that there was even a need for an international means of communication among 'non-intellectuals', given that (as he put it) the mass of the people in the various countries came into contact with one another through their 'leaders' and through translation. By this logic, then, international contacts should remain a monopoly of a chosen few, and it was inadvisable

¹⁰⁹ Edmond Privat, *Federala sperto. Studo pri du sukcesoj kaj unu malsukceso*, The Hague: Universala Ligo, 1958, p. 71.

¹¹⁰ Privat (1963), p. 97.

¹¹¹ Letter to Abbé Ricard, 5 June 1923; according to Huber (1973), p. 84. See also Pierre Hirsch & Tazio Carlevaro, 'Gonzague de Reynold kaj Esperanto', *Monata Cirkulero*, Kultura Centro Esperantista (La Chauv-de-Fonds), 1976, 78: 1–9; Künzli (2006), pp. 621–6.

to open the door to worldwide relations among the lower classes through the easily learned means of communication known as Esperanto.¹¹²

In this atmosphere of francophone hegemony and disdain for the masses, Esperanto had no chance. On 1 August 1923, the Commission decided not to take up the question of teaching Esperanto in schools, defending the position that, above all, what was necessary was ‘to aim to favor the study of living languages and foreign literatures’.¹¹³ Nitobe commented that in 20 years’ time this decision would be remembered as a sign that the League of Nations lacked good sense.

In September 1923, when the Fourth Assembly convened, the French delegate, furnished with instructions from his government ‘to expel Esperanto definitively’,¹¹⁴ proposed that the League adopt a sharper version of the Commission’s decision; in this new version, the League was to recommend explicitly the learning of foreign national languages in preference to an artificial auxiliary language. But with this proposal France pushed the acquiescence of the other delegates too far. Several delegates protested, explaining that, while they did not wish to insist on Esperanto, they also had no wish to accept wording that seemed directed against Esperanto, ‘since this movement had many friends in their countries’.¹¹⁵

France was obliged to withdraw its proposal, leaving as the only valid decision the acceptance of the report of 1922 on Esperanto’s positive achievements. This was hardly a negligible success on UEA’s part, but it fell considerably short of its expectations. Somewhat consoling was the fact that in September 1924 the new government of Édouard Herriot nullified Bérard’s decree—and also the fact that in

¹¹² Cf. Ivo Lapenna, ‘The common language question before international organizations’, *La Monda Lingvo-Problemo* 2 (1970): 83–102 (esp. p. 98). The ‘need for direct communication between uneducated or imperfectly educated individuals in different countries’ was also denied by a report (30 December 1921) of the Committee on an International Language of the American Philological Association. Since such communication should be ‘through leaders and representatives’, the ‘real desideratum’, according to the report, was for a language ‘which will satisfy the intellectual and aesthetic demands of educated people of every land, and that language can hardly be any but Latin’ (*Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 52 [1921]: xiii).

¹¹³ Quoted by Privat, ‘Esperanto ĉe la Ligo’, p. 59.

¹¹⁴ Privat (1927/1982), vol. 2, p. 146.

¹¹⁵ Quoted by Privat, ‘Esperanto ĉe la Ligo’, p. 59.

the same month the Fifth Assembly accepted, without opposition from France, a recommendation to treat Esperanto as a 'clear' language for telegraphy.

As we know, the League of Nations steadily lost its early promise because no member state was ready to yield any part of its national sovereignty, the League's decisions were not carried out and the great powers, when needed, sabotaged its activities. Not only did the political influence of the League remain limited, but the moral authority expected of it remained unformed. An example in this regard was the Commission on International Intellectual Collaboration which 'failed completely to bring them [the intellectuals of the various countries] into a common front against the dangers of national hatreds and national ambitions'.¹¹⁶

The treatment of Esperanto helps explain the League's ultimate fiasco. Pressure from the great powers succeeded in sidelining an initiative of China, Japan and several smaller nations whose aim was to use Esperanto to contribute to neutralizing conflicting national interests and also to advance education for international solidarity as the League's spiritual foundation and unifying device. The idea that the states could advance the worldwide popularization of the League's ideals by declaring their sympathy for the dissemination of Esperanto collided with France's timorous concern for the dominant position of the French language. In defending their position, the French did not even advance as a primary argument the possible linguistic unsuitability of Esperanto, though insistence on the inadequate expressiveness of an artificial language tended not to miss its mark. On the contrary, Esperanto's enemies found themselves in a kind of silent agreement with its friends in recognizing the fact that they were indeed dealing with a functioning language; indeed they were all too aware of its functionality, as Bérard's decree and Luchaire's elitist arrogance implied, tormented as they were by the thought that international communication

¹¹⁶ F.P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960, vol. 1, p. 193. The Commission's significance was diminished in 1926 when its executive organ became the Paris-based International Institute for Intellectual Collaboration, with financial support from France; its first director was Julien Luchaire. In 1946 it was replaced by UNESCO.

might escape the oversight of the ‘leaders’ and become the property of ‘non-intellectuals’ as well.

Given the ideas prevailing in the Commission on International Collaboration, we can readily understand why the Commission failed in its task of creating a sense of world solidarity that could advance the League and provide support for increasing its authority in the face of national egotism. The French campaign against Esperanto in the League of Nations¹¹⁷ was clearly dictated by great power concern that the League might live up to its name by becoming not just an optional debating chamber but an international forum to which the nations would have to yield some of their privileges. While the Esperantists, still too naïve, failed to envision the provocative nature of their demand that all the world’s children should learn two languages, one national and the other international, their opponents, early on, foresaw the political consequences that would ensue if the League were to encourage the learning and use of a neutral means of international communication. Its opponents were fully aware of the floodgates that such support for Esperanto would open. Raul do Rio Branco, in his speech, revealed his opposition to the idea of the League as ‘super-State’¹¹⁸ and Gonzague de Reynold expressed a similar opinion: ‘there is a constant battle to wage against all those who would make of the League of Nations, not only a super-state but a super-church as well, against all the utopist internationalists. ... I am referring to Esperanto.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷We should note that, behind the scenes, the British government also sought to avoid an expression of official support for Esperanto by the League: Huber (1973), pp. 87–90; Hilary Chapman, ‘The British Government’s view of Edmond Privat and the League of Nations’, *EAB Update*, 2009, 46 (July–Sep.): 7–8, 10. The educational authorities in Britain were more favorably disposed towards Esperanto, while the ministry of foreign affairs was completely opposed: Haimin Wung-Sung (2011), p. 38.

¹¹⁸*Contre l’octroi*, p. 7; cf. Panchasi (2009), p. 155.

¹¹⁹Letter to Abbé Ricard, 5 June 1923; quoted in Huber (1973), p. 100. In his memoirs, de Reynold writes that the Commission, while still barely established, experienced ‘the attack of total utopians and integral internationalists, namely the Esperantists’: G. de Reynold (1963), *Mes mémoires*, Tome 3: *Les cercles concentriques*, Geneva: Éditions Générale, p. 452. After the Second World War (in which he favored a victory by Hitler) de Reynold continued his agitation against Esperanto.

Workers and 'Neutralists'

At the height of the French agitation against Esperanto, Edmond Privat pointed out that 'Even after Mr. Hanotaux's intervention at the League of Nations, not a word of anti-French feeling appeared in the Esperanto press—and quite rightly'.¹²⁰ Certainly it was tactically correct to avoid provoking France unnecessarily, but we must also recognize that UEA felt itself insufficiently strong as an international pressure group to mount a more energetic defense of its position in the face of the selfish interests of one nation. It not only indulged the French but also failed to reveal French linguistic imperialism, the French intellectuals' arrogant neglect of the need for international communication on the part of the lower levels of society and France's elitist way of thinking—all factors playing an essential role in the effort to drive Esperanto off the League of Nations agenda.

Equally regrettable, as we can now understand, was the fact that, when pressure on the League no longer promised immediate results, UEA proceeded to turn its back on the League. Instead of using Esperanto to popularize the League's noble principles and thus prepare more fertile ground for future international agreements on Esperanto, the association little by little distanced itself from the guidelines laid down by Hodler. In the course of the 1920s, internationalism in general lost its attractiveness; nor did UEA work to resist this tendency. Indeed the Association became increasingly dependent on the national Esperanto societies, whose preference was to direct their attention to their governments, often failing to demonstrate sufficient resistance to the nationalist currents in their own countries. Privat, social democrat and tireless campaigner against colonialism, was both predestined and sincerely committed to following the path shown him by his deceased friend Hodler; his erudition and charming personality won the sympathy of many delegates at the League—from the Czechoslovakian minister and later president Edvard Beneš, to Romain Rolland and Mahatma Gandhi.¹²¹ But, assisted only

¹²⁰ Edmond Privat, 'Idealo kaj realigo', *Esperanto* 18 (1922): 121.

¹²¹ See *Bon voisinage. Edmond Privat et Romain Rolland*. Lettres et documents présentés et annotés par Pierre Hirsch, Neuchâtel & Paris: A la Baconnière & Albin Michel, 1977; Edmond Privat, *Vivo de Gandhi*, La Laguna: J. Régulo, 1967.

by mediocre functionaries and surrounded by so many dreamers and politically uninformed Esperantists, he lacked the strength to inspire in the association the requisite confidence in its worldwide mission and the readiness to defend its internationalism against national jealousies.

UEA's deviation from its founder's ideals would make no sense, however, without consideration of the fact that, after the war, and shortly after Hodler's death, a schism split the Esperanto movement along class lines. In August 1921, Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT: 'The Worldwide Non-national Association') was founded. This international organization of worker Esperantists in fact inherited certain of Hodler's guiding principles (e.g. an organizational structure built on individual membership), but at the same time its battle cry 'Down with neutralism!' shattered all relations with the neutral movement. It identified that movement as bourgeois, claiming that Esperanto had value and was worth supporting only as long as it could effectively serve the international class battle.

We will address the activities and significance of SAT in Part III. Here it is primarily important to note that the split between workers and 'neutralists' changed the face of the Esperanto movement profoundly—which in turn inevitably had its influence on public judgments about the language itself.

Before the war, as we have seen, the Esperantists of Germany, particularly, were attacked for their alleged unpatriotic goals. During the war, they distributed documents, in Esperanto translation, presenting the viewpoint of the German army.¹²² They assumed that after the war these activities would be interpreted as proof of their patriotism. In March 1915 the industrialist Albert Steche expressed his conviction that the wartime propaganda using Esperanto made it clear 'that the German Esperantists are not cosmopolitan dreamers but fervent and practical patriots who [...] spare no pains nor hold back resources to serve the fatherland'.¹²³

¹²² See *Die Wahrheit ins Ausland durch Esperanto. Stimmen des Auslands über den Krieg*, Leipzig: Ortsverband der Leipziger Esperantogruppen, 1915. From November 1914 to January 1919, 60 issues of *Internacia Bulteno*, the 'German newsletter on the war', were published by the German Esperanto Service in Berlin.

¹²³ Albert Steche, *Die Bedeutung der Welthilfssprache 'Esperanto' für das deutsche Volk in Krieg und Frieden*, Leipzig: Ortsverband der Leipziger Esperanto-Gruppen, 1915, p. 23.

But such arguments did little to impress Esperanto's chauvinist opponents. With mocking comments about how rapidly the war succeeded in dislodging 'rootless' internationalism, they refused to conclude that the international language had now become more acceptable for Germans. Albert Zimmermann, for example, whom we mentioned earlier, recognized that subjectively the German Esperantists were good patriots, but warned that to come to such a conclusion 'the international character, the de-nationalizing effect of Esperanto' had to be ignored.¹²⁴ The militant nationalists in Germany were more exercised by the fact that the other side, particularly the French, also utilized Esperanto for wartime propaganda. Thus, the German and French Esperantists gained little from their wartime activities, which failed to generate much sympathy among the nationalists. And the movement's point of departure following the war was further complicated by the unprecedented flow of working people attracted to Esperanto; thus, class warfare entered the Esperanto movement. In several countries these new recruits did not join the traditional, neutral association but organized their own free-standing workers' Esperanto unions.

This development was symptomatic of working people's desire to broaden their horizons beyond national boundaries and to engage immediately with internationalism, now that the end of the war had brought them new opportunities. In a document produced by the Committee on International Auxiliary Language, created in 1919 by the International Research Council, 'the rapidly awakening international consciousness of the man on the street', manifested particularly by the popularity of Esperanto among workers, was described as 'one of the most important features of the whole subject of international language development' from a sociological perspective. The Committee noted: 'If this interest of the masses can be carefully studied and sympathetically grasped by competent sociologists, it may be given constructive guidance for the benefit of all; but if neglected and left entirely to be developed by radicals, it may serve to merely fan the flame of bolshevism.'¹²⁵ We find similar recognition of the problem in the writings of Albert Steche, who as early

¹²⁴ Zimmermann (1915), pp. 14–15.

¹²⁵ Cited in Guérard (1922), pp. 185–7.

as 1914 warned against ‘influences hostile to people and state’ within the Esperanto movement and insisted that:

Governments and communities must consult with one another to assure that nationally conscious members of the public have available to them everywhere the opportunity to learn Esperanto *without charge*. If this option doesn’t exist, the would-be learners, as is now apparent, will turn to social democratic Esperanto courses, where they will be educated *not only as Esperantists but also as social democrats*.¹²⁶

The postwar establishment and growth of a separate workers’ Esperanto movement rapidly rendered redundant Steche’s proposal that governments make instruction in the language official as a way of avoiding the radicalization of the Esperantists. In any event, the favorable response that Esperanto found among workers reduced rather than stimulated the inclination of governments to support the Esperanto movement. Warnings like that of Steche against the penetration of socialist ideas in the ranks of Esperantists only served to supply ammunition to conservative and reactionary regimes. Instead of coming to the conclusion that such infiltration should be halted by their own efforts to promote Esperanto, these regimes tended to turn their suspicions on the movement as a whole—including its politically neutral elements.

The dilemma of the middle-class Esperantists, unsettled by the flowering of Esperanto among the workers on the one hand and confronting elite misunderstanding on the other, is well illustrated in the person of Steche, who was president of the German Esperanto Association from 1920 to 1925. A member of the National Liberal Party and active in industrialists’ organizations, Steche was neither the sinister reactionary of anti-capitalist textbooks nor the Esperantist dedicated exclusively to commercial profit by way of Esperanto.¹²⁷ He sought to base his plea for the introduction of Esperanto as the sole foreign language in elementary

¹²⁶ Albert Steche, ‘Der Siegeszug des Esperanto’, *Leipziger Tageblatt*, 4 and 5 April 1914; quoted from the pamphlet with the same title, Leipzig, n.d., p. 7 (emphases in the original).

¹²⁷ Steche was vice president of the Union of Saxon Industrialists (1905–20) and a member of the Saxon parliament (1909–18). He also served as a member of the board of the Hansa League, an influential alliance founded in 1909 by industrialists opposed to the influence of extreme conservatives in German political and economic life.

schools on a remarkable combination of ideas for the creation of harmony among classes and nations:

This would be a more benevolent way of bridging the gap between rich and poor; through Esperanto, the less prosperous person can, like the educated person of means, advance progressively, drawing on the finest works of world literature to do so, in easy linguistic intercourse with people of all ranks in the entire world. Thus social harmony in one's own country will contribute to harmony among the peoples of the earth [...]¹²⁸

Steche's notions of peacemaking accorded in some sense with the tradition of Esperanto, specifically Zamenhof's proposition that the practice of a neutral language helps to reduce conflicts. But Zamenhof's thinking was always focused on the elimination of *national* antagonisms through Esperanto; he barely addressed the social roots of interethnic animosity. In any event, in the postwar situation, in the midst of inflation and unemployment, it was mere illusion to indulge in generalities about Esperanto's potential to overcome disharmony among the classes. Not surprisingly, Steche's theories on neutralizing class conflicts through Esperanto were condemned by worker Esperantists as capitalist snares. For them, the idealism of people like Privat, here discussing 'Esperantism', was an anachronism:

Esperantism is the least 'bourgeois' movement of all, yet it stands above and beyond all human conflicts, either ethnic or class-based.¹²⁹

Now it was the worker Esperantists who saw themselves as the true guardians of the Esperanto tradition: using Esperanto to advance socialism, they claimed, put them on the right path:

What does 'socialism' mean? If we wanted to replace the word 'socialism' with some other term, we could best do so with a term like human libera-

¹²⁸ Steche (1922), p. 20.

¹²⁹ Edmond Privat, 'La 15 Decembro 1859', *Esperanto* 17 (1921): 201. In 1924, the 16th World Congress of Esperanto in Vienna unanimously accepted a resolution declaring that 'the congress is in no sense a bourgeois or workers' congress, but a neutral congress of Esperantists of all classes': *Esperanto* 20 (1924): 148.

tion, human happiness. But isn't the idea of human happiness the very foundation of Esperanto? We didn't add that idea to Esperanto; we found it there. And it was put there ... by Zamenhof himself.¹³⁰

For his part, Steche regretfully noted the 'unhappy situation' in which the lower strata of society enthused over the 'new Latin of democracy' while 'the more literate levels, educated and integrated into the worldview of the old Latin, fail to meet expectations now, when they ought to be taking the lead'.¹³¹

Matters developed differently than Steche imagined; inevitably the Esperanto movement, like everything else, reflected the social conflicts and political tensions characteristic of the 1920s; nor was that entirely Esperanto's loss. The separate path followed by the worker Esperantists increased their chances of injecting the language into the ranks of the workers' movement, while leaving a broad field in which the neutral movement could gather recruits from other social strata. Thus both could co-exist, particularly in the democratic states.

Indeed, in the years following the war, in many countries of Europe, in the USA, in Brazil, in Japan, and in various other places across the world, the ground was favorable for Esperanto. Most often, the study and use of Esperanto was an entirely private affair, pursued by people who, curious about the world, aimed to overcome linguistic and national boundaries as rapidly as possible. In most countries with Esperanto organizations, their activities developed freely and without direct hindrance. Nor did they lack official support. In Germany, for example, the 'Esperanto Institute for the German Reich' received regular state funding; educational authorities declared their sympathetic support and permitted the teaching of Esperanto in schools outside the official instructional program. And all this came about, in the judgment of the Esperantists at the time 'from strong pressure from below, from circles of people who valued international relations, but had not themselves experienced foreign language instruction in school'.¹³²

¹³⁰ F. Leuschner, 'Wir und die Bürgerlichen', *Der Arbeiter-Esperantist* 8 (1922), 9: 10.

¹³¹ Steche (1922), p. 20.

¹³² Paul Bennemann, 'Das Esperanto und die Schulbehörden', *Das Esperanto ein Kulturfaktor*, vol. 8. *Festschrift anlässlich des 17. Deutschen Esperanto-Kongresses*, Berlin: Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, 1928, p. 55.

A method for teaching Esperanto rapidly and without a textbook, also for less educated people, was developed by András Cseh, a Catholic priest from Romania of Hungarian extraction. The courses taught by him all across Europe, in which the language was presented as an entertaining game, soon found many imitators. Elements of the so-called direct method also found their way into traditional instruction. In the inter-war years, thousands of people could thank András Cseh, his charm and his skillful teaching, for their knowledge of Esperanto.

Those who had learned the language practiced it in various ways, predominantly for correspondence and for travel. Among the most interesting results of such connections were international marriages, in which Esperanto served as ‘edzperanto’ (spouse-purveyor) and from which ‘denaskaj esperantistoj’ (Esperantists from birth, i.e. native speakers) were produced. For the active Esperantist, the culmination of the Esperanto year was the World Congress, in which on average some 1500 or 2000 people participated. In addition, almost every year an international conference dedicated to the practical application of Esperanto was organized, attended by representatives of governments, chambers of commerce, trade fairs and financial organizations. Conference topics included the use of Esperanto in business, broadcasting, science and tourism. Also particularly notable was the conference on ‘Peace through the School’ convened in Prague over Easter 1927 by the Geneva-based International Bureau of Education. Almost 500 delegates from 19 countries participated, accepting recommendations for pupil exchange and for the removal of chauvinistic elements in textbooks; Esperanto was used as the sole language of translation.

The number and quality of original literary works in Esperanto increased. Schools of writers began to emerge, the most famous being the Budapest school. Following the founding of the journal *Literatura Mondo* (1922) the Hungarian capital became a center of Esperanto culture. It was also the home of the most popular Esperanto writer Julio (Gyula) Baghy, a former actor, who, on the basis of his experiences as a prisoner of war in Siberia, found his voice in Esperanto. In numerous short stories and poems he described his philosophy of love, peace and humanity. His works, optimistic, highly idealistic, often coming across as sentimentally naïve, infused

the ideals that underlay Esperanto with an emotional force that strongly appealed to the Esperantists. Baghy, nicknamed ‘Paĉjo’ (‘Papa’), expressed feelings that were dear to Esperantists from the beginning and also typified the inclinations of the moderately progressive middle class in the period between the wars. Baghy’s success was all the greater because of his passionate protests against social injustice and the barriers of nationhood, though he seldom showed his readers concrete ways of overcoming these evils. He avoided identifying himself with political and ideological positions, thereby helping the average apolitical Esperantists to identify themselves with his ideal of human brotherhood.¹³³

Other literary works in Esperanto displayed a similar idealism—such as those of the German Teo Jung, whose principal contribution, however, was his founding in 1920 of the newspaper *Esperanto Triumfonta* (Esperanto on the path to victory).¹³⁴ Of the hundreds of Esperanto-language periodicals, this was the most frequently published, appearing weekly. The newspaper, as of 1925 renamed *Heroldo de Esperanto* (Esperanto Herald), provided its readers with arguments they could use in promoting Esperanto and printed frequent reports of successes in the movement as a way of reminding the Esperantists not to grow weary in their efforts on behalf of the language and to maintain faith in its final victory.

Harassment in the 1920s

Esperantists became the object of police surveillance in Germany because of their political activities. After the Reich government overthrew the labor government in Saxony and Reich troops occupied the region in October 1923, the Police Presidium in Leipzig established its own ‘Esperanto-language office’ to collect information on the activities of the German Workers’ Esperanto Association. An internal report described this association as ‘a factor to be taken seriously among political movements’ because it explicitly declared its desire to use Esperanto merely as a means of bring-

¹³³ See Vilmos Benczik, ‘Julio Baghy, mitoj kaj realo’, *Sennacieca Revuo*, 1969, 97: 42–52; Marjorie Boulton, *Poeto fajrakora. La verkaro de Julio Baghy*, Saarbrücken: Iltis, 1983.

¹³⁴ See Teo Jung’s memoirs: Jung (1979).

ing about the worldwide union of the proletariat.¹³⁵ The police noted that between January and October 1924 communist Esperantists in Leipzig had published 16 issues of the broadsheet newspaper *Völkerspiegel*, taking their material from Esperanto periodicals and the letters of comrades in other countries. But the police did nothing to stop it, even though it served as a kind of substitute for the banned *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*.¹³⁶

Genuine persecutions were inflicted on worker Esperantists in other countries, primarily those where workers' parties were illegal. In Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, receipt of SAT publications was forbidden.¹³⁷ On occasion, a high percentage of workers in an Esperanto club was enough to attract the suspicions of a police chief, as happened in 1924 to the Esperantists in Split, Yugoslavia¹³⁸; in that country, the police in several villages simply outlawed Esperanto.¹³⁹ In 1926 a SAT member from Yugoslavia complained bitterly that in his 'putrujo' (in Esperanto *patrujo* means fatherland, while *putrujo* translates as 'rotten place') the general discrimination against workers extended also to his own desire to learn Esperanto.¹⁴⁰ In Estonia, workers' Esperanto groups founded in 1925 were unable to begin operations—'because of the imprisonment of most of the members'.¹⁴¹

Such bans and embargoes were directed specifically at the political activities of worker Esperantists. At first they did not touch the affairs of the neutral movement, for whose leaders the wisest tactic seemed to be to maintain silence or to content themselves by declaring that Esperanto could be used by all and belonged to no one. In this way they could deny the responsibility of the movement as a whole when the language was used for some specific and questionable purpose.

¹³⁵ Polizeipräsidium Leipzig, Esperantosprachliche Dienststelle, den 22. Februar 1924. Jürgen Hamann kindly made available the photo reproduction of this and other material now preserved in the Staatsarchiv, Leipzig.

¹³⁶ Cf. Otto Bässler, 'Fortschrittliche Traditionen', *Der Esperantist* 2 (1966), 5/6 (Apr./May): 33–4.

¹³⁷ *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 149; 5 (1928/29): 258, 456.

¹³⁸ Ĝivoje (1965), chap. 8.

¹³⁹ *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 27 (79): 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 35 (87): 6.

¹⁴¹ *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 41: 8.

Perhaps the least excitable were the Japanese Esperantists. In May 1921, the blind Russian-Ukrainian poet Vasili Eroshenko, who enjoyed great popularity among Japanese leftists, was expelled from Japan for his participation in a May 1 demonstration and his attendance at the Second Congress of the Japanese Socialist Union.¹⁴² In late September 1922 a speech on ‘Cosmopolitanism and Esperanto’ was interrupted by a police officer who believed that it contained ‘dangerous ideas’.¹⁴³ But the Japanese Esperanto Institute (JEI), which always avoided involvement in political and ideological conflicts, was unperturbed. On the contrary, it happily noted that the publicity surrounding Eroshenko’s deportation had awakened popular curiosity about Esperanto. If not against popular prejudices (‘Esperantists resemble watermelons: green on the outside, red on the inside’), at least JEI succeeded in shielding itself against government harassment. Somewhat different was the situation in Taiwan and Korea, both under the rule of Japan at the time. For Japanese citizens resident in those territories there were no obstacles to learning Esperanto, as long as they steered clear of political activities. But if local residents were interested in learning it the authorities tended to judge such activities as the first step on a slippery slope to ‘dangerous thinking’. A report that has come down to us, written by Yamaguchi Koshizu, a Japanese woman who publicized Esperanto among the Taiwanese, provides insight into the motives behind the denigration of Esperanto in Taiwan. She cites the following explanation from a high-ranking functionary in the Japanese police:

In general it is important to understand that the meaning is different when a Japanese does something from when a Taiwanese does it. [...] There is no doubt that Japanese people choose Esperanto only because they believe it to be a common international language for the world, a language symbolizing future peace for humankind, or a way of respecting one’s own national language. But the situation changes completely if it has to do with

¹⁴² Mine Yositaka, ‘Skizo pri la vivo de V. Eroŝenko’, in *La tundro ĝemas. Verkoj de V. Eroŝenko*, Toyonaka: Japana Esperanta Librokooperativo, 1980, pp. 69–70. Works by and about Eroshenko have been published in Esperanto, Japanese, Chinese, Ukrainian, and Russian. See also the chapter “Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Colonial Hierarchy: Chinese Responses to Russell, Eroshenko, and Tagore”, in Xiaoqun Xu, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism in Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan and the New Culture Era, 1918–1928*, Lanham and others: Lexington Books, 2014, pp. 53–71 (esp. 62–71).

¹⁴³ *La Revuo Orienta* 3 (1922): 162. The speaker was Sasaki Takamaru.

Taiwanese. They are interested in this world language not simply as one people in the world: their learning Esperanto implies complete rejection of the Japanese language. Language and thought are intimately related, so rejection of the Japanese language signifies total repudiation of Japan. Japan's colonial policy is completely unable to tolerate such traitors.¹⁴⁴

What makes this statement particularly notable is its lack of any attempt to hide the evident effort to treat non-Japanese as inferior and to apply different metrics even to the simple act of learning Esperanto.

In Eastern Europe, on more than one occasion the authorities declared that their actions against worker Esperantists were not directed at the Esperanto movement in general. In Poland, the minister of internal affairs announced in 1923 that the harassment of SAT members was occurring only because of their 'actions against the state', not because of Esperanto.¹⁴⁵ When in 1922 in the Romanian city of Cluj a group of young workers was arrested because over-enthusiastic police officers mistook the Esperantist green star for the communist insignia, the president of the military tribunal, before absolving the accused, declared that Esperanto was 'a very beautiful cultural movement' and that only the use of the language 'for unauthorized purposes' needed to be punished.¹⁴⁶ And when in 1926 the South Slav Esperantist League complained to the minister of education that district heads and gendarmes in various locations had forbidden the founding of Esperanto clubs or the organization of courses, the minister Stjepan Radić declared that he himself was an adept of Esperanto and had recently introduced the language into the curriculum of the University of Zagreb.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, this incident did not put an end to local obstacles in Yugoslavia. The situation was similar in Hungary. The neutral movement in semi-feudal Hungary had a generally more progressive character than that in the more developed countries of Western Europe. The president of the Esperanto Society of Hungary (Hungarlanda Esperanto-Societo, HES) from 1912 to 1923 was Sándor Giesswein, a Catholic prelate who before the war had been one of the leaders of the Christian Socialist Party.

¹⁴⁴ 'El la verkajoj de f-ino K. Jamaguĉi', *La Verda Ombro* 5 (1923): 11–12 (Japanese original).

¹⁴⁵ *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 6 (47): 12.

¹⁴⁶ *Esperanto* 20 (1924): 51.

¹⁴⁷ *Ĝivoje* (1965), chap. 9.

During the war he secretly permitted the use of the archbishop's palace, and even churches themselves, for pacifist meetings, and after the war as leader of the Reform Party he argued for democratization.¹⁴⁸ As early as 1911 the HES constitution emphasized the interconnection of Esperanto, the peace movement, women's emancipation and the protection of children and workers—a vision statement that survived every regime change until 1950.¹⁴⁹

During the Hungarian Republic of Councils of 1919, Esperantists were among those infected by revolutionary enthusiasm.¹⁵⁰ Following its fall, a few of them fled the country. The Esperanto poet, Rezső Rajczy, suspected of being a communist, died after being arrested and tortured; he was 'the only known martyr for Esperanto in Hungary'.¹⁵¹ Because the regime of Miklós Horthy remembered that Esperanto had been politically 'misused' in the 1920s, it was sometimes an act of courage for Hungarians living in the provinces even to wear the green star. In 1925 the founding of a group in Mezőkövesd was not authorized because, among other grounds, it was alleged that the local inhabitants had such a primitive level of development that even elementary education had not or would not have the desired result, and that the hours devoted to learning Esperanto might be misused to disseminate activities against the state.¹⁵² While the neutral society had plenty of room to operate, the workers' Esperanto movement in Hungary suffered from frequent embargoes by local authorities. To teach the language to workers without charge, special permission had to be sought from the police; it was often declined, sometimes because (allegedly) the neutralist Esperantists had already set up courses and the workers could study there, sometimes because Hungarian workers should first master their native language, sometimes because an Esperanto course in a city with so many illiterates was simply superfluous.¹⁵³ Worker Esperantists in Bulgaria had to deal with even

¹⁴⁸ Pechan (1979), p. 90.

¹⁴⁹ Rátkai (1985), p. 87.

¹⁵⁰ Zoltán Barna & Ervin Fenyvesi, 'Esperanto-movado dum la Konsilia Respubliko', *Hungara Vivo* 19 (1979), 1: 10–11.

¹⁵¹ Rátkai (2010), p. 79.

¹⁵² *EdE*, p. 230.

¹⁵³ *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 19 (71): 8.

greater obstacles: in 1924 the Bulgarian minister of internal affairs labeled Esperanto a Bolshevik language. As a result, non-Esperantist workers' journals, which had earlier considered Esperanto a 'bourgeois, purposeless and useless affair', began to change their opinion.¹⁵⁴

Workers could not be frightened away from learning Esperanto; in fact they tended to regard it as all the more attractive the more 'reactionaries' condemned it. Such enthusiasm, irrepressible through harassment and even stimulated by it, little by little caused the authorities to lessen their readiness or ability to make a clear distinction between the movement as a whole and the radical elements within it. As the 1920s drew to a close, the guardians of public order increasingly gave at least the impression that the Esperanto movement as a whole merited closer observation. In parallel with this view, the public tended more and more to impute ideological goals to the language itself. The French minister Bérard's circular, already mentioned, served as an occasion to warn against the widespread use of Esperanto to advance Bolshevism.¹⁵⁵ The German Romanist Karl Vossler even went so far as to suspect that through such use the character of the language itself had begun to change:

international Bolshevism, socialism, and communism have of late taken up residence in the grammar and vocabulary of Esperanto, with the intention not only of filling it with their ethos and ideas, their phonetic feelings and their semantic accents, their proletarian voices, but also having it make political propaganda for them.

[...] a language that is conscious of the fact that it was formed out of international word borrowing and that relies on international communication has to present itself as goal-directed, sympathetic, and linguistically related to the beliefs and actions, the ideas and dissemination, of communism.¹⁵⁶

The leaders of the neutral movement could hardly overlook such intentional or unintentional identification of Esperanto with particular

¹⁵⁴ *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 3: 6.

¹⁵⁵ Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, 2nd edn., London: Boswell, 1924, p. 345.

¹⁵⁶ Karl Vossler, *Geist und Kultur in der Sprache*, Heidelberg: Winter, 1925, pp. 187–8.

political agendas (generally of the left). With increasing frequency these leaders felt the need to defend themselves against accusations that the Esperanto movement was serving as a training ground for revolutionaries. Such efforts at self-protection were not unsuccessful. Even Bérard himself explicitly distinguished between ‘suspicious groups’ for whom Esperanto had become ‘a device for systematic internationalism’ and ‘the sincerity of many French people, often eminent people’, who considered Esperanto merely a practical instrument for correspondence.¹⁵⁷ (It may be useful here to quote the Japanese Nitobe Inazō, who, having just experienced the strong opposition of the French government to Esperanto, noted in 1924: ‘However it may encounter prejudice and unfriendliness in Europe, Esperanto is accepted in the Far East with an open spirit.’ Nitobe expressed one reservation—and immediately qualified it: ‘People accuse it of serving as a channel for radical thought: but it is well known that more propaganda material expressing “dangerous ideas” exists in other languages.’¹⁵⁸) Yet Bérard’s words remind us of the dilemma faced by the ‘bourgeois’ Esperantists, for they too were accustomed to talking not only about Esperanto’s practical advantages but also, to varying degrees, about the significance of the language as an idea. However imprecisely defined it might be, they felt themselves enduringly linked to Esperanto’s ‘internal idea’, remembering Zamenhof’s moving declaration in Geneva in 1906.

In consequence, to dispel the suspicions of governments about the political ‘misuse’ of Esperanto, the leaders of the neutral movement could no longer simply emphasize, as the French pioneers were still doing, the idea that Esperanto was just a language having nothing to do with an idea. An emphatic denial of its ideological content on the part of the leaders would have undoubtedly encountered incomprehension among the many enthusiasts for Esperanto who made up the neutral organizations, given that the ‘internal idea’ was their emotional link to the movement. It was impossible to reject the idea of Esperanto as a cause, even if every Esperantist was entirely free to

¹⁵⁷ Bérard’s circular, *Le Monde espérantiste* 15 (1922), 3 (125): 18.

¹⁵⁸ Inazo Nitobe, *The Use and Study of Foreign Languages in Japan*, Geneva: League of Nations, 1924, p. 26; reprinted in *The Works of Inazō Nitobe*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1972, vol. 4, p. 461.

interpret the ‘internal idea’ as he or she chose. So there was no avoiding the vulnerability of Esperanto to attacks by opponents—all the less as Esperantist idealism evolved in directions that collided with rulers’ ideology.

Under these circumstances, the leaders of the neutral movement could only keep repeating that the language was suitable for all purposes, that they should not be held responsible if socialists or communists made use of it, and that the focused activities of working people should encourage other social groups to avail themselves of Esperanto.

But no other social group knew how to use Esperanto as effectively as the workers—and this awareness was a constant source of embarrassment to the neutral movement. Steche’s expectations—that, in the postwar period, increased commercial exchange would dictate to the upper levels of society the need to use Esperanto as a means of international communication—went unrealized. Closer to reality, it seemed, was the prophecy of the French revolutionary writer Henri Barbusse, who early in 1921 wrote that there would soon come a time when Esperanto, which at first ‘was mostly developed in bourgeois circles’, would frighten this same bourgeoisie, who—because the revolutionaries had taken ‘this amazing little key’ into their hands—‘will reject it because of the evident sense of fraternity that it has brought with it’.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, conservative Esperantists had to ask themselves whether it was wise to continue their interest in Esperanto if working people were suggesting that the ‘neutralists’ were themselves unconsciously hastening the move to world revolution, as was asserted in the 1928 action plan of SAT, the international organization of worker Esperantists:

Esperanto itself is a double-edged sword in the hands of the oppressors because, in the end, its use even by the bourgeoisie will strengthen the international anti-capitalist tendencies of the masses.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Henri Barbusse, ‘Al la Internaciistoj’, *Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 2 (13): 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Protokolaro de la VIII-a Kongreso [of SAT] en Göteborg (Svedio), 14.–18. aŭgusto 1928*, Leipzig: SAT, 1928, p. 57.

By this time such a declaration could find support in the popularity of Esperanto in the Soviet Union. This new development merely reinforced the need for those active in the neutral associations to increase their emphasis on their distance from the labor movement. This inclination was expressed differently, depending on the degree of political freedom prevailing in the country in which the dissemination of Esperanto was taking place. The less democratic the regime, the more the neutral organizations' efforts to distance themselves took on the character of direct opposition to the use of Esperanto in politically undesirable ways—which, ultimately, meant contestation of the right to use the language for any and every purpose. In 1923, *Pola Esperantisto*, for example, called on 'true Esperantists' to protest against the intrusion of non-nationalism (*sennaciismo*), communism or pacifism into the movement:

we, true lovers of Esperanto, will not allow anything to be smuggled [into the movement] in the folds of our flag; we will not allow anyone to undermine the temple built with the toil and sweat of the First Pioneers.¹⁶¹

Consequently, attacks on worker Esperantists received in *Pola Esperantisto* the cold-blooded comment that 'they are themselves often responsible' for what happens to them.¹⁶² Similarly, in Hungary the neutral societies did not, as the workers complained, offer help when 'people offend Esperanto', even when, during the World Congress in Budapest in 1929, the police refused permission to recite the poems of Sándor Petőfi.¹⁶³

The effort to put limits on the use of Esperanto was certainly understandable, even defensible, in the sense that a language movement should not create unnecessary obstacles for itself under a dictatorial regime by publicly allying itself with opposition movements or revolutionary forces. On the other hand, such a tactic also contained a fair degree of self-delusion on the part of the 'neutral' Esperantists. First, it ignored the fact that the enthusiasm with which workers acted for Esperanto had its beginning in an idealistic inheritance that they shared with non-workers

¹⁶¹ 'Grava danĝero', *Pola Esperantisto* 17 (1923): 81–3 (quotation p. 83).

¹⁶² Baroko, 'Sub verda mantelo', *Pola Esperantisto* 18 (1924): 33.

¹⁶³ L. Kőkény, 'Intervjuo kun s-ano Tieder, prezidanto de HESL', *Hungara Heroldo* 3 (1930), 7: 6.

and therefore could not be claimed as a simple outcome of the revolutionaries' strategy. Secondly, the non-workers' efforts to create distance could not hide the fact that by the end of the 1920s attacks on Esperanto could no longer be regarded as directed only against so-called political misuse. It would be more accurate to say that in many cases the rulers were inspired by other motives than simple efforts to prevent the use of the language for class war—as the following examples will illustrate.

When in 1928 the Bulgarian minister of popular education ordered the disbanding of all school Esperanto clubs and banned the circulation of Esperanto periodicals among schoolchildren, among the motives adduced for this action the issue of security was the last to be mentioned. The reasons were as follows:

Because Esperanto is an easy language, the students will grow accustomed to easy things and will lose the desire to learn more difficult matters; because Esperanto is international, the students will begin to favor internationalism and dislike the national language and culture; finally, the Esperanto movement is suspect because hidden beneath it are Bolsheviks and anarchists.¹⁶⁴

The minister made no distinction between the neutral and the workers' Esperanto movement, but declared that merely learning Esperanto was itself an 'action against the fatherland'.

The worst surprises for aspiring learners of Esperanto were reserved primarily for people living outside the big cities and belonging to the lower classes. For example the banate (regional) administration in Zagreb motivated its refusal to recognize an Esperanto group founded in 1931 in the following terms:

there is neither a national-cultural nor a social need to form such a club among the peasants and craftsmen of Đelekovec, because there are various national, cultural, economic and social aspirations that a simple person should be interested in. Such a person should be taught literacy and cul-

¹⁶⁴ Decree no. 9607 of 10 April 1928; quoted in *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 301. See also p. 285; and 'Reakcio kaj mondlingvo', *La Socialisto* 3 (1928): 64–5. The decree was evidently influenced by Bérard's circular: *Esperanto* 24 (1928): 130.

ture, but not by means of a lifeless artificial language (Esperanto), which requires preparatory instruction and knowledge of at least one established living world language. Given that the club under no circumstances can achieve the goal for which it is founded and because there exists a demonstrated danger that the club could damage the national interest, denial of permission is seen to be advisable and lawful.¹⁶⁵

This decision offers striking evidence of the tendency of reactionary authorities to restrain the emancipation of people from less privileged social strata, dictate their path to education and suppress everything that might on its own account lead to the broadening of their intellectual horizons and the establishment of international contacts. The same considerations lay behind prohibitions in Hungary, as is documented in the explanations of local authorities in that country:

instruction in the Hungarian language and in orthography is a greater need.¹⁶⁶

[...] the workers barely know the Hungarian language, so it cannot be supposed that they would seriously desire to learn a foreign language.¹⁶⁷

In Orosháza the founding of an Esperanto group was denied on the grounds that ‘it can be expected that the Esperantists will establish relations with foreigners’.¹⁶⁸

To summarize: in the countries of Southeast Europe, ruled by dictatorial regimes and lagging behind other European countries economically and socially, embargoes and persecutions directed against Esperantists’ activities were dictated not only by fear of revolutionary elements in their ranks but also by two other hypothetical considerations: (1) that Esperanto impedes prescribed procedures for citizens’ education, and (2) that Esperanto allows its users to acquire knowledge from outside the

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Ĝivoje (1965), chap. 12.

¹⁶⁶ In the town of Tótkomlós in 1927, mentioned by social democratic deputies during parliamentary debate, quoted in *EdE*, p. 230.

¹⁶⁷ Mentioned during the annual meeting of the Esperantist Workers Society of Hungary (HESL: Hungaria Esperantista Societo Laborista), 23 March 1930: *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30), p. 321.

¹⁶⁸ *Antaŭen* (organ of HESL), 1929, April/May: 18; cf. *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 364; quoted also in *EdE*, p. 230.

country, which could have an unmanageable influence on their relationship with their own society.

So it is difficult to make a clear distinction between reactions to particular applications of Esperanto and hostility to the language for its own sake. Much as the position of a government or political movement on the subject of Esperanto not uncommonly provided a good measure of its degree of democracy, so the political conviction exposing an Esperantist to persecution could not be wholly separated from Esperanto itself and generally seemed to the persecuted Esperantist a logical extension of the idealism behind Esperanto. As a result, by emphasizing the political neutrality of Esperanto when some particular use of the language threatened to negatively influence public opinion on Esperanto itself, the 'neutral' Esperantists ignored the root causes of many of these negative judgments and their resulting negative responses. Instead, they tended all too rapidly to attribute them to the activities of leftist Esperantists.

The movement failed to apprehend the degree to which political obstacles included both covert and overt attacks on ordinary people's desire for self-education and their spontaneous reaching for international contacts, both tendencies manifested in their desire to learn Esperanto. Such attacks in fact touched the entire Esperanto movement, since the desire for self-education and the wish to overcome national barriers were fundamental characteristics of the Esperantists. Silence and passivity in reaction to repression on grounds like those cited for Yugoslavia and Hungary indicate that the neutral movement was insufficiently aware of certain essential considerations—considerations that influenced every form of Esperanto activity and were important for the future survival of the movement. Instead, in April 1929, a few months before the World Congress in Budapest, the Esperantists published the following 'Declaration of Neutrality':

For some time the enemies of Esperanto have been trying to identify general propaganda for the international auxiliary language Esperanto with activity for certain social goals.

The International Central Committee of the Esperanto Movement [...] firmly and formally declares that its program, aimed only at the introduc-

tion of Esperanto, is entirely neutral concerning political, religious, racial or social affairs.

It insistently opposes such false assertions, whose effect is only to hinder the important progress resulting from the introduction of an easily learned neutral auxiliary language side by side with the mother tongue in question.¹⁶⁹

The declaration aimed to remove suspicions of the Esperanto movement's social unreliability, but by emphasizing the obvious it had almost no effect on the people to whom it was clearly directed. Rightists, if they did not already disapprove of the idea of an international language, in any case ignored theories about Esperanto's rigorous neutrality, comparing them with the reality, namely the apparently ineluctable advance of Esperanto among the working class.

As the workers' Esperanto movement continued to grow, UEA and the neutral national societies saw a decline in their membership.¹⁷⁰ Particularly serious was an internal crisis in UEA. The association was already intellectually impoverished by the migration of many progressive Esperantists to SAT, the Worldwide Non-national Association founded in 1921. The successors of Hodler, as we have noted, were unsuccessful in further developing his spiritual and intellectual heritage. Although UEA remained an association of individual members and was therefore theoretically independent of national trends, it had weakened its link with internationalist goals (if only to protect its borders from SAT, with its 'non-national' goals) and at the same time faced a growing demand from national organizations for a right to collective decision-making concerning the international movement. The concerns of these organizations were conditioned in the first instance by the circumstances in their own countries; as a consequence they were calling, in part, for greater accommodation of the Esperanto movement to nationalism.

In 1932, UEA was threatened with bankruptcy. It drastically reduced its financial support for the Central Committee, which as of 1922 had

¹⁶⁹ *Esperanto* 25 (1929): 75.

¹⁷⁰ *EdE*, p. 548.

served as a common body for representatives of national associations and UEA. As a result, the national associations nullified the contract with UEA and began planning for a new international organization of Esperantists, based on national societies. This development, auguring a turning away from the ideals of Hodler, was a direct result of UEA's financial problems, but at the same time it signaled the degree to which the Esperanto movement was influenced by the public's rising lack of faith in internationalism and the extent to which UEA lacked the strength to fight the wave of nationalism following the world economic crisis.

At the beginning of the 1930s, then, internal problems were shaking the neutral movement—while externally the situation of Esperanto was worsening in numbers of countries. The language was still not faced with widespread persecution: pointing to the principle of neutrality or declaring their loyalty to the government, the leaders of the neutral movement trusted that the unfavorable atmosphere would pass, and that in any case the language would not fall victim to political changes. The Esperantist workers felt the same. In October 1932 *La Socialisto*, in Austria, expressed its conviction that, despite the ban on workers' Esperanto groups, there was no need to fear that the language itself was in danger: 'It would be inaccurate to conclude from [the ban] that fascist and semi-fascist governments want to suppress Esperanto. Nothing like this has happened so far. Such actions are aimed not at "Esperanto" organizations per se, but at the political tendencies of the organization concerned.'¹⁷¹

A few short months after the expression of such optimism, a regime was established in the center of Europe that would render this statement fundamentally inaccurate.

¹⁷¹ Adolf Sproeck, 'Esperantobewegung und Faschismus', *La Socialisto* 7 (1932), 10: 3.

Part II

**'Language of Jews and
Communists'**

3

The Rise of a New Enemy

Esperanto in the Weimar Republic

During the 1920s Germany held what was in many respects an enviable position in the international Esperanto movement. After the First World War and the creation of the Weimar Republic, the idea of an international neutral language was successful in attracting more and more adherents among Germans. The collapse of German military ambitions strengthened, particularly among the workers, a desire to overcome the barriers of self-isolation and great-power arrogance. Through Esperanto, Germans sought to bridge the gap in interpersonal contacts with a world skeptical of Germany's young democracy. In 1923, under the honorary patronage of Reichspräsident Friedrich Ebert, the 15th World Congress of Esperanto took place in Nuremberg, with almost 5000 attendees. The authorities were generous with their moral, and in some cases financial, support, recognizing that Esperanto was 'an important means' to achieve 'ethical education in the spirit of popular reconciliation'.¹ The

¹ Circular, State Ministry of Braunschweig, Department of Public Education, 20 October 1920; cited in *Das Esperanto ein Kulturfaktor*, vol. 8. *Festschrift anlässlich des 17. Deutschen Esperanto-Kongresses*, Berlin: Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, 1928, p. 63.

well-known publishers Ferdinand Hirt, in Leipzig, and Rudolf Mosse, in Berlin, released new publications in and on Esperanto. From Germany the message of the popular weekly newspaper *Heroldo de Esperanto* rang out across the world. Statistics for the year 1926 reveal that 30,868 Germans called themselves Esperantists, of whom 8490 were organized into local groups.²

The surge of Esperanto in interwar Germany, however, did not primarily benefit the neutral movement, as the membership figures for the German Esperanto Association (GEA) show: from 1921 to 1924 the association's membership actually declined from around 3000 to 2648, dropping by the end of 1930 to a mere 2371. At the same time, the German Workers' Esperanto Association (GLEA), operating independently of GEA, prospered, organizing courses for several thousand participants; its membership rose from 2900 in 1924 to some 4000 in 1930.³

The two associations' unequal organizational development was partly clarified by Albert Steche, GEA's president, in a review of the situation of Esperanto in Germany at the end of 1923: 'The movement is hindered by political and economic decline. It is kept afloat essentially by the middle-class and working-class elements of the population. The upper classes, science, industry, commerce, and transportation still essentially maintain an attitude of rejection, or, at a minimum, indifference.'⁴ Steche characterized the situation in precisely the same words in the following two years,⁵ while for 1926 he noted something of an improvement in the situation.⁶ From then on, GEA's annual reports registered a steady increase in public favorability toward Esperanto in Germany⁷—an increase apparently unhindered by the economic crisis.⁸ Nevertheless, GEA was unable to increase the number of its members.

²'Tutmonda statistiko esperantista', *Esperanto* 25 (1928): 134–56 (esp. p. 137).

³*Germana Esperantisto* 21 (1924): 145; *EdE*, pp. 192, 195.

⁴*Germana Esperantisto* 21 (1924): 5.

⁵*Germana Esperantisto* 22 (1925): 7; 23 (1926): 8.

⁶*Germana Esperantisto* 24 (1927): 20.

⁷In 1928 it was noted that 'the largest part of the press is favorable to Esperanto': *Germana Esperantisto* 26 (1929): 7.

⁸*Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 2; 30 (1933): 7.

The German division along class lines was therefore strongly evident in the organized Esperanto movement as well. In 1924 Steche realistically pointed to an ideological chasm ‘currently not even bridgeable by Esperanto’ between members of the middle class who ‘most often consider Esperanto simply a Jewish invention, serving anti-German internationalism and pacifism and barring the way to the profit that might be derived from knowledge of foreign national languages’, and working-class members, who were focused on the goal of using Esperanto to hasten the arrival of socialism.⁹ Steche concluded that, given these circumstances, GEA had to remain a neutral language association where there was room for all German Esperantists ‘with primarily patriotic feelings’. He rejected a proposal to transform GEA into a ‘militant patriot brigade’ because such an approach ‘completely denies the basic idea’ of Esperanto and ‘would drive out the best middle-class representatives’.¹⁰

Throughout the 1920s GEA followed this strictly neutral line; indeed it seemed the only way to prevent an influential element of public opinion, observing the rapid spread of Esperanto among the working classes, from definitively identifying the language movement with political goals. Thus, the Association hoped that it would succeed little by little, through rational argument, not only in convincing middle-class Germans of the practical usefulness of Esperanto but also in blunting the resistance of the strongest opponents of the whole idea of an international auxiliary language.

It was a difficult task. As Eugen Wüster wrote in 1931, in no other country ‘the opposition [to a planned language] was as strong as in Germany; until 1929 not a single sympathizer could be found among specialists in linguistics’.¹¹ A stronghold of opposition, for example, particularly up to the end of the First World War, was the pure-language movement represented by the Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein (General German Language Union). This association not only advocated the correct use of the German language but also tended to denounce

⁹ ‘Bericht über den 12. Deutschen Esperanto-Kongreß in Plauen (7.–10. Juni 1924)’, *Germana Esperantisto* 21 (1924): 145–8 (quotation p. 146).

¹⁰ *Germana Esperantisto* 21 (1924): 147.

¹¹ Eugen Wüster, *Internationale Sprachnormung in der Technik, besonders in der Elektrotechnik*, Berlin: VDI-Verlag, 1931, p. 350.

users of foreign words as committing intellectual treason against the German people. Because the purists often worked into their attacks the occasional sideswipe at Esperanto as a further danger to the purity of the German language,¹² GEA members devoted considerable energy to efforts to win over the sympathy of the Sprachverein. They argued that learning Esperanto helped sharpen understanding and proper use of the mother tongue¹³ and that Esperanto ‘prevents the exhaustion and disintegration of the national languages and guarantees their free development, removing from them troublesome international terms’.¹⁴ Esperantists were encouraged to join the Sprachverein, because against it Esperanto hardly seemed capable of success in Germany.¹⁵ In fact, a large number of German Esperantists, including Steche’s successor as GEA president, Ernst Kliemke, were enthusiastic members of the Sprachverein.¹⁶

The point of view of the Sprachverein itself was not unified, indeed conflicted. An unnamed member and a friend of Esperanto asserted in May 1926 that the organization was ‘in no sense hostile to our cause’, and that in its journal *Muttersprache* no articles opposed to Esperanto had appeared in a long while.¹⁷ Yet precisely in the same month the journal published an extensive article from the pen of its editor, Oskar Streicher, that was indeed hostile to Esperanto. Although he conceded that within the Sprachverein there were members who knew how to harmonize their enthusiasm for a ‘world language’ with love of their mother tongue, he criticized the insufficient representation of German-derived words in the Esperanto vocabulary, denied that Esperanto could ever be a living language, ‘because through it there speaks the soul of no people’, named the translation of Goethe’s *Iphigenia* into an artificial language ‘a sacrilege against a sacred text’ and ended by saying that ‘Esperanto would

¹² Eduard Engel, *Sprich Deutsch! Ein Buch zur Entwelschung*, 2nd edn., Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, 1917, pp. 15, 111; Maria Grunewald, ‘Die deutsche Sprache in der Wissenschaft’, *Zeitschrift des Allgemeinen Deutschen Sprachvereins* 34 (1919), col. 202.

¹³ Karl J. Loy, ‘Deutsch und Esperanto’, *Esperanto-Praktiko* 1 (1919): 26.

¹⁴ Steche (1922), p. 21.

¹⁵ ‘Über die Gewinnung der höheren Volksschichten für Esperanto’, *Germana Esperantisto* 23 (1926): 74.

¹⁶ Heinrich Orthall, ‘Wir und der Deutsche Sprachverein’, *Germana Esperantisto* 23 (1926): 216.

¹⁷ ‘Über die Gewinnung’, p. 74.

construct a broad bridge over which thousands of destructive foreign words would migrate into German speech, and thousands of German speakers would migrate to what would be for them the ever seductive land of cosmopolitanism'.¹⁸

The article carried with it the assumption that it expressed if not the official point of view of the Sprachverein at least the opinion of the majority of its members. On the other hand the president of the Sprachverein, Richard Jahnke, was himself an adept of Esperanto and distanced himself from the anti-Esperanto statements of *Muttersprache*.¹⁹ Contributing to defusing the debate over foreign words was the Germanist Theodor Steche, whose scientific study of the subject²⁰ also included a plea for Esperanto. It was due in no small measure to the Esperanto-sympathizing members of the Sprachverein that the militant chauvinist side of the organization lost its hold in the 1920s and the prejudice against Esperanto moderated.

However, the Esperantists were aware that within the Sprachverein there were also members who, simply because of their ideology, had no desire for communication among peoples. Such individuals could not be convinced by rational argument because they abominated everything 'smelling of internationalism'.²¹ A widely circulating book on linguistics expressed the opinion that Esperanto would have a chance only if there were a move toward cosmopolitanism, to a general world culture; the author conceived of such a move in the following terms:

Only if the requirements of international socialism or communism were fulfilled or realized on a worldwide scale—requirements that would lead us directly to soulless equality, to a coldly rational politics of utility, to the erasure of human diversity, to the conquest of everything spiritually elevating, to the elimination of nationhood, to denial of genius and talent—only

¹⁸ Streicher (1926), col. 133, 137–9.

¹⁹ See the letter from Jahnke, 20 February 1930, published in *Austria Esperantisto* 9 (1932): 1; see also Streicher (1926), col. 133.

²⁰ Theodor Steche, *Neue Wege zum reinen Deutsch*, Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1925; see also from the same author, 'Sprachwissenschaft und Welthilfssprache', *Germana Esperantisto* 28 (1931): 85–90. Theodor Steche was the son of Albert Steche.

²¹ Orthal, 'Wir und der Deutsche Sprachverein', p. 216.

then would there be a hope of the general dissemination of this dehumanizing, rationalizing and colorless international world language.²²

This opinion, picked up by several German newspapers, undoubtedly reflected the cultural pessimism current in middle-class circles. Accordingly, only as long as nationalist tendencies had not achieved dominance in such circles could the efforts to win people to Esperanto have any promise of success.

Up to the end of the 1920s GEA maintained a relatively stable position. In fact it seemed downright strong if we take into consideration the extent to which the enemies of Esperanto complained about the disproportionate importance Germans gave to such a language—instead of supporting efforts for the dissemination of German abroad. Franz Thierfelder, for ten years (until 1937) general secretary of the German Academy of Munich, an institution dedicated to ‘the scholarly study and cultivation of German identity’, steadily asserted that in Germany there were more organized Esperantists than in all other countries combined.²³ After the Nazi seizure of power he reflected on the time when, years earlier, he had protested against the use of public resources for Esperanto: the ‘internationally inclined’ press had jumped on this troublemaker, he said, and refused him access to their columns.²⁴ Thierfelder, it should be added, belonged to the more respectable opponents of Esperanto in Germany. He did not hesitate to concede that the ‘conquering advance’ of Esperanto came about ‘not only thanks to extremely skillful recruitment, but also because of its clever and practical internal structure’.²⁵ Instead of appealing—like the more primitive nationalists—to vague feelings in his attack on Esperanto, he explained quite clearly why he disapproved

²²Hermann Güntert, *Grundfragen der Sprachwissenschaft*, Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925, pp. 128–9.

²³F. Thierfelder, ‘Geistige Grundlagen kultureller Auslandsarbeit’, *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 28 (1930/31): 229, cited by Kurt Düwell, *Deutschlands auswärtige Kulturpolitik 1918–1932. Grundlinien und Dokumente*, Cologne & Vienna: Böhlau, 1976, p. 124. Thierfelder based his assertion on ‘Tutmonda statistiko esperantista’ (World Esperanto statistics), published in 1928, failing to notice, however, that the statistics could not take into consideration, among other things, the extent of Esperanto in the Soviet Union.

²⁴Thierfelder, ‘Weg mit Esperanto!’, *Kölnische Zeitung*, 14 May 1933.

²⁵Thierfelder, ‘Weg mit Esperanto!’, *Kölnische Zeitung*, 14 May 1933.

of the public advance of the language—namely that it endangered the worldwide importance of the German language.

Thierfelder's line of argument makes clear that Esperanto in the Weimar Republic was no longer something to be neglected; GEA was beginning to develop into an interest group recognized as such by its serious opponents. Although GEA, given its neutrality, explicitly supported none of the internationalist movements, it undoubtedly profited from the popularity enjoyed for example by the Pan-European idea among the more progressive parts of the German middle class, so that Thierfelder in 1933 was not wrong in seeing the earlier rise of the Esperanto movement in Germany as characteristic of 'the spirit of the post-war period'.²⁶

Hitler on Universal Language

Yet the nationalists never disappeared. Consumed by missionary fervor, and seeking to ignite what was in their opinion a lack of national pride on the part of the German people, they considered preoccupation with Esperanto a sign of insufficient patriotism. And among them there emerged, at first barely noticed, a new kind of enemies of Esperanto: the National Socialists. While not entirely different from those militant chauvinists who attacked Esperanto in the years before the First World War, they displayed, ever more clearly as the years advanced, an uncompromising hostility to the language and the ideas correctly or incorrectly imputed to it.

The departure point for this basic hostility was Esperanto's 'Jewish origin'. As early as 1923, following agitation in the National Socialist meetings and newspapers in Bavaria, particularly northern Bavaria, where the infamous anti-Semite Julius Streicher was particularly active, the bulletin boards of Esperantists were stolen; and during the World Congress in Nuremberg Nazi sympathizers 'cut down the big green flag in front of the congress building'.²⁷ Shortly after these incidents became known, the editor-in-chief of *Germana Esperantisto* was obliged to repel the attacks of

²⁶Thierfelder, 'Weg mit Esperanto!', *Kölnische Zeitung*, 14 May 1933.

²⁷*Der Arbeiter-Esperantist* 10 (1924): pp. 50, 55.

an old opponent, Albert Zimmermann, who declared the battle against ‘the Jewish Esperanto’ one of his missions in life.²⁸ Early in 1926 a newspaper on the extreme right described Esperanto as ‘a danger to, in fact a mortal enemy of, all forms of *völkisch* development’ and described the movement as led by Jews and their lackeys.²⁹

At first the Esperantists tended to turn away from such attacks in disgust, based as they were on racial hatred.³⁰ But, as the final years of the 1920s approached, they were forced to note the degree to which the Nazi attacks went beyond the framework of traditional anti-Jewish prejudice against Esperanto. On 21 January 1928, a debate in the budget committee of the Bavarian parliament gave striking testimony to the dividing line between merely reactionary and entirely fascist arguments concerning Esperanto. On the agenda was a petition from the Esperanto groups in Munich and Nuremberg to introduce the elective teaching of Esperanto in middle schools. The only positive interventions came from the Social Democratic³¹ and Communist deputies. As was to be expected, the representative of the German National People’s Party Hermann Bauer was entirely opposed, calling Esperanto ‘a purely mechanistic, soulless creation’, a mere code; two years earlier, in a parliamentary intervention, he had referred to Esperanto as the ‘un-language’ and compared the level of Esperanto congresses to that of striptease shows.³² But the leader of the National Socialist faction Rudolf Buttman far exceeded him in the sharpness of his comments. For him, Esperanto was something stitched together by a Jew—a member of a race known for its lack of creative ability and its hostility to German culture; it would undermine German influence in smaller countries and was ‘the forerunner of Latinization’.³³

²⁸ F. Ellersiek, ‘Alldesutsche Hetze gegen Esperanto’, *Germana Esperantisto* 21 (1924): 224.

²⁹ *Deutsch-Österreichische Tageszeitung*, 17 January 1926.

³⁰ Hartenfels, ‘Die deutsche Presse und Esperanto’, in *Beiträge zur Welthilfssprachenfrage*, Dresden: Ader & Borel, 1918, 18–19.

³¹ Wilhelm Hoegner, postwar Minister-President of Bavaria.

³² So described in the leaflet ‘An den Bayerischen Landtag! Protest der Esperantistenschaf Münchens gegen die Ausführungen des Abgeordneten Herrn H. Bauer über Esperanto vom 18. März 1926’.

³³ Bayer. Hauptstaatsarchiv München, ‘Niederschrift über die 271. Sitzung des Ausschusses für den Staatshaushalt vom 21. Januar 1928’, pp. 18–23.

The roots of this effort to link Esperanto to a worldwide conspiracy against the German nation can be found in Adolf Hitler himself, who as early as 1922, in a speech in Munich, announced:

Marxism became the driving force of the workers, freemasonry served the 'intellectual' levels as a force for disintegration, Esperanto was about to facilitate their mutual understanding.³⁴

Better known are Hitler's formulations in *Mein Kampf*, the book which, as we now know, anticipated in theory what was later put into practice, with catastrophic consequences, in the 12-year reign of the Nazis in Germany and Europe:

As long as the Jew has not become the master of the other peoples he must speak their languages whether he likes it or not, but as soon as they become his slaves, they would all have to learn a universal language (Esperanto, for instance!) so that by this additional means the Jews could more easily dominate them!³⁵

In 1926, a year after the publication of Hitler's book, an extreme right-wing weekly journal published the following characteristically maniacal outpouring of conspiracy theory:

This bastard language, lacking roots in the life of the people and lacking any kind of literature arising from that life, is in fact acquiring that position in the world assigned to it by a Zionist plan aimed at exterminating patriotism among the future slave workers of Zion!³⁶

³⁴ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 20 September 1922; reprinted in Eberhard Jäckel (ed.), *Hitler. Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980, p. 691.

³⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London: Pimlico, 1992, p. 279. Cf. Christian Hartmann and others (ed.), *Hitler, Mein Kampf. Eine kritische Edition*, Munich & Berlin: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016, vol. 1, pp. 799–800.

³⁶ Prof. Dr. Sieglerschmidt, 'Das Esperanto', *Der Reichswart* 7 (1926), 27 (3 July).

With rising anxiety, the Esperantists noted this grotesque declaration of war on their language by the ever more powerful Nazis.³⁷ With increasing frequency, articles appeared in GEA's journal discussing nationhood and the international language. Their authors called for 'true internationalism', possible only 'on the basis of strong and healthy nationalism',³⁸ or repeated the odd assertion that Esperanto helped to purify the German language by ingesting its foreign words.³⁹ In October 1932 *Germana Esperantisto* published a proclamation by the new leader of the Esperanto Institute for the German Reich demanding that Esperanto serve 'the highest earthly value known to a German, the Fatherland'.⁴⁰ The same issue carried a letter of resignation from a GEA member who saw the cause of the insufficient progress of the movement in its excessive link to pacifism.⁴¹ In response to this declaration, Arnold Behrendt, a postal official and, as of 1929, president of GEA, reasserted the total neutrality of the Association, judging political or social activity for Esperanto 'neither useful, nor necessary'.⁴²

Almost in the same breath, however, Behrendt confessed that, for him personally, 'as also probably for most adherents of Esperanto', the movement was 'more than a purely language movement'⁴³—apparently unconscious of the contradiction between the principle of neutrality, as he had formulated it, and the implicit allusion to the 'internal idea'. In any event, his assumption about the feelings of the membership was not wrong; undoubtedly the majority of members saw their movement as more than the dissemination of a language, but, more or less explicitly, the advancement of peace. For their part, the Nazis noted that at the heart of Esperanto lay the struggle for peace among the peoples and that such a

³⁷ Robert Trögel, 'Esperanto und Kultur. Individuum, Volk, Menschheit', in *Das Esperanto ein Kulturfaktor*, vol. 8. *Festschrift anlässlich des 17. Deutschen Esperanto-Kongresses*, Berlin: Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, 1928, pp. 5–31 (esp. p. 21).

³⁸ Fritz Wicke, 'Volkstum und Esperanto', *Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 131.

³⁹ *Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 113.

⁴⁰ Letter from Max Friedrich Schreiber to the GEA executive board, 23 September 1932, printed in *Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 165.

⁴¹ Letter from Wolfgang Jäckel to Behrendt, 11 July 1932, *Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 156–7. For a similar resignation see *Germana Esperantisto* 28 (1931): 58.

⁴² *Germana Esperantisto* 28 (1931): 174.

⁴³ *Germana Esperantisto* 28 (1931): 174.

goal could be achieved only by ‘a death blow to the vampires of the international powers’ responsible for the Treaty of Versailles and not by having Germans and French ‘stuttering among themselves’ in Esperanto.⁴⁴

The efforts of GEA to defend its position against the rising tide of Nazism had no effect. The Nazi press insisted on identifying the Esperantists as enthusiasts for ‘this artificial, international, pacifist language; this anemic hothouse culture aimed at further stupefying incurably pan-European mongrels’.⁴⁵

Gleichschaltung

When Hitler seized power on 30 January 1933, the GEA leaders had every reason to suppose that the new situation would have consequences for Esperanto.

The first sign of alarm was the liquidation of the powerful workers’ Esperanto movement. Less than two years before the ‘National Socialist revolution’, the movement had already been torn apart by the growing conflict between the Social Democratic and Communist parties.⁴⁶ As a result, relations between the old, now primarily Communist, Workers’ Esperanto Association (GLEA) and the newly founded, social democratic Socialist Esperanto Association (SEA) were characterized primarily by reciprocal insult. But after the Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933, which provided the new regime with a pretext to suppress unions and workers’ parties, they were united by a similar fate. Early in April, police invaded the headquarters of GLEA in Berlin and confiscated all its property; thus, GLEA was forcibly disbanded, though in a few places it continued to operate in secret.⁴⁷ SEA choosing not to wait for an official order, freely disbanded on 31 March; an attempt to continue its existence under the new name ‘Society of Esperanto Friends’ was abandoned within a few

⁴⁴ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 4 November 1930.

⁴⁵ *Die Volksparole* (Düsseldorf), 28 May 1932; cited in *Germana Esperantisto* 29 (1932): 114.

⁴⁶ See p. 214.

⁴⁷ Personal communication from Ludwig Schödl, 1 June 1969.

weeks.⁴⁸ In Leipzig the police confiscated the inventory of the Communist publisher EKRELO and arrested its leader Walter Kampfrad although the administrative office of SAT, located in the same city, was able to send the larger part of its possessions to Paris before it too was banned at the end of 1933.

Many activists were imprisoned. A German SAT member reported early in June that Storm Troopers ‘confiscated absolutely everything. The German “brown idiots” don’t like Esperanto; they call it a Jewish language worthy only to be spread among the savages of Australia.’⁴⁹ A request by an SEA group leader for permission to conduct purely private lessons was refused. Of course, the persecution of worker Esperantists was aimed primarily at their Marxist activities, not their knowledge of Esperanto,⁵⁰ but often the state police, particularly in doubtful cases, considered the fact that they were Esperantists as the last straw, prompting the arrest of a suspected socialist or communist. On occasion, the victims noted that the Gestapo called Esperanto ‘a secret communist language’.

After the disbanding of the workers’ movement had eliminated the organizational base of three-quarters of the Esperantists in Germany, GEA was of the opinion that it could survive under the Nazi regime only by abandoning its previous moderate internationalist line and giving up its political neutrality.

‘To All!’ was the title of the April editorial in *Germana Esperantisto*, in which—beneath a quotation from Hitler—the GEA leadership stressed its fidelity to the German nation.⁵¹ Two months later, Behrendt, whose political leanings favored the German National People’s Party, published a five-page article on ‘Esperanto in the Service of the German Spirit’, which asserted that Esperanto was capable of ‘conveying to other countries an understanding and respect for those things that make us German’.⁵² In the same issue, the Association reported on its proposal to the government to make use of Esperanto, particularly to counteract the

⁴⁸ Personal communication from Adolf Sproeck, 28 July 1966.

⁴⁹ *Sennaciulo* 9 (1932/33): 95.

⁵⁰ *Sennaciulo* 10 (1933/34): 15.

⁵¹ ‘An Alle!’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 61–2.

⁵² Behrendt, ‘Esperanto im Dienst am Deutschtum’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 99.

‘atrocious propaganda’ (‘Greuelpropaganda’) directed at the Nazi regime from abroad.⁵³

On 30 May the GEA addressed a written request to the ministry of internal affairs for so-called *Gleichschaltung* (such ‘bringing into conformity’ with Nazi policies was a requirement for the continued existence of voluntary organizations).⁵⁴ Two weeks later, the ministry replied that the coordination of GEA ‘can be left to [your] consideration’. Communicating this reply, nebulously formulated and devoid of detail on the procedures to be followed, the leadership presented its members with its guidelines for *Gleichschaltung*. Point number 11 required that ‘persons with an anti-state attitude cannot be members in GEA’ and that ‘non-Aryans [that is, Jews], Marxists or communists’ would be excluded from leadership bodies. At the same time the leadership underlined the necessity of *Gleichschaltung*, ‘if GEA wishes to continue its existence and to go on with its work without hindrance’, and it called for discipline among the membership.⁵⁵

The GEA leaders were painfully aware of the level of concern among the Association’s members. As early as the end of April, the president of the Saxon League reported that ‘whole groups’ had lost the courage to continue disseminating Esperanto, given the political changes.⁵⁶ In May, Paul Christaller, president of the Stuttgart Esperanto Club from the time of its founding in 1905, announced his resignation, also as a member; as a known pacifist, he sought to avoid giving the club difficulties under a regime that considered pacifists, like communists, ‘enemies of the people’.⁵⁷ In July, an activist in Heilbronn wrote that in his city ‘the movement is almost entirely stagnant’ and that ‘these days, we don’t

⁵³ Georg Habellok, ‘Esperanto im neuen Deutschland’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 100.

⁵⁴ Georg Habellok, ‘Esperanto im neuen Deutschland’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 100. The term *Gleichschaltung* refers to the various methods employed by the Nazi regime to bring all formerly independent institutions and associations into conformity, for example by putting its leadership positions in the hands of members of the Nazi party. Often such *Gleichschaltung* was also freely entered into.

⁵⁵ ‘Gleichschaltung der Esperanto-Bewegung in Deutschland’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 121–2.

⁵⁶ *Sächs. Esperanto-Landesverband des D.E.B.* (circular), 1933, 4 (32): 1.

⁵⁷ Text of the farewell speech of P. Christaller, 11 May 1933 (copy in the author’s possession).



Fig. 3.1 On 1 August 1932, *Heroldo de Esperanto*, a weekly newspaper published in Cologne, included a message of greeting from the lord mayor, Konrad Adenauer, to the future attendees at the 25th World Congress, planned to take place in Cologne a year hence. In March 1933 six weeks after Hitler’s seizure of power, the Nazis removed Adenauer from office. The Congress did indeed take place, but with far fewer participants than originally anticipated

have a very good reputation around here’.⁵⁸ He and probably many others were waiting for the results of the coming annual meeting of GEA; though there were also numbers of direct participants from the proposed *Gleichschaltung*.⁵⁹

For GEA the world situation was complicated by the fact that during the first six months of the Nazi regime preparations were proceeding for the 25th World Congress, to take place in the summer of 1933 in Cologne. The

⁵⁸ Letter of Friedrich Bachmann, Heilbronn, to Heinrich Nischwitz, Mannheim, 17 July 1933 (copy in the author’s possession).

⁵⁹ An anonymous person in Breslau sent a postcard to this effect to GEA groups: *Germana Esperantisto*, 30 (1933): 117.

invitation had been issued in 1932 by Konrad Adenauer, the Lord Mayor at the time (Fig. 3.1).

When the Nazis expelled him from office, preparations for the congress were thrown into crisis when the new authorities limited their support for the Local Congress Committee (LKK). The organizers also knew that the Nazi press had earlier condemned the idea of inviting an Esperanto congress to Cologne.⁶⁰ The concerns of the LKK were all the greater because as soon as the first news of the reign of terror in Germany was published abroad, many of those registered to attend began to reconsider their participation. Calls came to move the congress to a country where participation could be guaranteed to ‘Jews, working people and generally to everyone with differing opinions’.⁶¹ Foreign indignation grew when it was learned that a Slovak businessman traveling through Germany was beaten unconscious by a group of Nazis because he was wearing a suspicious badge—the green star of Esperanto.⁶²

Nonetheless, the majority of German Esperantists probably favored holding this international gathering in their country, hoping thereby to gain support, or at least less negative pressure, from the new rulers; accordingly, they sought to reassure those foreigners afraid of encountering difficulties during their stay in Hitler’s Germany. Particularly *Heroldo de Esperanto*, published in Cologne, repeatedly asserted that ‘today the situation in German territory is quieter and safer than it was before’.⁶³ Yet such assertions led to protests:⁶⁴ early in June the Polish Esperanto Congress, meeting in Warsaw, accepted a resolution that the World Congress ‘cannot be attended by Poles’.⁶⁵

In mid-May the president of UEA, Eduard Stettler, urgently asked the LKK whether ‘the Congress can take place [...] in complete liberty,

⁶⁰ *Westdeutscher Beobachter*, 7 February 1932; *Lokal-Anzeiger* (Cologne), 10 September 1932.

⁶¹ Appeal to Vilna Esperantista Societo, May 1933, quoted in *Sur Posteno*, 1933, p. 28; a similar appeal, also in May, was made by Edvardo Wiesenfeld, ‘Publika letero al I.C.K. por LKK’, *Pola Esperantisto* 27 (1933): 66–9.

⁶² *Sur Posteno*, 1933, p. 28; *La Socialisto* 8 (1933), 8: 5.

⁶³ ‘Mensogoj pri Germanujo’, *Heroldo de Esperanto* 14 (1933), 13 (718): 2. According to his memoirs, the publisher of *Heroldo* was early made aware of Nazi atrocities: Jung (1979), pp. 235–6.

⁶⁴ *Sennaciulo* 9 (1932/33): 89.

⁶⁵ Edvardo Wiesenfeld, ‘La VI Tutpola en Varsovio’, *Pola Esperantisto* 27 (1933): 86.

without police oversight or the necessity of police protection'.⁶⁶ Receiving no reply after four weeks, on 17 June Stettler dispatched a circular to the members of the UEA committee asking for a vote on the question of whether to hold the UEA Congress in Cologne or to abandon it. Of the 20 replies, 14 committee members, all of them German, voted to go ahead; only four members voted against, and two abstained.⁶⁷ Although Stettler himself was willing to give up on the Congress⁶⁸, such a decision would have affected only the Congress of UEA, traditionally taking place *within* the larger World Congress. This larger event was fully the responsibility of the International Central Committee. In any case, the result of the vote was clear, and in the meantime the LKK was able to communicate to would-be participants that the authorities had guaranteed that there would be no 'difficulties or hindrance to invited foreign guests'.⁶⁹ For the moment, the Nazi regime, concerned for its international reputation, chose to put its ideological opposition to Esperanto on one side.

In the end, the Congress attracted a mere 900 participants from 32 countries—approximately half the number earlier anticipated.⁷⁰ A British participant noted that 'you felt a somewhat strange atmosphere [in the congress] because of the Hitler paraphernalia'.⁷¹ The Nazi mayor, Günter Riesen, greeted the Congress wearing a brown shirt, ignored Esperanto completely and expressed his joy that so many foreigners had come to Cologne 'to learn for themselves about Germany as it really is'. He defended the 'National Socialist revolution' as protecting the world against Bolshevism.⁷² Subsequently, the Cologne newspapers published the favorable views of a few participants on the harmonious conclusion of the World Congress,

⁶⁶ Letter of 13 May 1933, printed in *Esperanto* 29 (1933): 98.

⁶⁷ The ballots are preserved in the UEA archive in Rotterdam. The four negative votes came from Odo Bujwid, András Cseh, J.R.G. Isbrücker and Vilho Setälä. Edmond Privat abstained, noting that 'The congress cannot be Zamenhof's congress in the current conditions, but UEA cannot stand back if it takes place.'

⁶⁸ Hans Jakob, 'Esperantismaj problemoj', *Esperanto* 39 (1946): 10.

⁶⁹ Letter from the LKK to Stettler, 23 June 1933, published in *Esperanto* 29 (1933): 131.

⁷⁰ In Paris (1932) 1650 attended, in Stockholm (1934) 2042. A year earlier, more than 3000 participants were expected: *Lokal-Anzeiger*, Cologne, 12 August 1932; cf. Jung (1979), p. 238.

⁷¹ C.C.G., 'De nubo al sunbrilo', *The British Esperantist* 29 (1933): 145.

⁷² *Kölnische Zeitung*, 31 July 1933.

adding that in the future the worldwide community of Esperantists would have no ground to believe the ‘tales of terror’ in Germany.⁷³

GEA’s annual general meeting took place as part of the World Congress on 29 July. A priority item on its agenda was the proposal for the *Gleichschaltung* of the association. The delegates—41 groups with 106 votes were represented, though they comprised less than 5% of the total membership—unanimously approved the *Gleichschaltung*. In the interim, Behrendt assumed the role of ‘leader’. Directly responsible to him was a four member Steering Council (previously the executive committee) and the leaders of the groups (‘Obmänner’). The annual general meeting would now have only an advisory role.⁷⁴

GEA’s new constitution⁷⁵ was emptied of any mention of political neutrality. Drastically illustrating this changed situation were Behrendt’s ominous words in Cologne to the effect that ‘misusers’ or people who used Esperanto ‘for bad purposes [...] should be punished’.⁷⁶ The guidelines did indeed state that people with ‘an anti-state attitude’ were not allowed to belong to GEA.⁷⁷ But, in contrast to the draft guidelines published in advance of the Congress, the final version did not contain the requirement that ‘non-Aryans, Marxists and Communists’ should be excluded from leadership positions in the Association. This condition had brought indignant reactions. A long-time member, the Austrian Esperanto pioneer Otto Simon, sent Behrendt a sharply worded declaration of resignation,⁷⁸ and numerous protests came from German Esperantists.⁷⁹ Although the discriminatory clause had disappeared from the guidelines, Behrendt nonetheless required that a candidate for the function of club leader should provide a written guarantee that he was neither Jewish nor Marxist and that he would report ‘anti-state’ members to the GEA.⁸⁰

⁷³ *Kölner Tageblatt*, 17 August 1933.

⁷⁴ *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 145–6.

⁷⁵ *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 149–51.

⁷⁶ *Heroldo de Esperanto* 14 (1933), 32/33 (737/738): 3.

⁷⁷ *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 146.

⁷⁸ The letter was printed in *La Socialisto* 8 (1933), 8: 5. In reaction, Behrendt wrote to Simon: ‘I very much regret that I do not have the opportunity to turn you over to the German police!’ (*La Socialisto* 11 [1937], 2 [July]: p. 1; personal communication from Joseph T. Simon, Vienna, 2 January 1974).

⁷⁹ J. Ŝapiro, ‘Ne riproĉu spegulon, se ĝi montras nigrulon’, *Pola Esperantisto* 28 (1934): 16.

⁸⁰ Ŝapiro, ‘Ne riproĉu spegulon’, p. 16.

The report on the Congress noted optimistically that ‘all concern has been removed because the German Esperanto Association has effectuated its *Gleichschaltung*’.⁸¹ But it soon became apparent that such expectations were mere illusion. To begin with, no government authority named an official leader for GEA, as was required for orderly *Gleichschaltung*. To curry favor with the regime, Behrendt advised the members that it was everyone’s responsibility to use correspondence with foreign Esperantists to provide ‘correct information’ on the new Germany.⁸² Indeed, this appeal did not remain without echo,⁸³ nor was there a lack of Esperantist voices from other countries expressing their sympathy for the Nazi regime, including its anti-Jewish policies.⁸⁴ In the October 1933 *Germana Esperantisto* six pages were devoted to an Esperanto-language translation of a speech by Hitler,⁸⁵ and the Esperanto Union of Saxon Teachers published a four-page leaflet, *La Nova Germanlando* (The New Germania), which was distributed to 70 countries in 10,000 copies. Using statistics in an attempt to prove that Jews dominated German public life, this pamphlet, with its clear anti-Semitic bias, must be numbered among the most odious publications ever produced in the language of Zamenhof.

Nazi Esperantists

Around the autumn of 1933, a group of individuals hitherto largely unknown to the German Esperanto movement began to rise to prominence. For these people, GEA’s submission to the authorities was still insufficient. As early as 9 February 1931, the young SA squad leader Herbert Wohlfahrt had founded the so-called Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, an organization that from the start made

⁸¹ *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 139.

⁸² *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 198–9.

⁸³ See for example the letter from the Esperanto group in Frankfurt a.M., March 1934, printed in *Sennaciulo* 10 (1933/34): 40.

⁸⁴ Karl Kröber, ‘Welt-Echo durch Esperanto-Außendienst’, *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 98–101.

⁸⁵ ‘La mondo atentu: parolas Adolf Hitler!’, *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 154–60. The text also appeared as an offprint in 10,000 copies.

itself available for Nazi propaganda by way of Esperanto. However, the party refused the Association the use of the epithet 'National Socialist', with the result that it changed its name to 'Neue Deutsche Esperanto-Bewegung' (NDEB). In October this group launched a divisive campaign against the 'eternaj hieraŭuloj' ('eternal yesterpeople') in GEA, with the aim of attracting GEA members to their cause.⁸⁶ NDEB's constitution required, among other things, that all Esperanto organizations in Germany 'who tolerate and accept as members Jews, pacifists and profiteers' should be resisted 'by all interested authorities' until 'this anti-German attitude ceases or they are forced to dissolve'.⁸⁷

At first, chiefly because of the prestige of Behrendt, the subversions of NDEB had only limited success. Realizing that even the Nazi GEA members were disinclined to support it, NDEB relaxed its earlier condition that only party members could join and from then on accepted sympathizers as well. GEA resisted NDEB's attacks, asserting that essentially the aims of the two organizations were identical, only excepting the ambitions of the NDEB leadership and the Jewish problem. GEA refused to expel its Jewish members (if they were 'honest people'), because GEA had not yet received an order to apply the 'Aryan paragraph'.⁸⁸

In April 1934, however, the conflict entered a critical stage. Sixteen local groups in Saxony threatened to resign if the leadership of GEA did not resign and if the Aryan paragraph was not applied.⁸⁹ In reply, Behrendt underlined the fact that there was no legal hindrance to the existence of Jewish representatives (*delegitoj*) of UEA in Germany⁹⁰ and promptly expelled the person principally responsible for the ultimatum, the leader of the Saxon League, Albrecht Naumann.⁹¹ Naumann, a teacher in a technical school and for many years head of the GEA's press office, had earlier, in Cologne, proposed Behrendt as leader of the

⁸⁶ *Germana Esperantisto* 30 (1933): 178, 192.

⁸⁷ Text of the constitution in *Esperanto in Deutschland*, 1934, no. 1 (Sept.).

⁸⁸ Justus, 'Brauchen wir eine "Neue" Deutsche E-Bewegung?', *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 2-5. The 'Aryan paragraph' proclaimed in April 1933 stipulated that Jews could not be government officials.

⁸⁹ Text of the letter of 8 April 1934 in *Rundschreiben Nr. 2* of the Leader of GEA, 11 April 1934.

⁹⁰ Text of the letter of 8 April 1934 in *Rundschreiben Nr. 2* of the Leader of GEA, 11 April 1934.

⁹¹ *Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, Gauverband Sachsen* (circular), 1934, no. 4 (38), 28 April.

Association. His present effort to remove Behrendt found little support among the GEA membership. Of the 1048 members who expressed an opinion, only 22 argued for the immediate introduction of the Aryan paragraph,⁹² and in May, during the Whitsuntide annual general meeting of GEA in Würzburg, Behrendt was unanimously re-elected as leader.

But in the course of the annual meeting a further ultimatum arrived. NDEB demanded that the two associations merge in a new 'German Esperanto Front' whose leader would be Naumann; if GEA did not yield, NDEB announced that it would 'launch, in the most severe and uncompromising manner, a fanatical battle against the present personalities, reactionaries who obstinately seek to resist the creation of a patriotic spirit within the German Esperanto community'.⁹³ The annual meeting greeted the reading of NDEB's letter with cries of 'Shame!' and derision, but the recently re-elected Behrendt, wounded by the letter's naming him a 'reactionary', announced that he was stepping down and resigned. As the new leader he proposed the engineer Kurt Walther, from Dresden, a member of the party who had joined GEA only at the end of 1931.

Assuming office, Walther not only paid homage to his predecessor but also bowed to Naumann. Two weeks later, on 3 June, Walther (for GEA) and Willibald Pietsch (for NDEB) signed an agreement for the merger of the two organizations in a working relationship whose goal was the creation of a German Esperanto Front.⁹⁴ In July, Walther ordered every GEA member to complete a survey that required, among other things, an answer to the question of whether he or she was of Jewish ancestry.⁹⁵

Because GEA had adapted itself to NDEB's line, for a while it seemed that the quarrel was in fact at an end. But peace did not last long, because Friedrich Ellersiek, publisher of GEA's journal, categorically refused to accept contributions from NDEB. When, in addition, a Berlin group contested the validity of the decisions taken in Würzburg—in fact, Behrendt, in the general confusion, had not followed the correct procedure for invitations to the annual general meeting—NDEB again broke off relations with GEA and, as of September

⁹² 'Die Bundesführung im Lichte der Mitgliedermeinung', *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 70.

⁹³ Letter of 17 May 1934, *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 103.

⁹⁴ *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31, (1934):106.

⁹⁵ *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 117.

1934, began publishing its own newsletter.⁹⁶ It openly appealed to members of GEA to leave their Association, attacked Ellersiek for publishing advertisements for ‘anti-German’ Esperanto publications, and demanded that the language be used in the service of the Fatherland ‘on an unconditionally National Socialist basis’. Although barely a month passed before GEA submitted to the Nazi regime, NDEB considered the delay to be pure opportunism.⁹⁷

In an effort to avoid giving NDEB fodder for further attacks, Walther tried to erase the most recent differences between GEA and NDEB. He assured Pietsch, the leader of NDEB, that with his consent nothing had occurred in GEA that was not in accordance with his National Socialist principles.⁹⁸ On 6 January 1935, an extraordinary annual meeting of GEA took place in Dresden, at which a new constitution was accepted and the goal of the Association was defined, next to the dissemination of Esperanto, as ‘utilization [of the language] in a National Socialist sense’.⁹⁹ Now definitively elected as leader, Walther asked for the cooperation of his members ‘to spread our National Socialist worldview in all countries of the world through Esperanto’.¹⁰⁰ And, finally, to ‘satisfy in *every* way the requirements of the times’, in September 1935 Walther communicated the message that ‘*only German compatriots can be members of GEA*’¹⁰¹—an action that meant that Jews would have to resign from the Association.

The once neutral and globally respected GEA had expelled from its ranks in the name of ‘love of country’ members of the same ethnicity as Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, who addressed the forerunners of fascism in his day with the following words: ‘You who sow the dark seeds of conflict, talk if you will about your hatred of everything that is not yours, talk about egotism, but never use the word “love”—because in your mouths that sacred word “love” is defiled.’¹⁰²

⁹⁶ *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 134. The newsletter *Esperanto in Deutschland* was edited by Naumann and continued to appear until May–June 1935 (no. 9/10).

⁹⁷ *Esperanto in Deutschland*, 1934, p. 8.

⁹⁸ Letter of 30 September 1934, *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 31 (1934): 154.

⁹⁹ Text in *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 15–19.

¹⁰⁰ *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 2.

¹⁰¹ *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 130.

¹⁰² Speech in the London Guildhall, 21 August 1907), *PVZ* VIII 89.

4

'An Ally of World Jewry'

The Road to Prohibition

We have described the steps by which the politically neutral GEA degenerated into an association overtly dedicated to Nazi ideology. We can now turn to, among other sources, the papers of the State Secret Police. These papers, preserved in the German Federal Archive in Berlin-Lichterfelde, will help us to reconstruct the tactics employed by the regime in its anti-Esperanto policy and also to discover how it reacted to attempts to create a kind of symbiosis between Esperanto and National Socialism.

The first major official blow to the German Esperanto movement, after the destruction of the workers' associations, was delivered by a decree of the Reich Minister of Science and Education, Bernhard Rust, on 17 May 1935:

The cultivation of artificial world auxiliary languages such as Esperanto has no place in the National Socialist state. Their use leads to a weakening of the essential values of the national heritage. Thus we should avoid all

promotion of the teaching of such languages; instructional classrooms should not be made available for this purpose.¹

Although this decree, canceling official permission for such instruction granted in 1924, merely confirmed the continued silent suppression of teaching of this kind (all radio courses in Esperanto were closed down immediately after the seizure of power), it nonetheless provoked widespread discussion in the press, which tended to interpret the decree as a total prohibition of Esperanto.² In reply to a memorandum sent to the government shortly before the decree, Walther was notified on 3 June by the Ministry of Internal Affairs that work on behalf of Esperanto ‘is not prohibited, but also will not be supported by the state’. Informing the members of the leadership and the group leaders about this response, Walther ‘urgently’ requested that all members send him excerpts from their private correspondence that might document ‘that the Esperantists, through their world auxiliary language, are working abroad for the [German] people and fatherland’.³

At almost the same time, the first expression of official opinion arrived regarding the efforts of German Esperantists to have Esperanto serve the Nazi ideology and thereby ignore the humanist origins behind the language and movement. It was clearly negative. In a semi-official commentary on Rust’s decree, ministerial counselor Kohlbach delivered the following lesson to the Esperantists:

As in most international efforts, the driving impulse of the Esperanto movement is a desire to secure the advent of eternal peace among the peoples. [...] Even if today many German Esperantists distance themselves from such political fantasies [...], the original driving idea behind a movement is nonetheless difficult to dispel. But even greater than the danger of self-delusion [...] is the risk that elements unalterably opposed to the pres-

¹ *Deutsche Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* 1 (1935), 10 (20 May), official part, p. 228. According to Walther, denunciations of GEA by NDEB led to this decree: circular of 23 December 1935.

² For example, *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten*, 11 June 1935; *Die Ostschweiz* (St. Gallen), 17 June 1935 (‘Esperantoverbot in Deutschland’); see the circular of Walther, 23 December 1935. An up-to-date report from Berlin was provided by a letter (22 June 1935) to András Cseh from the Jewish Esperantist Margarete Saxl, published in Borsboom (2003), pp. 156–7.

³ Circular of 12 June 1935.

ent form of the state and to any effort at national self-preservation will use the cover of such a movement to pursue their old goals, both within and beside it.⁴

This was still a relatively moderate statement compared to the tone used by NDEB. In April 1935 that organization declared its opposition to 'the limitless glorification of Zamenhof, which is unfortunately still in style in some German Esperanto circles'. It continued by spewing out the following offensive utterance: 'between the Jewish-pacifist goals of the "internal idea" of this Zamenhof and our Führer's desire for peace there lies a racially conditioned and hence abysmally profound contrast'.⁵ This was a level of betrayal of the Esperanto tradition never before experienced.

This constant battle on two fronts made GEA's situation more and more complicated. In fact, we must attribute the Association's repetition of Nazi slogans and its opportunism not so much to specifically Nazi tendencies as to a high degree of political blindness—the result of a longstanding tradition of ignoring the political implications of work for Esperanto. We should also take into consideration the fact that at the time the vast majority of the German people was equally blinded and that much more prominent figures than Behrendt or Walther paid homage to the regime with elaborate declarations of loyalty. It would be unjust to condemn the entire GEA membership as infected with the brown virus. As German Esperantists explained when the war was over, only for the sake of appearance and through gritted teeth did they pretend 'that their Esperanto club was in harmony with "national concepts"' to ensure its continued existence.⁶ A few, for example the publisher Ellersiek, revealed the limits of their willingness to adapt quite early on or even protested directly against injustices. After the GEA group in Magdeburg introduced the Aryan Paragraph in 1934, for example, it immediately lost not only its single Jewish member but also about a quarter of its members through voluntary resignation.⁷

⁴ Kohlbach, 'Vom Esperanto', *Deutsche Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung* 1 (1935), 11 (5 June), unofficial part, p. 106.

⁵ Brunwald, 'Was wird das Ausland dazu sagen?', *Esperanto in Deutschland*, 1935, p. 18.

⁶ Letter of 'a long time Esperantist' in *GEJ-Gazeto*, 1984, 3 (May/June): 34.

⁷ Letter of Fritz Rockmann, Magdeburg, to Hans Jakob, 13 December 1934 (copy in the author's possession); cf. Sikosek (2006), p. 134.

How little the attitude of GEA came from sincere conviction was evident also in the statements of NDEB. To some extent, GEA's Nazi deviation was excusable, given the constant pressure and slanderous utterances on the part of NDEB, which never tired of blaming GEA's leaders for their insincere and 'reactionary' attitude, finally coming to the conclusion that most Esperantists in Germany, in spite of everything, continued to march, consciously or unconsciously 'along the old much-traveled paths of the Jewish illusion of brotherhood among the peoples'.⁸ It remains for us to note, however, the sad fact that GEA increasingly presented itself as a 'militant patriot brigade'—the kind of organization into which ten years earlier Albert Steche had refused to transform it.

As late as 1935, Walther was apparently still unaware of the futility of his battle against the regime's disapproval on the one hand and NDEB's insults on the other. Emphasizing that GEA was ready to review hostile Esperanto publications from abroad, on 23 June he asked the Ministry of Internal Affairs to 'protect' the association against slanderous articles in the press to the effect that German Esperantists harbored unpatriotic thoughts and engaged in unpatriotic activities, and to declare that GEA, led by a member of the party, continued 'its work in accordance with its constitution' and that officials and teachers were entitled to join as members.⁹ But the Ministry refused—'for reasons of principle'—to make such a declaration,¹⁰ with the result that the GEA found itself in the delicate position of being neither prohibited nor officially confirmed as acting legally.

Soon afterward, NDEB learned its limitations too. From its dealings with the authorities, among them the Ministry of Propaganda, it concluded that 'recruitment for Esperanto linked to National Socialism is not desired'. As a result, in a meeting in Leipzig on 18 August, it decided to dissolve its local groups, cease recruitment for Esperanto in Germany

⁸ Circular to NDEB members, 18 August 1935.

⁹ Letter of 23 June 1935; text in an appendix to a circular from Walther to GEA members, 23 June 1935.

¹⁰ Letter of 2 July 1935, published in *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 108. The letter, like that of 3 June 1935, was signed by Rudolf Buttmann, who in 1928 attacked Esperanto in the Bavarian Parliament. Buttmann as of 5 May 1933 led the cultural policy department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (until 1935). From June 1933 to 1945 he chaired the Deutscher Sprachverein.

and limit itself only to the 'practical use' of the language for Nazi propaganda abroad; at the same time it threatened GEA with drastic consequences if it too did not give up on recruitment within the country.¹¹

Neither GEA nor NDEB could know how closely their conflict was being watched by the SS Security Service. Among comments internal to the SS were the observation that even after the departure of the 'political charlatan Behrendt', little had changed in GEA, and complaints that the Ministry of Propaganda had twice provided financial support for Esperanto publications (which GEA with 'foolish lack of caution' had announced to the world).¹²

At around the same time, in the summer of 1935, the political police insisted to the ministries that all Esperanto organizations be liquidated. On 26 June, Reinhard Heydrich, deputy of the *Politische Polizeikommandeur der Länder*, Heinrich Himmler, drew the attention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the fact that 'recently the Esperanto movement has been engaged in very lively activity'. As an example he mentioned that, among 36 people arrested in March 1935 in Düsseldorf for treason against the state, no less than 29 were Esperantists.¹³ Because 'a large part of the membership of the Esperanto unions are suspected of anti-state activity' and because, on the other hand, it was not possible to check their correspondence on such a large scale, Heydrich recommended the dissolution and prohibition of all such organizations and the confiscation of their property.¹⁴

¹¹ Circular to NDEB members, 18 August 1935. Leadership of NDEB was assumed by Albrecht Naumann, because his predecessor Willibald Pietsch, as a former Freemason, could not be a member of the Party.

¹² Report of 16 July 1935, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7421, fol. 90, 92–4. The publications were the aforementioned speech of Hitler and *La Nova Germanlando*.

¹³ One of those arrested, Matthias Trauden, from Duisburg, declared to the Gestapo that NDEB was 'the only Communist organization in Germany working legally', and that under the cover of the leadership were party members who were able 'to work without hindrance': police report, Düsseldorf, 7 March 1935, Bundesarchiv, R 58/389, fol. 8–9; communication of Heinrich Himmler, 13 November 1935, Bundesarchiv, R 58/389, fol. 117; internal report of 8 June 1940 (see p. 129), Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 221. NDEB, which expelled Trauden after his arrest, confessed that it had difficulties with 'former worker Esperantists' in its ranks but assured the authorities that because of its 'constant contact' with the Gestapo there was no need for concern: *Esperanto in Deutschland*, 1935, p. 25. For more details see Bludau (1973), pp. 108–13, 116.

¹⁴ Bundesarchiv, R 58/378, fol. 56–60.

While the Ministry of Science and Education supported Heydrich's proposal, the Ministry of Propaganda, led by Joseph Goebbels, in fact had scruples about direct prohibition at this stage. In a letter of 23 October the Ministry (undoubtedly mindful also of the Berlin Olympics to take place in the summer of 1936) expressed concern about the international reaction such a step might have:

Among the millions of adherents of Esperanto abroad there is certainly a large number who are not political and see only the idealistic side of work for Esperanto. These people will receive the impression that because of activities in their opinion totally benign, as is indeed the learning of a new language, in Germany even associations of this kind are persecuted. This opinion will naturally be promulgated in the abundant pamphlets distributed by Esperanto organizations throughout the world. Also the foreign press will use such an occasion to launch propaganda against Germany.

Thus, the Ministry recommended that Esperanto Associations led by party members should not be hit with official prohibition; instead, 'with a certain amount of pressure easily achievable' it would be better to work for their voluntary dissolution.¹⁵

On 21 January 1936, Heydrich communicated the Ministry of Propaganda's opinion to Rudolf Hess, the Deputy Führer. In his letter he repeated that in the past year the Esperanto movement had been notably active: in Münster 44 members of a Communist group had been arrested, and in Bottrop the local GEA club had been dissolved for the distribution of leaflets by former GLEA members. Heydrich wrote that originally he intended to dissolve all Esperanto organizations, but he now asked Hess that a party order be promulgated prohibiting party members from belonging to these organizations. At the same time he asked Goebbels' ministry 'to issue propaganda in a suitable form' against GEA.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bundesarchiv, R 58/378, fol. 89. In 1940, Heydrich noted with satisfaction that following the dissolution the foreign press did not involve itself 'except in a single case': internal report of 8 June 1940 (see p. 129), Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 225.

¹⁶ Letter from Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt to Stellvertreter des Führers, 21 January 1936, Bundesarchiv, R 58/378, fol. 114–7 (also R 58/7421, fol. 188–95).

Indeed, as of the end of 1935 an anti-Esperanto campaign was clearly visible in the Nazi press. Its sharpness far exceeded the tone of earlier attacks. In November, *Der Weltkampf*, a journal founded by the principal Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg and fully dedicated to the battle against Jews, named Esperanto 'an ally of world Jewry'.¹⁷ The article was written by Theodor Koch, an elementary school teacher in Bremen who knew enough Esperanto to supply the Gestapo, regularly as of April 1935, with information on the movement. We will return to him.

Also relevant to the situation in November 1935 was an internal report by the Gestapo branch in Potsdam: 'it seems extraordinarily odd that in Germany the publication of journals in Esperanto, that deceitful Jewish language, is still allowed, as is the case in Cologne'.¹⁸ The report was referring to *Heroldo*, which at the time was preparing to move to the Netherlands. At the beginning of 1936 the attacks became so frequent and intense that they could only give the impression that coordinated activity aimed at systematically preparing for the liquidation of the movement was proceeding. The newspapers gave their principal attention to the use of the language in a National Socialist sense, which they condemned without reservation. Under the title 'Information under the Soviet Star' the journal of the Nazi student union wrote that it was amazed by the fact that 'the German Esperanto Association is naïve enough to believe that *through the use of its internationalist artificial language* it can *campaign for a nationalist idea* such as National Socialism to workers in foreign countries influenced by Jewish-Marxist beliefs'.¹⁹ Thus, it was from the Nazi side that GEA had to learn of its naivety in failing to understand that Nazism and Esperanto were irreconcilable.

¹⁷Theodor Koch, 'Esperanto, ein Bundesgenosse des Weltjudentums', *Der Weltkampf* 12 (1935), 326–9 (quoting p. 327). The author also contributed an anti-Esperanto article to the anti-Semitic periodical *Der Judenkenner* (no. 27, 21 August 1935).

¹⁸'55. Lagebericht' (4 December 1935), in Wolfgang Ribbe (ed.), *Die Lageberichte der Geheimen Staatspolizei über die Provinz Brandenburg und die Reichshauptstadt Berlin 1933–1936*. Teilband I: *Der Regierungsbezirk Potsdam*, Cologne and others: Böhlau 1998, p. 390. This same report notes that in Spain and the Netherlands Esperantist activity serves primarily for pacifist propaganda, as proved by stickers used on Esperanto letters, and it recommends that such letters should be confiscated immediately by the postal authorities.

¹⁹*Die Bewegung* (Zentralorgan des Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes), 1936, 2 (8 January).

At the end of 1935 GEA's journal ceased to appear. Its publisher Friedrich Ellersiek gave up on it partly because of financial difficulties and partly because of the attacks of NDEB against its 'un-German attitude'. In the final issue Kurt Walther still optimistically quoted a communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Every German can, if he wishes, learn Esperanto!'²⁰ but midway in the preparations for the 25th German Esperanto Congress in Weimar, came the decree demanded by Heydrich. Signed by Martin Bormann, chief of staff in the office of the Deputy Führer, and dated 18 February 1936, it declared:

Because the creation of an international mixed language runs counter to the basic concepts of National Socialism and ultimately can respond only to the interests of supranational powers, the Deputy Führer hereby forbids all party members and members of organizations affiliated with the party from membership in all forms of artificial-language organizations.²¹

Because NDEB was led by party members and probably a large number of its likely 500 members also belonged to the party, its existence was essentially ended by this decree. GEA also faced the question of whether it should continue its activity or dissolve itself, because Bormann's decree meant that not only Walther but also many of its members would have to resign. At the end of May 1936 the Congress in Weimar took place as planned; a publicity leaflet on Esperanto produced on that occasion lacked all mention of the origins of the language and its authorship by Zamenhof.²² The participants unanimously decided to continue their activities, approved a new constitution (the fourth in three years) and elected the Dresden businessman Fritz Thieme as their new leader.²³

But the new leadership scarcely had time to draw breath before the regime abandoned its last scruples. On 26 April the Gestapo arrested

²⁰ Letter from the Ministry to Esperantists in Katowice, 13 September 1935, quoted in *Der Deutsche Esperantist* 32 (1935): 162.

²¹ Decree no. 29/36, in *Zusammenstellung aller bis zum 31. März 1937 erlassenen und noch gültigen Anordnungen des Stellvertreters des Führers*, Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1937, p. 262.

²² *Warum Esperanto? Warum Deutscher Esperanto-Bund?* Dresden: Deutscher Esperanto-Bund, 1936.

²³ Deutscher Esperanto-Bund e. V., *Bundesnachrichten*, 1936, no. 5 (June/July).

two Dutch Esperantists who were meeting in Düsseldorf with German fellow speakers; after four days of questioning they were escorted to the frontier.²⁴ An internal decree of the political police bearing the date of 24 April left to the discretion of local police forces the dissolution of groups whose members were engaged in activity against the state. The decree indicated that 'for reasons of state politics, a general prohibition of Esperanto organizations is currently not the intention'.²⁵ According to an internal report of 1940, irregular and illegal activities by members of Esperanto associations continued, so that it was necessary to put an end to the organized movement entirely. The fatal blow came on 20 June. A decree from Heinrich Himmler, who had recently combined the offices of Chief of Police and Leader of the SS, prohibited activity for the international organizations UEA and SAT and required that internal associations, principally GEA,²⁶ dissolve themselves before 15 July if they wished to avoid compulsory liquidation. After that date all activity for any artificial-language organization was forbidden.²⁷

This requirement was communicated by Thieme to the clubs and individual members in a circular of 4 July.²⁸ Thirty years and almost two

²⁴ See the report from the Düsseldorf Gestapo to the Berlin headquarters, 27 April 1936, Bundesarchiv, R 58/385, fol. 18–20. On this matter the papers of the Gestapo also contain a clipping from the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* of 6 May 1936: Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221a. Report of one of those arrested: J. M. van Meegeeren, 'La "malliberiga stelo"', *La Praktiko* 5 (1936), 6 (54): 5; see Borsboom (2003), pp. 174–5. The Gestapo also noted a report in the Social Democratic *Danziger Volksstimme* (4 May 1936) that unknown persons, presumably Nazis, destroyed the 'Esperanto oak' in Zoppot (now Sopot), planted during the 19th World Congress in Danzig in 1927: Bundesarchiv, R 58/7421, fol. 203.

²⁵ Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 3.

²⁶ The requirement was also directed at the NDEB, the 'Amika Rondo' (Friendly Circle) Club in Berlin and the Esperanto Union of Businessmen in Radebeul. The German Ido Federation (Germana Ido-Federuro) was immediately prohibited.

²⁷ The decree of 6 June 1936 was signed on Himmler's behalf by Dr. Werner Best, who was Heydrich's deputy: Bundesarchiv, R 58/7421, fol. 204–5.

²⁸ Thieme could read the text of the decree but was not entitled to receive it for distribution to the members: circular of Thieme, 12 July 1936. The Businessmen's Esperanto Union was able, under the name 'Commercial Union', to continue to operate for some time. The Esperanto Institute for the German Reich closed its office in Leipzig on 31 December 1936.

months after its founding, the German Esperanto Association ceased to exist.²⁹

Just a Language?

What, then, can we learn from the papers of the secret police? We can surely conclude that GEA was banned because, despite its efforts at adaptation, it remained infiltrated by elements opposed to the regime.

Clearly, throughout the period of the Third Reich, Esperantists, particularly those in the workers' Esperanto movement, engaged in anti-fascist resistance. The group most active in using Esperanto to organize resistance proved to be the communists.³⁰ In the first years of the Nazi regime, GLEA members organized underground courses³¹ and distributed information about the situation in Germany among their comrades abroad, sometimes hiding them in advertising leaflets, for example for Nivea Cream.³² In the reverse direction, translations from the workers' Esperanto press in other countries served as instructional material in illegal anti-Nazi cells. In addition, the periodicals published by SAT in the years 1933–35 were full of first-hand reports from German comrades about the Nazi terror; it seems, furthermore, that in general they painted a more realistic picture of the situation³³ than the newsletters produced by the communist PEK.³⁴ Worker Esperantists maintained contact with one another by means of secret meetings not only in private houses but even in such places as public baths and in forests,³⁵ and they also undertook to serve as couriers, transporting banned literature from Czechoslovakia

²⁹ Following the war, GEA was re-established (12 April 1947).

³⁰ *Protokolaro pri la XIV-a Kongreso de SAT en Valencio*, 1934, p. 5.

³¹ *Sur Posteno*, 1934, 25 (161): 90; 1935, 1 (169): 1.

³² L. Schödl, 'NIVEA', *Der Esperantist* 7 (1971), 50: 6–8.

³³ For example, they denied that workers in Germany had heroically fought against fascism and labeled as incorrect the Communist propaganda to the effect that the regime would not long survive: *Sennacieca Revuo*, n.s., 1 (1933/34): 51–3.

³⁴ W.G. Keable spoke of their 'grandiloquent, erroneous "high politics"': *Sur Posteno*, 1933, 8 (145): 61.

³⁵ *Protokolaro Valencio*, p. 6.

to Saxony³⁶ or from the Netherlands to the Ruhr region;³⁷ in Hamburg, seamen smuggled anti-Nazi brochures to local Esperantists.³⁸ Esperanto also helped victims of political persecution flee abroad. Many worker Esperantists nevertheless fell victim to the regime. Some of them languished in prisons or concentration camps, in some cases for several years. In the Hohnstein concentration camp Gerhard Schubert, a Social Democrat and a teacher, was tortured to the point of suicide in March 1933,³⁹ and Theodor Stöterau, founder of the workers' Esperanto club in Bremerhaven, threw himself to his death from the fifth story of the courthouse where he had been sentenced to six years of imprisonment.⁴⁰ A highly active communist Esperantist in Frankfurt am Main, Herbert Haupt, arrested in 1933, was shot dead, probably in a cellar.⁴¹

In concentration camps, workers continued to teach Esperanto wherever they could, though it seems that increasingly such courses served primarily as secret fora for political discussion.⁴² As the years passed, the opportunities to work for the spread of Esperanto were reduced to a minimum. For example, a Berlin GLEA club spawned an anti-fascist resistance group that succeeded in surviving until 1944; its core consisted of Esperantists, but little by little, and in increasing numbers, new members joined primarily to participate in its underground activities; these new members were either not competent in Esperanto or had no knowledge of it at all.⁴³

³⁶Willi Glier and others, *Zur Geschichte der Arbeiter-Esperanto-Bewegung im Bezirk Erzgebirge-Vogtland (1907–1933)*, Karl-Marx-Stadt: Kulturbund der DDR, 1976, pp. 32–3.

³⁷Karl Schabrod, *Widerstand an Rhein und Ruhr 1933–1945*, Düsseldorf: VVN, 1969, p. 40; Bludau (1973), pp. 108–13, 116. The leader of the workers' Esperanto group, who carried out these courier services, was the miner Alois Huber, of Duisburg, later condemned to life imprisonment. His companion Matthias Trauden (see p. 113, note 13) was imprisoned for ten years.

³⁸Theobald (1948), p. 59.

³⁹From a paper by Hellmut Fuchs, *Der Esperantist* 5 (1969), 28/29: 30.

⁴⁰Personal communication by Robert Stoffers, Cassis, 15 November 1970. Stöterau was arrested along with his fellow members. Today a street in Bremerhaven bears his name. On Stöterau and his companion Stoffers, see also Bundesarchiv, R 58/384.

⁴¹Interview with Kurt Nissen, July 1977.

⁴²Wolfgang Langhoff, *Die Moorsoldaten. 13 Monate Konzentrationslager*, Munich: Zinnen-Verlag, 1946, p. 225, concerning experiences in the Börgermoor concentration camp near Papenburg in 1933/34.

⁴³Diethelm Becker, *Der Arbeiter-Esperanto-Bund auf dem Weg zu einer revolutionären Organisation des deutschen Proletariats*, dissertation, University of Rostock, 1968, pp. 47–8.

To what extent did the resistance of worker Esperantists have an effect on GEA? How did they relate to the ‘neutralists’ in the shadow of Nazism? In June 1933, SAT members were reminded by their leader Lanti of advice he had given a few years earlier, in August 1929, to members in countries where SAT was banned. ‘Where our members cannot gather under the red flag’, Lanti advised, ‘they must simply shelter under the green one; they must participate in the neutral, bourgeois, even fascist Esperanto movement’.⁴⁴ Although Lanti had in mind activities in countries suffering under ‘white terror’—countries which, unlike Hitler’s Germany, were not in principle opposed to the neutral Esperanto movement—part of the German SAT membership certainly followed his advice and joined GEA ‘to stay in contact and to avoid losing our knowledge of the language’.⁴⁵

But certain facts argue against widespread infiltration of the association by socialists and communists. First, GEA itself, for its own protection, had no wish to tolerate widespread membership in the association by people earlier known as adherents of the workers’ organization. Secondly, those who followed Lanti’s call were warned by SAT not to engage in political activity within a neutral association. Thirdly, some SAT members were critical of Lanti, suggesting that he ‘has forgotten that the Esperanto movement in Germany is no longer “neutral” but “fascist”’ and that to such a movement ‘our adherence is not possible’.⁴⁶ Diehard resisters accordingly could not regard GEA as a suitable forum for their activities.

The conclusion that GEA was banned because it failed to free itself of members hostile to the regime is contradicted by a further consideration—namely that Heydrich intentionally exaggerated the possibility of the existence of Marxist elements in the German Esperanto movement because he hoped in that way to achieve more rapidly something to which the conservative bureaucracy (and apparently even the Ministry of Propaganda) was still disinclined: the complete destruction of the entire

⁴⁴ E.L., ‘Inter ni’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 534. Reprinted under the title ‘Vivu la neŭtralismo!’ in Lanti (1931), pp. 73–4; and in *Sennaciulo* 9 (1932/33): 93–4.

⁴⁵ *Protokolaro Valencio*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Protokolaro pri la XIII-a SAT-Kongreso en Stokholmo*, 1933, p. 8.

Esperanto movement. Undoubtedly Heydrich's agents kept him well informed of the internal structure of GEA and the apolitical viewpoint of most of its members. The question of whether more or fewer Marxists were active in it had little essential influence on his conviction that Esperanto was the invention of a Jew and therefore had to be exterminated. To him, all active Esperantists were enemies of the state by their very nature, because only such people could possibly be interested in, as he wrote in June 1935, 'the propagation, entirely superfluous and from a nationalist point of view utterly repulsive, of a universal language for individuals of all peoples and races'.⁴⁷ Heydrich's insistence on the destruction of the Esperanto movement might also be considered an element in the struggle of the Gestapo and the SS for a stronger position in the state. Himmler and Heydrich achieved this goal with the establishment, on 17 July 1936, of the institution *Reichsführer SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei*.⁴⁸ Three days later the definitive demise of GEA was decreed.

It remained unclear whether the Nazis were willing to tolerate Esperanto as a language. Fritz Thieme, the last leader of GEA, informed the members in July 1936 that Himmler's decree was not directed 'against the application' of Esperanto 'through the spoken and written exchange of ideas with speakers of foreign languages'⁴⁹ and that 'Esperanto itself is not forbidden in Germany'.⁵⁰ Heydrich also noted under the date of 27 August 1936: 'The use of Esperanto in private correspondence cannot be opposed, as long as it does not take place with negative intentions against the state or to advance the unity of the Esperantists.'⁵¹ In the following year the Gestapo confirmed that 'a ban on the application of Esperanto has so far not occurred and probably will not occur in the future'.⁵²

⁴⁷ Letter from the Politische Polizeikommandeur der Länder to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 26 June 1935, Bundesarchiv, R 58/378, fol. 56–60. On the position of Heydrich in 1935 see Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, p. 94.

⁴⁸ In this way the German police were centralized, but, at the same time, following their amalgamation with the party SS, in effect were removed from state jurisdiction: Helmut Krausnick and others, *Anatomy of the SS State*, trans. Richard Barry and others, New York: Walker & Co., 1968, pp. 157 and following, 164.

⁴⁹ Circular from Thieme, 12 July 1936.

⁵⁰ Circular from Thieme, 21 July 1936.

⁵¹ Internal report, 8 June 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 225.

⁵² Geheime Staatspolizei Berlin, 1 July 1937, Bundesarchiv, R 58/387, fol. 119.

Indeed, after the dissolution of GEA many Esperantists—those who did not fear persecution for political activity—continued their private involvement with the language, corresponding with foreign friends and subscribing to neutral magazines. However, permission for the private use of Esperanto often had only symbolic value: the permission was not widely known, nor did it hinder individual denunciations on the part of local Gestapo members. Thus, on the one hand, we know of Esperantists who never suffered hindrance, and even a few Germans who fled to Switzerland having secretly learned Esperanto.⁵³ On the other hand, there were those who were called in for questioning by the police for receiving foreign Esperanto magazines, were given written orders ‘to desist from all activity for the Esperanto language’⁵⁴ or were threatened with punishment after having participated in an informal meeting at which Esperanto was spoken.⁵⁵ On one occasion an Esperantist in Antwerp received a recommendation from the German ambassador to Belgium that he cease correspondence in Esperanto with his German friend,⁵⁶ and on another occasion, when a Chinese Esperanto journal published the names of two financial contributors and indicated that they were from the no longer existing Austria, the Gestapo did not neglect to take an interest in their identity.⁵⁷

In April 1938 Theodor Koch, the Gestapo informer in Bremen, reported that, according to German regulations, ‘only *organized* Esperantism is forbidden in Germany’; in his view, this fact was cleverly exploited by Esperantists in Germany and abroad.⁵⁸ But the office of the Reichsführer SS confirmed the actual situation, noting in June 1939, that ‘the dissemination of Esperanto in Germany is forbidden’.⁵⁹

⁵³E. Malmgren, ‘Novjara saluto de la Prezidanto de U.E.A.’, *Esperanto* 41(1948): 1–2 (esp. p. 1).

⁵⁴Geheime Staatspolizei Hamburg to Oscar Bünemann, 22 September 1936; facsimile in Theobald (1948), p. 60.

⁵⁵Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizeileitstelle Berlin, to Erwin Stolpe, 15 November 1937; personal communication from Erwin Stolpe, 30 January 1968.

⁵⁶Personal communication from Artur Gitzinger, Solingen, 4 July 1966.

⁵⁷Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 150–1. The journal was *Voĉoj el Oriento* (Hongkong), 1938, 7/8 (Aug.): 8.

⁵⁸Theodor Koch to Gestapo Bremen, 7 April 1938, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 135.

⁵⁹Reichsführer SS, 3 June 1939, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 183.

Of the European countries annexed by the Nazis or under their growing influence, Austria was the first to discover that a legal Esperanto movement was no longer possible. The workers' Esperanto movement in Austria, as in Germany, was much stronger than the neutral movement. At the end of 1933 the social democratic Austrian Workers Esperantist League (ALLE), whose guiding force was Franz Jonas, postwar federal president of Austria, numbered over 1700 members, while the neutral Austrian Esperanto Association (AEA) had only around 500. Following the unsuccessful workers' uprising of February 1934, the dictatorial regime of Engelbert Dollfuss banned ALLE, along with all other workers' organizations. This did not change the traditionally favorable attitude of the Austrian authorities toward Esperanto. When in 1936 the 28th World Congress of Esperanto took place in Vienna, its honorary committee included large numbers of well-known figures—from the Federal Chancellor to the president of the Danube Steamship Company.⁶⁰

On 12 March 1938 Austrian independence came to an end. As early as 20 March, members of the SA closed the International Esperanto Museum in Vienna.⁶¹ Individual Esperantists suffered exploratory visits by Gestapo agents.⁶² On 1 August, instructions from Berlin decreed the end of the organized Esperanto movement.⁶³ Significantly, the instructions made a distinction between the AEA, characterized as primarily Catholic and rightist,⁶⁴ and the competing organization, the Austrian Esperantist Federation, founded in 1936 and, according to the Nazis, headed by former Socialists. The former was 'requested' to disband itself, while the latter was forcibly dissolved. After the annexation of the Sudetenland, the German Esperanto League in Czechoslovakia too was dissolved on 16 December 1938, as a result of a local initiative, before the order came from Berlin.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Aŭstria Esperantisto* 13 (1936), 2: 2.

⁶¹ Hall & Köstner (2006), p. 383.

⁶² *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 75.

⁶³ Internal report, 8 June 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 226.

⁶⁴ In the Gestapo archives, an issue of *Aŭstria Esperantisto* (13 December 1937) is preserved that energetically pleads for the independence of Austria ("Trifoje Aŭstrio!"): Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221b.

⁶⁵ Internal report 8 June 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 227.

The Swiss journalist, Hans Unger, who worked in Berlin as a special correspondent to several Swiss newspapers, experienced at first hand the degree to which Heydrich's attitude grew more and more severe. Soon after IEL's yearbook for 1939 appeared, listing him under 'Germany' as its only representative—in this case as a journalist—he was visited by a Gestapo agent. When Unger later met with a dozen or so Esperantists in a Berlin café, he was called to the head office of the Gestapo. There, Heydrich personally questioned him, characterizing Unger's contacts with Esperantists as efforts to organize an 'international network' opposed to the Third Reich. When Unger replied that the conscience of humanity would be offended if people were sent to concentration camps simply for the use of Esperanto, Heydrich curtly interrupted him: 'Our conscience is German, and we act only on that basis. The idea of a human conscience is a Jewish creation and is of no interest to us!'⁶⁶ Unger later heard similar insults from the mouth of Rudolf Hess, who even went so far as to present him with a fantastic plan for a simplified German language to be forced on a pan-European federation of states under Nazi German hegemony.⁶⁷

Not long after Unger's conversations with Heydrich and Hess, the Second World War broke out, bringing death and unimaginable suffering to millions of people. Here, there is no need to present the details of the Nazi terror rampaging across Europe, particularly in the east. A less well-known aspect of the enslaving policies of the Nazis was the suppression of the communication rights of Jews and Slavs. Hitler himself insisted in July 1942 that the non-German population of Eastern Europe

⁶⁶Report of Dr. Hans Unger to the German Esperanto Institute, 2 June 1948; extract in *La Ponto* 3 (1949): 5–6. In much the same way, a guide to the SS in 1942 named the term 'humankind' 'a Jewish lie': Bialas (2014), p. 145.

⁶⁷Hitler himself said early in 1941 that a hundred years hence German would be the language of Europe: Werner Jochmann (ed.), *Adolf Hitler, Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944*, Hamburg: Knaus, 1980, p. 124. The policies of Nazi Germany were more and more characterized by efforts to install German as the dominant language of Europe: Dirk Scholten, *Sprachverbreitungspolitik des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands*, Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2000, p. 57. Franz Thierfelder published a book on German as 'world language': *Deutsch als Weltsprache. I: Die Grundlagen der deutschen Sprachgeltung in Europa*, Berlin: Verlag für Volkstum, Wehr und Wirtschaft, 1938 (on Esperanto see pp. 29–32). See also Christopher Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich: Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 201–2. In 1951 Thierfelder was among the founders of the Goethe-Institut.

'should never be allowed a higher education' and that in the schools this population should be allowed to learn 'nothing more than the meaning of traffic signs, at most'. The German language was to be taught to Jews and Slavs only to the extent that it was necessary 'to create the linguistic preconditions for our leadership'—so, to explain to such people the meaning of Nazi orders.⁶⁸

The expansion of the Nazis to the east ruled out possibilities for the use of Esperanto, that symbol of linguistic equal rights that found its first enthusiastic support among precisely the Jews and Slavs. Within two or three days of the occupation of Poland, German soldiers appeared among the Esperantists.⁶⁹ One of the most eminent such Esperantists was the bacteriologist Odo Bujwid, of Krakow, a former fellow student of Zamenhof.⁷⁰ Security police searched his house in mid-September 1939; he was subjected to interrogation, also about his Esperanto connections, for three days. Singled out among the first victims were members of the Zamenhof family. On 4 October, shortly after the German army's entry into Warsaw, members of the Nazi security service arrived at the Jewish Hospital asking for Adam Zamenhof, the head doctor in its ophthalmology department.⁷¹ Adam, son of Lazar Zamenhof, was arrested.

Adam's son, Louis Christophe Zaleski-Zamenhof, is convinced that the Zamenhof family was on a specially prepared list, since the family members were arrested, at various addresses, all on the same day. Given that all Jews and Polish intellectuals were no longer safe in the face of the unbridled harassment of Heydrich's executioners, one could assume that no special order was needed to arrest the Zamenhof family and other

⁶⁸ Henry Picker (ed.), *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier*, 3rd edn., Stuttgart: Seewald, 1976, pp. 453–4. In May 1942 Hitler expressed the hope that in Bohemia and Moravia the authorities would succeed 'within 20 years, in reducing the Czech language to the significance of a dialect' (Picker, p. 322). See also Himmler's memorandum of May 1940, specifying that non-German peoples should have an elementary-school education only up to the fourth year: 'Einige Gedanken über die Behandlung der Fremdvölkischen im Osten', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 5 (1957): 196–8 (esp. p. 197).

⁶⁹ *Esperanto Internacia* 11 (1947): 3.

⁷⁰ Jochen August (ed.), 'Sonderaktion Krakau'. *Die Verhaftung der Krakauer Wissenschaftler am 6. November 1939*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1997, p. 30. In Bujwid's home the police found his extensive correspondence with Robert Koch and probably did not arrest him for that reason.

⁷¹ Dobrzyński (2005), p. 24.



Fig. 4.1 Lazar Zamenhof's three children, murdered by the Nazis: Lidia, Zofia and Adam

Esperantists.⁷² But the fact that such a list existed is evident from a report sent by Lothar Beutel, head of 'Einsatzgruppe IV' of the Security Police, to Berlin on 6 October 1939 (one day after the triumphant entry of Hitler into the conquered Warsaw). Beutel mentions particularly that the 'well-known Jewish Zamenhof family' had been arrested and questioned.⁷³ Adam Zamenhof was shot dead on 29 January 1940;⁷⁴ his sisters Zofia and Lidia, along with Ida Zimmermann, Lazar's sister, were transported from the Warsaw ghetto in 1942 to Treblinka, where all three perished.⁷⁵

⁷² See Boulton (1960), p. 213.

⁷³ The report was published most recently in Stephan Lehnstaedt & Jochen Böhrer (ed.), *Die Berichte der Einsatzgruppen aus Polen 1939*, Berlin: Metropol, 2013, pp. 337–41 (quotation from p. 337). Beutel further reports that the family members were interrogated about 'the leadership level' among the Jews and that the search of the houses had been 'so far' without result. According to an internal note (1940), in the homes of Lidia and Zofia Zamenhof newspapers, books 'and minutes of the Esperanto movement' were confiscated; the material was taken by truck to the RSHA, 9 October 1939: note by SS-Hauptsturmführer Herbert Hagen, Bundesarchiv 58/7430, fol. 25. See also Emanuel Ringelblum, *Kronika getta warszawskiego, wrzesień 1939–styczeń 1943*, Warsaw: Cytelnik, 1988, p. 93. On Beutel see Ingrao (2012), pp. 130–3.

⁷⁴ Dobrzyński (2005), p. 25; Raul Hilberg and others (ed.), *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniaków: Prelude to Doom*, New York: Stein & Day, 1979, p. 179.

⁷⁵ Zofia Banet-Fornalowa, *La familio Zamenhof*, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland: Kooperativo de Literatura Foiro, 2000, pp. 90–1. See also Isaj Dratwer, *Lidja Zamenhof. Vivo kaj agado*, Antwerp & La Laguna: tk & Stafeto, 1980, pp. 102–9 (reproductions of four postcards written from Warsaw

Many Esperantists were among the numberless victims of mass murder in Poland,⁷⁶ some of them probably primarily because they were activists for Esperanto (Fig. 4.1).⁷⁷

On 27 September 1939—a few days before the occupation of Warsaw—an office was set up in Berlin known as the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA, the Reich Security Main Office), which combined the state Security Police, including the Gestapo, with the party's Security Service and as of that date served as the center of power for the discovery and suppression of all opponents of the Nazi system; its leader was Reinhard Heydrich. It seems evident that the arrests of Esperantists in Poland also originated in a carefully prepared plan emanating from that office. In fact, even before the RSHA was created, the preparations for persecution had been elevated to the status of scientific research: as of April 1937, these plans were in the hands of Franz Alfred Six, head of Department II, responsible for 'ideological research'.⁷⁸ Six soon became the most important functionary at RSHA after Heydrich and his deputy Werner Best, and faithfully followed the line that maintained that an ideological opponent was more dangerous than the more easily identifiable political enemy.⁷⁹ Six was a SS-Brigadeführer and, as of 1940, also a university professor. Although he always (particularly after the war) liked to pose as a mere scientific manager, he was well informed about the extermination plans of the Nazis—or, to put matters differently, Six saw no contradiction between research and persecution. Characteristically, many years

between May 1940 and January 1942); Wendy Heller, *Lidia: The Life of Lidia Zamenhof, Daughter of Esperanto*, Oxford: Ronald, 1985; and the article collection compiled by Amouroux (2008). Wanda, the wife of Adam, and her son were hidden by a non-Jewish family in Warsaw and survived.

⁷⁶Best known are Leo Belmont, Halina Weinstein, Edward Wiesenfeld, Jakub Szapiro, Izrael Lejzerowicz (on these individuals see Banet-Fornalowa [2003]), Leopold Dreher and Wilhelm Róbin.

⁷⁷Czesław Pruski, UEA representative in Lublin, was shot early in February 1941 apparently primarily because of the fact that he was an Esperantist: Jan Zawada in *Pola Esperantisto* 42 (1962), 4 (Jul./Aug.): 5.

⁷⁸See Hachmeister (1998); Ingrao (2012), p. 134. Heydrich brought Six into the Security Service in April 1935. Department II was, as of 1940, re-designated as Department VII.

⁷⁹Carsten Schreiber, *Elite im Verborgenen. Ideologie und regionale Herrschaftspraxis des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS und seines Netzwerks am Beispiel Sachsens*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008, p. 126.

later Adolf Eichmann expressed his admiration for the scientifically based work of his former superior Six.⁸⁰

Beginning in 1936, Eichmann worked in Section II 112 ('Jewry'). Another section in Six's department, II 122, was responsible for opponents other than Jews, Freemasons, Marxists and churches, namely liberalism, pacifism, émigrés—and Esperantists. The head of the Esperanto office was SS-Untersturmführer Horst Kunze, who also remained in regular contact with Theodor Koch, the fervent ex-Esperantist and Gestapo confidant in Bremen.

It was this same Koch who pointed out, following the annexation of Austria, that the annexation presented a unique opportunity to seize not only the 'treasures' of the Esperanto museum but also all papers associated with the AEA. This material had, he maintained, 'the greatest scientific significance—also for research on the Jewish community'. Koch attempted to explain matters to his colleagues:

Because the world organization of the Esperanto movement, in addition to its Messianic task of abolishing the languages of the peoples (First Epistle to the Corinthians 13.8), also serves as a political auxiliary force (for example in the siege of Germany before 1914), all leading Esperantists should be considered not only as cultural subversives but also as international conspirators.⁸¹

One could certainly conclude that such delusion was no more than paranoia masquerading as science. But Koch seems to have found in the RSHA a ready audience for his favorite topic. We know that Heydrich was fanatically convinced of the omnipresent subversion of the Jews. On 13 April 1940, Koch personally appeared in the RSHA. Kunze asked him to 'compile a summary report on the ideology of the international Esperanto movement' and promised to provide him with confiscated

⁸⁰ Hachmeister (1998), p. 157; Ingrao (2012), p. 143. Heydrich designated Six as leader of an operations group to begin activities following the occupation of England: Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, p. 177.

⁸¹ Koch to Gestapo Bremen, 4 April 1938, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 131.

'Esperanto literature' in support of his studies.⁸² Koch seems not to have been particularly dependent on this material because very soon thereafter there appeared, under the title 'Esperanto' and with the date of 8 June 1940, an internal report of 11 typed pages.⁸³ This remarkable document summarizes the ideological position of the RSHA regarding Esperanto. It was evidently based on Theodor Koch's studies.⁸⁴ In the introduction we can read how Esperanto came into being:

From a Zionist movement (Chawewe Zion⁸⁵) came the Polish Jew Zamenhof, at one time an eye doctor in Warsaw. He sought to realize Jewish world rule in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah 2.4, as a reign of peace under Jewish leadership.⁸⁶ All peoples would freely submit to the Jews. This goal would be achieved through the 'peaceful' penetration and subversion of the master peoples. Serving Zamenhof in this effort would be unlimited pacifism, a new religion of his own creation, *Homaranismo*, as a first step to the Jewish religion and the universal language 'Esperanto' invented by him, which, through application of the same law for all members of all peoples, colors and climes and through the same education, ideals, convictions and goals, would little by little lead to the same mish-mash of peoples.⁸⁷ These three goals together, not simply propaganda for a universal language, constitute Esperantism, which, after around 1905, plays the role of an auxiliary force for the Jews. Among its special resources are anticipated, among other things: an international press at first partially and later entirely in Esperanto; an international literature; international employment and freedom of domicile.

⁸²Notes of Kunze, 18 April 1940 and 10 June 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7430, fol. 1 & 23. On the back of a notice of material confiscated from members of the Zamenhof family (see p. 126, note 73) Kunze noted (5 June 1940), that he, along with SS-Untersturmführer Schmaljohann, had looked through the material for Koch's use.

⁸³Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 217–27.

⁸⁴Several drafts can be found in the writings by which Koch, beginning in 1935, proposed his services to the Gestapo. See Bundesarchiv, R 58/378, fol. 29–36, and R 58/593, fol. 1–2.

⁸⁵An erroneous rendering of 'Chowewe Zion' (Hovevei Zion, Lovers of Zion).

⁸⁶A reference to Isaiah's prophecy of a future reign of eternal peace: 'And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more' (*Isaiah* 2.4).

⁸⁷Literally 'porridge of peoples' (Ger. 'Völkerbrei'). The formula appeared earlier in an article by Koch in the journal *Der Judenkenner*, 1935 (see p. 115, note 17).

The document goes on to describe the development of Esperanto in the Weimar Republic through the lens of Nazism:

In Germany, leadership was in the hands of the B'nai B'rith Jew [Georg] Arnhold, of Dresden. Esperantism in Germany always had an anti-German attitude and its culturally subversive tendencies have become particularly evident in the period since the end of the war (after 1918). Precisely in the period after 1918, Esperantism was able to establish itself readily in Germany. Left-wing parties and circles made use of the artificial language 'Esperanto'. The leadership of almost all Esperanto associations was in the hands of Jews and Freemasons. The 'progressive' governments of the day advanced this language because it propagated in its literature the ideas of Marxism and communism, forming an excellent international organ for the idea of world brotherhood contained in such world concepts, and used by the Jew to attain his aim—world domination.

Given the above, it comes as no surprise that even the compliant GEA experienced no indulgence from the authorities. Even if a few patriotically minded people wished to advance and disseminate Esperanto 'in a way useful to the state'—the document continued—experience showed that this was 'an entirely erroneous belief'. Despite the *Gleichschaltung*, even the politically reliable leaders of Esperanto organizations could do nothing to prevent activities hostile to the state within their ranks, given that a large part of their membership came from the working classes who did not know how to use the language professionally 'but employed it for their illegal political activity'. The malign political influence attributed to the German Esperantists was also applied to the Universal Esperanto Association. At first the document, relatively accurately, called it an 'international union of bourgeois liberalist character for the neutral application of Esperanto in the field of tourism etc.' but later it noted that UEA 'particularly in other countries is strongly infiltrated by Jews and pacifists'.

As if to dissolve any hope that, after the destruction of the Esperanto organizations, the Nazis might begin to tolerate Esperanto as a mere hobby, the June 1940 document gave precisely the opposite instructions:

To consider 'Esperanto' merely an auxiliary language for international communication would be incorrect. The artificial language Esperanto is part of Esperantism, the weapon of the Jews.

We can gain a better understanding of the 'scientific research' from reading one of Heydrich's memoranda prepared less than a month after the above document. Heydrich proudly reports that the invading troops, most recently in Poland, were accompanied 'under special order of the Führer' by special groups of police operatives who

on the basis of earlier preparations, have delivered a severe blow, by means of arrests, confiscation and the securing of the most important political material, to the worldwide anti-Reich elements in the camp of emigration, freemasonry, Judaism and political-ecclesiastical opposition, and in the Second and Third Internationals.⁸⁸

Not only in Austria and Poland but also in other countries, the Esperantists constituted an often small but always carefully monitored part of these 'anti-Reich elements'.

Soon Theodor Koch received a new task. At the end of July 1940, he traveled to Vienna, on instructions from Six, to look at the contents of the Esperanto Museum.⁸⁹ As we have noted, the Gestapo closed the museum immediately after the annexation of Austria. There followed, on Six's orders, more widespread confiscation of archives and libraries, among them Esperanto collections.⁹⁰ A few of the museum documents were confiscated, but it was decided to leave its library in Vienna, since it would be too great a burden to transport this material to Berlin, given that it was 'politically unimportant to the Reich'.⁹¹

Two years later, the RSHA had a different view. It now regarded the contents of the museum as extremely important and for that reason sent

⁸⁸Note from Heydrich for Himmler, 2 July 1940, published in Helmut Krausnick, 'Hitler und die Morde in Polen', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 11 (1963): 196–209 (quotation from p. 206).

⁸⁹Note from Kunze, 10 June 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7430, fol. 23–4.

⁹⁰Ingrao (2012), p. 171; Patricia Kennedy Grimsted and others (ed.), *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe and Recent Restitution Issues*, Builth Wells: Institute of Art and Law, 2007, p. 51.

⁹¹Sonderkommando II 122, Vienna, 7 April 1938, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7150, fol. 11.

Koch to Vienna. But at that point there arose unexpected difficulties: the new director of the Austrian National Library (to which the museum belonged), Dr. Paul Heigl, himself an SS-Sturmbannführer, categorically refused to agree to the transfer of the museum material to Berlin. Koch was only able to spend a couple of hours in the completely disordered museum and was obliged to conclude, with some consternation, that Heigl had no idea how valuable the contents of the museum really were. Two days later, Koch returned to Berlin empty-handed. In April 1941 he reported:

This library is unique in the world. Through it, the Jews have created a monument for themselves, assembling here everything [...] that attests to their goals of world destruction—and to a degree that probably could not be rivalled by any Freemasonry library.⁹²

Reading this report, one has the impression that Koch was seized by a desire to accord the library an importance out of all proportion. He attributed to it major significance for the discovery of biblical secrets, particularly concerning the Messianic goals of the Jews. In sum, Koch proposed that the museum material be dispatched to Berlin, and he also recommended that all public libraries in Germany be refused permission to lend any Esperanto titles, depositing them instead in a special secret storage space. Koch's approach was partly (pseudo-) scientific, partly a hobby; but the responsible parties at the RSHA took it altogether seriously. Research since the war has revealed that Six's department in fact appropriated libraries in all of the occupied countries. In line with this interest, it considered putting pressure on Heigl, head of the Vienna library, to separate the museum from the former national library, so that 'anti-German material without exception' be subjected to 'ideological investigation'.⁹³ Two months later, however, Six explained that, because

⁹² Report of Koch, sent from Bremen to the RSHA, 22 April 1941, Bundesarchiv R 58/7430, fol. 61–8 (quoted from fol. 64).

⁹³ Note by RSHA (VII B 4), 11 September 1941, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7430, fol. 73–4.

of Heigl's angry obstructionism, it was necessary to proceed very carefully and that a solution would be possible only after the war was over.⁹⁴

In this case, then, it was impossible to move further because of disagreement within the party; but in other respects the RSHA proceeded in accordance with its plans. In September 1941 an internal document noted that 'in connection with the reorganization of Europe, the banning of the Esperanto movement must be achieved in all European states'.⁹⁵ As we have seen, in Austria, the Sudetenland and Poland, the movement was duly liquidated. This process continued, but with interesting variations.

Unexpectedly, following the dismantling of the State of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the movement in the 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia' was not immediately banned, though the Czech Esperanto Association, which had replaced the earlier Esperanto Association of the Czechoslovak Republic, was obliged to limit itself to activities only among Czechs.⁹⁶ In March 1940 it had to close its office, and in a meeting on 3 November 1940 the association decided, in compliance with an order received from the Gestapo, to disband itself.⁹⁷ The Prague Esperanto Club continued a clandestine existence until 1944. In the Protectorate, whose leader became, in September 1941, Reinhard Heydrich,⁹⁸ many Esperantists were also among the victims of cruel persecution.⁹⁹

Following the Nazi Model

Shortly after the Nazi occupation of territory in western Europe, the RSHA noted that *Heroldo de Esperanto* had published an article about the Nazi advance in Europe and its consequences for the Esperanto

⁹⁴ Note by RSHA (VII B 4), 11 November 1941, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7430, fol. 75–6; cf. Hall & Köstner (2006), p. 385.

⁹⁵ Note by RSHA (VII B 4), 11 September 1941, Bundesarchiv, R 58/7430, fol. 73.

⁹⁶ *Ligilo*, 25 August 1939; quoted in *Esperanto* 35 (1939): 34.

⁹⁷ Kamarýt (1983), p. 69.

⁹⁸ As is well known, in June 1942 Heydrich was assassinated, after which the Nazis massacred the inhabitants of the village of Lidice.

⁹⁹ Kamarýt (1983), pp. 76–81, lists the names of 37 victims.

movement. It particularly remarked its introductory sentence: ‘The Monster Leaps Ahead’ (‘La monstro faras saltojn’).¹⁰⁰

The occupying forces in the Netherlands did not bother the Esperanto movement at first, even allowing the use of Esperanto in correspondence with neutral countries. But the RSHA was secretly preparing its liquidation: the RSHA archives contain detailed lists of Esperanto organizations and individual Esperantists in the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ Soon, in June 1940, Kunze, the RSHA officer in charge of Esperanto, paid an official visit to the Netherlands to gather information on materials scheduled for confiscation.¹⁰² While there, he also turned his attention to the International Esperanto League (IEL), which he described as an organization ‘absolutely hostile to Germany’ and therefore to be banned. Kunze further suggested that Teo Jung, publisher of the ‘anti-German’ newspaper *Heroldo de Esperanto*, be arrested.¹⁰³ While the arrest did not take place,¹⁰⁴ on 20 March 1941 the Dutch Esperanto organizations were dissolved by a decree from the Commandant of the Secret Police and the Security Service.¹⁰⁵ Responsibility for carrying out the decree fell to Werner Schwier, head of the International Organizations Section of the Reich Commissariat for the Occupied Dutch Territories. Professionally, Schwier was a horse butcher but wished to be called ‘Doctor’; he had a reputation for brutality.¹⁰⁶ According to a report by András Cseh on the closing of the International Cseh Institute of Esperanto in the Hague

¹⁰⁰ RSHA (compilation of Koch, 17 May 1940), Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221b, fol. 102; *Heroldo de Esperanto* 21 (1940), 9 (1049): 3. See also *Esperanto Internacia* 4 (1940): 97–9.

¹⁰¹ Also in the archives are long lists of addresses of Esperantists in England, Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Romania, Switzerland: Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221b.

¹⁰² Hachmeister (1998), p. 223.

¹⁰³ RSHA to the Security Police in the Hague, 2 July 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221b, fol. 104. In October 1936 Jung and his newspaper moved from Cologne to Scheveningen in the Netherlands. From then on, *Heroldo* was also organ of IEL.

¹⁰⁴ *Heroldo* continued to appear regularly until 1 May 1940. There followed two ‘wartime’ editions (1 Dec 1940 and 15 March 1941).

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication from the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, Amsterdam, 14 March 1969. See also ‘La verda stelo brilas en la mallumo. Esperantista vivo en la okupita Nederlando’, *La Praktiko* 11 (1946): 87; according to Borsboom (2003), p. 185, this article was written by Jan Dercks.

¹⁰⁶ Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 5. Maart ‘41—Juli ‘42, eerste helft*, The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1974, p. 416. As of 1941, Schwier was also head of the Ommen concentration camp.

(closed as an 'organization affiliated with freemasonry lodges'), Schwier, a 'fanatical enemy of Esperanto', boasted 'that he had already annihilated the Esperanto movement in Germany and Poland, and he threatened us with arrest and concentration camp if we continued to argue for Esperanto', because 'pacifism and humanism are the greatest crimes against the life of the people'.¹⁰⁷ Parts of the book collection of the Dutch Esperanto organizations—two crates—were sent by Schwier in August 1942 to Berlin, where they were assigned to the library of the planned Advanced School of the NSDAP (an establishment to be opened after the war)—to serve as study material on the conspiratorial activities of the Jews.¹⁰⁸

In other countries occupied during the war, Nazi policies concerning Esperanto were not unified; in general, Nazi suppression in Scandinavia and Western Europe was less severe than the suppression in the East. In France, no system-wide measures were undertaken; Esperanto courses were sometimes permitted, sometimes not, and in any case were almost everywhere carried on in secret.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in Norway¹¹⁰ and Denmark¹¹¹ the movement was never banned. In 1942 the Workers Esperanto Club in Copenhagen even dared to publish a book with the highly significant title *Tra densa mallumo* (Through Deepest Darkness), in which Chinese Esperantists were praised for 'working diligently to employ Esperanto

¹⁰⁷ Andreo Cseh, 'La Ĉe Instituto dum la milito', *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 57–9 (quoting p. 57); cf. Borsboom (2003), pp. 182–6. Schwier wrote a book on the Freemasons as an 'organization hostile to the people' in which were reproduced, among other things, membership cards of the Universala Framasona Ligo: W. Schwier, *Vrijmetselarij, een volksvijandige organisatie*, Amsterdam: Westland, 1941. In 1967 the Dutch government sent to the Federal Republic of Germany a list of 658 people suspected of war crimes; the list included Schwier's name: *Nederlanda Esperantisto* 32 (1967): 75. Schwier died in 1971, unconvicted.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof, Nürnberg, 14. November 1945—1. Oktober 1946*, Nuremberg: International Military Tribunal, 1947, vol. 25, pp. 252–3. The confiscation of libraries of international organizations for this purpose was led by the so-called Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce, which received from Hitler in July 1940 the task of securing in the occupied territories materials from all organizations whose world view was hostile to Nazism.

¹⁰⁹ Pierre Petit, '50-monata esperantista propagando sub germana okupado', *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 3–5.

¹¹⁰ Arnfinn Jensson, 'Norvega Esperantista Ligo dum la milito', *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 78.

¹¹¹ K.T. Hansen, 'En Danujo dum la milito', *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 87. See also Ulrich Lins, 'Danoj eskapis persekuton. Pri la observemo de Gestapo/SS kaj la spitemo de esperantistoj', *Beletra Almanako* 9 (2015), 22: 65–73.

in the service of their struggle against the Japanese invaders' and the German Esperantists were criticized for their 'fevered behavior' when they 'apparently to save the movement, declared themselves ready to serve Nazism'.¹¹²

In Belgium, in January 1941, the Flemish Esperantists published (without permission), five issues of *Mededelingen voor den Vlaamschen Esperantist*. When the sixth issue was in press, the Gestapo appeared and, after a search and interrogation, disallowed further activities by the Flemish Esperantist League. In December 1941, however, the local group in Bruges began secret publication of a monthly mimeographed bulletin whose title was itself a program: *Paco kaj Justeco* (Peace and Justice).¹¹³

During the war, Austrian Esperantists met secretly in private homes. At one of these meetings, at the end of June 1944, in the home of Gustav Weber, the former head delegate of IEL and a collaborator with the Esperanto Museum, members of the Gestapo suddenly appeared and arrested everyone present. Weber was sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where even the SS officers had difficulty believing that he was arrested simply because of Esperanto. Weber was later transported to the nearby Gusen camp and put to hard labor in a stone quarry. One day, shortly before the liberation, an SS guard, made nervous by Weber's constant smiles, symptoms of incipient mental disorder, seized the shovel from his hands and battered him on the head until he died.¹¹⁴

Even before the Nazis embraced the countries bordering on Germany, these countries took measures unfavorable to the spread of Esperanto. Next to anti-Communism, the primary cause was anti-Semitism, more or less latently prevalent in many countries of Europe, even the democracies. Anti-Semitism reinforced among the broad spectrum of people an antipathy toward Esperanto as a Jewish creation, and was a factor that

¹¹² *Tra densa mallumo* (1942), pp. 27, 25. One of the authors, the seed pathologist Paul Neergaard, had earlier published an Esperanto-language work opposing racism: *Scienco kaj pseŭdoscienco pri heredo kaj raso. Populara skizo*, Paris: Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, 1937.

¹¹³ E. Cortvriendt, 'Flandra Ligo Esperantista dum la milito', *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 88–9; 'Verda standardo—malgraŭ Hitler', *American Esperantist* 60 (1945): 111–12.

¹¹⁴ Pierre Jayet, "'Pro Esperanto'", *Memoro pri Gustav Weber*, manuscript, 1966. Another former museum collaborator, the Bahai Hugo Maier, also perished. Because of his Jewish ancestry he was deported in August 1942 to the Nazi death camp Maly Trostinec in Belarus: Hall & Köstner (2006), p. 386.

the Esperantists had to take into consideration even in countries with relatively 'Esperanto-friendly' governments. In May 1934, an Esperanto teacher in a high school in Bydgoszcz, Poland, carried out a survey among those pupils who refused to accept Esperanto as their subject of study. In explaining their motives, the children showed that they were fatally infected with anti-Jewish feelings:

because it's a Jewish jargon, which we must hate [...]

Esperanto serves anti-religious propaganda. Esperantists are most often Jews or atheists. Esperanto must be leveled with the ground. [...]

I am a big anti-Semite and for this reason I do not like Esperanto, [...] because in my opinion it is a Zionist discovery to make it easy to spread communism, freemasonry and other hindrances.¹¹⁵

A few years after this survey, Esperantists across the world became witnesses to the nightmarish force of nationalism and anti-Semitism in a country that soon became a victim itself. When the government, probably wishing to enhance the international reputation of Poland, gave permission to organize the Jubilee Esperanto Congress, marking the 50th anniversary of Esperanto's publication, in Warsaw, birthplace of Esperanto, the far-right and fascist press sharply attacked the government for allowing the organization of a 'Jewish-communist' congress.¹¹⁶ During the congress week the absurd allegations and 'unashamedly cynical attacks' of the far-right press created such a fraught atmosphere 'that the Congress participants, or at least a large part of them, felt themselves almost terrorized'.¹¹⁷

In Poland, the enemies of Esperanto did not succeed in influencing the essential viewpoint of the government, but, through the example of the Nazi regime, which led the way in systematically opposing not only troublesome elements in the Esperanto movement but the entire movement and the language itself, several other right-wing and fascist regimes

¹¹⁵ Mieczysław Sygnarski, 'Kion opinias la junularo pri Esperanto?', *Internacia Pedagogia Revuo* 17 (1938), 1: 6–14 (quoting pp. 11, 13).

¹¹⁶ ESTO, '29-a Universala Esperanto-Kongreso en Varsovio', *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 2.

¹¹⁷ Georgo Verda (Izrael Lejzerowicz), 'La Jubilea', *Literatura Mondo* 7 (1937): 97–100 (quoting p. 99).

were stimulated to increase their surveillance of Esperantists and to step up their persecutions. In the process, they often dispensed with the earlier practice of differentiating between neutral and workers' movements.

Portugal, where Salazar's almost 40-year reign began in 1932, was a pioneer in imitating the German model. In September 1936 all Esperanto societies were closed. The sudden annihilation of the Portuguese movement, which had a distinctly proletarian color, was obviously influenced by events in neighboring Spain, namely the newly exploding Civil War; at least for the duration of that war one risked arrest if one sought recruits for Esperanto in Portugal.¹¹⁸ After a period of relaxation, on 11 August 1948 a decree from the Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed the prohibition of 'any Esperantist activities or publications' and two months later the Ministry of Education banned the teaching of Esperanto;¹¹⁹ one argument was that the language had a deleterious influence on the purity of the Portuguese language.¹²⁰ Agents of the secret police (PIDE) carried out a search of the homes of Esperantists, took away Esperanto material and, in August 1949, confiscated the property of the Portuguese Esperanto League. The police also announced that they would confiscate letters arriving from abroad bearing Esperanto stickers.¹²¹

Only by stealth could the Esperantists succeed in spreading their language at all. For example, they produced bars of a green soap that they called 'Esperanto' and sold in packages of six. The packing included a short Esperanto lesson.¹²² A definitive change came only with the April Revolution of 1974, after which the Portuguese Esperantists could finally inform their friends abroad that the weight had been lifted: 'Esperanto in our country will no longer be the dangerous language'.¹²³

The reasons why Esperanto encountered official disapproval in Spain only partly resembled those in Portugal. Before the explosion of the Spanish Civil War, during which the fascists more or less indiscriminately identified the Esperantists with the enemy camp, conflicts with state

¹¹⁸ *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 23, 88; 15 (1938/39): 78.

¹¹⁹ *Scienca Revuo* 2 (1950): 27.

¹²⁰ 'Esperanta kaj portugala lingvoj', *Revista Portuguesa de Esperanto* 1 (1973), 5/6 (Nov./Dec.): 14.

¹²¹ *Esperanto* 42 (1949): 48, 149.

¹²² *Heroldo de Esperanto* 31 (1955) 15 (1221): 2.

¹²³ *Revista Portuguesa de Esperanto* 2 (1974): 101.

power occurred not because of the waging of class war through Esperanto but—seemingly paradoxically—because of the use of the language for nationalist goals, more precisely its implication in Catalan aspirations for autonomy. As early as 1905 the society 'Unió Catalanista' adopted Esperanto for its international relations,¹²⁴ and from the beginning the leadership of the Catalan Esperanto movement was firmly in the hands of people who saw validity in the maxim 'the Catalan language first, Esperanto second'. Spanish, the official language of the country, was systematically marginalized in the pages of the journal *Kataluna Esperantisto*, and contacts with the international movement were maintained directly, rather than through the Spanish Esperanto Association in Madrid.¹²⁵ As a result, particularly during the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923–30), the Catalan Esperantist Federation was often accused of separatist activity against the Spanish state. When in 1928 a general with jurisdiction over Barcelona required that the Federation no longer call itself Catalan and promote fraternity with the other regions of Spain, the Catalan Esperantists, instead of submitting to the order, decided to suspend the organization's activities and await more favorable circumstances. After the fall of the dictatorial regime in 1930, a more positive period did indeed begin, and by the following year a second edition of *Kataluna Antologio* could appear, in which more than 50 authors eloquently pleaded for their language and people in prose and verse translated into Esperanto.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Lingvo Internacia* 10 (1905): 564; Francesc Poblet i Feijoo, *Els inicis del moviment esperantista a Catalunya I La komenca esperanto-movado en Katalunio*, Sabadell: Associació Catalana d'Esperanto, 2004, pp. 26, 90.

¹²⁵ *EdE*, pp. 216–20. In the beginning, the principal force behind Esperanto in Catalonia was the writer Frederic Pujulà i Vallès, one of the leaders of the Catalan nationalist movement. Because of an article in an Esperanto magazine that was critical of Spanish soldiers he was obliged to flee to France at the end of 1905, remaining there for several years: *Lingvo Internacia* 11 (1906): 150; *EdE*, pp. 217, 458–9. Beginning in 1911, almost every year the Catalan Esperantist Federation organized literary competitions, the so-called International Floral Games, in which Esperanto authors from various countries competed: details in Francesc Poblet i Feijoo & Hèctor Alòs i Font (ed.), *Història de l'esperanto als països catalans. Recull d'articles I Historio de esperanto en la kataluna landaro. Artikolkolekto*, Sabadell: Associació Catalana d'Esperanto, 2010.

¹²⁶ *EdE*, pp. 219–20. The first edition of *Kataluna Antologio*, published in 1925, was one of the causes of the harassment.

But soon came a new and more terrible test afflicting more than the Catalan Esperantists. The rebellion of Francisco Franco's troops against the government of the People's Front in July 1936 limited and, after the rebellion's success, cut off all opportunities for action throughout the entire Spanish Esperanto movement. Examination of the contents of a number of Esperanto-language periodicals makes it easy to establish on which side most Esperantists found themselves during the bloody Civil War. The best known of these periodicals was a journal published by the 'Grupo Laborista Esperantista' in Valencia, *Popola Fronto*. In the period of a little more than two years during which the journal was published, it sought to galvanize its readers in Spain and beyond, using a style of Esperanto unprecedented in its bellicose language.¹²⁷ In addition, press releases from the Catalan government appeared in Esperanto,¹²⁸ along with the anarchist *Informa Bulteno* and other more short-lived periodicals, illustrating the heterogeneous composition of the anti-fascist camp by arguing energetically among themselves.¹²⁹

Esperantists struggled against the perils of fascism in many other ways too: the International Brigades attracted numbers of the almost proverbial 'pacaĵ batalantoj',¹³⁰ making their way to Spain from ten or a dozen countries; Esperanto courses were also organized under the auspices of the Brigades.¹³¹ The most outstanding Esperantist brigade member was the German writer Ludwig Renn, who delivered an Esperanto-language greeting to Esperantist fellow-combatants over Radio Barcelona.¹³² As for the Spanish, among the fighters on the Republican side was the president of the Spanish Esperanto Association, Colonel, and later General, Julio

¹²⁷ Between November 1936 and January 1939, 44 issues of this 'international information bulletin on the Spanish struggle against fascism' appeared.

¹²⁸ *Comunicat de Premsa* (Generalitat de Catalunya). Between 1937 and 1938 at least 33 issues appeared.

¹²⁹ Also the anti-Stalinist (not Trotskyist) Workers' Party of the Marxist Unification (POUM) in Barcelona published an Esperanto bulletin in 1937, *La Hispana Revolucio*. On the polemics, see, among other sources, *Popola Fronto* 2 (1937), 22: 7; 3 (1938), 36: 3; *Informa Bulteno* 2 (1937), 7: 3; 8: 4; *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 35, 68–9.

¹³⁰ Franz Haiderer, 'La Internaciaj Brigadoj kaj la esperantistoj', *Der Esperantist* 10 (1974), 5/6 (67/68): 10–12.

¹³¹ Haiderer, p. 11; *La Socialisto* 11 (1937), 1 (May): 5.

¹³² *Sur Posteno* 4 (1937), 49 (Jan.): 5.

Mangada Rosenörn, who was known as the publisher of a booklet by Zamenhof on *Homaranismo* (1913) and as the author of fragile poems in Esperanto.¹³³

On the island of Mallorca, three members of SAT were murdered. Persecution of Esperantists seldom occurred simply because of their activities for Esperanto, though this was often an element in the charges against them. The editor of *Heroldo de Esperanto* was on one occasion the recipient of an insistent plea from a Spanish Esperantist that people stop writing to him in Esperanto 'because it is mortally dangerous'.¹³⁴ On the other side, there were also Esperantists who supported Franco's rebellion. In August 1936, Republican militia members murdered Father Joan Font i Giralt, who for a number of years was president of the International Catholic Esperantist Union; but again it is unlikely that the murder had to do with Esperanto.

For several years following Franco's victory, Esperanto was regarded with suspicion by the authorities,¹³⁵ but in 1947 conditions permitted the re-establishment of the Spanish Esperanto Federation. However, when efforts were made to set up an Esperanto course in the University of La Laguna (Tenerife), a Falangist student newspaper ensured its rejection by publishing a hostile article.¹³⁶ Only in 1951, after an interval of 14 years, did Esperanto courses begin again in Madrid. Subsequently there were no further obstacles, and, in 1968, almost 30 years after the end of the Civil War, the capital hosted the 53rd World Congress—under the honorary sponsorship of Generalissimo Franco.

For many years, Italy under Mussolini was cited by the neutral movement in support of the proposition that the International Language could survive even under extreme nationalist regimes; the strong position maintained by the Italian movement during the first 15 years of Mussolini's

¹³³ See the article on Mangada by José Antonio del Barrio, *Libera Folio*: <http://www.liberafolio.org/2012/vizagoj-julio-mangada-la-esperantista-donkihotol/?searchterm=mangada>.

¹³⁴ Jung (1979), p. 195. The Esperantist was the lawyer Andrés Piñó Alegret, of Valencia, who was also a socialist member of parliament. The most detailed study of the subject to date is José Antonio del Barrio Unquera & Ulrich Lins, 'La danĝera lingvo en la hispana civitana milito': <http://www.liberafolio.org/2006/civitanamilito>; also in Poblet i Feijoo & Alòs i Font, pp. 67–80, 303–15.

¹³⁵ *Esperanto* 40 (1947): 114–15.

¹³⁶ *Esperanto* 42 (1949): 23.

regime caused many to believe that fascism and Esperanto could live in harmony. The Italian Esperantists could point to frequent support from the authorities, who saw the language as a useful tool for informing the world about Italy's touristic beauties. The culmination of such support came with the organization of the 27th World Congress in Rome (1935). Franz Thierfelder, the energetic opponent of Esperanto in Germany, was not entirely incorrect when he observed that the makers of Italian language policy attributed to Esperanto, because of its Latin elements, an indirect advertisement for the Italian language.¹³⁷

Not long after the Rome Congress, the efforts of the Italian movement to secure ongoing official favor took on a more compromising character. Beginning in 1936, the journal of the Italian Esperantist Federation (IEF) called on the Esperantists of the world to show their support for Italy in its war of conquest in Ethiopia.¹³⁸ In 1938 the delegate of the IEF provoked an incident during the inauguration of the 30th World Congress in London when he refused to greet the Congress because of the presence of a representative of the Spanish Republic.¹³⁹ By this time, winds less favorable to Esperanto were blowing across Italy. In 1936 and 1937 permission was refused for the organization of a national congress; that of 1938 did indeed take place, but with the subject 'Esperanto as a Means of Tourist Propaganda'. As of September 1938, Italy, in part because of pressure from Germany, approved anti-Jewish laws. At that same time anti-Esperanto propaganda began to appear in the columns of the newspapers. *Il Popolo d'Italia* suddenly discovered that the existence of a Zamenhof street in Milan 'is an insult to Rome, which has other bridges for relations with other peoples' than Esperanto.¹⁴⁰ IEF advised its Jewish members not to renew their membership for 1939, and in this way the Federation succeeded in escaping persecution. As of 1939, IEF's bulletin ceased publication. Bureaucratic rumor-mongering prevented the organization, in September 1939, of the previously announced congress in Turin.

¹³⁷ Franz Thierfelder, *Sprachpolitik und Rundfunk*, Berlin: v. Decker, 1941, pp. 38–9.

¹³⁸ According to *Sennaciulo* 12 (1935/36): 33.

¹³⁹ *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 82.

¹⁴⁰ According to *Esperanto* 35 (1939): 11.

At the end of 1939 the International Esperanto League's journal noted that for several months the Italians had been 'enjoying' reading matter of a kind already well known in Germany, to the effect that Esperanto was a Jewish language.¹⁴¹ In October 1941, a fascist magazine rained insults on the linguistic creation of the Polish Jew Zamenhof, 'an instrument of Zionism and international subversion',¹⁴² thereby espousing, somewhat late in the day, Nazi conspiracy theory. The Esperanto broadcasts of Radio Roma, long a source of unease for the German Gestapo,¹⁴³ continued for a while, though they consisted primarily of the reading of military bulletins.¹⁴⁴ There was no longer much opportunity for Esperanto in Italy.

In Hungary and Bulgaria, where there were strong organizations of worker Esperantists, for a long time it seemed that the neutral movement could avoid difficulties with the authorities simply by emphasizing its distance from these leftist associations. But in 1935 the Hungarian Esperanto Federation (HEF) was founded. HEF, as opposed to the neutral, moderately progressive Esperanto Society of Hungary (HES), argued for submission to the regime's political line. HES was obliged to yield and join the Federation; the journal *Hungara Heroldo* tried to demonstrate that 'internationalism and Esperanto are different things'.¹⁴⁵ Although during the war the Federation shifted considerably to the right, it resisted official pressure to expel its Jewish members, and the Federation president, József Mihalik, tried to save the lives of young people of Jewish descent.¹⁴⁶ In 1940 the Nazi RSHA angrily labeled Hungary a country 'currently least resistant to the advance of Esperanto-Jews and their helpers'.¹⁴⁷ As long as Horthy's govern-

¹⁴¹ 'La plej stulta argumento', *Esperanto Internacia* 3 (1939): 321.

¹⁴² *Roma Fascista*, 9 October 1941; quoted by Gianfranco Cardone, *Il movimento esperantista cattolico in Italia. Storia dei rapporti fra stato e chiesa*, doctoral dissertation, University of Turin 1973/74, p. 179. We should remember that the Nazi RSHA, in an internal communication in September 1941, noted that the Esperanto movement would have to disappear from all countries that underwent the German 'reorganization of Europe'.

¹⁴³ Theodor Koch commented for the Gestapo: 'Fascist Italy spreads the language of the world rule for which the Jews are striving!' Note of 7 April 1938, Bundesarchiv, R 58/384, fol. 136.

¹⁴⁴ *Esperanto Internacia* 5 (1941): 37. On this and other details see Minnaja (2007), pp. 87–90, 92.

¹⁴⁵ Rátkai (2010), p. 87.

¹⁴⁶ Pechan (1979), p. 96. Leading Esperantists also protested against the anti-Jewish law of 1938: Rátkai (2010), p. 94.

¹⁴⁷ Note for the Gestapo from Theodor Koch, 11 April 1940, Bundesarchiv, R 58/6221b, fol. 98.

ment could maintain some semblance of resistance to its powerful ally Nazi Germany, a modicum of freedom of action still remained for Hungarian Esperantists, but the short but bloody duration of the government takeover by fascist ‘Arrow Crossers’ beginning in October 1944 brought an end to the organized movement. In these last months before the conclusion of the war, many Hungarian Esperantists fell victim to the fascists.¹⁴⁸

In Bulgaria, too, the neutral movement tried hard, particularly as of the end of the 1920s, to disperse any suspicion by the authorities that it served as camouflage for communist activity. After the disbanding of all communist organizations, the neutral Bulgarian Esperantist Association (BEA) used various artifices in an attempt to survive; during the war it avoided any public demonstration of its existence.¹⁴⁹ Intentionally, BEA delayed acceptance of an invitation to join the organization *Otets Paisii*, in which almost all intellectual organizations in the country were assembled, for so long that the authorities eventually forgot about them. The last issue of the journal *Bulgara Esperantisto* appeared in June 1942. A little earlier, in the middle of February, Radio Sofia, which broadcast a regular program in Esperanto, one day received a visit from the German cultural attaché; that same evening, the Esperantist in charge was informed that the broadcasts were ended—at the ‘suggestion of higher authority’.¹⁵⁰

It is interesting that, of the allies of Germany, Japan was the only country that did not follow the Nazi model. The Japanese Esperanto movement was not persecuted, even during the war. When, after the mid-1930s, so-called proletarian organizations of Esperantists were obliged to cease activity, the Japanese Esperanto Institute (JEI), earlier criticized by the left, now opened itself as a refuge for its critics and willingly employed their knowledge and experience on behalf of the neutral movement. Understandably, JEI was forced to make concessions to the reigning ideology, but its influential leaders succeeded in steering the Institute through the war years by rigorously defining itself as a purely linguistic organization, in this way escaping both persecution and compromising implication in the hypocritical

¹⁴⁸ Pechan (1979), p. 108. Among them was the Jewish dentist József Takács, for many years the secretary of HES, murdered in October 1944.

¹⁴⁹ Atanas D. Atanasov, ‘Esperanto en dummilita Bulgarujo’, *Esperanto Internacia* 9 (1945): 79.

¹⁵⁰ Nik. Nikolov, ‘Esperanto—35 jarojn en Radio Sofia’, *Esperanto* 63 (1970): 102 (interview with Kiril Drazhev).

supranational rhetoric by which the regime sought to justify its expansion in Asia.¹⁵¹ In Korea and Taiwan, in connection with the planned spiritual mobilization following the opening of the Chinese-Japanese War of 1937, the Japanese liquidated the modest remains of cultural autonomy. In 1938 they also abolished the teaching of the Korean language in all primary and secondary schools. The policy of forced assimilation led to the compulsory use of Japanese even on the street. While the suppression of the Korean language continued, the Esperanto movement in Korea was also obliged to remain silent. In October 1937 the first issue of *Korea Esperantisto*, a handsome magazine entirely in Esperanto, was published. No second issue followed it, since the publisher, Hong Hyeong-eui, was promptly imprisoned. Until the end of the war, the publicizing and teaching of Esperanto were severely forbidden; but in Japan itself, even at the height of the war in 1942, it was still possible to publish the opinion of one brave soul, Inoue Masuzō, who, speaking out against the language policy then being applied by the Japanese in the occupied regions, proposed Esperanto as a means to bring the peoples of Asia closer together outside the circle of the elites.¹⁵²

The plea was published in the journal of JEI, *La Revuo Orienta*, which was able to continue publication until March 1944, long after legal Esperanto periodicals had ceased publication in the heart of Europe.

A Healthy Lesson for the Neutral Movement

We end this part of our narrative by turning our attention to Yugoslavia, where the Esperanto movement quickly understood the consequences of the Nazi declaration of war on Esperanto, and its conclusions also had an effect internationally. Emerging in a country characterized by fundamental sociocultural diversity and a strong, often scarcely bridgeable, antago-

¹⁵¹ Such entanglement befell the Esperanto journal *Tempo*, published in Kyoto from 1934 to 1940. *Tempo* was basically liberal (several issues were banned), but as of 1937 it increasingly sought to justify the missionary declarations of Japanese expansion into Asia. See the reprint of the complete series, with afterwords by Nozima Yasutarō & Ulrich Lins, Nagoya: Eldona Societo de Nagoya Esperanto-Centro, 1982.

¹⁵² Inoue Masuzō, 'Daitōa kensetsu to esuperanto' (The building of East Asia and Esperanto), *La Revuo Orienta* 23 (1942): 65–7 (esp. p. 66).

nism among its constituent nations, the Yugoslav movement as a whole adopted a generally more progressive approach than that in neighboring countries. As early as 1922, in connection with the preparations for the founding of a South Slav Esperantist League, the desire was expressed

[to] use all available means so that at least within our own circles we might preserve the idea of Man as a citizen of the whole world and not simply of the piece of ground where he was born. Everyone should understand this: Croatians, Serbs, Slovenes and others, Catholics, Orthodox, Muslims and others—and we should show to our compatriots the solidarity that is the foundation of our success and the most effective path to influence.¹⁵³

In line with this call for unity across national and religious boundaries, the Yugoslav movement was also able to maintain greater internal coherence than the movements in other countries. Although as a result of a resolution in favor of Esperanto accepted in June 1920 by the Second Congress of Communists in Yugoslavia,¹⁵⁴ many left-wing members joined its ranks, the movement did not split apart between middle-class Esperantists and workers in the way that it did in other countries. Of course there were plenty of collisions between more progressive members and those who, fearing pressure from the regime, argued for a strict focus on linguistic activity, but the conflicts did not shake the fundamentally unified organizational structures.¹⁵⁵

Significantly contributing to the solidarity of the Yugoslav movement were the continual misrepresentations to which the Esperantists, particularly at the local level, were subjected, and the usually weak arguments used by the authorities to justify the searches of Esperantists' homes or the refusal of requests to found Esperanto groups.¹⁵⁶ The Yugoslav Esperantists understood that, because the persecutions were not limited to explicitly revolutionary activity through Esperanto, but reflected a general official unease at grass-roots emancipatory tendencies, it was important to stay together and face the opposition down in unison.

¹⁵³ *Konkordo* (Zagreb) 1 (1922), 1 (April): 1; cf. Ĝivoje (1965), chap. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ĝivoje (1965), chap. 4; cf. *EeP*, p. 646.

¹⁵⁵ Zlatnar (1976), p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ See chap. 2, 71.

As a result, and early on, Yugoslav Esperantists developed an acute sense of the social and political implications of their activities. This self-confidence also spread to other countries—particularly after the Yugoslavs, in July 1932, established the largely Esperanto-language journal *La Suda Stelo*¹⁵⁷ as a platform for the dissemination of their point of view. As early as June 1933, the Yugoslav Esperanto League (JEL) organized, as part of their congress in Belgrade, an international conference on the topic 'The Ideological Problem of Esperantism'.¹⁵⁸ Through this event, whose central idea was later summarized in the sentence: 'We all condemn only one thing: the suppression of free speech!',¹⁵⁹ JEL launched a discussion whose pertinence was confirmed by recent developments in Germany, but for which the international Esperanto movement was evidently little prepared.

Though the enmity of the Nazis toward Esperanto was widely recognized, the international movement took several years to realize that such hostility was of a new type, radical in nature—namely that it addressed the fundamental right of Esperanto to exist. At the end of September 1932, so four months before Hitler's victory, a Dutch Esperantist dispatched a laconic postcard to the International Central Committee of the Esperanto Movement, in which, citing Hitler's opinion on Esperanto in *Mein Kampf*, he asked: 'Can we remain indifferent to a movement [the Nazi movement] that has already declared war on us?' In its political shortsightedness the reply was the equivalent of a tranquilizer:

The quotation is very interesting. It only goes to prove the inferiority of the author, who arrogates to himself the right to force on others a point of view acceptable only to people of very limited horizons. [...] It seems to us superfluous to waste our time tilting at windmills that will eventually stop turning because they lack the right wind. Of course we are following these developments.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ See Josip Pleadin, 'Kritika analizo de la revuo *La Suda Stelo*', in Haupenthal (2011), pp. 317–28.

¹⁵⁸ The texts of the lectures of Jakob Stefančić and Rudolf Rakuša appeared in *La Suda Stelo* 2 (1933): 101–2 and 115–16.

¹⁵⁹ Leo Kun, 'Post la beograda kongreso', *La Suda Stelo* 2 (1933): 77.

¹⁶⁰ Postcard from B.E.J. Zieck Jr., Scheveningen, 30 Sept. 1932, and postcard in reply from Robert Kreuz for ICK, 11 Oct. 1932 (in the UEA archive).

When in 1933 the journal *Esperanto* received letters from readers protesting the earliest acts of terror perpetrated by the Nazis, the editors refused to publish them, admonishing their writers with the following words: ‘*Don’t complain* in the name of an Esperantist organization about political events that we cannot prevent.’ Although UEA pointed to the principle of neutrality regarding religion, nationality or politics, the Association explicitly agreed that this principle could be ignored when circumstances required: ‘In countries with a nationalist/authoritarian regime, the national Esperantist society can do nothing other than arrange its affairs in accordance with required conditions.’¹⁶¹ This line of argument served also to justify the organization of congresses in dictatorial states, as for example, the World Congress in Cologne in 1933.

In 1934 UEA was able to dodge a test of its resistance to outside pressure. When NDEB issued an ultimatum requiring that the office in Geneva cease publishing the names of Jewish delegates in the section entitled ‘Germany’, the problem was solved when the delegates in question voluntarily (?) resigned.¹⁶² In the same year, the UEA journal provided a strange demonstration of neutrality. The December issue, dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the birth of Zamenhof, contained an article describing the Nazi point of view on the race problem, with quotations from Hitler and Wilhelm Frick,¹⁶³ while the same issue, as if to provide balance, offered a passionate denunciation by Lidia Zamenhof of the chauvinism sweeping the world.¹⁶⁴ After the Congress in Cologne, there was no lack of voices in the neutral movement calling for a reorientation of ‘the essential character and ideology of Esperantism’ if the movement really found it useful to organize congresses in the Third Reich ‘when the best friends of the green flag are rotting and suffering in prisons and concentration camps’. Resignations followed in protest at the display of the

¹⁶¹ H.J. (Hans Jakob), ‘Esperantistaj problemoj. La neŭtraleco’, *Esperanto* 29 (1933): 160–1 (quotations p. 161).

¹⁶² Hans Jakob, ‘Esperantismaj problemoj. I. Nia ideologio’, *Esperanto* 39 (1946): 10.

¹⁶³ E.W. (Ernst Wichert), ‘La germana vidpunkto pri la rasproblemo’, *Esperanto* 30 (1934): 169. UEA’s vice president was the German banker Anton Vogt, who as early as 1927 was a sympathizer of the Nazi party. Wilhelm Frick was the Nazi Minister for Internal Affairs. See Sikosek (2006), p. 133.

¹⁶⁴ Lidia Zamenhof, ‘Nia misio’, *Esperanto* 30 (1934): 166–7; reprinted in Amouroux (2008), pp. 134–7.

Nazi flag next to the green star of Esperanto in the congress venue.¹⁶⁵ But UEA and *Heroldo de Esperanto* showed no understanding of the undivided enmity toward Esperanto exhibited by Nazism and accordingly had no idea how to redefine its position to confront the danger threatening the entire movement.

In truth, there was no precedent in the history of the Esperanto movement for a threat of this scale. In the past, it was always possible to continue activities under unfavorable political conditions if at the same time, by pointing to the principle of neutrality, the movement kept its distance from those Esperantists who used Esperanto for goals unfavorable to the regime in question: people could always retreat to the relatively secure position of harmless language hobbyists. Even a more or less emphatic emphasis on the 'internal idea', by which the movement claimed that its character was not purely linguistic, but generally supportive of fraternity and peace, did not necessarily provoke the opposition of governments. Indeed, it is important to consider that the 'internal idea' often served the members of neutral groups not only as an internal unifying factor but also as a kind of protection against the involvement of Esperanto in the battle of ideologies and classes as long as it resisted any effort to give it concrete form—in other words to politicize the 'internal idea' and thereby impede the principle of neutrality.

Neutrality undoubtedly helped the movement to resist external opposition. But at the same time it led to a fatal misunderstanding, namely a failure to distinguish between friends and enemies, or between (on the one hand) governments or ideologies characterized by tendencies that could be reconciled with the humanist basis of Esperanto, or could at least tolerate it, and (on the other) political movements whose program was unalterably opposed to the international way of thinking and whose dominance reduced or even erased any ground for fruitful activity on behalf of Esperanto. In reaction to insults against the 'Jewish universal language', the leading functionaries of the neutral movement tended simply to add the point 'Esperanto and Jewishness' to its list of prejudices to be countered. Thus, *Heroldo de Esperanto* attempted to refute such arguments by suggesting that, by the same logic that the anti-Semites

¹⁶⁵ Letter from H. Dijkema (Rotterdam), 30 October 1933: *La Dua Jarcento* 1 (1995), 1: 5.

employed to attack Esperanto, they 'should also reject Salvarsan, the antidote to syphilis, because it was invented by [Paul] Ehrlich, a Jew'.¹⁶⁶

The apologists were of course correct to emphasize the universality and not just the Jewish character of the language, but, chiefly because of the blinders of neutrality, they failed to appreciate that there was no sense in trying to convince people who could not be convinced, namely those who condemned something simply on the grounds of its Jewishness. For a movement desirous of contributing to the goodwill of all people, those suffering from such prejudices could only constitute a dangerous impediment; it was absurd to try to recruit anti-Semites to support an international language. It should be noted that at no assembly of Esperantists in the early years of the Hitler regime did any leader of the neutral movement make a declaration to the effect that Jews constituted an element of humankind as valuable as the members of all other races and religions.¹⁶⁷

The leaders were blind to the danger that confronted the Esperanto movement, along with all human civilization as it faced an implacable enemy. This blindness derived in part from the distraction of the long debates on the reorganization of the movement that they allowed to go on in the 1930s. These internal conflicts came to a head in 1936, when the neutral movement split into two competing organizations, UEA and the newly founded International Esperanto League (IEL). From this point forward, UEA no longer played an essential role: the majority of individual members of UEA shifted their allegiance to IEL, which served at the same time as a federation of national Esperanto societies.¹⁶⁸ To some degree, the schism was a consequence of the growing demand by national Esperanto societies for a share in UEA's decision-making, but it would be an exaggeration to interpret the founding of IEL, which sought to harmonize individual membership with the federation of national societies, as a break with UEA's supranational tradition.¹⁶⁹ A primary contributor to the split was the poor financial management of UEA, rather than principled opposition to any supranational ideal. In any event, we have

¹⁶⁶ *Heroldo de Esperanto* 18 (1937), 44 (951): 1; cf. Jung (1979), p. 262.

¹⁶⁷ H.J., 'Kalejdoskopio de l' esperantismo. La kontraŭjudismo', *Esperanto* 29 (1933): 74.

¹⁶⁸ In April 1947 the two organizations reunited, under the name UEA, but essentially with the organizational structure of IEL.

¹⁶⁹ This is the interpretation favored by Forster (1982), pp. 219–20.

to recognize the fact that such organizational matters so occupied the attention of the functionaries in the neutral movement that they failed to recognize the full dimensions of the danger from outside.

While the international movement was primarily preoccupied with itself, the Yugoslav Esperantists criticized it for its passive attitude to fascism. Struck by the prohibitions in Germany and growing pressure in their own country, they confronted the widespread acquiescence to such persecutions by initiating a counter-offensive against the enemies of Esperanto. In 1937, the April editorial in *La Suda Stelo* attacked the false understanding of neutrality afflicting the Esperanto movement as a 'cancerous wound'. The writer of the editorial, the young Croatian lawyer Ivo Lapenna, suggested that some Esperantists expected others 'to be neutral in an impossible way, empty of thought and opinion, or to remain silent and by silence to assent to everything!' Lapenna insisted that the 'principles of freedom of thought and of democracy' have to accompany neutrality if it is to be anything other than a negative phenomenon.¹⁷⁰ Two months later he went further by proposing that the Esperanto movement, finding itself on the defensive more or less everywhere, should take as its common basis 'that ideology that is the opposite of the principles of our enemies', namely 'the ideology of full democracy, which at the same time signifies freedom, equality, tolerance, culture and progress'. The movement should once again grow conscious of these values if it was to survive and recover confidence in a time when the Esperantists were persecuted simply because 'they see in people of other countries fellow humans and not inferior beings—people with whom they wish to exchange ideas, with whom they wish to remain in contact and friendship and with whom they wish to enjoy collaboration rather than reciprocal destruction'.¹⁷¹

Such were the words of the person who in September 1937 was elected president of JEL, a year later joined the board of the International Esperanto League, and after the war was for many years general secretary and later president of UEA.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Ivo Lapenna, 'La malneŭtrala "neŭtraleco"', *La Suda Stelo* 6 (1937): 9–10.

¹⁷¹ Ivo Lapenna, 'La danĝero unuigas', *La Suda Stelo* 6 (1937): 25–6 (quotations p. 26).

¹⁷² See the chapter on Lapenna in Lins (2008), pp. 75–112.

At about the same time as the Yugoslavs called for active opposition to the external dangers confronting Esperanto, such sentiments began to emerge in other countries as well, in the form of discontent at the ostrich-like behavior of those who clung to the principle of absolute neutrality. Among IEL and UEA members, at least as of the mid-1930s, there was a growing desire to stop identifying neutrality with silence. This new activism was evident, for example, at the World Congress in Warsaw in 1937. A telegram of greetings from the Catalan government was met with thunderous applause,¹⁷³ and a member of SAT who, attending the Congress and expecting to find it populated with apolitical members of the bourgeoisie, noted with surprise that the opening plenary became ‘a demonstration for liberalism, humanitarianism, democracy’. He summed up his impressions with a conclusion almost heretical for a member of SAT, namely that the bourgeois Esperanto movement ‘is in its essence antifascist’.¹⁷⁴

This opposition became even more evident a year later, during the World Congress in London. There, Ivo Lapenna won the sympathies of the participants with a stirring speech in which he named Esperanto’s internal idea as ‘a bastion against fascism’,¹⁷⁵ and in November 1938, when, following the annexation of Austria, the independence of Czechoslovakia was annihilated, even UEA’s journal *Esperanto* uttered the cry, far too long delayed, ‘Away with illusions!’, along with the following confession:

To remain indifferent, that is, neutral in the old sense, would be a betrayal of our ideals. Esperanto stands and prospers only under a regime that respects individual freedom.¹⁷⁶

When the Second World War broke out, the journal *Esperanto* no longer ignored the evident fact that ‘further successes by this regime [the

¹⁷³ Georgo Verda, ‘La Jubilea’, *Literatura Mondo* 7 (1937): 98. On this event a fascist radio station in Salamanca later reported: ‘The Bolshevik congress of the Jewish language Esperanto, in Warsaw, heard a revolutionary telegram from the red government in Catalonia. The participants, Bolsheviks and Jews, applauded loudly.’ See *Popola Fronto* 2 (1937), 22: 1.

¹⁷⁴ ESTO, ‘29-a Universala Esperanto-Kongreso en Varsovio’, *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 2–3.

¹⁷⁵ Lins (2008), pp. 77–8.

¹⁷⁶ H.J., ‘For la iluzion!’, *Esperanto* 34 (1938): 69.

Nazi regime] would wipe out our cause completely'.¹⁷⁷ Finally, then, the experience of the advance of fascism became a healthy lesson for the international movement—in the sense that it abandoned its neutrality where such neutrality equaled political blindness, and actively reconfirmed the internationalist and humanistic basis of the Esperanto movement. In May 1939 a congress of Yugoslav Esperantists in Karlovac accepted a resolution to be proposed to the World Congress in Bern that noted that the IEL had never protested when the movement in a given country was banned. The resolution went on to insist 'that we state clearly what we want and that we fight against those who persecute our movement'.¹⁷⁸

Soon, even *La Suda Stelo* was forced to go silent. Its last issue appeared in March 1941. On 10 April, German troops entered Zagreb, whose streets were still hung with posters advertising spring Esperanto courses. The following day the Croatian fascist police broke into the headquarters of the Esperanto clubs, destroying or burning their contents and arresting a large number of Esperantists.¹⁷⁹ Among the first victims of the Ustasha terror were several members of JEL's board.¹⁸⁰

The inferno of the Second World War, as we have seen, did not bypass the movement in other countries. By serving as intermediaries for correspondence and by sending medical supplies and food, the IEL and UEA sought to mitigate the hardships of many of those suffering in various parts of Europe, but such Esperantist relief could no longer be as effective as it was during the First World War. Occasionally, Esperantists were saved in some crisis situation when a soldier or even a member of the SS turned out to be an Esperanto speaker.¹⁸¹ In the Dachau concentration camp a

¹⁷⁷ 'Milito kaj esperantismo', *Esperanto* 35 (1939): 30.

¹⁷⁸ *La Suda Stelo* 8 (1939): 62; see also Bude Borjan, 'Esperanto atakata—Esperanto batalanta', as above, pp. 61–2.

¹⁷⁹ Letter of Ivo Lapenna; quoted in *Esperanto Internacia* 8 (1944): 54–5.

¹⁸⁰ Of those Esperantists who escaped arrest, the majority joined the Movement of National Liberation and its partisan detachments. From the information available, it seems that 340 Esperantists from 90 locations in Yugoslavia fell in battle or were killed in prison or concentration camps; of these, 37 were later proclaimed 'people's heroes'. See Vokoun (1976), p. 7.

¹⁸¹ For examples of rescue thanks to meetings with Esperantists, see *American Esperanto Magazine* 67 (1953): 83; *Sennaciulo* 25 (1954), 5: 3; *Germana Esperanto-Revuo* 8 (1955): 94; *Paco* 4 (1956), 34/35: 16; *La Libera Esperantisto*, 1961, no. 60, p. 7. The Austrian Karl Nell was freed from the Buchenwald concentration camp when a British Esperantist signed a guarantee on his behalf: *ELNA Newsletter*, 1986, July–August, p. 4.



Fig. 4.2 With renewed hope after the war, on 14 April 1946 Polish Esperantists marked the 29th anniversary of Zamenhof's death by gathering among the ruins of the building where Zamenhof once lived. His grandson Ludovic holds the flag

Yugoslav prisoner, Jože Kozlevčar, taught an Esperanto course attended by fellow victims from a number of nationalities.¹⁸² In the Stutthof concentration camp near Gdańsk, a textbook compiled on the spot from memory by the Polish Esperantist Albin Makowski circulated from hand to hand.¹⁸³ In the years 1942–45, the Hamburg Jew Felix Epstein organized secret meetings of a half-dozen Esperantists in the Theresienstadt concentration camp;¹⁸⁴ the Hungarian Elek Tolnai taught fellow victims

¹⁸²Vokoun (1976), pp. 76–9; see also Francisko Haiderer, 'Esperanto en la koncentrejo', *Aŭstria Esperanto-Revuo* 30 (1975), 10/12: 11–12.

¹⁸³Janusz Sulzycski, 'Intervjuo kun numero "P 23407"', *Paco*, 1979, GDR edition, pp. 12–15.

¹⁸⁴Personal communication from Felix Epstein, 5 April 1966.

at Bergen-Belsen.¹⁸⁵ And in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation two Esperantist women Gesine and Ali Obbes risked their lives by hiding a Jewish couple in their home.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, the Lithuanian Antanas Poška hid Akiva Geršater, a fellow-Esperantist, in his home in Vilnius for ten months.¹⁸⁷ Valdemar Langlet, of Sweden, and his wife Nina (daughter of the Russian Esperanto pioneer Nikolai Borovko) used their diplomatic status in Budapest in 1944–45 to provide Jews with 'letters of protection' issued by the Swedish Red Cross, thereby shielding many from the death that would otherwise have been their destiny.¹⁸⁸ We could give many other examples showing how during the war Esperantists continued to use their language or how it brought assistance to the afflicted. In this regard we should add that Esperanto also performed the function of a 'secret language'. For example, the Austrian parents Rudolf and Emma Fischer, when they needed to talk about politics, used Esperanto to protect their children against compromising information.¹⁸⁹

Fortunately, after the war the international Esperanto movement recognized its moral responsibility to the numerous victims of fascism.¹⁹⁰ On 14 April 1946, Polish Esperantists raised their green flag of hope in the stony desert that was once Warsaw to mark the spot where the home of Zamenhof had stood (Fig. 4.2).

The gesture symbolized their invincible enthusiasm for Esperanto. But it was not enough simply to continue along the road of idealism, however honorable such a course may have been in the face of fascist attack. The 'naïve internationalism of Zamenhof's time is over',¹⁹¹ declared UEA's journal at the end of 1946. Indeed, the 'internal idea' in its traditional, somewhat unclear form, and with its tendency to exaggerate the role of Esperanto, was unsuited to the period of postwar reconstruction.

¹⁸⁵ Ludoviko Kökény, 'Elek Tolnai', *Hungara Esperantisto* 10 (1970), 5: 5.

¹⁸⁶ Letter of Mrs. Ethel Prent, *Israëla Esperantisto*, 1986, 92 (Feb.): 8–9.

¹⁸⁷ Jokūbas Skliutauskas, 'Ne nur esperantisto', *Litova Stelo* 10 (2000), 3: 4–5. Poška is recognized as one of the 'Righteous Among the Nations' honored in the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁸ Nina Langlet, *Kaoso en Budapeŝto*, trans. Kalle Kniivilä, Varna: Bambu, 2001.

¹⁸⁹ The Fischers are the parents of the former Federal President of Austria (in office from 2004 to 2016): see Elisabeth Horvath, *Heinz Fischer. Die Biografie*, Vienna: K & S, 2009, pp. 19, 25.

¹⁹⁰ Among them are also the well-known German Catholic priest and pacifist Max Josef Metzger. Condemned to death for 'defeatism', he was beheaded in Berlin on 17 April 1944.

¹⁹¹ 'Konsideroj pri organizo', *Esperanto* 39 (1946): 43.

Understanding this reality, the leaders of the neutral movement, led by the Yugoslav Ivo Lapenna, did not attempt to formulate a new ideology for Esperantism, but instead declared the Esperanto movement loyal to values valid not only for Esperantists but more widely recognized, namely the values of human rights.

When, in the middle of 1947 UEA was re-established as the representative organization of the international Esperanto movement, it added to its constitution a paragraph declaring that ‘respect for human rights is an essential condition for its work’.¹⁹² In so doing, UEA emphasized that its neutrality regarding politics, race and religion extended only as far as respect for fundamental human rights and only when the development of peace and international cooperation was not threatened. Thus, UEA redefined the principle of neutrality—in a way different from the timorous, passive neutrality practiced in the earlier hurricane of persecution.

Esperanto survived the fascist era, proving its viability in the face of pressure and persecution by ruthless enemies. Thus, in the sense that the movement both learned its lesson through its own mistakes and moved on to a more realistic judgment of the external world, it would be right to say that Esperanto triumphed over fascism.

¹⁹² About a year and a half later (10 December 1948) the UN General Assembly in Paris accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Part III

**'Language of Petty Bourgeois and
Cosmopolitans'**

5

Finding a Place for Esperanto in the Soviet Union

Post-revolutionary Hopes

In the previous section we saw how the Esperanto movement suffered under the attacks of conservative and fascist regimes. We will now turn to a second variety of persecution. This variety came from a regime that considered itself the vanguard of worldwide socialism. Exploring the details and causes of the suppression of Esperanto in the Soviet Union is incomparably more difficult than analyzing the persecutions under Hitler because for many years we had no access to archival material generated by the authorities responsible for the suppression. Until 1988, the topic went unmentioned in the Soviet Union, and so researchers had to be content with the limited documentation available to them—documentation so limited that it was difficult indeed to gain a clear understanding of the fortunes of the Esperanto movement.

From the beginning, the Russian Esperantists were a numerous—and extremely progressive—element among the enthusiasts for the International Language. The American historian Richard Stites characterized their movement as ‘emphatically middle-class and respectable—

cosmopolitan and urban, but also patriotic'.¹ The vast majority of them undoubtedly welcomed the political changes of 1917, if only because of the disappearance of the barriers of censorship and police interference that characterized the old regime.

The text of a 1919 poster perhaps best illustrates the hopes of these Esperantists in a post-Tsarist Russia. It was published by 'Esperanto House' in Moscow, a former mansion,² which the government, without charge, put at the disposal of local and national Esperanto organizations.³ The poster compares the historical significance of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 with that of Zamenhof's language project of 1887. The call of the former, 'Workers of the world, unite!' was answered by the October Revolution; now the time had come for a liberated proletariat to tackle, with comparable energy, the task of realizing the idea contained in the latter—adopting Esperanto as the worldwide instrument of communication for the proletariat.⁴

Many Russian Esperantists were fired with enthusiasm at the prospect of helping to liberate their oppressed comrades in the West through the medium of the language of the worldwide proletariat, Esperanto.⁵ This spontaneous desire to put Esperanto at the service of world revolution accorded with the atmosphere of the first years of Soviet rule. It is no accident that a rapid increase in the numbers of Esperanto groups occurred in the same period as the so-called proletarian cultural movement was also expanding, namely between 1917 and 1921. According to the inspiration behind that movement, Aleksandr Bogdanov,⁶ the worldwide proletariat could come together not only through political and economic activity but also through cultural collaboration. With emotions bordering on exultation, the followers of 'Proletkult' proclaimed the proletariat

¹ Stites (1989), p. 135.

² *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 2 (March): 4. The name of the owner was Lopatin.

³ *Esperanto* 16 (1920): 32. According to this source, information on the subject appeared in *Izvestiia* on 16–17 January 1919.

⁴ The poster was reproduced in *Esperanto* 63 (1970): 111.

⁵ For a living description of how in 1920 a young Red Army member was recruited for Esperanto, see S.N. Podkaminer, 'Oktobra Revolucio kaj rusia esperantista movado', *Der Esperantist* 14 (1978), 3 (89): 4.

⁶ Pseudonym of A.A. Malinovsky. Published in Esperanto was: A. Bogdanov, *Ruĝa stelo. Fantazia romano*, trans. N. Nekrasov & S. Rublev, Leipzig: Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, 1929.

the conveyor of a new culture, radically different from the earlier, bourgeois culture. This soon-to-be created proletarian culture was destined to become the general culture of all people after the destruction of class divisions in society.

The radical plea for a new culture for all humankind sounded attractive to Esperantists as well. Likewise, within the proletarian cultural movement there was considerable support for embracing Esperanto. In February 1919, one of the theorists of ‘Proletkult’, Platon Kerzhentsev, in an article on ‘International revolution and proletarian culture’, argued that, to facilitate cultural exchange among the workers of various countries, thought had to be given to a (proletarian) international language.⁷ Bogdanov also devoted a 1919 lecture to the topic ‘Proletarian culture and the international language’, in which, however, he saw English as providing the core of such a language.⁸ An All-Russian Congress of Art unanimously voted in favor of Esperanto.⁹

Such hopes were not without substance. In 1918–19 Esperanto groups existed in around 100 locations in Russia.¹⁰ Early in 1920, the Polish and German press published a release containing an extract from a Soviet Russian magazine announcing the compulsory introduction of Esperanto in schools in accordance with the decision of a government commission.¹¹ The French writer Romain Rolland, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1915, called this apparent decision ‘a historic event’,¹² and several national Communist Party congresses, influenced by the news from

⁷ P.M. Kerzhentsev, ‘Mezhdunarodnaia revoliutsiia i proletarskaia kul’tura’, *Proletarskaia kul’tura*, 1919, no. 6; German translation in Richard Lorenz (ed.), *Proletarische Kulturrevolution in Sowjetrusland (1917–1921). Dokumente des ‘Proletkult’*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969, pp. 72–7 (esp. p. 76).

⁸ A. Bogdanov, *O proletarskoi kul’ture*, Leningrad & Moscow: Kniga, 1924, p. 329. Earlier he had a fairly favorable opinion of Esperanto: see his preface to an article, ‘De la filozofio al la organiza scienco’, specially written for *Sennacieca Revuo. Literatur-sciencia aldono* 1/3 (1923/24): 83–4. On the context, see Zenovia A. Sochor, *Revolution and Culture: The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 147; Smith (1998), pp. 77–8.

⁹ *Esperantista Movado*, 1920, no. 2 (9): 11.

¹⁰ *EdE*, p. 590.

¹¹ Edmond Privat, ‘Venkoj de Esperanto’, *Esperanto* 16 (1920): 91; E. Adam, ‘Le Bolchevisme et l’Espéranto. La langue de Zamenhof officiellement adoptée par le Gouvernement des Soviets’, *Le Travailleur Espérantiste*, 3rd series, 1 (1920), 3 (Apr.): 1.

¹² Letter to E. Adam, 20 April 1920, in *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 4 (May): 2.

Soviet Russia, approved resolutions in support of Esperanto.¹³ The decree seemed to put workers of all countries under a kind of obligation to learn Esperanto. But, from the beginning, doubts were raised about the veracity of the report, and in May 1920 the People's Commissar for Education Anatolii Lunacharsky denied that such a decision had been made.¹⁴

Also unsuccessful were efforts to approach the Comintern. In November 1919, a group of Esperantists in Samara founded a so-called Esperanto Section of the Communist International, without consulting the Comintern, which had only national sections. A decision to change the name to 'The Esperanto Communist International' (ESKI) did not save the initiative: late in 1921, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party put an end to the further existence of ESKI, probably considering it a kind of sectarian enterprise.¹⁵

A similar fate befell an effort to convince the Comintern to recommend favorable consideration of the question of an international language. A proposal that the matter be discussed at the Second Comintern Congress, in July–August 1920 in Petrograd and Moscow, was submitted by several delegates, among them the Spaniard Ángel Pestaña.¹⁶ It was referred to the Executive Committee for action at the next Congress. When that event took place, in Moscow in June–July 1921, a resolution was indeed proposed, submitted on this occasion by delegates from

¹³ The Second Congress of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia, referring specifically to the 'decision' taken by Soviet Russia, accepted a highly supportive resolution in June 1920: Ĝivoje (1965), chap. 4. The founding congress of the French Communist Party, in Paris in May 1920, accepted an expression of support for more teaching of Esperanto, 'a remarkable aid for achieving concord among the peoples and preventing war': *Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 6 (17): 10.

¹⁴ Lunacharsky nevertheless declared that the Soviet government allowed the elective learning of Esperanto on an equal basis with the French, German and English languages—according to the testimony of M.S. Valentinov, member of the SEU Central Committee, in *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 5 (24): 9.

¹⁵ H.K., 'Kial Esperanto en Rusio malvenkas', *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 10: 7. The founders of ESKI were Mikhail Okhitovich (later to become a well-known figure in urban planning) and Drezen, subsequently remembered, against his will, for his role. Apparently their idea was to concentrate in ESKI the entire Esperanto movement in Soviet Russia: *Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 4/5 (15/16): 8; see also E. Drezen, 'En batalo por SEU', in Drezen (1992), pp. 151–62, esp. pp. 158–9; *EdE*, p. 123; Solzbacher (1957), pp. 43–4; Fayet (2008), pp. 10, 13.

¹⁶ *Esperantista Movado*, 1920, no. 2 (9): 10, 15. See also Toño del Barrio, 'Anarhiisto proponis Esperanton al la Komunista Internacio', *Sennaciulo* 80 (2009), 5/6: 20–2.

almost all the nations represented; it called on an already established¹⁷ Study Commission for the adoption of an auxiliary language in the Third International to examine objectively the utility and applicability of an international language.¹⁸ On the final day of the Congress, 12 July 1921, the German Wilhelm Koenen, on behalf of the Presidium, achieved an agreement that the proposal be taken up by the Executive Committee.¹⁹ Perceiving that agreement as an official mandate, the commission began its work—under its chairman József Pogány²⁰ and secretary Hans Itschner, both of whom were adepts of Ido, the reformed version of Esperanto.

Although the commission in its report of June 1921 took a nonpartisan approach to the various projects,²¹ a few months later Communist newspapers²² published the information that the commission had concluded that a language like Ido would have a better chance than Esperanto of acceptance as an international language.²³ Noisy uproar among the Esperantists ensued. They were not wrong in suspecting that the work of the commission was a plot by a handful of Idists (adepts of Ido) under the ‘apparent auspices’ of the Comintern. Although news soon came from Moscow that the commission had been disbanded, probably in March 1922,²⁴ Eugène Lanti, of France, leader of *Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda* (SAT), traveled from Paris to Moscow to find out about the affair for

¹⁷The Executive Committee announced the creation of the commission on 12 January 1921: Fayet (2008), p. 11.

¹⁸*Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 7/8 (18/19): 12–13; *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 1 (20): 12; Jörg Mager ‘Die Esperantobewegung in Russland’, *Der Arbeiter-Esperantist* 7 (1921), 10: 49. The draft resolution was initiated by the Swiss Hans Itschner, at the time a member of the Comintern Executive Committee. Among the signers were the Frenchman Boris Souvarine, Jules Humbert-Droz of Switzerland, and Willi Münzenberg of Germany.

¹⁹*Protokoll des III. Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale. Moskau, 22. Juni bis 12. Juli 1921*, Hamburg: Verlag der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1921 (reprinted Erlangen: Karl-Liebkecht-Verlag, 1973), p. 1057.

²⁰Pogány in 1919 was People’s Commissar of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. He was a victim of the Great Purge.

²¹The commission declared that first the communist parties should take a position on the question of an auxiliary language: Fayet (2008), p. 12.

²²Among others, in *L’Humanité*, 28 March 1922; according to *Sennacieca Revuo* 4 (1922/23), 7/8 (37/38): 23.

²³E.L., ‘Stranga informo’, *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 10: 8.

²⁴‘Letero de Sovjetlanda Unuiĝo Esperantista al E. Lanty’, 24 June 1922, in *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 11/12 (30/31): 18.

himself. From Mátyás Rákosi, secretary of the Comintern's Executive Committee, Lanti received confirmation that the Comintern had dissolved the commission, 'which in fact never got started', and that the International in truth 'had no interest in this enterprise'.²⁵ In May 1923, the Executive Committee finally noted in its official minutes that 'no language-advocacy organization has any right to claim the authority of the Comintern'.²⁶ The Swiss researcher Jean-François Fayet, after studying the Comintern papers on the Esperanto movement preserved in the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History in Moscow, concludes that the Executive Committee used the quarrel among Esperantists and the 'much less influential Idists' to delay indefinitely a decision on an auxiliary language, itself assuming no responsibility in the matter. The Esperantists were caught in a vicious circle: 'In other countries, everyone waits for a decision from the USSR and here everyone says that the international language must first find mass support in other countries.'²⁷

Lunacharsky's denial and the confirmation by the Comintern that it had no interest in Esperanto or Ido made the Soviet Esperantists sharply aware of the limits imposed on them by the crude realities of post-Tsarist Russia. This was also the experience of the proletarian cultural movement, whose spontaneous enthusiasm hardly harmonized with the firm organizational goals of the Communist Party. Lenin's aim was to do battle with illiteracy and to bring to the people the knowledge needed for building socialism, rather than confusing them with experiments in revolutionary art and literature. He considered the claims of the 'cultural autonomy' of the proletariat as out of conformity with the needs of the time, indeed even threatening the hegemony of the Party. Accordingly,

²⁵ E.L., 'Finita la komedio...', *Sennacieca Revuo* 4 (1922/23), 1 (32): 9–10; Lanti (1982), pp. 14–15.

²⁶ *Sennacieca Revuo* 4 (1922/23), 11/12: 14. In 1924 there was hope, for a time, that the Comintern would interest itself in the world language question. Its secretary Béla Kun requested a report on the workers' Esperanto movement. Commissioned by the Communist Fraction of SAT, Lanti wrote this report in French and sent it to Moscow: E.L., 'Publika letero al kompartiaj SAT-anoj', *Sennaciulo* 8 (1931/32): 138. It seems that the Comintern also inquired into the situation of the Esperanto movement in various countries through their communist parties: letter of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to R. Burda, 22 March 1926, in *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 29 (81): 7. Nothing is known of the result. (The report for the Comintern later appeared as a brochure: E. Lanti, *La langue internationale. Ce que tout militant ouvrier doit connaître de la question*, Paris: Fédération ouvrière espérantiste, 1925.)

²⁷ Fayet (2008), p. 14.

in October 1920 he required that ‘Proletkult’ be folded into the People’s Commissariat for Education. In 1922 it essentially disintegrated as a mass organization.

This development was part of the beginning phase of a new political and economic direction in the Soviet state. To put the Russian economy on its feet, weakened as it was by the Civil War and by over-hasty efforts at socialism, in March 1921 Lenin proclaimed his so-called New Economic Policy (NEP). Its aim was a radical realignment of the economy, even at the cost of strict observance of communist principles. The NEP, among other things, once again permitted private enterprises and virtually free commercial activity. Many Communists greeted this move with a mixture of shock and disillusionment.²⁸ In June 1922, a Russian Esperantist wrote that the NEP had ‘stripped official support from many cultural initiatives. Among their number was Esperanto. So now the Russian Esperantists are organizing themselves in a private way.’²⁹

In the meantime the first steps were taken to adapt the Esperanto movement to changing circumstances. At the beginning of June 1921, in Petrograd, the Third All-Russian Esperantist Congress was held, the first since the revolution. It was attended by 160 delegates and resulted in the founding of the Soviet Esperantist Union (SEU) (Fig. 5.1).³⁰

The founding of SEU did not meet with unanimous approval: protests were raised against the crude and restrictive homogenization of the movement in Russia.³¹ But the victory went to those who emphasized the need for organizational unity after almost four years of disorder and factionalism. The Congress accepted two sets of principles. One, on questions of

²⁸ Compare the discussion between Lanti and a Russian Communist: Lanti (1982), pp. 48–56.

²⁹ N. Futerfas, ‘Esperanto en Rusio’, *La Nova Epoko*, 1922, no. 1 (June): col. 22.

³⁰ In Russian: Soiuz Ĕsperantistov Sovetskikh Stran. From 1927 the name was: Sovetrespublikara Esperantista Unio (Soiuz Ĕsperantistov Sovetskikh Respublik: Esperantist Union of the Soviet Republics). Among the founders was the Hungarian army officer Tivadar Schwartz, father of the financier George Soros.

³¹ E. Drezen, ‘Al la sovetlanda esperantistaro’, *Esperanta Informilo* (Monthly journal of the Petrograd Esperantist Society), 1921, 2/6 (June/Oct.): 6. A report from a Chinese student in Moscow at the time describes arrests and the temporary closing of Esperanto groups because ‘many long-time Esperantists’ resisted the effort ‘to unite Esperantism and communism’ and expressed their opposition to Bolshevism even in letters abroad: Bao Pu, ‘La movado de Esperanto en Rusujo’, *La Verda Lumo* 3 (1923/24): 4–6 (quotations p. 5). In addition, see A. Sidorov, ‘Amiko de Zamenhof. Devjatnin—esperantisto el Vilno’, *Litova Stelo* 18 (2008), 3: 19–21.



Fig. 5.1 The Tauride Palace in Petrograd, in June 1921, was the site of the founding congress of the Soviet Esperantist Union (SEU). In front of the flag (no. 6) sits its longtime leader Ernest Drezen

organization, required that the Soviet Russian Esperanto movement act in full conformity with the regime, criticizing those ‘factions’ that judge the present only from an Esperantist viewpoint; the second set of principles, on relations with other countries, pointed out that all Esperanto activity, including receipt of magazines and other literature from abroad, should be fully centralized in SEU.³²

These statements of principle were developed by Ernest Karlovich Drezen, who was elected president of the 15-member Central Committee of SEU and led the organization through almost its entire existence. A Latvian by origin, born in 1892, Drezen attended secondary school in Kronstadt and later the Polytechnic Institute in Saint Petersburg, where he was also very active in the student Esperantist group. A fellow member

³²The two collections of principles appeared in *Esperanta Informilo*, 1921, 2/6 (June/Oct.): 3–6.

recalled him as a ‘lively, playful young man’, intelligent and well educated.³³ During the war, Drezen was sent to a military engineering school, and in August 1916 he became an officer in an electrical engineering battalion. After the February Revolution, by whose third day he was already assisting in guarding arrested Tsarist ministers in the Tauride Palace, he joined the left wing of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, which along with the Bolsheviks formed the first Soviet government. In 1918 Drezen joined the Communist Party, serving in the Red Army as commandant and commissar. As of 1921, he worked in the Kremlin—as deputy chargé d’affaires in the Central Executive Committee of Soviets.³⁴ Having a president in a position close to the centers of power was undoubtedly advantageous for the Soviet Esperantists. This new beginning, following the dashing of the earliest post-revolutionary hopes, seemed promising indeed.

SAT and SEU: Pluralism Under a United Front

Two months after the founding of SEU, an additional important organizing event occurred in the international Esperanto movement, marking the beginning of a new phase. Early in 1921, SAT was founded. Its aim was to serve as the representative organization of those united in the desire to put Esperanto at the service of the worldwide class struggle.

Efforts to create self-supporting groups of worker Esperantists actually began before the war. Most workers using Esperanto preferred to distance themselves from the traditional, neutral organizations. Quite apart from the fact that the leadership of the traditional movement lay primarily in the hands of ‘socially respectable’ individuals, the workers were put off by the apolitical atmosphere of ‘samideanoj’ (adepts of the

³³ Letter from Roman Sakowicz to Hans Jakob, 2 July 1957 (in the UEA archive).

³⁴ R. Nikolskij, ‘Kontraŭ kalumnioj pri kamarado Drezen’, *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 212–13. As of 1924, Drezen worked primarily in scientific fields, for example on organizational rationalization and linguistics. From 1926 to 1930 he was director of the Institute of Communication. He was professor in various technical colleges and also a board member of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS). The most detailed study of Drezen to date is that of Kuznecov (1991).

same idea, as the Esperantists called themselves), the cult surrounding the ‘master’ Zamenhof (which he himself abhorred), the singing of a naïve hymn (Zamenhof’s poem *La Espero*, which became the anthem of the Esperantists) and symbols of the Esperanto movement, green flags and stars. They were drawn by the idealistic element in Esperanto, to be sure, but they noted, not without disquietude, that many Esperantists seemed to have an insufficient understanding of the ideas of Zamenhof or Hodler, both of whom emphasized the link between Esperanto and the goal of removing international tensions and social injustice.

The historical merit of initiating an independent international organization of worker Esperantists goes to the Frenchman, Eugène Adam, who became known by the pseudonym Lanti.³⁵ Born in Normandy in 1879, Lanti received only an elementary education, but as an autodidact rapidly acquired considerable knowledge. He learned the craft of woodworking, which he later also taught. In Paris, around the turn of the century, Lanti was drawn to anarchism, under the influence of Peter Kropotkin and Élisée Reclus, and later had personal contact particularly with the theorists Sébastien Faure, Jean Grave and Han Ryner.³⁶ He was particularly taken with the undogmatic character of anarchism and its radical opposition to nationalism. The war, in which Lanti participated as a member of an ambulance brigade, reinforced his hatred for everything associated with nationhood; but also, because of the dispiriting example of the great anarchist Kropotkin, who in 1914 announced himself a Russian patriot, the war caused him to distance himself from anarchism. As a result, when in 1917 the October Revolution triumphed, Lanti gladly joined the sympathizers of the Bolsheviks.

In December 1914 he began to learn Esperanto; and, following the war, he had his first contact with revolutionary Esperantists in Paris, who had just re-established ‘Liberiga Stelo’ (Star of Liberation), a small organization that had come into being before the war. They offered Lanti the editorship of their journal *Le Travailleur Espérantiste*. He accepted, including in the first issue a declaration that established the priority

³⁵ Formed out of *l’anti* (the against-person). Adam called himself Lanty as of 1921, Lanti as of 1928.

³⁶ Lanti (1940), p. 179; Borsboom (1976), pp. 11–12, 14. The most sustained contact was with the French writer and philosopher Han Ryner, whose work *La veraj interparoladoj de Sokrato* (Beauville: SAT-Broŝurservo, 1999) Lanti himself translated into Esperanto.

‘socialists and trade-unionists first ... Esperantists second’ and ended with the cry, ‘Down with all fanaticisms!’³⁷

In his articles for the journal, Lanti expressed skepticism about efforts to unite the national workers’ associations in a ‘Red/Green International’. He argued, for the first time in April 1920, for a ‘nationless’ form of organization,³⁸ and in the following months repeatedly returned to that theme. Time after time proclaiming his conviction that nations must be stamped out, he called on his readers to put into action immediately ‘a society which could, as it were in embryo, function as society might universally function in the future’. Lanti conceded that national associations were needed, but he refused the idea that they might form a basis for the desired worldwide organization. He preferred that an effort be made, through a kind of Esperanto-speaking microcosm, to create a ‘nationless people’, which ‘could immediately accustom itself to action and to a capacity for thought and feeling outside nationhood’.³⁹

Lanti insisted on rigorous separation from the neutral Esperanto movement. He condemned its bourgeois spirit as he condemned the illusion that Esperanto would inhibit wars⁴⁰—in fact the whole Esperanto neutralism that ‘clouds the vision to class consciousness’. For Lanti, ‘Esperanto is not the *goal* of our action, but *merely a means* to reach our goal’⁴¹—and he concluded with the battle cry ‘Down with neutralism!’. This was the title of a collection of Lanti’s articles that later appeared, bearing on its cover the following supportive words of the French revolutionary writer Henri Barbusse: ‘The bourgeois and worldly Esperantists will be more and more amazed and terrified by everything that can emerge from this talisman: an instrument allowing all human beings to understand one another.’⁴²

³⁷ ‘Déclaration’, *Le Travailleur Espérantiste*, 2nd series, 1 (1919), 1 (Aug.): 1.

³⁸ Aseto, ‘Diskutejo. Ĉu internacia aŭ sennacieca organizaĵo?’, *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 3 (Apr.): 2.

³⁹ Sennaciulo (=Lanti), ‘Liberiga Stelo al la Verdruĝuloj’, *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 10 (Nov.): 2.

⁴⁰ E. Lanti, *For la neŭtralismon!*, new edn., Paris: Eldona Fako Kooperativa de SAT, 2007, p. 14.

⁴¹ Lanti, *For la neŭtralismon!*, pp. 12–13.

⁴² Letter of greeting from Henri Barbusse to the founding congress of SAT in Prague; see *Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 7/8 (18/19): 1. Earlier Barbusse had called Esperanto ‘the ABC of the International’: ‘Al la internaciistoj’, *Esperantista Laboristo* 2 (1921), 2 (13): 3. Barbusse’s sympathy

Lanti saw himself as linked to a venerable tradition in the workers' movement when he argued energetically for ignoring nationhood.⁴³ In the same way, he was inspired by the model of Hector Hodler, who in 1908 founded the Universal Esperanto Association on the basis of individual members, not national associations.⁴⁴ Unique to Lanti, however, was his decisive effort to put Esperanto at the service of the class struggle regardless of party-political preferences. From the beginning, Lanti aimed to open his organization equally to socialists, communists and anarchists and not to allow it to be swayed by the passions and tactical zigzags of the different workers' parties. Though the understanding of such agendas may diverge, Esperanto should remain the common language of all revolutionaries, providing a basis for the solidarity of all people, even if outside the framework of Esperanto they might feel themselves linked primarily to their own parties. This strategy meant that Esperanto had, in effect, a wider role than a mere tool of class struggle:

By means of our language a spiritual current must arise that overcomes all national boundaries. This constant intercourse will cultivate in our hearts a feeling that transcends nations. It will serve as a kind of antidote to the ugly nationalist education thrust on us by the state. It will be a kind of spiritual hygiene against the nationalist miasma that we inhale constantly in the chauvinist atmosphere created by governments. Using an artificial language as often as possible, we will incorporate in our beings characteristics suitable for making us true citizens of the world. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of this fact. Therein lies the revolutionizing essence of Esperanto. Because we are in constant contact with our Comrades in all countries, we can be justly proud that we are the most committed of all of the so-called internationalists.⁴⁵

for Esperanto became known principally through his foreword to the textbook *Cours rationnel et complet d'Espéranto* (Paris: Fédération espérantiste révolutionnaire, 1921).

⁴³ See chap. 7, pp. 237 and following. Publishing an article by Rosa Luxemburg from *Die russische Revolution* (1918) on 'Imperialism, nationalism and socialism' (*Sennacieca Revuo*, n.s., 1 [1933/34]: 1–3), Lanti asserted full agreement between her recommendation against the battle for national liberation and his 'sennaciismo'. It is well known that Rosa Luxemburg encountered strong opposition from Lenin to her radical internationalism.

⁴⁴ Cf. E. Adam, 'Mortis nobla internaciisto' [on Hodler], *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 4 (May): 1–2.

⁴⁵ Lanti, *For la neŭtralismon!*, p. 24.

We will explore later the question of whether the requirement to submit Esperanto to the class struggle⁴⁶ and the implicit assertion that in itself it had a revolutionary effect were contradictory, and, if they were in conflict, whether that conflict could be resolved.

At the beginning of August 1921, at the 13th World Congress of Esperanto in Prague, some 80 members of 'Liberiga Stelo' met to found an association inspired by the ideas formulated by Lanti. It took the name SAT. Chosen, despite his absence, as honorary president of the founding meeting was Henri Barbusse, whose movement 'Clarté' (Clarity)—a union of progressive intellectuals from various countries⁴⁷—somewhat resembled the organization of revolutionary Esperantists in its undogmatic internationalism.⁴⁸ In planning the founding of SAT, Lanti sought to steer a course between two obstacles: first, to prevent the association from falling under the influence of Zamenhof's 'illusionary' Homaranismo; secondly, not to allow it to consist of the members of a single political party. The first obstacle was easily dispensed with; as for the second, while SAT ran the risk of communist uniformity, the discussions in Prague showed that a majority of the communists accepted the project for an organization that would rise above party differences.⁴⁹ The founding resolution was unanimously approved; its final words declared: 'Down with neutralist hypocrisy, down with capitalism, long live SAT!'⁵⁰ The break between the workers' Esperanto movement and that of the neutralists was now an accomplished fact.

The degree to which SAT took its defiance of 'neutralism' seriously was revealed at the Second Congress in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1922. By

⁴⁶ See the essentially programmatic article by L. Revo (Lucien Laurat), 'Mondlingvo kaj klasbatalo', *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 1 (20): 1–2.

⁴⁷ See 'Lettre de Henri Barbusse', *Le Travailleur Espérantiste*, 2nd series, 1 (1919), 2 (Sept.): 1; 'Intelektula Internacio', *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 1 (Feb.): 5. The journal *Clarté* published an extended discussion of projects for an international language in 1920: Nicole Racine, 'The Clarté movement in France, 1919–21', *Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (1967), 2: 195–208 (esp. p. 203).

⁴⁸ Because of conflict between the idealistic leftists and the controlling Comintern party members towards the end of 1921, the 'Clarté' movement nevertheless lost its original character as an independent intellectual international.

⁴⁹ 'La 1-a Internacia Kongreso de la Revolucia Esperantistaro' (minutes), *Sennacieca Revuo* 3 (1921/22), 1 (20): 2.

⁵⁰ 'La 1-a Internacia Kongreso...', p. 4.

a small majority the participants decided on a clarifying amendment to their constitution whereby a member of SAT could not at the same time hold membership in ‘any bourgeois or so-called “neutral” Esperantist organization’. When Romain Rolland, honorary president of the congress (not present), read about this prohibition in the newspaper *L’Humanité*, he was sharply critical. He considered the decision sectarian in nature and reproached the revolutionary Esperantists who ‘have no idea about the importance of Esperanto [... which] is in itself a revolution much more effective than all so-called revolutionary congresses: because it creates [...] an international way of thought that is “nationless and worldwide” (*sennacieca tutmonda*).⁵¹ In truth, it was not possible to sustain such a radical stipulation; in 1924 the rigid article 2 of the constitution was made less severe.⁵² However, with or without such a constitutional requirement, in the early years of the life of SAT many capable Esperantists were drawn away from the neutral movement. This trend continued: people of leftist persuasion preferred to join SAT rather than other, neutral Esperanto associations.

The natural consequence of this separation was not only a weakening of numbers but also an ideological impoverishment of the neutral movement, so that little by little its leaders began to conform perfectly to the caricatures cultivated by SAT from the beginning: business people, generals, clergy and reactionary professors interacting with a crowd of petty-bourgeois Esperantists. And the members of SAT were proud of their separation, happily punning on the resemblance of SAT-ano (SAT member) and Satano (Satan).

In 1922 SAT had 1064 members. Between then and 1926 the number grew to 2960. In 1927 it rose to 5216 and in 1929 to 6500. SAT’s official journal was initially, as of October 1921, *Sennacieca Revuo*, previously entitled *Esperantista Laboristo*. Three years later its chief periodical

⁵¹ Letter from Romain Rolland to E. Lanti, 9 Sept. 1922, trans. *Sennacieca Revuo* 4 (1922/23), 1: 15. For Lanti’s reply see ‘Publika letero al Romain Rolland’, *Sennacieca Revuo* 4 (1922/23), 2: 13–14; reprinted in Lanti (1931), pp. 52–6.

⁵² See the discussion on Article 2 in *Kongresa dokumentaro. IVa Kongreso, Bruxelles, 14. ĝis 18. aŭgusto 1924*, Leipzig: Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, 1924, pp. 17–21. The new formula was: ‘only a person who approves its Constitution and declares himself fully ready to serve the interests of the Association may be a member of SAT’.

became the newly founded *Sennaciulo*, which appeared weekly until the end of 1931.⁵³ Under the editorship of a young German communist, Norbert Barthelmess, it little by little became one of the most important Esperanto periodicals. The intention from the beginning was to make *Sennaciulo* a mirror of the real life of workers all across the world. Because its columns were indeed largely filled with descriptions of daily life sent in by the readers themselves⁵⁴ and because, particularly in the 1920s, some 100–200 articles were annually translated into national languages, the direct, often dispassionate reports in *Sennaciulo* on living conditions in the various countries reached a readership far in excess of the circle of worker Esperantists.

For the worldwide workers' movement in general, relations with Soviet Russia played an essential part. It was, after all, the first state in which, by its own claims, the proletariat had taken over power. Also SAT, from its beginning, was aware of the special links that it had with the country in which just a couple of months earlier the SEU had been established. Outside Soviet Russia, the non-communist SAT members were also sympathetic with Lenin's newly founded state—a condition that facilitated collaboration of various socialist factions within SAT as an independent organization free of party politics. Furthermore, unity was reinforced by the common desire to win workers worldwide for Esperanto. At the time, probably few asked themselves such questions as: How long can this harmony last? What influence will the development of Soviet Russia have on the attitudes of comrades outside that country? And will the Soviet side be willing to tolerate the over-arching character of SAT?

First, it was urgent to get to know the Russians better, because no Soviet delegate was present in Prague. For Lanti the occasion presented itself in August 1922, when he traveled to Moscow for the previously mentioned mission to the Comintern to establish its attitude to Esperanto. During his visit he also met Drezen; he found in the person who would later

⁵³ As of January 1932 *Sennaciulo* appeared biweekly, and, as of February 1933, monthly. *Sennacieca Revuo* continued to be published as a monthly literary and scientific journal (from October 1928 to February 1933 with the title *La Nova Epoko*).

⁵⁴ See esp. the series 'Tago el mia vivo', in which SAT members from various countries wrote about their personal living situations. It was initiated by the Englishman Howard Stay: *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 125/126 (19 Feb. 1927): 5–6.



Fig. 5.2 Eugène Lanti, founder of SAT, the *Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda*, visited Moscow in August 1922. Here he met with the editors of the literary journal *La Nova Epoko* (New Era). L-R: Valentin Poliakov, Natan Futerfas, Lanti, Nikolai Nekrasov, Grigorii Demidiuk

become his chief antagonist a deep devotion to the language. Exploration of possible collaboration between SAT and SEU remained for the moment unresolved. Drezen complained that SAT was not purely communist and refused to work with anarchists and social democrats, while Lanti in his report of the conversation responded by pointing out that Drezen was president of an organization ‘in which there were not only anarchists but also bourgeois members of a particular kind’ (Fig. 5.2).⁵⁵

Drezen soon reconsidered his skepticism regarding SAT. In November 1922, after the victory of the fascists in Italy, the Fourth Comintern Congress formally proclaimed the principle that communists should try to create a united front among the working classes, collaborating, if necessary, with social democratic organizations. In the following months SEU discussed how to align itself with this new Comintern directive. In a

⁵⁵ Lanti (1982), pp. 17–19.

declaration of principles defining SEU's position, the Central Committee in March 1923 left no doubt about its views on SAT—its idealism, 'political imprecision' and 'politically ideological neutralism'—but nonetheless decided to call on communist Esperantists in all countries to support SAT as long as 'an organizational form for international activity more suited to the communists has not been created, though at the same time unmasking SAT's idealistic and false ideas and urging on it a truly practical approach and greater communist influence'.⁵⁶ These were the terms on which SEU was willing to support SAT, if without much enthusiasm.⁵⁷

From then on, SEU presented itself as a cooperative participant in the international workers' Esperanto movement. One sign of this cooperative spirit was the elimination, in May 1923, of UEA's presence on Soviet territory through its local representatives and members.⁵⁸ Three months later, a Soviet delegation appeared for the first time in a SAT congress: Drezen and five other delegates from SEU attended the Third SAT Congress in Kassel.⁵⁹ Elected as one of the chairs of the meeting, Drezen demonstrated in his closing comments that he was a loyal colleague:

We have here found that middle way, that we, sons of the revolution, using the international language for the profit of the proletariat, can follow together, whether we be anarchists, or communists, or members of other revolutionary parties. We believe that we have found the right and true way.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Central Committee of the Soviet Esperantist Union, *Nia pozicio. Deklaracia letero al ĉiuj revoluciaj esperantistaj organizajoj*, Moscow, March 1923 (four printed sheets); cf. *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 79.

⁵⁷In 1932, after the break with SAT, the SEU Central Committee declared that its 1923 document *Nia pozicio*, defining the relations with SAT, 'from a historical perspective proved entirely accurate and was correct': *Bulteno de Centra Komitato de Sovetrespublikara Esperantista Unio* 11 (1932): 14.

⁵⁸The letters in question, from SEU to UEA, were printed in *Esperanto* 19 (1923): 141–2. Commenting on the decision, UEA protested, distinctly un-neutrally, at the 'Bolshevik violence', conveying 'the expression of its warm sympathy to the oppressed Russian fellow-Esperantists'. See Sikosek (2006), p. 174.

⁵⁹In this congress Lanti met Ellen Kate Limouzin, who was George Orwell's aunt. He subsequently lived with her in Paris for several years.

⁶⁰'IIIa Kongreso de Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, Cassel, 11a–15a aŭgusto 1923' (minutes), *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 1 (43): 11.

Such public support for the idea of SAT as above party politics was not without risk for SEU, since it was unable to tolerate similar attitudes in its own ranks, namely any doubt that leadership was in the hands of communists. Drezen had just lived through a conflict with the editors of the Moscow literary journal *La Nova Epoko*.⁶¹ The journal had been founded in June 1922 by Grigorii Demidiuk and Nikolai Nekrasov, who had met Lanti during his stay in Moscow and subsequently carried on an active correspondence with him.⁶² Anarchists were also among the journal's collaborators. Everyone opposed Drezen's centralizing tendency and defended SAT's pluralism, implicitly demanding that the latter tendency should reign also in SEU.

But Drezen's position was stronger. In the second half of 1923 he succeeded in shutting down *La Nova Epoko*. When in mid-1924 *Sennacieca Revuo* published an extensive article about the fate of the anarchist movement under the Soviet regime, quite openly reporting the clashes with the Bolsheviks and the persecutions that followed,⁶³ Lanti, as editor, received a sharp protest from Moscow because of this 'anti-revolutionary article'. Lanti found himself obliged to announce that in future he would refuse to publish offensive articles containing attacks against positions represented in SAT.⁶⁴

In SAT, this refusal was, for the moment, the culmination of a process making 'unity above all' the association's watchword. The first victims of this trend were the anarchists, who in 1924 finally lost confidence in SAT and founded their own organization, under the name Tutmonda Ligo de Esperantistaj Senŝtatanoj (TLES: World League of Non-State Esperantists). At the same time SAT's publications took on

⁶¹ On this conflict see Lins (1987), pp. 35–52.

⁶² On their relations, see Lins (1996). On Lanti's visit to the editorial office: Lanti (1982), p. 16.

⁶³ A. Levandovskij, 'Skizo pri la anarkista movado en Rusio dum la Revolucio (1917–1923)', *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 9 (50): 9–10; 10 (51): 7–8. In this context we should mention that the anarchist Esperantist Qin Baopu, who studied in Moscow, after his return to China publicly cast doubt on the internationalist character of Soviet Russia and, in support of that judgment, explained that, contrary to widespread opinion, the regime was completely opposed to Esperanto: Gotelind Müller, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus. Eine Kulturbewegung im China des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts unter dem Einfluss des Westens und japanischer Vorbilder*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001, p. 483. Qin Baopu in 1924 published a Chinese-language book with the Esperanto subtitle *Malsukceso de rusa revolucio* (Failure of the Russian Revolution): Müller, p. 509.

⁶⁴ E. Drezen & Lucien Revo, 'Pri iu "kompletigo"', *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 49: 4.

a more uniform character. Instead of the announced free competition of philosophical positions, they began to be characterized by articles that for the most part avoided offending anyone. Contributions with an anti-Soviet bias were, according to the editors, not received at all, and Lanti met criticism of the preponderance of contributions favoring communism by declaring that this was because ‘the communist comrades are more active’.⁶⁵

Thus, SAT learned that an organization desirous of serving the proletariat across all party differences could not escape the antagonisms reigning in the workers’ movement. The dilemma was made concretely apparent by the anarchists. SAT solved it provisionally in favor of a united front, which in practice meant the dominance of the communists, at least in its periodicals. The Association chose to sacrifice to the struggle for unity its declared tolerance for differing opinions. For SEU, on the other hand, an organization that had overcome the crises of 1923–24 with an internally strengthened structure and a now undisputed leader, the way was open for expansion of its collaboration with SAT. The Central Committee officially called on all active members of SEU to join SAT.⁶⁶

Demonstrating Esperanto’s Utility

Having achieved organizational stability, SEU could move on to execute its plan of action. Its goal was to win over the Soviet public to the usefulness of Esperanto. The obstacles to be taken into consideration were formidable. Before and after the revolution advocates of Esperanto among the Bolsheviks were not numerous. Rákosi, the Comintern function-

⁶⁵‘Protokolo de la Va SAT-Kongreso en Wien’, *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 49: 4–5; cf. the letter from Lanti to Martin Muribo, 27 January 1925, in Lanti (1940), p. 61. The social democrat Franz Jonas also pointed out that the Russian SAT members were ‘more active than us’: ‘Protokolo [...] Wien’, *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 51: 3.

⁶⁶‘Raporto pri agado de CK SEU dum 1923–1925 jj.’, *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 98. Because Drezen could allow himself to seek compromise in the relations with SAT only on the basis of complete homogeneity in SEU, he continued to attack the anarchist Esperantists in the Soviet Union, describing them as ‘much more detrimental and even dangerous for our movement than the remaining representatives of “neutral Esperantism”’: E. Drezen, ‘La vojoj de la movado mondlingva en Sovetlando’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 15 (41): 2–4 (quotation p. 4).

ary, warned his visitor Lanti that the Russian Esperantists were not to be trusted: ‘Many of them are counter-revolutionaries.’⁶⁷ Lanti himself observed that the communist Esperantists ‘are ashamed that they are Esperantists’ and that they ‘fear compromising themselves by making propaganda in communist circles’. He added that the ‘severe communist discipline has stifled among many of them the enthusiasm and fervor’ for Esperanto.⁶⁸ Drezen was probably able to counter the strongest suspicions concerning unreliable Esperantists by pointing to the disciplined ‘sovietization’ of SEU. As of 1925, an increase in declarations of sympathy could be noted among communist leaders, among them the former People’s Commissar for Foreign Commerce, Leonid Krasin,⁶⁹ the president of the so-called Small Council of People’s Commissars, Mikhail Boguslavsky,⁷⁰ the Japanese member of the Comintern Executive Committee, Katayama Sen,⁷¹ and the writer Ilya Ehrenburg.⁷² But at the Second SEU Congress several delegates complained that the party organizations and those of the trade unions and the young communists were indifferent to Esperanto and that this indifference remained the biggest obstacle to successful activity on the ground.⁷³

Drezen was well aware of the situation the local delegates complained of. The recipe that he proposed for changing it—to eliminate such ignorant treatment and even mockery encountered by Esperantists among ‘authoritative revolutionary circles’—was very simple: they should use the language and thus prove to the doubters its practical utility. Drezen

⁶⁷ Lanti (1982), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Lanti (1982), p. 20.

⁶⁹ Declaration of 27 February 1925: *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 55; trans. in *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 26: 7.

⁷⁰ Declaration of 28 July 1925: *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1925, no. 1 (27), p. 2; trans. in *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 1 (53): 8. The declaration gave a particularly supportive assessment of the usefulness of Esperanto for the proletariat. Boguslavsky was expelled from the Party in 1927 and shot to death in 1937.

⁷¹ Greetings to the Soviet Esperantists, 12 May 1925, and letter to the Esperanto group in Dolynska: *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 87–9; trans. in *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 38: 6.

⁷² In the essay *A use-taki ona veritsia* (And yet it moves), 1922; cited in *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 55, trans. in *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 26: 7.

⁷³ *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 136, 137, 139. Regarding *Izvestiia* it was stated that it had recently published notes on Esperanto; regarding *Pravda*—that it ‘still continues to relate to Esperanto insufficiently favorably’ (p. 139).

immediately specified the area in which Esperanto should demonstrate its utility: his recommendation ‘Apply Esperanto’ was aimed principally at demonstrating the value of Esperanto as an easy means of interrelations between Soviet workers and those in other countries.

Explaining his position, Drezen mentioned that much attention had recently been given to ‘direct communication’ among worker journalists in the various countries.⁷⁴ In fact, in Moscow in July 1924 the Fifth Comintern Congress had discussed the question of intensifying the flow of information to foreign workers about the struggles of everyday life among their Soviet class-brothers, and, conversely, information to workers in the Soviet Union concerning their comrades in western Europe, still suffering under the yoke of capitalism. As a concrete step, the Comintern Executive Committee recommended that the so-called workers’ correspondents should expand their sphere of action to other countries.⁷⁵ The Soviet Union already possessed an extensive network of these workers’ correspondents, understood as a new type of volunteer journalists: people who, active among the working masses, tried, in their widely distributed correspondence, to reflect the wishes of the local workers, refer their complaints and proposals to the authorities and thus function as intermediaries between party and workers. In regional and local newspapers, factory bulletins and wall newspapers, they ‘dispassionately bring to the judgement of society all the ulcers of everyday life and work’⁷⁶ among Soviet factory workers and farm workers.

The workers’ correspondent movement was already well established in the Soviet Union when, in July 1924, this call to organize international workers’ correspondence was published. Drezen was correct in understanding the extent to which language difficulties inhibited extensive correspondence between Soviet and foreign workers; he saw in the new Comintern initiative a unique opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness of Esperanto and reinforce SEU’s reason for being. From the beginning of 1925 he repeatedly called on the members not only to cor-

⁷⁴E. Drezen, ‘Apliku Esperanton!’, *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 17: 6.

⁷⁵J.A. Lwunin (Iu. A. Lvunin), ‘Zum Briefwechsel zwischen sowjetischen und deutschen Arbeitern und Arbeiterkorrespondenten 1924–1929’, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 19 (1977): 1013.

⁷⁶A. Tomo (E.F. Spiridovich), “‘Labkoroj’ en Sovet-Unio”, *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 24: 4.

respond privately but also to propose their services to all Soviet organizations wishing to have contact with other countries.⁷⁷ SEU's chief task was defined as 'directing the application of Esperanto for the goals of Sovietism, approaching workers in other countries, and, telling them the truth about the Soviet countries, recruiting among them friends of the Soviet working people and the Soviet system'.⁷⁸

To many of SEU's members, Drezen's call to action confirmed that they were working in the right direction; in fact, as soon as the international isolation of the Soviet state was broken, Esperantists began extensive correspondence abroad. The quantity of Esperanto correspondence was impressive: in 1925–26 around 2000 letters in Esperanto were mailed in a period of eight months from the cities of Minsk and Smolensk alone. After the issuance of the call to expand international workers' correspondence, many of the letters from abroad were translated and published in the press or in wall newspapers. In a single year, more than 360 Esperanto letters appeared in the press in Belarus, and as early as mid-1924 in the city of Tver the local newspaper printed 100 Esperanto letters from abroad. When in May 1926 the all-Soviet conference of industrial and farming worker-correspondents reviewed the achievements of the still barely two-year-old campaign, particular praise was given to activities in Crimea, Smolensk and Tver—all three of them organizations of worker correspondents almost exclusively using Esperanto for their international contacts.⁷⁹

Early in March 1926, the Komsomol Central Committee dispatched to its regional committees instructions on how to organize Esperanto circles in youth clubs; the circular encouraged the founding of such circles where there was interest in Esperanto, requiring that members 'must link their acquisition of Esperanto with practical work in the form of

⁷⁷ Drezen, 'Apliku Esperanton!', p. 6.

⁷⁸ 'Raporto pri agado de CK SEU dum 1923–1925 jj.', *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 98.

⁷⁹ 'Internacia laborista korespondado' (report by Vladimir Varankin), *Protokolo de la VI-a Kongreso de Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, Leningrado, 6–10 aŭgusto 1926*, supplementary issue of *Sennaciulo*, November 1926, pp. 17–18. This report indicated that in Smolensk the work was performed by 18 small circles of worker correspondents, of whom 95% wrote directly in Esperanto.

correspondence with workers in other countries'.⁸⁰ And three months later the Soviet Esperantists received praise from an authoritative source, which they duly noted with particular pride: the Moscow-based newspaper *Izvestiia* named the international workers' correspondence, carried out by comrades in Smolensk through Esperanto, a model for the entire Soviet Union.⁸¹ Esperanto's role in the service of the state was symbolically recognized when in 1925 the Soviet post office, for the first time in philatelic history, published postage stamps with texts in Esperanto.

Such practical application of the language took place in the context of the dream of world revolution. On a small scale it seemed to anticipate what would one day characterize interpersonal relations in the emerging proletarian civilization. The publicist Lev Sosnovsky expressed this view in 1925 with the following prognosis:

If not today, then tomorrow, a veritable torrent of workers will flow in mass excursions out of the USSR into other countries and vice versa. It is naïve to hope that a Russian worker travelling in Europe will learn five or six languages to visit five or six countries. It is true that with Esperanto he won't be able to contact the working masses in the west, since also in those countries the language is insufficiently widespread. But if in every country the communist parties devoted at least some attention to the matter, how much easier it would be for the worker on our side, having no knowledge of foreign languages, to communicate with his brothers and connect with the activities and struggles in other countries.⁸²

As if to confirm Sosnovsky's optimism, with increasing frequency western workers visiting the Soviet Union found easy contact through Esperanto. During their stay, such visitors, the first of whom were British,⁸³ Czech,⁸⁴

⁸⁰Cited in *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 30 (82): 5. The circular recommended that members of Esperanto circles should join SEU and SAT and subscribe to *Sennaciulo* and *Sennacieca Revuo*.

⁸¹Gr. Lvovich, 'Smolenskii "narkomindel"' (The Smolensk people's commissariat on external affairs), *Izvestiia TsIK*, 1 June 1926; reprinted in *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 17 (43): 15. See also *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 38 (90): 6.

⁸²*Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 33; cited in *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 26: 7.

⁸³P. Kiriushin, 'Cherez Belorussiiu pri pomoshchi esperanto' (Across Belarus using Esperanto), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1925, 1 (27): 7–8, on Arthur Whitham.

⁸⁴R. Nikolskij, 'Unu vespero kaj ĝiaj rezultoj', *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1925, 2 (28): 9, on the Czech Anna Bouda.

German⁸⁵ and Swedish⁸⁶ workers, helped dispel the skepticism of local authorities about the functional capability of Esperanto and, returning home, issued positive reports of their impressions of the Soviet Union.⁸⁷

More direct help to SEU's activities came from a few experienced foreign Esperantists who came to the Soviet Union for longer stays. In addition to political émigrés, like the Hungarians Pál Robicsek,⁸⁸ István Michalicska⁸⁹ and Sándor Szatmári,⁹⁰ they included two founding members of SAT. One, the Frenchman Robert Guiheneuf, was a friend of Lanti.⁹¹ The other, the Austrian communist Lucien Laurat,⁹² played a particularly important role because he lived in Moscow for four years as of 1923. Working in the Comintern press office, serving as a correspondent of *L'Humanité* and teaching in the Communist University of Eastern Working People, Laurat in those years, during which he was also a member of the SAT Central Committee and published, under the pseudonym

⁸⁵ W. Bennewitz, 'Kun la germana delegacio laborista al Sovetlando', *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 52: 1, and several following issues; W. Bennewitz, 'Ĉu Esperanto estas utila por laboristaro tutmonda?', *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1925, 5 (31): 1–3 (also in Russian). The delegation, which included Willy Bennewitz, was the first of its kind organized by the Communist Party of Germany. See *Was sahen 58 deutsche Arbeiter in Russland?*, Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1925.

⁸⁶ John Nilsson, 'Impresoj el Sovet-Unio', *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 48: 4.

⁸⁷ 'Kelkaj rezultoj de laboristaj ekskursoj al Sovet-Unio', *Sennaciulo* 1 (1924/25), 52: 4; Kiriushin (1930), pp. 10–12. See also N.V. Nekrasov, comp. *Tra U.S.S.R. per Esperanto. Malgranda helplibreto por alilanda esperantisto*, Moscow & Kazan: La Nova Epoko, 1926.

⁸⁸ Paŭlo Robiček, 'Pri la laboro inter politikaj elmigrintoj', *Sovetskii esperantist*, 1925: 39. Robicsek, who, like Michalicska, was at the time a member of the SEU Central Committee, was in 1919 deputy people's commissar for postal services in the Hungarian Republic of Councils.

⁸⁹ Stefan Michalicska, 'Kiel mi lernis Esperanton', *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 7 (33): 3–4 (also in Russian). Michalicska learned Esperanto in prison in Hungary.

⁹⁰ Borbála Szerémi-Tóth, 'Perloj el la historio de Esperanto', *Hungara Vivo* 3 (1963), 1: 10–12. Szatmári (1878–1964) is not the same person as the Hungarian Esperanto author Sándor Szathmári.

⁹¹ Guiheneuf (pseudonym: Yvon or Ivon) worked, among other things, as head administrator of a forest in Khabarovsk. In 1934, having lost his enthusiasm for the Soviet Union he was able to leave the country with his Russian wife and child. Borsboom (1976), pp. 29, 136; J.-L. Panné, 'M. Yvon', in Jean Maitron & Claude Penetier (ed.), *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français*, Paris: Éd. Ouvrières, 1993, vol. 43, pp. 403–5; Guiheneuf (2004).

⁹² His original name was Otto Maschl. He learned Esperanto in 1913. From 1932 to 1939 he taught Marxism and economics at the Higher Workers' Institute of the French Trade Union Association (CGT). As of 1949 he was Soviet economy editor for the journal *Est-et-Ouest*. See the biographical summary in J.-L. Panné, 'Lucien Laurat', in Maitron & Penetier, *Dictionnaire*, 1988, vol. 23, pp. 337–8.

L. Revo, numerous articles in *Sennaciulo*, seemed the personification of the close connections between SAT and SEU.

These connections became increasingly important for SEU because the effective advancement of the international correspondence of its members depended on the cooperation of workers' Esperanto associations in other countries and the coordinating activity of a worldwide organization. This consideration caused Drezen to put particularly strong emphasis on the principle of a united front. In a radio talk on the Fifth SAT Congress in Vienna (1925) he not only reinforced the characterization of SAT as a 'cultural association in the service of the proletarian class' but explicitly welcomed victory over 'comrades too devoted to party and doctrine':

We don't have to make propaganda in SAT about our particular political ideals. We must argue with facts. We should quote facts alone. In the facts resides the remarkable quality of education, of acculturation.⁹³

A year later, the Soviet Esperantists were themselves hosts of the SAT Congress. In August 1926 the Sixth Congress, held in the Tauride Palace in Leningrad, brought together more than 400 participants, of whom some 150 were from abroad. The People's Commissar for Education, Lunacharsky, agreed to be honorary president of the congress; in his written message of greeting he acknowledged 'that the Esperantists, feeling themselves to belong to the vanguard of the most progressive forms of human intercommunication, also feel a certain kinship with the great movement for communism'.⁹⁴ A representative of the Association of Proletarian Writers publicly confessed 'a grave error'—namely that he and his comrades had formerly believed Esperanto to be 'a utopia and a fantasy'.⁹⁵

The brotherly atmosphere during the days of the congress put the participants in a state bordering on euphoria, which had a positive influence on their general judgment of the Soviet Union. Bartelmess spoke enthusiastically of 'a paradise for Esperantists and people with free ideas',

⁹³E. Drezen, 'Pri la rezultoj de la V. Kongreso de SAT', *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 1 (53): 1.

⁹⁴*Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 46 (98/99): 4.

⁹⁵*Protokolo de la VI-a Kongreso de Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, Leningrado, 6–10 aŭgusto 1926*, special issue of *Sennaciulo*, November 1926, p. 13.

called the freedom of the Soviet citizen ‘incomparably greater than in any “democratic” country’, and spoke of ‘enviable health resorts and spas’ where workers, after the sweat of hard labor, could enjoy the relaxation they deserved.⁹⁶ The conviction that only thanks to Esperanto was it possible to engage with and adequately assess the gigantic progress made by the Soviet Union accordingly inspired unanimous approval of a resolution that demanded that Esperanto be applied in the struggle ‘against the efforts of false leaders to trick and to keep in ignorance the workers of the various countries, to hide from them the truth about the living condition of the workers in the various countries, and to impede the creation of a united front’.⁹⁷ With pride they acknowledged that the Congress was a significant step forward in demonstrating the suitability of Esperanto ‘not only for commerce, tourism, philately, nudism, etc., but also to express with scientific accuracy the proletariat’s aspiration for the struggle’.⁹⁸

Another resolution⁹⁹ called on all SAT members to give ‘priority attention’ to correspondence by assisting workers’ organizations wishing to make contact with other countries, and organizing the translation of correspondence published in *Sennaciulo* for local workers’ periodicals and also letters of foreign workers received by these periodicals directly. SAT’s magazine would serve as the central organ of international correspondence through Esperanto, multiplying its effect. To avoid hindering this process, Drezen explicitly agreed, in the course of the congress, that in his editorial work for *Sennaciulo*, Lanti would have the right ‘to refuse publication of articles too “communist” or too “anarchist”, if they might hinder SAT’s united proletarian front’.¹⁰⁰

Not only did the congress reinforce SEU’s position at home, but it also proved fruitful for SAT: after Leningrad SAT’s membership in the Soviet Union grew to almost 2000.¹⁰¹ Interest in Esperanto so increased that in April 1926 SEU complained of its limited capability to respond to the needs: a textbook printed in 10,000 copies sold out within three

⁹⁶ N. Barthelmess, ‘Ĉe la laboruloj. Impresoj pri kongresvojaĝo’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 104: 5.

⁹⁷ *Protokolo de la VI-a Kongreso*, p. 49.

⁹⁸ L. Revo, ‘Al la proletaj verkistoj esperantistaj!’, *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 101: 7.

⁹⁹ *Protokolo de la VI-a Kongreso*, pp. 51–2.

¹⁰⁰ *Protokolo de la VI-a Kongreso*, p. 52. Lanti did not attend the congress.

¹⁰¹ *Historio de S.A.T. 1921–1952*, Paris: Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda, 1953. p. 40.

months.¹⁰² SEU's membership in this period reached a total of 10,000.¹⁰³ SEU noted contentedly in mid-1927: 'People no longer treat us with mockery or suspicion, or by ignoring us: they consider SEU and the proletarian Esperanto movement a valuable social factor'.¹⁰⁴

Confirming the position of respect that SEU enjoyed during this period was the fact that in 1927 it received, along with other Soviet organizations, the right to invite guests from abroad to participate in the festivities marking the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The invitation was accepted by 11 people from 9 countries, to whom were added another 12 Esperantists belonging to various other delegations.¹⁰⁵ They attended, among other events, the World Congress of Friends of the Soviet Union (Moscow, 10–12 November 1927), of whose almost 1000 delegates from over 40 countries one-fourth signed an expression of support for the wider use of Esperanto in the cultural relations between the Soviet Union and other countries.¹⁰⁶ The visit, which took the guests of SEU also to other cities in the Soviet Union, allowed them to gain impressions of Soviet life which were probably deeper than those most other delegates, unable to avail themselves of Esperanto, were able to gather.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 13 (39): 7.

¹⁰³ Of these, 3400 were personally registered with the SEU Central Committee and regularly received the journal.

¹⁰⁴ 'Pli da anto kaj seriozeco', *Bulleten' T&K SĖSR* 5 (1926/27): 69–71 (quotation p. 69).

¹⁰⁵ 'Alilanda delegitaro esperantista en Sovetio', *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 113–14. SEU's guests were four communists, four social democrats, and three non-affiliated persons.

¹⁰⁶ 'Esperanto ĉe la Mondkongreso de l' Amikoj de Sovetio', *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28), 116.

¹⁰⁷ These impressions were generally favorable: 'Per propraj okuloj', *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 118. In his report, however, the French communist Georges Salan also openly described the negative aspects of Soviet life: 'Impresoj pri Sovetio de okulvidinto, orelaŭdinto, fingrotuŝinto', *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 135. The report of the Swedish journalist, Einar Adamson, *Sub la ruĝa standardo. Impresoj kaj travivaĵoj en Sovetio*, Göteborg: Sveda Esperanto-Oficejo, 1928, was enthusiastic. The most detailed impressions were described by the well-known Japanese playwright, Akita Ujaku: *Wakaki Sovĕto Rosĥiya* (Young Soviet Russia, Tokyo: Sōbunkaku, 1929). This book received considerable attention from Japanese intellectuals: see also Ozaki Kōji (ed.), *Akita Ujaku nikki* (Diary of Akita Ujaku), Tokyo: Miraisha, 1965, vol. 2, pp. 36–58. A similar or even greater effect among Chinese intellectuals was later generated by Hu Yuzhi's book, *Mosike yinxiang ji* (Impressions of Moscow), Shanghai: Xin shengming shuju, 1931, based on a week's stay among Soviet Esperantists; see Šaŭ Bin, 'Hujucz kaj Esperanto', *El Popola Ĉinio*, 1986, 3: 7, 9.

Letter Writing

Given that the possibility of direct contact or face-to-face conversation with foreign Esperantists was always extremely limited, no other practical use of Esperanto was more important than correspondence. Correspondence, opening as it did a doorway to the outside world, satisfied personal aspirations and at the same time, given the goodwill of the authorities for the idea of international workers' correspondence generally, helped raise the prestige and the organizational strength of SEU as a whole.

The aspirations of many Soviet Esperantists were apparent in the large number of requests for correspondents that appeared in almost every issue of *Sennaciulo*. The feelings stirred by this awareness of links with the whole world through the medium of Esperanto were well described by the Germanist Lev Kopelev,¹⁰⁸ who in 1926, as a schoolboy in Kiev, began studying the language. Describing his teacher and the enthusiasm that he ignited among young people, Kopelev writes:

The newspapers offered only the same boring telegraphed stories from abroad, while the magazines, with their dark grey photographs, gave only dull reflections of far-off foreign life.

By contrast, Kopelev alludes to

the personal letters from distant lands, only recently received, addressed to this man right in front of us, our teacher. From an old satchel he took postcards and envelopes, so bright they seemed lacquered with rare and wondrous stamps. You could hold them in your hands, sniff them—inhalé the air of London, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo ...

[...] he showed us postcards from Australia, Japan, Spain, Argentina. ... All of them began with the same salutation: 'Kamarado' or 'Samideano' (fellow thinker).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Lev Kopelev, writer, literary critic and translator from German, was condemned in 1945 to ten years in a concentration camp for 'compassion towards the enemy'. In January 1981, because of his declarations of sympathy with Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents, while visiting the Federal Republic of Germany he was stripped of his citizenship.

¹⁰⁹ Kopelev (1980), pp. 98–9. For similar memoirs, see Konstantin Paustovsky, *The Story of a Life*, trans. Joseph Barnes, New York: Pantheon Books, 1964, p. 170; and L. G. Fišbejn, 'Kamarado

A similar description of an enthusiastic Soviet worker is provided by Andrei Platonov in his novel *Happy Moscow*. His hero, in whose room hung portraits of Lenin, Stalin and Zamenhof, received letters from different parts of the world almost every day:

Clerks and factory works, far-off men pinned to the ground by eternal exploitation, had learned Esperanto and so conquered the silence between peoples; drained by hard work, too poor for travel, they communicated with one another through shared thought.

The Soviet correspondent replies to every letter, proudly recounting the steady improvement in life thanks to socialism, and anticipating a time when ‘a whole billion of them’ [workers] will want to come to the Soviet Union ‘and live with us forever, bringing their families—and, as for capitalism, let it remain empty, unless a revolution sets in there as well’.¹¹⁰

What was the content of these exchanges of letters? The sheer number of letters exchanged between Soviet Esperantists and those in other countries makes it more or less impossible to give an overview of the topics covered. But the fact that for the most part this correspondence was targeted does allow us to draw some conclusions about favored topics. Because SEU wanted to share the letters received with as large a public as possible, namely by publishing them in the press, the organization both offered its members advice on how to organize their correspondence¹¹¹ and also sought to instruct the correspondents in other countries about the kinds of letters they should write to serve as material for Soviet publications. Analysis of the instructions addressed to correspondents abroad about preferred topics reveals primarily two characteristics.

First, correspondents were warned not to fill the letters with trivia. Instead of descriptions of ‘the beauties of the homeland or purely bourgeois, local sensations’, Soviet readers expected—as the activist Pavel

Esperanto’, *Nuntempa Bulgario*, 1966, 4: v. The recollections of a Bulgarian villager about such correspondence make an interesting comparison: Trifon Hristovski, *Mia vivo*, trans. Nikola Aleksiev, Sofia: Sofia Pres, 1981, pp. 117–18.

¹¹⁰ The (unfinished) novel, probably written in the mid-1930s, was published only in 1991. English translation: Platonov (2012), esp. pp. 11–14.

¹¹¹ See for example the articles of Kiriushin and Nikolsky in *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 5 (1926/27): 15–20, 25–26, 254–6.

Kiriushin, of Minsk, put it—letters in which workers should ‘freely’ recount the various aspects of their lives:

For us and for our readers it will be interesting to know from the letter of a simple worker what kinds of working conditions exist in given places in a given country, and it is important if the description is an eye-witness account. Similarly interesting for us is to read about the political rights of workers, about harassment of the workers’ movement, about workers’ ideals, and about the feeling of worldwide brotherhood among working people.¹¹²

There was no lack of readiness on the part of western comrades to reply to such appeals, because the topics indicated seemed, in this general formulation, of common interest to workers in all countries. Many were convinced that the Soviet Union merited their support and so they willingly used Esperanto to demonstrate their solidarity. For their part, they hoped, in return, to receive from their Soviet correspondents information on living conditions in the Soviet Union that could be published in national-language workers’ periodicals. With this in mind, the most enthusiastic among them even asked their Soviet friends directly for help in providing authentic information that would correct misrepresentations about their country. For example, soon after the British *Evening News* asserted, in June 1927, that Soviet workers had to pay personally for the education of their children, *Sennaciulo* published a brief related article that asked whether ‘some Soviet reader would help us rebut these bourgeois lies by replying to the following questions: [...]’¹¹³ On another occasion the journal published a translation of an article that appeared in *Münchmer Zeitung* about Siberia, quoting examples from the Siberian press of uncivilized behavior, drunkenness, homelessness and superstition; the translator, a SAT member from Munich, asked that these assertions be answered so that he could demand a correction from the newspaper.¹¹⁴

¹¹²P. Kirjušin, ‘Kion ni atendas de niaj korespondantoj?’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 109: 6.

¹¹³Mark Starr, ‘Pri edukado en Sovetio’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 145: 3.

¹¹⁴“Barbarajoj en Sovet-Siberio”, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 111: 4–5. The original appeared in *Münchmer Zeitung*, 22 Oct. 1926. Members of the Esperanto course in the Tver cavalry school

But it would be incorrect to suppose that these letter-writing contacts between Soviet and foreign Esperantists were stimulated by the fervor of people who believed that bourgeois papers contained only falsehoods about the Soviet Union and that Esperanto opened a privileged route to knowledge of the truth. On the contrary, the correspondence flourished in large part because those SAT members who were less inclined to regard the Soviet Union as a model for the building of socialism found it interesting in itself and important for the Esperanto movement. Many began corresponding with Soviet citizens out of natural curiosity about living conditions in their country and the desire to describe their own environment in their letters. They understood that in the Soviet Union there was a great deal of interest in corresponding with other countries, and they were happy to respond to it—also to advance Esperanto. This awareness was sharpened by the warnings published from time to time in *Sennaciulo* about the threat of imbalance in the dissemination of Esperanto between the Soviet Union and other countries.¹¹⁵

This brings us to the second principal characteristic of the correspondence. As the warnings about disequilibrium suggest (and to them we could add the constant admonitions that SAT members should be faithful and timely correspondents), the desire to keep the letter writing going clearly exceeded any tendency to limit the topics to be covered. Efforts to prescribe the contents of the letters in any case held little promise of success. Certainly the comrades in other countries did not limit themselves to complaints about their miserable lives under capitalism and, on the other hand, their Soviet correspondents did not confine themselves to long reports of their victories in the building of socialism. The encouragement of correspondents to cover topics in their letters that could later be of interest also to newspaper readers could not weaken the element of spontaneity, curiosity and personal pleasure. Furthermore, for the intended exploitation of foreign letters in, for example, factory newsletters, there was even an initial preference for the specific atmosphere of

reacted by expressing their indignation at the selective nature of the article but did not deny the facts themselves. They listed steps taken by the Soviet government to counter the negative behaviors described: *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 15: 3.

¹¹⁵I. Avrunin, 'Danĝero', *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 38 (90): 6; V. Varankin, 'Pri internacia laborista korespondado', *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 104: 6.

the personal letter. The coloring of individuality in the letters written by foreigners was popular among readers, as a worker Esperanto correspondent in Kremenchug emphasized early in 1927:

Letters from simple, barely educated workers often have much more effect than the discourse of high politics because they are more ‘alive’.¹¹⁶

Similarly, the editors of *Sennaciulo* called on their correspondents

[...] not to write politically colored articles, not to produce poor imitations of the professionals, but to talk in simple terms about your life, your profession, the customs of your region; in this way our magazine will acquire a special character, a certain originality.¹¹⁷

When a magazine for Ukrainian working women expressed a wish to receive regular information about living conditions abroad, its Esperantist collaborators laid out for non-Soviet SAT members the topics that should be covered in letters destined for publication:

in what conditions women work in factory working-places; how they are paid (differences between men’s and women’s wages); how many hours they work; dangers in the workplace and accidents (injuries at work); whether the company’s premises have special clothing if the work is dirty or damaging to clothes; whether female workers receive paid free time (time off) and for how long; is insurance available as part of employment (which a female worker can receive if sick, or in the final months of pregnancy and right after giving birth, or if injured; who, how, how long and how much gets paid in such non-working periods). Write about the exploitation of women’s (and particularly girls’) work; write about successes in the revolutionary women’s movement and also the struggle against the petty bourgeois women’s ‘emancipation’ movement; about cultural work among women workers; how working women, including working wives, participate in cooperative work; how workers’ cooperatives facilitate the lives of women

¹¹⁶ ‘Konsiloj al la gazetservantoj’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 121/122: 9.

¹¹⁷ *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 100: 7. The editors described as ‘extremely important’ the desire that ‘the letters not relate to general political analysis of the domestic situation’ within the country in question.

workers (establishment of cafeterias, day care, kindergartens, help for pregnant women, etc.); unemployment among females [...] Send us a torrent of letters!! Get your friends to write! Make the letters simple, but full of facts!¹¹⁸

Preference went, according to several appeals, to letters whose topics were close to the everyday experience of working people. Because articles on living conditions in various countries made up a large part of the contents of *Sennaciulo* and were evidently particularly liked by its readers, we can assume that even without special appeals most SAT members would be disinclined to engage in ‘the discourse of high politics’, believing that it would be more interesting and more in line with their competence if they wrote about everyday affairs.

At the end of the 1920s, the Esperanto movement in the Soviet Union was prospering. The letter-writing relations between Soviet and foreign Esperantists reached impressive numbers. In eight months the Esperantists of Sebastopol received 500 letters from 20 countries,¹¹⁹ their colleagues in Kurgan in 17 months received 696 letters from 23 countries and themselves dispatched 938 pieces of correspondence.¹²⁰ In Irkutsk, where the young communists’ committee recommended that its branches learn foreign languages for the purpose of international education and mentioned primarily Esperanto, foreign correspondence amounted to around 500 items a year.¹²¹ A growing readiness on the part of editors to publish material received through such correspondence was apparent. Such material appeared regularly in 10% of Soviet periodicals.¹²² In 29 Moscow periodicals a total of 82 letters, translated from Esperanto, were

¹¹⁸ V. Kolčinski, ‘La SAT-aparato servu’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 119/120: 9. The article provides a translation of a letter to the editors of *Komunarka Ukraïny* (organ of the Central Department of Women Workers and Villagers in the Communist Party of Ukraine).

¹¹⁹ I. Lisichnik, ‘Zavoeyvaem massy’ (We mobilize the masses), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928), 74–7.

¹²⁰ ‘696 korrespondentsii iz 23 stran’ (696 items of correspondence from 23 countries), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): pp. 145–6.

¹²¹ M. Krjukov, ‘Esperanta movado en Irkutsk’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 106–7.

¹²² ‘Rezolucio pri internacia korespondado’ (by the Fourth SEU Congress), *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 101–2.

published¹²³, and in Kurgan, of 481 letters received in a single year, 86 appeared in newspapers or wall newspapers.¹²⁴ Of material on other countries that appeared in 1928–29 in the Leningrad district of Volodarsky, 95% had their origins in Esperanto.¹²⁵ The SEU periodicals regularly reported on local experiences in letter-writing activity, giving advice to SEU members about ‘how by skillful use of Esperanto correspondence you can penetrate the indifference and even the opposition of all editorial staff regarding Esperanto’.¹²⁶ Editors who preferred to use national languages for correspondence were criticized for wasting money by spending large sums on translators instead of using the services of Esperanto.¹²⁷ The Esperantists also argued that their material was more authentic than that received from abroad by way of ‘mediating authorities’.¹²⁸

It was largely due to the tireless use of Esperanto in international letter-writing work that SEU encountered more often than not a positive attitude to its work among organizations and people of influence. Early in 1928, for example, the press department of the Communist Party of Belarus noted with approval the successful activity of Esperanto correspondents in Minsk.¹²⁹ In that year, Soviet workers were officially urged to learn foreign languages in order to have more intimate contact with foreigners; SEU reacted to this advice by arguing that Esperanto was the most easily learned language and that it also helped in the acquisition of the national languages of other countries.¹³⁰ These efforts brought results. The Eighth Komsomol Congress in May 1928 accepted a resolution stating that Esperanto organizations ‘must be used for international

¹²³ N. Incertov, ‘Al novaj venkoj’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 74–5.

¹²⁴ V. Sokolov & V. Zyrianov, ‘God raboty Kurganskogo “Narkomindela” ’ (A year of work by Kurgana Narkomindel [People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs]), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 17–19.

¹²⁵ P. Lisicin, ‘Batalo sur la lingva kampo’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 400–1.

¹²⁶ P. Kiriushin, ‘Ot “printsipial’nogo nesoglasiiia” —k polnoi pobeде’ (From ‘disagreement in principle’—to full victory), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 19–20.

¹²⁷ Baranov, ‘Vot poprobuite perelomit’ upriamstvo redaktsii’ (Let us try to break down editorial obstinacy), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 141–2.

¹²⁸ Lisicin, ‘Batalo’, pp. 400–1; Kiriushin (1930), p. 24.

¹²⁹ *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 175–6; cf. Lwunin, p. 1020.

¹³⁰ *EdE*, p. 591.

contact',¹³¹ although the secretary of the All-Union Komsomol, Lazar Shatskin, counseled against learning Esperanto. His position was balanced, however, by the warm support of Ukrainian functionaries, who recommended that young communists pay attention to 'this vast volunteer movement, which came into being spontaneously, without any pressure from above'.¹³² A representative of the district party committee of Vladivostok in March 1929 described as 'unhealthy' the fact that a local school was corresponding in English with a bourgeois school in the USA and recommended that 'Our schoolchildren must correspond with the children of the proletariats of other countries, and Esperanto can help with that.'¹³³

In August 1929, the Central Committee of the Ukraine Komsomol, having earlier recognized the service of young communist Esperantists in the field of international correspondence, praised the 'total suitability' of Esperanto particularly for the reciprocal understanding of young workers in the various countries. It strongly recommended that its readers learn and use the language.¹³⁴ Around the same time, a well-known economist and public figure, Iurii Larin, linked the present usefulness of Esperanto with the need for international communication in the period after world revolution:

Our workers cannot master several foreign languages all at once. But it is necessary that we have the ability to communicate with comrades in other countries, and understand them. To be sure, those who are now entering school will be adults by the time of the victory of the proletarian revolution

¹³¹ G. Demidjuk, 'Jes, de malsupre kaj per praktikado', *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 245. See also G. Dem., 'Pod natiskom molodniaka' (Under attack by our children), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 165–71; 'Komsomol i esperanto', *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 53–4, 56.

¹³² Demidjuk, 'Jes, de malsupre', p. 245. This is how Kaplan, representative of the Komsomol Central Committee, expressed the matter in a conference of young communist Esperantists in Moscow in February 1929.

¹³³ *Bulteno de CK SEU*, 1929: 123. The Bulletin also states (p. 116) that editorial staff who at first preferred to organize correspondence in national languages had to acknowledge that they received more useful material from abroad by means of Esperanto.

¹³⁴ Dneprano, 'La junkomunistaro de Ukrainio lernos kaj aplikos Esperanton', *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 545; 'Ĕsperanto v otsenke Komsomola Ukrainy' (Esperanto as assessed by the Ukraine Komsomol), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 278–80. See also V. Kolchinsky, 'Ĕsperanto v internatsional'noi rabote Komsomola Ukrainy' (Esperanto in the international work of the Komsomol of Ukraine, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 8 (1930): 39–43.

in the rest of Europe, when travel abroad (and the arrival of foreigners in our midst) will be common and widespread. But if it is difficult to master all languages, it is accordingly easy to master the single language Esperanto [...]. Right now, one can travel through the principal countries of Europe and interact with workers there with a knowledge of Esperanto alone. [...] If the teaching of the Esperanto language were introduced in our secondary schools, that would accelerate further acquaintance with the language and with foreign workers.¹³⁵

In a book written following a journey through the Soviet Union, the British journalist and writer, Emile Joseph Dillon, reported that 16,000 Esperantists could be found there, and that in schools where non-Russian languages were taught, Esperanto occupied fourth place after English, German and French. Dillon noted with surprise the extent of Esperanto correspondence by factory workers and members of the Red Army.¹³⁶

Organizationally, SEU noted growth ‘to an almost catastrophic degree’. In May 1928 the Central Committee calculated that a second ten thousand people ‘have been attracted to our circles and groups’. The active members of SEU (subscribers to the journals) at that time numbered 3500. In a mere six months, a total of 35,000 textbooks were sold.¹³⁷ Although these achievements still did not satisfy SEU and although it often reproached its local groups for organizational lapses, public interest in Esperanto seemed sufficiently large to look to the future with optimism.

¹³⁵Iu. Larin, ‘Boevye voprosy narodnogo obrazovaniia’ (Battle tasks for popular education), *Revoliutsiia i kul'tura* 3 (1929), 14 (July): 10–16, quoted from pp. 14–15; cf. *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 283, and *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 10–11. Larin protested in *Pravda*, 20 May 1926, against anti-Jewish discrimination. In 1929 he published a book on Jews and anti-Semitism in the USSR. His niece Anna married Nikolai Bukharin. See also Zvi Y. Gitelman, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics: The Jewish Sections of the CPSU, 1917–1930*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 436.

¹³⁶E.J. Dillon, *Russia Today and Yesterday*, London & Toronto: Dent, 1929, pp. 185–6.

¹³⁷‘Ni bezonas disciplinon, devokonscion kaj memkritikon’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 65–6.

The Growing Class Struggle and the ‘Misuse’ of Esperanto

Although local newspapers during this period supposedly had a degree of freedom in the choice of what letters to publish, on what topics, this freedom was not as broad as the topics chosen by the letter writers. In other words, not everything that foreigners wrote to their Soviet friends was actually publishable. Lanti himself experienced this problem as early as 1924–25 when he was serving as an Esperantist correspondent for a Siberian newspaper. After about six months he resigned his—paid—position, having received word from the editors ‘that my articles are not much to the readers’ liking; not because they are not interesting, but because I apparently don’t believe that French capitalism is standing on the brink of bankruptcy; and also because I haven’t reported sufficiently optimistically about the “progress” of the communist party’.¹³⁸

It is not surprising that Lanti’s openness clashed with the editorial criteria of a Soviet newspaper. But, more significantly, personal correspondence was also not without its problems. Foreign Esperantists, in their letters, often (partly unintentionally) led their readers to understand that the living conditions of workers in capitalist countries were not irremediably worse than those in the Soviet Union. They also, even if they were fully sympathetic with the building of socialism in the Soviet Union, sometimes revealed the phenomenon of revolutionary virginity, namely the attitude of people who naively measured Soviet realities in accordance with their imagination of the character of a successful revolution. For example, one writer, in a letter to his Soviet correspondent, expressed amazement at the information that Soviet trade unions ‘had to be concerned with making work more productive’ rather than fighting for the worker against the factory administration. In response to such letters, SEU in 1926 warned their members to avoid giving inaccurate or imprecise information about life in the Soviet Union, which ‘fosters confusion among workers in other countries’.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Letter to Raymond Laval, 2 December 1935, in Lanti (1940), p. 116.

¹³⁹ R. Skribemulo (Roman Nikol’skii), ‘Neobdumannye pi’sma’ (Thoughtless letters), *Izvestiia T.K. SĖSS* 5 (1926/27): 22–5.

In the first three years of the program, SEU only sporadically alluded to negative issues with the correspondence. If problems were mentioned at all, they related to such matters as the ‘difficult conditions’ under which correspondents in other countries had to work,¹⁴⁰ or the fact that in a few countries Esperantists corresponding with the Soviet Union were harassed.¹⁴¹ That the presentation of the Soviet Union in these letters began to be a matter of attention emerged for the first time in April 1927 in a discussion in *Sennaciulo*, in which Demidiuk expressed his fury about earlier published assertions by a certain ‘Soviet citizen’ concerning salaries, taxes, rent and holidays, which, Demidiuk maintained, ‘confused the facts to such an extent that it looked like the beginning of *systematic misinformation* about the Soviet Union’.¹⁴² The problem was made clearer in a letter published in *Sennaciulo* in early 1928, in which an Esperantist from Rostov complained that the magazine contained ‘abundant material about the total success of Soviet workers’ economic and cultural life’. The writer entered a plea for reporting about his country that was more in conformity with the reality. He recommended that the Soviet Esperantists ‘not remain silent on such topics as unemployment, homelessness [...], the urban housing shortage, the lack of education of country people’, because only in this way would the comrades in other countries receive ‘a full picture’. The letter ended with the words ‘I believe that the truth must come first’.¹⁴³

The correspondence during this period seems to have dealt more and more with the negative sides of Soviet life. Foreign Esperantists displayed in their letters a bothersome curiosity, asking their correspondents what they thought about the struggles within the Soviet Communist Party following the expulsion in December 1927 of the opposition figures Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. The Bavarian SAT member Karl Weber, in a letter to his friend Veniamin Zyrianov, approved the expulsion but at the same time expressed disagreement about ‘the deadly punishment of exile,

¹⁴⁰ Kir-in, ‘Vsegda pod obstrelom’ (Always under fire), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSS* 5 (1926/27): 27–8.

¹⁴¹ R. Nikol’skii, ‘Zhertvy nashei neostorozhnosti’ (Victims of heedlessness), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 5 (1926/27): 102–3. The article warns SEU members to be on their guard in corresponding with Esperantists in these countries.

¹⁴² G. Demidiuk, ‘Ankaŭ leteroj el Sovetio’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 133/134: 6.

¹⁴³ Letter from Andrei Sidorov, December 1927, in *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 129.

because it is a counterrevolutionary, anti-Marxist perpetration'. Weber also asked about the truth of the rumors that the letters sent abroad by Soviet Esperantists 'were for the most part not written by them, but by some Esperanto office', to which they were required to submit correspondence received from other countries. He warned that, if such information proved true, he and his comrades would stop corresponding with Soviet Esperantists, because under such conditions they 'would always be deceived and would never learn the truth about the Soviet Union'.¹⁴⁴

Because the incidence of disagreeable interest on the part of foreigners continued to grow, often stimulated by letters from the Soviet Union itself, the SEU Central Committee in June 1928 took an unprecedented step. In a letter addressed to the editors of *Sennaciulo* the committee stated:

Recently, individual neutral Esperantists still resident in the Soviet Union [...] have spread lying information in their letters abroad about apparent political and economic crises in the Soviet Republics, about alleged cruel treatment of political prisoners [...]. Foreign proletarian Esperantists [...] are clearly confused by such information—with the result that many questions about the truth of such information have been received by SEU organizations and by individual Esperantists in the Soviet Republics.¹⁴⁵

At the same time the Central Committee sent the SEU organizations a circular, warning them against 'misinformation' emanating from the Soviet Union. The circular confirmed that such difficulties with correspondence did not come only from the letters of Soviet 'neutralists'. The

¹⁴⁴R. Nikol'skii, 'Vezdesushchie "agenty Komintern" ' (Ever-present 'agents of the Komintern'), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 152–4. Quoting from the letter, Nikolsky contrasted Weber, whose 'naïve worker's head' he called 'foggy', with the judgment of a foreign Esperantist visiting the Soviet Union; according to the latter, 'the very air in the country of the Soviets is filled with freedom and with the joy that comes from creative work; in a smoky district of a Soviet city it is easier to breathe than in any seaside resort in any capitalist country'. Nikolsky named the assertion of the existence of a state Esperanto office 'a senseless offence to all Soviet Esperantists'.

¹⁴⁵Letter to the secretariat of the SEU Central Committee, 25 July 1928, *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 400. The letter was signed by Drozen, Iodko, Nekrasov, Demidiuk, Nikolsky and Varankin. In reaction to the assertion about a state censorship office, it concluded with the following emotional declaration: 'Esperantists of the Soviet Union, members of SAT and of SEU, write to their class brothers abroad only truth, as dictated to them by their class honor, their worker's heart.'

numerous questions from abroad about the actions of the opposition had created confusion among the SEU membership: 'Frequently our comrades, unable to reply to all, often difficult, questions, have been bombarding the SEU Central Committee with letters asking for advice'.¹⁴⁶

SEU had already confessed to 'a few sufficiently serious defects' in the correspondence between Soviet and foreign Esperantists. Responsibility for such problems lay above all in the fact that the correspondence was carried out almost exclusively on an individual basis. SEU described the defects as follows:

[... the] circle of use of the letters received is very narrow, and often, apart from the correspondent himself, no one knows about this correspondence. In individual correspondence, misinformation to comrades abroad about life in the Soviet Union is more frequent; individual correspondence is very hard to assess.

To avoid such misinformation, SEU believed it necessary to reorganize the correspondence effort completely. It recommended 'that such correspondence should now move to a higher level—to that of collective correspondence'. What would such an arrangement look like? SEU gave the following illustration: a letter from abroad would be publicly discussed in a group, its translation would be posted on a special notice board so that non-Esperantists could also be informed of its content, and finally the response to the foreign correspondent should be the result of a collectively discussed text, initially developed in the Russian language.¹⁴⁷ By the call for 'collective correspondence', it was clear that SEU aimed at greater control. A member of the Central Committee, Roman Nikolsky, urged that 'private individual correspondence be replaced, completely and by all means possible, by collective correspondence by conforming

¹⁴⁶'Korespondado pri politika vivo de Sovet-unio. Cirkulera letero de CK SEU al ĉiuj SEU-organizajoj', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 70.

¹⁴⁷'Pri kolektiva korespondado. Cirkulera letero de C.K. al ĉiuj SEU-organizajoj', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 34.

groups (associated with the party, professions, trade unions, etc.) and by correspondence for newspapers'.¹⁴⁸

In an earlier circular to its organizations, SEU pointed out that the 'increased activities of neutralists' and lapses in the political education of the membership, causing misrepresentation of Soviet life in letters abroad, was directly related to its social structure—that such dangerous tendencies were due to the insufficient proportion of workers in SEU. In so stating the matter, SEU touched a nerve, because in fact the membership included many teachers and office employees, and only a few ordinary workers.¹⁴⁹ From this point forward, priority attention was devoted to the recruitment of industrial workers. The Central Committee indicated as a goal its intention to raise the percentage of workers in SEU from 17% to at least 40%. This task was urgent because in the autumn of 1928 the leaders of the official worker-correspondence movement expressed their disinclination to support the broad application of Esperanto. The question was taken up by the journal of the worker and peasant correspondents, *Raboche-krestianskii korrespondent*, in an article written by none other than Lenin's sister, Mariia Ulianova, the managing editor of the journal. She declared that Esperanto, although, thanks to its use, a few positive results in the organization of international contacts had been achieved, did not, because of its insufficient powers of expression and its limited dissemination, have a future, 'despite the paeans of praise of its practitioners'. She suggested that preferably a worker should learn a foreign national language and that there were occasions when 'Esperanto has been used in ways that harmed the Soviet Union'.¹⁵⁰

This last point was more starkly emphasized by another author in the next issue of the journal:

¹⁴⁸R. Nikolskij, 'Nuntempaj stato kaj taskoj de internacia korespondado. Tezoj por la IV-a kongreso de SEU', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 67–8 (quotation p. 67).

¹⁴⁹Statistics on the 135 delegates to the Third SEU Congress in August 1926 show the following professional representation: 36 clerical workers, 7 railway workers, 25 office workers, 12 medical personnel, 4 unskilled workers, 5 workers on the land, 2 nutritionists, 4 postal workers, 3 journalists, 1 scientist, 1 hairdresser, 1 leatherworker, 7 soldiers, 1 carpenter, 7 technicians and 19 others: *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 23 (49): 9.

¹⁵⁰M.I. Ul'ianova, 'Inostrannye iazyki ili esperanto?' (Foreign languages or Esperanto?), *Raboche-krestianskii korrespondent*, 1928, 21 (15 Nov.); extracts translated in *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 134.

We have facts that confirm that Esperanto is used by enemies of the working class for spreading lies and implausible information about the situation of the workers in the USSR and in capitalist countries. We should further add that in other countries Esperanto is more widespread among the petty bourgeoisie, in circles of office workers, business people and bureaucrats, in those of people who are hostile in their orientation to all things revolutionary. It is superfluous to explain how such people use their free access, thanks to Esperanto, to links with the workers of the Soviet Union. Attention to this matter is long overdue.¹⁵¹

This warning about the misuse of Esperanto was published four months after the SEU Central Committee itself, in a letter to *Sennaciulo*, had confessed that ‘neutral Esperantists’ had been spreading ‘lying information’ abroad about the political situation in the Soviet Union. It came right before a conference of the Worker and Peasant Correspondents in Moscow (28 November–7 December 1928), whose agenda included the use of Esperanto. A draft resolution contained the assertion that the Esperanto movement was petty bourgeois. After discussion, in which many defenders of Esperanto spoke out, the sentence was struck out and replaced by a recommendation to use Esperanto in parallel with national languages for correspondence.¹⁵²

The fact that the leaders of the worker-correspondence movement themselves opposed Esperanto undoubtedly unsettled SEU’s activities. The leaders continued to reproach the Esperantists for their overconfidence and criticized the fact that ‘particularly in the provinces’ the newspapers published an over-abundance of letters translated from Esperanto or printed contributions that were unnecessary, lacking in seriousness, naïve or simply dangerous—for example the letter of a German Esperantist who complained that the socialist and communist parties sometimes fought against one another more than they fought against the bourgeoisie.¹⁵³ An additional criticism of the Esperantists was the asser-

¹⁵¹ Cited in *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 134 (extracts from an article by V. Fin). The context is explained by Moret (2007), 47–59.

¹⁵² *Bulteno de CK SEU*, 1929: 9, 20, 33.

¹⁵³ D. Itskhok, ‘Za ili protiv esperanto?’ (For or against Esperanto?), *Raboche-krest’ianskii korrespondent*, 1929, 7/8 (Apr.); extracts translated in *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 353; I. El’vin, ‘Protiv khaltury i bezgramotnosti v mezhdunarodnoi svyazi’ (Against errors and illiteracy in international connec-

tion that workers' Esperanto periodicals were full of personal announcements by stamp collectors and even people looking for wives.¹⁵⁴

Throughout 1929 *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, SEU's monthly theoretical organ, devoted extensive space to efforts to refute such accusations, particularly the idea that Soviet letter writers were corresponding with the petty bourgeoisie in other countries. Agreeing that the Esperanto movement in other countries had its petty-bourgeois residue, it pointed out that, almost without exception, the correspondence belonged to the working class.¹⁵⁵ To prove the point, it quoted from letters expressing foreign friends' burning curiosity about the achievements of the Soviet Union, their enthusiastic support for the struggle against kulaks and right-wing deviants and their confession that, though sometimes made hesitant by the misrepresentations of class enemies, they re-established their revolutionary equilibrium thanks to the convincing explanations of their Soviet correspondents.¹⁵⁶

This leads us to a key question. To what extent were Esperantists in other countries, on whose collaboration success ultimately depended, willing to participate in this new form of collective correspondence? Were they willing to follow the path dictated to SEU by the circumstances prevailing in the Soviet Union?

In January 1929, Ida Lisichnik, one of the most active organizers of letter writing in the SEU, directed an appeal to the *Sennaciulo* readership. She encouraged SAT members to increase their awareness of the 'social significance' of correspondence and to actively pursue connections with fellow professionals, places of work, party cells, editorial teams and so on, in the various countries. She pointed out that in her city, Sebastopol, the young communists 'were extremely eager' to correspond, but that *Sennaciulo* did not provide them with enough addresses of part-

tions), *Raboche-krest'ianskii korrespondent*, 1929, 15 (Aug.), reprinted in *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 253–5. See also *Bulteno de CK SEU* 9 (1929/30): 98.

¹⁵⁴ P. Tilin, 'Filatelismo, bagatelismo kaj lab. esp. propagando', *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 412.

¹⁵⁵ P. Kiriushin, 'Kto nam pishet iz-za granitsy?' (Who is writing to us from abroad?), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 82–3.

¹⁵⁶ I. Lisichnik, 'Nashi zarubezhnye korrespondenty' (Our foreign correspondents), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 84–8; P. Kiriushin, 'Moi zagranichnye "sobkory"' (My foreign 'own correspondents'), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 149–51.

ners matching their age and professions.¹⁵⁷ A month later, Barthelmess replied to Ida Lisichnik's appeal. In principle he supported it, but he named two serious obstacles which 'effectively prevented an immediate solution'. One was the imbalance of numbers between correspondence requests from the Soviet Union and replies from the rest of the world. The other obstacle preventing the expansion of letter-writing connections had its origins in Soviet particularities:

We have often noted that Soviet letter-writers are content to address slogans and dry, schematic analysis of organizational topics to their foreign comrades. Young Soviet comrades should consider that the spiritual condition of many young comrades in other countries has been formed in surroundings totally foreign to the Soviet world and that, if they are to establish intimate contact with them, they must begin not with descriptions of organizing or party work, but by telling them about individual and collective living conditions in the workplace, in clubs, and in the family.¹⁵⁸

Such admonitions had up to this point been unnecessary or unexpressed. They were based on current conditions which in the moment of publication were in a sense already anachronistic. Barthelmess probably did not realize that, in supporting collective correspondence and calling for fewer slogans, he was advocating two things that were directly opposed to one another. The invitation to Soviet Esperantists to include in their letters descriptions of their private lives and expressions of personal feelings was undoubtedly addressed to people whose way of thinking was essentially no different from that of people living in the rest of the world. But the new form of collective correspondence was directly aimed at suppressing the incalculable risks of individuality. A primary requirement of such correspondence from abroad was that it harmonize with the editorial policies of the Soviet press and demonstrate the utility of Esperanto as a source of welcome information. By the same token, the flow of letters abroad should faithfully report the achievements of the building of socialism. Thus, SEU in 1929 began to prescribe to its members directly what they should write to other countries—namely 'the sense and significance of

¹⁵⁷ Ida Lisičnik, 'Aktuala problemo', *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 154.

¹⁵⁸ N.B., 'Internacia interligo', *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 191.

the five-year program of “Great Tasks” and the uninterrupted five-day work week and other great moments in the life of the Soviet Union’.¹⁵⁹ But these were precisely the kinds of topics of which many non-Soviet members of SAT had had enough; and even if they were still willing to correspond with the Soviet Union, they were less and less able to deliver the kinds of content deemed suitable for publication in Soviet newspapers, factory bulletins and wall newspapers.

Early in 1928, Drezen’s language grew more truculent. In proposals prepared for the upcoming Fourth SEU Congress he explained that it was no longer enough to pursue the struggle against neutralism: now it was necessary to unmask ‘the opportunistic and class-betraying tendencies of certain leaders of the workers in other countries’. Drezen described the world situation as characterized ‘by a pervasive sharpening of the class struggle’, in which ‘all compromise is increasingly pointless’. He repeated the belief that the members of SEU should ‘to the extent that they can’ abandon ‘the old methods of individual correspondence’ in favor of ‘collective group correspondence’.¹⁶⁰ The earlier exhortations to SEU members to intensify the battle ‘against attempts to exploit the international language not for class-based, revolutionary or technological goals, but for simple amusement or entertainment, etc.’¹⁶¹ were now followed by attacks on the ‘25% neutralism’ practiced by those members who ‘prefer collecting stamps to addressing social issues’.¹⁶² It was precisely such ‘barterers’ who were urged to get serious by turning to collective correspondence.¹⁶³

Drezen’s mention of the ‘sharpening of the class struggle’ reminds us of the political background without which the increasingly authoritarian tone used by the SEU leaders as of 1928 would make little sense. It was Stalin himself

¹⁵⁹ P. Kiriushin, ‘Ocherednye zadachi éesperkorovskogo dvizheniia’ (The current tasks of the Esperanto-correspondence movement), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 326–7 (quotation p. 326).

¹⁶⁰ E. Drezen, ‘Nuntempa soci-politika situacio kaj la taskoj de SEU. Tezoj por IV-a Kongreso de SEU’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 50. The congress took place in Moscow at the end of July 1928.

¹⁶¹ ‘Al ĉiuj SEU-organizaĵoj’, *Biulleten’ TsK SĖSR* 6 (1927/28): 1–2.

¹⁶² *Bulteno de CK SEU* 6 (1927/28): 63.

¹⁶³ N. Shumarin, ‘Kuda idet Ivanovo-Voznesensk?’ (Whither Ivanovo-Voznesensk?), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 276–280. The article noted that a few groups in the province of Ivanovo-Voznesensk ‘are engaging in frivolous international correspondence simply to exchange illustrated postcards and stamps’.

who launched the slogan ‘sharpening class struggle’ in connection with his two major goals: collectivization of agriculture and rapid industrialization. It was useful to him less as a means of analyzing the actual situation than as a pretext to justify a ruthless battle against all resistance to realizing these goals. The 15th Party Congress in December 1927, which approved the directives for developing the Five-Year Plan for industrial expansion, ended with the expulsion of Trotsky and other ‘leftists’ who opposed Stalin’s program for the building of socialism in a single country. It was followed by the arrest and exile of the opposition; at the same time, the Party rigorously intervened in the lives of the peasants, ordering confiscation of their grain reserves.

In March 1928 the secret police asserted that they had uncovered a counter-revolutionary conspiracy of ‘specialists’ in the North Caucasus city of Shakhty. There followed not only a public trial and death sentences, but also insistent cries for greater vigilance against such bourgeois specialists. The ten-year alliance between the Party and non-communist experts, a hallmark of the NEP, was now definitively at an end. At the same time, the people’s suffering intensified. In North-western Russia and Southern Ukraine large numbers of country folk starved to death. Workers were forced to submit to severe conditions and threats of punishment, intended to raise the level of ‘working discipline’. Arrests became a mass phenomenon, no longer inflicted on people for actual political deviation but also merely because they belonged to a particular social group.¹⁶⁴ In April 1929 the Five-Year Plan for industrialization and the plan for rapid collectivization were finally accepted. A new period began in the history of the Soviet Union, in which Stalin was the undisputed master. He could now construct socialism in his empire by revolution from above.

Such was the internal political situation in the Soviet Union—reflected in the actions of SEU as of 1928. In a later chapter we will attempt to describe in greater detail how SEU adapted to this situation. But first we will look at how relations between SEU and SAT developed up to the years 1928–29. The question that principally interests us is whether the so-called sharpening of the class struggle in the Soviet Union, which played out within SEU in the form of severe warnings to the members, influenced relations between the Soviet Esperantists and SAT.

¹⁶⁴ At the end of December 1929 Stalin ordered the liquidation of the entire ‘class of kulaks’.

6

Schism and Collapse

‘Sennaciismo’

Even as SEU was trying to free itself from suspicion that its letter-writing activity was allowing bourgeois ideas to infiltrate the Soviet Union, it was forced to devote increased attention to the development of its relations with SAT. There were two factors to consider. First, the interests of the communist movement had become wholly identified with the goal of maintaining the power of the Soviet Union. Stalin had, in 1927, made it clear that ‘An *internationalist* is one who is ready to defend the U.S.S.R. without reservation, without wavering, unconditionally; for the U.S.S.R. is the base of the world revolutionary movement’.¹ The following year, the Comintern complemented this requirement with a declaration of war against those who, in its opinion, had abandoned the ‘true’ path of class struggle. Furthermore, the Party launched the equally attention-focusing thesis that the danger of an imperialist war was growing more and more imminent, along with the possibility of a surprise attack on the Soviet Union. The country was gripped by a siege mentality.

¹J.V. Stalin, ‘Joint Plenum of the Central Committee [...]’, *Works*, vol. 10, Moscow: Progress, 1954, p. 53.

The time was past when the Soviet Union could trumpet, or at least tolerate, the loyal cooperation of communists in international workers' organizations. Now the argument was that, after the fascists, the social democrats were the most dangerous enemies of the Soviet Union. For SAT, as it sought to unite the various camps within the socialist movement, the Comintern's new line was ominous. Lanti's guiding principle was to steer the association in such a way that no one felt discriminated against; socialists, communists and other party members were advised to form interest groups (*frakcioj*) in which they could carry on their party work outside SAT's responsibility. *Sennaciulo*, on the other hand, should be free of polemics in support of any one group or opposition to the others. In this way, within SAT, communists and non-communists, aware of their divergent positions, succeeded in maintaining a *modus vivendi*—or perhaps, given this awareness, were all the more careful to subordinate political or ideological differences to the common goal of disseminating Esperanto.

In August 1928, while the Sixth Comintern Congress was going on in Moscow, the first signs of public disagreement between Lanti and Drezen emerged. The SEU leader, in a working meeting at the Eighth SAT Congress in Göteborg, made a declaration that sounded distinctly threatening:

I can say quite unequivocally: we in the Soviet Union have a dictatorship of the working class; as long as the SAT movement helps us further educate our workers, we will participate in SAT. There may come a moment when we are compelled to leave SAT or when people of other political tendencies will leave SAT.

Drezen was angry at various unorthodox articles by Lanti in *Sennaciulo*,² in which Lanti, in an often ironic tone, emphasized SAT's specific 'nationless' (*sennacieca*) character and sought to make the members aware that SAT 'must not be a political organization, but educational, cultural, informational'.³ Despite his complaint that Lanti was not publishing enough articles on the class struggle, Drezen confirmed his connection with SAT:

² Reprinted in part in Lanti (1931).

³ This was Lanti's explanation: *Protokolaro de la VIII-a Kongreso en Göteborg (Svedio), 14.–18. aŭgusto 1928*, Leipzig: SAT, 1928, p. 24.

SAT now needs a policy that prevents us from bumping into one another, because that's useful to none of us. It would be good if Lanti could manage to find a middle way for us all, with occasional zigzags in one direction or the other. With that arrangement, we might be able to continue together for a few years. For us, our *Sennaciulo* is precious, and gives all of us good information. We don't want to destroy it because of a vague hope for something that might be more agreeable to us. Let's establish a united front at least in those areas in the field of culture where it is possible to do so.⁴

Drezen was also not opposed to Lanti's proposal to adjust the SAT constitution by a redefinition of its goals, implicitly addressing the tendency of the communists to insist that they were right. The newly accepted text declared SAT's goals as follows: 'by comparing facts and ideas, by free discussion, [the Association] aims to prevent among its members the *dogmatization* of the teachings that they receive within their own spheres'.⁵ This redefinition was a clear requirement to avoid fanaticism at all costs.

However much the two sides took care that discussions not become disputes, as the communists' sensitivity heightened Lanti's restraint declined. (In 1928, having long since lost his illusions about communism, and having failed to pay his membership fees for two or three years, he resigned from the French Communist Party.) At the end of 1928, in a brochure entitled *La laborista esperantismo* (The Workers' Esperantism),⁶ Lanti made an attempt to present *sennaciismo* as a separate doctrine. Previously there had not been much discussion among SAT members about the precise meaning of the term. As we explained earlier, from the beginning SAT had sought to educate its members to a 'nationless' way of thought, beyond nation and nationality.⁷ Most members, including the communists and probably Lanti himself, were happy enough to consider

⁴ *Protokolaro Göteborg*, p. 25.

⁵ *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 293; *Protokolaro Göteborg*, p. 38.

⁶ Lanti (1928), p. 3. (English translation: *The Workers' Esperanto Movement*, London: N.C.L.C. Publishing Society, 1930.)

⁷ For a somewhat more up-to-date overview, see Petro Levi, 'Pri konkreta tiel nomata internaciismo de SAT', *Sennacieca Revuo*, 1997/98, 125/126: 23–30.



Fig. 6.1 Members of the Lipetsk Esperanto group, Tambov Governorate (1927–28)

sennaciismo a combination of proletarian internationalism and the fight for an international language.⁸

In any event, *sennaciismo* had its enthusiastic supporters among the Soviet Esperantists.⁹ Kopelev describes in his memoirs the feelings that

⁸ An early attempt at a theoretical definition of *sennaciismo* was given by Nekrasov at the Third Congress in Kassel in 1923. Quoting Marx, Kautsky, Lenin and Stalin to show the natural struggle of socialists for the assimilation of nations and cultures, he made it clear that SAT, in the field of culture and with special emphasis on the battle against nationalism, should complement the general struggle of revolutionaries for a classless society by fighting for a nationless world order: 'Elementoj de sennaciismo', *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 1 (43): 8–9; see also his 'Sennaciismo ... burĝa?', *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 11/12 (52/53): 14. In 1924 SAT published a brochure that made the same argument, namely that *sennaciismo* accords completely with the expectations of Kautsky and Lenin concerning the assimilation of nations following the triumph of socialism: V. Elsudo (Viktor Kolchinsky), *A.B.C. de sennaciismo*, 2nd edn., 1926, reprinted in Mickle (2013), pp. 11–58.

⁹ See for example V. Vozdvijenskij, 'Interlanda Esperanto-korespondo kiel edukilo al sennaciismo', *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 71, 78.

he had when as a 14-year-old schoolboy he received his SAT membership card: ‘From now on, in answer to the question of nationality, we were supposed to declare proudly: “Without nationality, *sennaciulo, satano*”—that is a member of SAT. The game was all the more beautiful in that it was not intended to be a game, but the beginning of a new life.’¹⁰ He goes on to explain:

When as a schoolboy I learned about a language that urged all the peoples of the world to unite among themselves, the future looked pure and simple to me. The people of the different countries would learn to understand each other, and all the causes of war—distrust, enmity, chauvinistic myths—would simply vanish. [...]

We hoped that soon the forces fighting for the brotherhood of all men—for communism—would triumph throughout the world. And we believed that in our country these salutary forces were ascendant, that a natural fusion of different peoples and races had already been realized with us.¹¹

Such was the atmosphere in 1926. Two or three years later, when the communists of the world were urged to cease concentrating on world revolution per se and to dedicate themselves entirely to building socialism in the Soviet Union as the model for world revolution, the Esperantists could escape the threat of a conflict of loyalty between membership in SAT and support for the Soviet Union only for as long as the content of *sennaciismo* remained largely without precise definition.

But now Lanti was trying to provide *sennaciismo* with a clear definition. He once again emphasized the undogmatic character of SAT and its openness to free discussion. But in one chapter, ‘The emergence of a new tendency: *sennaciismo*’, he revealed his wish that, despite the fact that SAT stood above party, the Association would do more to allow the dissemination of the idea of *sennaciismo*, even if it ‘in certain respects does not fit with the present program of the workers’ parties’.¹²

While the social democrats, among them Franz Jonas, expressed their disapproval of Lanti’s views, the strongest opposition came from

¹⁰Kopelev (1980), p. 98.

¹¹Kopelev (1980), p. 121.

¹²Lanti (1928), p. 30.

the leaders of the Soviet Esperantists, who accused Lanti of ‘ideological opportunism’ because he declared the battle against imperialism vain and the right of nations to self-determination unworthy of support.¹³ The principal accusation was that Lanti, opposed to national emancipation and apparently hoping for the disappearance of the nation state though assimilation, was ‘making a fatal and extremely dangerous error’, since by ignoring the struggle of oppressed peoples he was encouraging the appetite of the ‘major nationalisms’.¹⁴ Evidently Lanti’s new initiative was an acute embarrassment for the Soviet Esperantists—all the more so because, equally evidently, it was an outcome of his disillusionment with the Soviet Union.

Early in August 1929, during the Ninth SAT Congress in Leipzig, Drezen attacked the leadership of the association directly. By allowing the publication of the brochure *La laborista esperantismo*, the leaders perpetrated, in his view, ‘sins or crimes [...] against the tradition of revolution’. Drezen even insisted that the association move its headquarters from Paris to a city in Germany, where its members would be ‘more connected with the masses’.¹⁵ The proposal failed to receive support; surprisingly, the following day Drezen withdrew his demand, only asking that the perpetrators ‘not repeat their errors’. In an emotional speech he declared that for him, who for 20 years had been ‘a worse communist than a good Esperantist’, the danger of disintegration caused much pain: ‘For that reason, I am looking for a middle way, to preserve our unity. Making SAT communist is not at all our goal.’¹⁶

A compromise was found: the Leipzig congress resolution expressed confidence in the leadership and noted its confession that the *manner* in which it published Lanti’s brochure was ‘a mistake’. It attributed the chief

¹³Homo (Herbert Muravkin), ‘Kial SAT devas batali kontraŭ la imperialismo?’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 164. Lanti replied laconically that on these questions Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg had disagreed: E.L., ‘Respondo al “respondo”’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 172. Lanti had long since made clear his dislike of struggles for national independence: see, for example, ‘Sennaciismo je praktika vidpunkto’, *Sennaciulo* 3 (1926/27), 123/124: 1–2.

¹⁴N. Nekrasov, ‘Sennacieca kulturo kaj internacia politiko’, in Ejdelman & Nekrasov (1930), pp. 37–46 (quotations pp. 38–9).

¹⁵‘Protokolaro de la 9-a SAT-Kongreso, 4.–10. aŭgusto 1929 en Leipzig’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 481–498 (quotation p. 491).

¹⁶‘Protokolaro’, p. 495.

blame for these misunderstandings to ‘the capitalist system, which must be destroyed’ and which ‘currently prohibits normal and free contact between the vast masses in the Soviet Union and the proletariat in the capitalist countries’.¹⁷

Following its conclusion, Lanti summed up the results of the congress in optimistic terms, writing that the resolution had returned SAT ‘to a clean, healthy state’. He speculated, probably picking up also on Drezen’s words, that the avoidance of a break was due to the fact that ‘we are all of us, more or less consciously, Esperantists first and party members second’.¹⁸

In fact, Drezen’s conduct showed his flexibility. While on the one hand he energetically defended the communist understanding of the class struggle, on the other he was willing to yield when too much emphasis on the communist position threatened the basic agreement on the unifying role of SAT. At the same time, there was no getting away from the fact that the internal situation in the Soviet Union left him less and less room to maneuver: the Soviet circumstances, on which SEU’s remaining ties to SAT depended, had changed, according to Drezen’s comments in Göteborg. The question was how long the contradiction between the condemnation of ‘middle positions’ directed at SEU members by Drezen in 1928, and his support of a ‘middle way’ for SAT, proclaimed in Leipzig, could be maintained.

In December 1929, shortly after the difficult Leipzig compromise, *Sennaciulo* published a translation of a long article in *The Daily Herald* claiming that the Soviet Union was reviving nationalism and that the Bolsheviks ‘aimed less at the realization of world revolutionary upheaval than at ensuring the safety of Russia’.¹⁹ The analysis was accurate, but with it Lanti delivered new ammunition to those who saw him as drifting

¹⁷‘Protokolaro’, p. 497.

¹⁸E.L., ‘Postkongresaj pripensoj’, *Sennaciulo* 5 (1928/29): 469. Several years later, in October 1936, Lanti recounted (in a letter to his Paris comrades) that after the surprising concession of Drezen in Leipzig, Demidiuk confessed to him: ‘Look, we *must* contest your political line, but we don’t have to do so too bitterly, since at the bottom of our hearts we are Esperantists first’. Lanti added his impression that the same was true of Drezen: Lanti (1940), p. 129.

¹⁹Mikael [=Michael] Farbman, ‘Naciisma reviviĝo en la nova Rusio. Fiereco je propra lando kaj izoligo de Eŭropo. Ekonomia rekonstruo’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 125 (from *Daily Herald*, 19 October 1929).

into the anti-Soviet camp. The leaders of SEU, for whom cooperation in an organization not overseen by communists was already risky, now had to ask themselves how much longer it was possible to continue to present SEU at home as an ideologically faithful organization, while at the same time tolerating a situation in which SAT not only resisted conformity with the guiding principles of the Comintern but, through dissemination of Lanti's ideas, was acquiring a more independent philosophical profile than ever before.

SAT Dismembered

SAT was aware that traditions of nationhood still had considerable survival power even in the workers' movement, but at least SAT members, united by a common language, should never be infected by nationalist tendencies: they should serve instead as models for the solidarity of the worldwide proletariat. This sense of solidarity, SAT members felt, should be defended not only against narrow national loyalties but also against the parties and their competing claims to best represent the proletariat. In practice it was not possible to avoid involvement in the work of parties and unions, not least because SAT members needed to spread the word about Esperanto in such circles. The leaders of SAT, particularly Lanti, were equally concerned that party disputes not intrude on the Association and that, within SAT—which they saw as primarily a cultural and educational organization—harmony among the various political factions should prevail. As the addition to the constitution, accepted in Göteborg stipulated, SAT's goal was that the widening of mental horizons made possible by the international language Esperanto should counterbalance the dogmatism generated in the mind of the proletariat by party guidelines.

The fact that SAT itself did not take a specific position on the best revolutionary strategy nor was too precise in its definition of the content of *sennacieca* thought undoubtedly helped maintain the coexistence of the members of the various parties, even though there was no lack of occasions for controversy brought on by the articles published in *Sennaciulo* and *Sennacieca Revuo*, which one or another party member could find offensive. However, in the late 1920s the areas of friction grew.

Among western non-communist SAT members the willingness to shield the Soviet Union from all forms of criticism declined, particularly when in the individual countries the relations between communists and social democrats grew more contentious. It was only a matter of time before SAT's balancing act would be disrupted.

SAT members, for example the social democrats, firmly embedded in a particular party, nonetheless worked harder than ever to prevent SAT from getting drawn into the growing antagonism of communists and socialists. Those who had earlier often complained about communist dominance in SAT, but who for the sake of unity had avoided polemics, now paid particular attention to the question of whether SAT would retain its independence. For them it was particularly important that developments in SAT not impede their work at home, particularly in their national social democratic party.

The social democrats were not alone. Those who had no party to fall back on or who did not need to consider their national situation were equally concerned to preserve SAT's unity. But these members felt that it was important to give SAT a more independent character that would allow the Association to resist getting drawn into party disputes. Lanti, particularly, was among them.

Sooner or later, SEU had to recognize the 'sovietization' of the communist movement and try to modify its cooperation with SAT. After Leipzig, Franz Jonas called on the socialist SAT members to be prudent, pointing out that the insulting expression 'social fascism', used by the communists, covered at least half of the membership of SAT.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, in November, the bulletin *Kunligilo* began publication, as the organ of the 'International Communist Esperantist Interest Group' (Internacia Komunisma Esperantista Frakcio). *Kunligilo* openly raised the question of whether 'class conscious' Esperantists could any longer remain in 'a politically amorphous association like SAT'. Might they not have to leave if the 'mistaken opportunistic philosophizing' of its leaders continued?²¹

²⁰ Franz Jonas, 'Ĉirkaŭ la Naŭa SAT-Kongreso', *La Socialisto* 4 (1929): 76. During the congress SAT's Social Democratic Interest Group was re-established, with Jonas as secretary: see p. 98 of this issue.

²¹ 'Pri instruoj de la IX-a SAT-kongreso', *Kunligilo* 1 (1929/30), 1 (29 Nov.): 3; cf. E. Lanti, 'Principoj de unueco', *Sennaciulo* 11 (1934/35): 25. No author was indicated; according to Lanti,

Particularly troubling to SAT were developments in the Workers' Esperanto Association for the German-language Regions (GLEA), after SEU the largest national organization collaborating with SAT. Although a majority of its membership consisted of non-communists, the GLEA's board was, as early as 1924, primarily communist. In its annual meeting of April 1930 in Essen, a majority of the delegates voted to join the 'Workers' Culture Circle', which was a clearly communist organization.

For SAT, GLEA's abandonment of its party-independent character was a major blow. An even larger and unexpected blow came a couple of months after the events in Essen. The SAT administration informed its membership that the Soviet Commissar for Finance had forbidden further transfer of money from SAT's accounts in Moscow, which had reached the sum of 15,000 German marks, and that therefore, at least for the moment, no further payments for purchases or subscriptions could be accepted from the Soviet Union.²² SAT was threatened with bankruptcy by the middle of the year.

Demidiuk explained that because of the foreign boycott of Soviet goods²³ the state was obliged to limit the scheduled export of money and that this decision was not applied to SAT alone. He also promised that SEU, to the extent that it could, would do everything possible to offset the debt.²⁴ But, despite this conciliatory effort, tension in the relations between SAT and SEU moved to a climax. A significant role was played by the feelings of the members. Outside the Soviet Union the financial issue dispelled any remaining illusions about the natural alliance of the proletarian state and 'the cultural and cooperative organization of proletarian Esperantists', while despair set in among Soviet SAT members at the prospect that, from now on, the only reading material available to them would be Esperanto-language brochures on the building of socialism, published by SEU and translated from Russian.

Drezen wrote the article.

²² 'Al ĉiuj sovietiaj gek-doj!', *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 436.

²³ In Demidiuk's (translated) words, "The massive efforts of the Soviet Union to complete its five-year plan of construction, for its economic emancipation from the capitalist states—has caused a plot to be laid outside the country to hamper the sale of Soviet goods abroad (for example Soviet matches in Germany)."

²⁴ 'Voĉoj el Sovetio', *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 490–2.

Early in 1930 SAT held its Tenth Congress, in London. For the first time in seven years no Soviet delegates attended; no explanation for their absence was provided to the congress organizing committee. Instead, in the first working meeting of the congress the arrival of a telegram from Moscow was suddenly announced. The text of this telegram did not declare, as many people anticipated, that the money problem had been solved, but crudely accused the leaders of the Association of creating division in its ranks.²⁵ The mood abruptly changed. Lucien Laurat, the Austrian-French former member of the SEU Central Committee, launched a counter-offensive, declaring his suspicion that ‘certain Soviet comrades’ had exploited the money transfer problem to ‘squeeze out’ of SAT a guarantee that *Sennaciulo* would continue to report favorably on the Soviet Union.²⁶ When it became known that SEU had invited the next congress to Moscow, but had set an implicit condition that first the current leadership of SAT had to be removed from office, Lanti and his friends adopted the interpretation that the money transfer issue had served SEU as a welcome occasion to weaken SAT’s financial base and blackmail it into suppressing the spread of ‘anti-Soviet’ tendencies.

Even as Demidiuk and possibly also Drezen were trying to fix the money problem, SEU was made painfully aware of the delicate implications that its entire cooperation with SAT carried with it on the home front. The warning came from one of the most authoritative politicians in the Soviet Union. In June 1930, *Komunist*, the journal of the Communist Party of Ukraine, published, under the title ‘Esperantization or Ukrainization’ the text of a speech by Mykola Skrypnyk (in Russian, Nikolai Skrypnik), the Ukrainian People’s Commissar for Education.²⁷ In his speech, Skrypnyk addressed progress and obstacles in the dissemination of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine—a process aimed at overcoming the centuries-long legacy of Russification. Concerning the obstacles, Skrypnyk devoted

²⁵ *Protokolaro de la Xa Kongreso en Londono, 3–7. aŭgusto 1930*, Paris: SAT, 1930, p. 23.

²⁶ *Protokolaro*, pp. 29–32; see also pp. 53–4.

²⁷ ‘Esperantyzatsiia chy ukraïnizatsiia’, *Komunist*, 19 June 1930; reprinted in Mykola Skrypnyk, *Statti i promovy z natsional’noho pytannia* (Articles and speeches on the national question), Munich: Suchasnist’, 1974, pp. 185–91; Russian-language text (‘Ėsperantizatsiia ili ukraïnizatsiia?’) in *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 8 (1930): 74–7. Skrypnyk delivered the speech at a meeting of cultural activists in Stalino [Donetsk] (30 May 1930).

extensive attention to the theory of *sennaciismo*, whose adepts he had found, much to his surprise, even among young communists. His stance was disapproving. The fact that in a few schools Esperanto was taught and was presented as an alternative to Ukrainization, served him as an example of what he saw as a tendency to move immediately to the idea of a unifying language and—in the name of internationalism—to underestimate the significance of national languages and cultures in the era of socialist construction. This was to ignore, said Skrypnyk, the existence of the mother tongue of millions of working people and hence also the practical task of raising their cultural level through a language spoken by the masses. Those who argued for the compulsory introduction of Esperanto in the schools, he claimed, had the petty bourgeois desire to escape Ukrainization; if a new school subject was needed, then training for trades should be introduced, not Esperanto. If the Esperantists advocated a separate international, *sennacieca* culture, in opposition to the national culture of the masses, their theory should be resisted, because it was neither proletarian nor communist nor international, but reactionary and false.

We will analyze elsewhere and in greater detail the political background of Skrypnyk's initiative.²⁸ For the moment, it is important only to note that SEU responded immediately with self-criticism: 'We are at fault because we did not better explain to our comrades that we regard *sennaciismo* only as a weapon against nationalism, chauvinism, and social chauvinists in the workers' movement [...] and that we do not aim to create through Esperanto some separate Esperanto culture, but to *use* Esperanto to create an international proletarian spirit and substitute it for the narrowly national and nationalist spirit.'²⁹ After this confession that the entire previous theoretical work of SEU had been inadequate, the Central Committee made the campaign to do battle against the ideology of *sennaciismo* a first priority.

In October 1930 a new journal, *Internaciisto*,³⁰ began publication in Berlin and, in the name of 'class-struggle opposition to SAT' called for

²⁸ See, in the present volume, pp. 255 and following.

²⁹ 'Bona instruo por nia aktivularo', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 9 (1929/30): 126–8 (quotation p. 127).

³⁰ The editor was the Hungarian exile József Batta, living in Berlin. The bi-weekly journal was printed, except for two issues, in Moscow until November 1931, then, as of January 1932, in Berlin.

a campaign to re-transform SAT into a revolutionary organization and drive out its leadership, which had made the Association ‘a sect torn away from the vast proletarian masses’.³¹ In November, the publisher EKRELO was established in Leipzig, under whose auspices dozens of books and brochures, printed in Moscow, began to appear.³² At around the same time, evidently because of SEU’s intervention with the authorities, confiscation of SAT publications sent to the Soviet Union began.³³ In January 1931 the opposition publicly called for a boycott of SAT’s journals and announced that they were organizing a referendum aimed at removing the leadership.³⁴ The leaders of SAT responded by expelling Drezen and eight leaders of the opposition, mostly German, from the Association.³⁵

Because any hope of meeting in Moscow had evaporated, the 11th SAT Congress took place, in early August 1931, in Amsterdam, once again without delegates from the Soviet Union. A vote taken at the Congress resulted in almost unanimous approval of the work of the Executive Committee,³⁶ while the opposition founded an International Unity Committee to reorganize the proletarian Esperanto movement, thereby turning the schism in SAT into an established fact. Now, the blocked SAT funds became a weapon openly deployed. Relying on the results of an organized ballot indicating that the vast majority of the worker Esperantists no longer supported the SAT leadership,³⁷ the SEU Central

³¹ ‘Al la SAT-anaro de la tuta mondo. Deklaro de la klasbatala SAT-Opozicio’, *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 1–2.

³² Detlev Blanke, ‘La historio de EKRELO’, *Impeto ‘91. Soci-politika kaj beletra almanako*, Moscow: Progreso, 1991, pp. 69–89; Reinhard Haupenthal, *EKRELO* [...], Bad Bellingen: Iltis, 2010.

³³ As of mid-November 1930 the complaints of Soviet subscribers about non-receipt of *Sennaciulo* multiplied: *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 194, see also p. 223; *Protokolaro pri la XIa Kongreso en Amsterdamo*, 2–7 aŭgusto 1931, Paris: SAT, 1931, pp. 58–9.

³⁴ *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 66.

³⁵ ‘Al la tuta SAT-anaro!’, *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 193–4. The first expulsions were those of: Drezen, Otto Bässler, Friedrich Carl Richter, Walter Kampfrad (head of EKRELO), József Batta, Fritz Wolff, Georg Richter, Herbert Muravkin, Willi Vildebrand: *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 239. With the exception of Drezen, they were all German or, in the case of Batta and Muravkin, lived in Germany.

³⁶ A total of 105 approved the action of the Executive Committee, 6 disapproved and 6 abstained: *Protokolaro Amsterdamo*, p. 64.

³⁷ In a referendum launched in January 1931 the opposition gave voting rights not only to members of SAT but also to ‘all unemployed, poor people, Soviet citizens, non-subscribers of *Sennaciulo*, i.e.

Committee designated the International Unity Committee as ‘the true inheritor of this money’.³⁸ Finally, at a congress in Berlin in August 1932 a new organization was founded, under the name ‘Internacio de Proleta Esperantistaro’ (IPE).³⁹ In contrast to SAT, which organized its membership on an individual basis and had only collaborative relations with national workers’ Esperanto associations, the IPE was an association made up of national sections—which allowed it from the beginning to proclaim its ‘character as an organization of the masses’ consisting of a collective of 14,000 proletarian Esperantists.⁴⁰

The schism in SAT was more than an outcome of the division of the international workers’ movement into two wings, one Stalinist and the other democratic socialist: it had its specifically Esperantist color—in the sense that, following the departure of the communists, SAT was no longer an acceptable home for supporters of the other principal direction in the workers’ movement, namely the socialists. Thus, it was reduced to little more than a small group of supporters of *sennaciismo* and of members of no political party. The Austrian Franz Jonas, in 1933, declared himself convinced that SAT, having torn away the workers from the neutral movement, had ‘already fulfilled its historical function’ and that a new era had to follow. Jonas judged the situation of SAT following the withdrawal of the communists in the following terms:

What is left of SAT? Comrades who belong to no political party, that is, non-party members who for sentimental or individualistic reasons are waging an ‘independent’ class struggle, world reformers, fantasists, and embittered philanthropists. They all appear in SAT under the guise of revolutionaries. In addition to them, the large group of socialist Esperantists

passive members’: *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 74. By the middle of 1931 the opposition asserted that 75 per cent of all organized worker Esperantists had expressed themselves in favor of its point of view: *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 137.

³⁸ N. Nekrasov, ‘La 5-a kongreso de SEU unuanime voĉdonis por IUK’, *Internaciisto* 2 (1932): 10.

³⁹ On the founding congress of IPE see *Internaciisto* 2 (1932): 81–3, 85–6. Present were 348 participants from 11 countries, among them, because of refusal of visas by the German authorities, no participants from the Soviet Union.

⁴⁰ These sections were, right before the founding, the associations or ‘unifying committees’ in Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Soviet Union, Sweden and the USA: ‘Larĝa estas nia bazo. Antaŭen al fondo de IPE!!’, *Internaciisto* 2 (1932): 75. In 1935 IPE announced membership totaling 13,728; of those, however, 11,195 were Soviets: *Sur Posteno* (international edition) 3 (1935): 188.

continue as SAT members. Should these people remain above parties in deference to the non-party members? An impossible requirement!⁴¹

Although many social democrats also resigned from SAT, the association, almost ruined organizationally and financially, survived. At the beginning of 1933 it had less than 2000 members. At the end of 1932, Lanti, feeling himself unable to bear responsibility for the Association any longer, announced his resignation from its leadership.⁴² He was conscious of the fact that it was difficult to explain convincingly that *sennaciismo*, for which he wanted to continue to proselytize, was only one of several political positions represented in SAT—particularly difficult, given that the *sennaciismo* interest group was the only one of SAT's interest-groups without support outside SAT and that the Association required that all members have a *sennacieca* attitude. In 1936 Lanti began to travel the world, a multi-year undertaking that took him to Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South America. His final location was Mexico, where he took his own life because of illness in January 1947.⁴³

In August 1933, during the congress in Stockholm, at which he resigned, Lanti described as erroneous SAT's founding slogan, 'We should be revolutionaries first and Esperantists only second'.⁴⁴ Perhaps he understood at the time that SAT's survival was due to those members who could not and would not subordinate their Esperantism to party considerations, or who, lacking party affiliation, were not bothered about priorities. In other words, SAT became a more coherent organization after the double schism, since the remaining members, for the most part resident in democratic countries, felt no conflict between a given party line and their loyalty to Esperanto. The cost of this coherence was often a lack of clarity of political vision, but this much may be said: SAT encouraged independent thinking and remained at the disposal of its members

⁴¹ Franz Jonas, 'Kie mankas la mondriĝardo?', *La Socialisto* 8 (1933), 9: 4. Jonas was replying to the article of John Johansson, 'Kie la mondriĝardo mankas. Malferma letero al miaj aŭstraj kamaradoj', *Svenska Arbetar Esperantisten* 12 (1933), 6/7 (July): 7. In early June 1933, the Socialist Esperantist International (ISE) was founded in Vienna.

⁴² E. Lanti, 'De ekstere—de supre', *Sennaciulo* 9 (1932/33): 45–7.

⁴³ On Lanti's last years: Borsboom (1976), pp. 145–77.

⁴⁴ *Protokolo pri la XIII-a SAT-Kongreso en Stokholmo* (supplement to *Sennaciulo*, no. 409, 25 sept. 1933), p. 5.

as a forum for free discussion. Thanks to the fidelity of its remaining members, SAT succeeded in resisting the political storms of the 1930s; its weakness as an organization was compensated in part by the fact that it could finally reveal its basic nature, namely tolerance—a quality which in its first decade was often occluded by partisan fanaticism and opportunistic indecision.

Esperanto and the Culmination of Stalinism

The schism in the workers' Esperanto movement was undoubtedly influenced by the catastrophically unhelpful decision of the Comintern to begin the destruction of fascism by destroying its 'twin', the social democratic movement. This policy, decided in Moscow and urging the communists to wage a merciless battle against 'social fascists', made it impossible for the leaders of the Soviet Esperanto movement to continue even silent tolerance of SAT's pluralism. Esperanto could no longer serve as an overarching unifying factor, above the rivalries of the workers' parties, even if, right up to the last moment—probably until the middle of the year 1930—SEU held out hope that it could.

For SAT's Soviet members, the schism was a painful experience. Their cooperation with SAT was too active, its utility as a means of contact with worker Esperantists outside the Soviet Union too evident, for the breakdown of unity not to leave a deep wound. The SAT members in the Soviet Union were in effect torn from their comfortable home; for them the non-arrival of *Sennaciulo* meant goodbye to a journal to which they had often contributed, through which they communicated their wishes for correspondents, and which kept them supplied with reading matter of a kind no longer to be found in the Soviet press.

The separation of SAT and SEU not only destroyed many years of cooperation but also shook the internal workings of the Soviet Esperanto movement. This was apparent from the time the blockage of SAT's money became known. Shocking and upsetting as it was to the Soviet members, it was not accepted without resistance. SAT's Soviet members did not want to believe that workers' money in the Soviet Union would be blocked from flowing to a workers' association abroad, and

they were furious because SAT, which had always assisted the Soviet Union and which, because of that support, had often been called by its class enemies ‘a covert communist enterprise’, should now suffer such undeserved treatment.⁴⁵ Insistent requests were addressed to the SEU Central Committee calling on it to restore the transfer of subscription payments to SAT because the well-being of the local Esperanto movement was seriously hindered by the absence of *Sennaciulo*, the journal ‘so read and enjoyed by everyone’.⁴⁶ In *Sennaciulo* letters appeared from Soviet members complaining (anonymously) about the ‘inertia’ of the SEU Central Committee concerning the transfer of funds.⁴⁷ After the imposition of censorship made it impossible even to take advantage of gift subscriptions, many people composed bitter letters to SAT, in which blame for the situation was often assigned to the Central Committee in Moscow. Lanti, after initial hesitation, made extensive use of these letters in defending himself against the communist attacks. Letters from Soviet members appeared in *Sennaciulo* declaring support for SAT’s leadership and at the same time expressing strong disapproval of the Central Committee, particularly Drezen.⁴⁸

There is no proof that the blocking of payments was due to action by Drezen. He himself called it ‘a monstrous lie’ and officially complained to the Control Commission of SAT, citing ‘compromise of personality’ on the part of the leadership.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the SAT leadership focused its counterattacks largely on Drezen. It denied that it had a hostile attitude to the Soviet Union and even posed as its most fervent defender, while Drezen was characterized as ‘a conspirator and pseudo-communist’ who had denounced SAT to the Soviet authorities ‘to hide his bourgeois background, his Esperantist neutralism, and to seem orthodox’.⁵⁰ This was a

⁴⁵ ‘Voĉoj de SAT-anoj’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 468, 483.

⁴⁶ On 25 July 1930 the Esperantists of Nizhnii Novgorod decided to direct such a request to the SEU Central Committee: *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 88.

⁴⁷ ‘Voĉoj el Sovetio’, *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 492. A few letters alluded to the dictatorial attitude and ‘thieving’ policy of Drezen.

⁴⁸ ‘Voĉoj el Sovetio’, *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 143–4, 247, 280, 342–3.

⁴⁹ E. Drezen, ‘Al la Kontrol-Komitato de SAT’, *Internaciisto* 1 (1930/31): 4.

⁵⁰ ‘Kiel la Centra Komitato de Sovetrespublikara Esperantista Unio klopodas por ke SAT “evitu la rifon”’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 531–2.

much sharper attack than the lines on Drezen that the Hungarian poet Kálmán Kalocsay published at about this time, which began as follows:

Drezen, la ruĝa-verda car'
 Rigore regas en la SEU,
 Postulas, oni lin obeu
 En ĉiu pens' kaj ĉiu far'.⁵¹
 [Drezen, Tsar both green and red,
 Rules strictly in the S.E.U.,
 Insists that they obey him, too,
 In all that's thought and done and said.]

Lanti tried to outflank Drezen on the left and to appeal to the solidarity of the Soviet SAT members. The SAT congress in Stuttgart (1932) accordingly sent the Soviet members 'brotherly greetings over the heads of the current Central Committee of SEU'.⁵² SAT's leadership could hardly be surprised that Drezen and the Central Committee for their part campaigned against it.⁵³ Drezen, already on the defensive following the attacks by a senior state functionary to which we have already alluded, was inevitably further intimidated by the public appeal to the Soviet SAT members that they free themselves from a leader described as a clandestine enemy of the Soviet Union. This controversy was bound to collide with the political pressure directed at SAT from within the country—not to mention the fact that Lanti's theses on *sennaciismo* in effect forced SEU to line up against SAT. SEU had been damaged by the discovery that Soviet SAT members had written letters in support of the SAT leadership in Paris. That SEU would not yield and that the attacks from Paris would not shake Drezen's position is clear from the following statement in its minutes: 'The SEU Central Committee calls on local organizations of SEU and SAT to stamp out the agents of the reformist wing who have penetrated the ranks of the Soviet Esperanto movement.'⁵⁴

⁵¹ K. Kalocsay, *Rimportretoj. Galerio de Esperantaj steloj*, Budapest: Literatura Mondo, 1931, p. 41.

⁵² Thus, Lanti at the opening of the congress in 1932: *Protokolaro pri la XII-a Kongreso de S.A.T. en Ŝtutgart*, supplement to *Sennaciulo*, no. 393, 8 Sept. 1932, p. 1.

⁵³ 'En lukto por la klasbatala SAT', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 9 (1929/30): 149–56.

⁵⁴ Extract from minutes, 7 August 1930, *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 22.

References to ‘traitors’ among the Soviet Esperantists showed that SEU intended to silence everyone who maintained contact with the SAT headquarters in Paris. One person who quickly went silent was Maksim Kriukov in Irkutsk, a party member as of 1904, who in 1907 met Zamenhof⁵⁵ and, in frequent contributions to *Sennaciulo*, emphasized the revolutionary character of *sennaciismo*.⁵⁶ The members were urged to identify and unmask the disciples of Lanti in their midst. With pedantic precision the names of the SEU members whose position in the conflict seemed unclear were duly listed. Thus, of the group in Kokhma it was noted that it was teaching Esperanto to hundreds of people ‘neutrally’, without giving them ‘living tasks’ through correspondence. As an illustration of the ‘complete decadence’ reigning there, the words of one student of Esperanto were noted:

Why should I write about my life to foreign comrades if I am just an office-worker, i.e. a pariah, an outlaw, if my children do not learn in a school, if I receive almost nothing from a factory, if I do not relax after work but toil in the forest or stand in line outside shops, etc.?

These ‘disgusting words’ were attributed to the influence of Lanti. The result was that the Ivanovo Regional Committee ‘decided to carry out a personal purge of all city Esperantists’ in Kokhma.⁵⁷

Although the journal *La Socialisto* in Austria conjectured in 1931 that intelligent Esperantists in the Soviet Union were retiring from the organization ‘to silently protest against intellectual endogamy’,⁵⁸ the official statistics of SEU showed an increase in membership: at the end of 1930 there were 5116 members in 686 locations, and a year later

⁵⁵ Maks Krjukov, ‘Rememoroj pri Zamenhof’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 313–14.

⁵⁶ M. Krjukov, ‘Niaj kontraŭuloj estas analfabetaj en politiko’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 382–3. Addressing the question of opposition to Esperanto among workers’ movement leaders, Kriukov provided a table of the class origins of famous revolutionaries, including Lenin (‘petty bourgeois, son of a government official’). Showing that, by comparison, Zamenhof was ‘just a simple and impoverished oculist’, he concluded that the opponents of Esperanto were ‘ordinarily bourgeois polyglots’. See Lanti’s statement about Kriukov: *Protokolaro Amsterdamo*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ N. Ŝumarin, ‘Rezultoj de renegata laboro’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 75–6.

⁵⁸ F.S., ‘Ein organisatorisches Problem’, *La Socialisto* 6 (1931): 94.

there were 5740 in 884 locations.⁵⁹ Noted as a great success was the fact that *Komsomolskaia pravda* at about that time published a page of letters received in Esperanto from various parts of the world. And in 1931 the Moscow Regional Council of Trade Unions approved a resolution that encouraged the organization of Esperanto circles in factories, pointing out that Esperanto ‘can and must be a preparatory step to the study of foreign languages’.⁶⁰

On the other hand, not infrequently local newspapers refused material, declaring, for example, that all foreign Esperantists were social democrats.⁶¹ To serve the press effectively, SEU put still greater emphasis on the necessity of collective correspondence. There was an increase in appeals ‘to focus the entire correspondence on technical help for industrialization and for the collectivization of agriculture’.⁶² In such appeals, made in 1930, the year in which occurred, among other events, the mass deportation of ‘kulaks’, we note the effect that the Five-Year Plan, forcing the entire Soviet Union into a massive industrializing effort, inevitably had also on the Esperantists. They could not stand aside while Stalin declared in February 1931, in words to be noted by every Soviet citizen: ‘We are 50–100 years behind the leading countries. We have to cover this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.’⁶³ SEU was aware that new tasks would be assigned to it by the acceleration in the building of socialism—that it ‘must be more closely linked with production, with the masses’.⁶⁴ In practice this meant that the use of Esperanto should have significance less to stimulate the world revolutionary fervor of the workers of the world than to bring acclaim and support to the industrialization of the Soviet Union.

⁵⁹ *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 142.

⁶⁰ ‘Laboristaj sindikatoj subtenas esperanton’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 101.

⁶¹ *Sennaciulo* 7 (1930/31): 88 (on Nizhnii Novgorod).

⁶² ‘Sur la vojon de praktika partopreno en la socialisma konstruado (Pri 1-a Moskva landkonferenco de SEU)’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 9 (1929/30): 47.

⁶³ Quoted in Martin (2001), p. 270.

⁶⁴ ‘Plivastigita plenkunsido de CK SEU en Moskvo la 25 kaj 26 de julio 1931’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 87–9 (report by Intsertov, p. 87).

The Esperantists outside the Soviet Union, although requested to abandon ‘harmful individualism’,⁶⁵ adapted only with difficulty to the new production-oriented style of correspondence. In truth they were not particularly inspired by directives requiring that they write primarily about the Soviet Union, for example the taking up of collections ‘to buy tractors for Soviet villages’⁶⁶, and not provide much information of the traditional kind, that is, information on the living conditions in their country. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether such pro-Soviet material, if delivered and printed, would do much to vary the monotony of Soviet newspapers and thus draw attention to the source language, namely Esperanto. In any event, if SEU, in accordance with a party directive, asked for help from abroad to improve its technical capabilities, it was evidently unaware of the extent to which such a request not only taxed the goodwill but also ignored the competence of the worker-correspondents in other countries.

In April 1931 the Communist Party Central Committee decreed a reorganization of the worker and peasant correspondents’ movement in the Soviet Union. The movement was instructed to dedicate its letter writing exclusively to profession-specific problems and was placed under the guidance of *Pravda*. Thus, the party sought to eliminate definitively the risk that spontaneous, unregulated activity might occur at the base—a situation irreconcilable with the idea of bureaucratic centralism. Because editorial teams were increasingly dispensing with the help of ‘special correspondents’ in their workplaces and preferred to use professional journalists, a steady decline in the importance of the correspondence movement set in.

Given that the Soviet network of worker and peasant correspondents was already in the hands of an oversight organization, the international correspondence movement, particularly that part of the movement using Esperanto, could hardly be expected to function any better. Indeed it would be likely to work less well because of its remoteness from current production needs. SEU’s admonitions rose to a new level. The unfortunate Esperantists who announced their search for correspondents in *Heroldo*

⁶⁵ A. Erjuhin, ‘For individualism’, *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 266.

⁶⁶ Dim. Sneĵko, ‘Kiel ni verku por “PEK”?’, *Proleta Esperanto-Korespondanto* 1 (1929/30): 32.

de Esperanto and whose letters of thanks for gift subscriptions appeared in that neutral journal saw their letters reproduced in pillorying articles in the SEU journal, where they were attacked as seekers after ‘bourgeois charity’ who profited from ‘false philanthropy’.⁶⁷ During the SEU congress, Roman Nikolsky declared that Esperantists who ‘in corresponding with other countries, occupy themselves with pretty postcards’ betray the aims of the movement: ‘Such apolitical activity should be banished from international correspondence.’⁶⁸

The consequence of such dire warnings, namely the increasingly stereotyped nature of correspondence coming from the Soviet Union, had already been noted abroad. In Vienna in mid-1931 *La Socialisto* observed: ‘It seems that the whole Esperanto correspondence effort is growing disagreeable to some people, so they are trying to find ways around the direct exchange of letters from worker to worker.’⁶⁹ The latest example of this trend, cited by the journal, was the fact that letters from the Soviet Union were beginning to be accompanied, or even substituted, by printed leaflets with the title *La vero pri Sovetio. Niaj respondoj al alilandaj laboristoj* (The Truth about the Soviet Union. Our Replies to Workers Abroad). In 1931 SEU published at least 15 of these leaflets in print runs of between 7000 and 10,000 copies.⁷⁰ They contained replies to such questions as the following:

- Is it true that workers in the Soviet Union are hungry?
- We do not understand. You, Soviet comrades, always write about the successes of socialist construction, but at the same time you warn about various ‘shortcomings’.

⁶⁷ *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 13, 79; see also the self-criticism of one of the attacked in *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932) 19. A complaint about the ‘nauseating asking for favors’ of Soviet Esperantists, by Ralph Bonesper (New York), is cited in ‘Ne misuzu korespondemon de alilandaj kamaradoj!’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 44.

⁶⁸ ‘5-a Kongreso de Sovetrespublika Esperantista Unio’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 131–41 (quotations p. 133).

⁶⁹ F. Seidl, ‘Wie sollen wir korrespondieren?’, *La Socialisto* 6 (1931): 72.

⁷⁰ I have seen issues 5–12, all of them dating from 1931, plus four pages without numbers or year. Later the bulletin *Vero pri Sovetio* appeared, as a publication of the Moscow PEK center.

- Why does Comrade Litvinov, in Geneva, talk about disarmament when at the same time the Soviet government is increasing the Red Army's battle readiness?
- Why was Trotsky expelled from the Communist Party and exiled from the Soviet Union?
- Do all workers in the Soviet Union enjoy a seven-hour workday?
- What does it mean that the Soviet Union will this year [i.e., 1931] complete construction of the foundations of a socialist economy? Does that mean that there will be socialism in your country as of next year?

The leaflets were intended to make it easier for SEU members who might lack adequate political education to provide appropriate responses to their foreign correspondents. The fact that the questions coming from abroad were frequently similar and that therefore it was economical to reply to them with printed leaflets might be one explanation for SEU's providing this service, but a more likely explanation is that questions from abroad were often problematic and therefore required polished responses. That the difficulties arose from the problematic nature of the questions and that leaflets were no longer sufficient to overcome them is apparent from a report given by a local SEU group early in 1931: in Tuapse, on the Black Sea, the SEU cell required of all its members who were corresponding abroad to attend a political school run by the Party. Furthermore, it was in regular consultative contact with the cultural propaganda department of the local party committee. The goal of the instruction and consultation was to learn how to avoid political errors in international correspondence and to raise the 'quality' of the letters, given the experience that 'foreign comrades ask questions that not all communists can reply to'.⁷¹

How annoying such questions could be was illustrated by an example in the SEU journal. It quoted from a letter by a French admirer of the Soviet Union who asked his correspondent to clarify for him the clearly improbable assertions found in a French Catholic periodical to the effect that 'In Russia [...] you see in the countryside large bands of miserable

⁷¹B. Belakov, 'Evitu politikerarojn dum internacia korespondado', *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 46.

children. They have been abandoned and live as best they can. Many die of hunger.’⁷²

Hardly surprisingly, the correspondence rapidly dried up. The GLEA group in Munich remarked that their Soviet correspondents grew silent after receiving their first letters. In response to its announcement that it was interested in corresponding, the group received about 40 letters from the Soviet Union, but when the German comrades wrote back, their letters were apparently so embarrassing that of the 40 only 4 or 5 replied.⁷³ This uncommunicativeness on the part of the Soviet Esperantists was particularly annoying to those unreservedly committed to the Soviet Union, as was evident in the reactions of the German communists Otto Bässler and Walter Kampfrad, who were among the first of the opposition group to be expelled from SAT. Bässler reported that complaints ‘about the dysfunction of the correspondence’ between Germany and the Soviet Union were widespread. And if letters did come, their content was disillusioning:

And what for the most part do we find to read in these letters? ‘We are the Fatherland of the world proletariat, we carry out a five-year plan in four years, we build socialism, here or there we are building this or that big factory, in which this number or that number of workers are working, and so on.’ After that comes the postal address in Esperanto or in Russian or Ukrainian—and that’s generally everything.

Letters with this kind of content Bässler regarded as essentially an insult to his connection with the Soviet Union: ‘We know all this and believe it. We are communists, after all.’ Instead of using battle cries and newspaper rhetoric, Bässler suggested, Soviet comrades should write, in the ‘simple, primitive language of the proletariat’ about their working and club life, family, working conditions and wages. Underlining the unhelpful consequences of such hectoring correspondence, he mentioned that the 70-member communist cell in Leipzig had discontinued its collective

⁷² S. Levickij, ‘Kio interesas eksterlandan instruiston’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 29.

⁷³ Ludwig Schlamp, ‘Plendo (Letero al Redakcio de “Bulteno”’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 36.

correspondence with a large factory in Kharkov on the grounds that ‘they didn’t like reading newspaper articles’ instead of real letters.⁷⁴

In much the same way, Kampfrad complained that collective correspondence was hindered by the Soviet side—either by silence or with responses full of political agitation and little else. He reported that in Germany on various occasions, after much effort and under ‘constant threat of dismissal’, some Esperantist worker had persuaded his colleagues at work to begin correspondence with a Soviet factory, only to find that ‘ninety-five times out of a hundred’ the result ‘was anything but happy’. Either there was no reaction or the Soviet workers replied with ‘meaningless phrases about the construction of socialism, the magnificent Red Army, and so on’ and with information long known, ‘for example “we have overcome our capitalists [...] and we hope that you will overcome yours”’. After that, said Kampfrad, the German workers, who wanted to know about such things as wages in relation to living costs in the Soviet Union, generally lost interest in further contact.⁷⁵ Also Japanese workers were sadly reproachful of the Soviet Esperantists for their inertia at just the point when the workers ‘were hoping to learn everything about the Soviet Union’.⁷⁶

Silence Descends on the Soviet Esperantists

Shortly thereafter, political developments in Germany made maintaining relations with Soviet Esperantists impossible. With Hitler’s seizure of power, the Proletarian Esperantist International (IPE), in existence for only a few months, was also destabilized, given that GLEA, its German section, dissolved by the Nazis, was one of its two pillars of support. If it was to survive as a significant organization, the IPE needed the full support of its other pillar—namely the SEU.

About SEU’s contribution, however, the western IPE members had reason to complain. In 1934 they could no longer contain their

⁷⁴O. Bässler, ‘Alvoko’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 52.

⁷⁵W. Kampfrad, ‘Pekoj kontraŭ “PEK”’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 60.

⁷⁶Japan PEK-servo, ‘Alarmon al sovjetiaj esperantistoj!’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 12 (1933): 32.

dissatisfaction. The complaint was raised that the ‘lack of seriousness, particularly by Soviet comrades’, given to correspondence was ‘discrediting’ the Esperanto movement.⁷⁷ In response to these criticisms, SEU attempted to defend itself, applying self-criticism and promising to be more active, also in devoting more attention to its responsibilities in IPE. That was the message delivered externally, but internally SEU had for the past couple of years taken positions that make it easier to understand what we have already observed, namely the waning enthusiasm of the Soviet Esperantists and SEU’s neglect of the IPE. As early as 1931, the Central Committee had confessed that massive propaganda for Esperanto and efforts to achieve official recognition were useless unless the practical application of the language could be considerably expanded in the era of the Five-Year Plan: ‘A single modern Esperanto-language publication on tractor production or on the use of excavators in mines would be more powerful than a million Esperanto textbooks for Soviet citizens’.⁷⁸ Citing Drezen, SEU stated, at the end of 1932: ‘It must be said clearly that the Esperanto movement cannot be privileged, that the language problem and in some degree the international connections of the workers cannot be put on the agenda as principal priorities in the current period.’⁷⁹

What lay behind these near-defeatist declarations? In September 1934, a plenary session of the SEU Central Committee considered reports on defunct or unsatisfactorily functioning groups; it was noted that both in the provinces and in Moscow the dominant opinion was that Esperanto was dead; and Demidiuk remarked that in the Soviet Union ‘in general we do not hear much about Esperanto—in strong contrast to what we were hearing six or seven years ago’. Drezen, publicly, had to listen to complaints that he was not only neglecting recruitment for Esperanto but even denying its necessity.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ ‘Rezolucio pri la PEK-laboro’, *Sur Posteno* (international edition) 2 (1934): 105–6. See also *Sur Posteno Klasbatala*, 1934: 117–18, 120.

⁷⁸ ‘Saluton al la kvina kongreso de SEU!’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 113–14 (quotation p. 114).

⁷⁹ TsK SĖSR, ‘Usilivat’ razvitie ĉperanto-dvizheniia vshir’ i vglub’, no ne forsirovat” (Broaden and deepen the development of the Esperanto movement, but gradually), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 304–6.

⁸⁰ ‘Plenkunsido de CK SEU’, *Sur Posteno Klasbatala*, 1934: 129–32.

The issue of the journal *Sur Posteno Klasbatata* that reported on the Central Committee meeting also published a leading article on the murder of the Leningrad party secretary Sergei Kirov⁸¹ threatening that soon ‘we will publish material unmasking Trotskyists in the Esperantist camp’ (‘Brothers and fellow-thinkers of the abominable Zinovievist opposition group’)⁸². But the rest of this same issue contained hints that could give SEU members hope of a new beginning. The editors introduced several changes in content, for example a column on language, a puzzles corner and a humorous section (‘Red Laughs’), which somewhat softened the activist character of the journal. And there was more: a letter from a reader was published giving the impression that the wavering course of SEU would finally reach a point at which it would no longer be taboo to use the language as a mere hobby. The writer, Evgenii Blinov, appealed for a new mode of recruitment for Esperanto: one should not ‘parrot, always and everywhere, the words “capitalism” and “proletariat”’: such ‘r-r-revolutionary’ bigotry only gets in the way of the progress of the movement. Blinov did not hesitate to plead for the right to use Esperanto to express ‘loving feelings’ even if that did not please the ‘radicals’.⁸³

Blinov’s plea reflected a new trend in party declarations, which now began to proclaim the achievement of a classless society and the consequent right of Soviet citizens to enjoy the fruits of their work in the building of socialism. More optimistic feelings began to prevail, while little by little the economic situation improved; as of autumn 1935, food rationing was suspended. A new faith in the future also stimulated the decision to revise the Soviet constitution, announced in February 1935. In meetings across the country the Party encouraged discussion of the proposed changes—including ‘democratization of the electoral system’, the principle of political equality of all citizens and the guaranteeing of fundamental human freedoms. Although the new constitution, approved in December 1936, in no way limited the dominant position of the Party (which in practice rendered its

⁸¹ It is well known that the murder of Kirov (1 December 1934) served Stalin as a good opportunity to advance his preparations for the Great Purge.

⁸² ‘Memore al k-do Kirov’, *Sur Posteno Klasbatata*, 1934: 129. The announced article, ‘Proletoj, pligrandigu vian klasan atentemon!’, consisting primarily of attacks on Lanti and his influence, appeared two issues later: *Sur Posteno Klasbatata*, 1935: 9–10.

⁸³ *Sur Posteno Klasbatata*, 1934: 136. On Blinov see *EdE*, p. 592.

promises merely theoretical), it nonetheless encouraged the hope that the time of extreme political pressure was over. That, in turn, seemed to imply brighter prospects for the friends of Esperanto in the Soviet Union.

That interest in Esperanto was growing again seemed evident from membership trends in the Soviet Esperanto Union. In mid-November 1935 there were 13,344 members—a record number in the history of the organization.⁸⁴ The British Communist Esperantist Thomas Aldworth, who visited the Soviet Union in June 1936, came home with the impression that Esperanto ‘has long been asleep in the Soviet Union and is now reawakening’. However, at the same time the state of organization and the material resources of SEU were growing weaker. There was not even enough paper for textbooks, because the annual paper quota, gradually reduced over several years, was finally not provided to the SEU at all.⁸⁵ Aldworth confirmed that the ‘dreadful lack of paper for books’ and the lack of time of workers obliged ‘to engage in trade training’ were a great hindrance to Esperanto.⁸⁶

When in Antwerp in August 1935 the Second IPE Congress took place, delegates from the SEU were once again absent—an absence noted all the more acutely by the fewer than 100 participants because the Congress agenda included the question of the reunification of the workers’ Esperanto movement. This question was made particularly pressing by policy changes in the Soviet Union. Realizing that the victory of the Nazis in Germany was no ephemeral event, the Soviet Union—under slogans calling for an ‘anti-fascist popular front’ and ‘collective security’—sought ways to achieve a broad alliance against the threat of fascism. The USSR worked to improve its relations with the capitalist governments of Western Europe and, through the Comintern, proposed common activity

⁸⁴ ‘Pri nuna stato de SEU-movado’, *Informilo. Interna organo de la IPE-centro*, 1935, no. 3 (Dec.): 13.

⁸⁵ ‘Pri nuna stato’, p. 15.

⁸⁶ T. Aldworth, ‘Esperanto en Sovetio’, *Sennaciulo* 12 (1935/36): 74. Aldworth published in *Sennacieca Revuo* (n.s., 4 [1936/37]: 154–6, 170–2; 5 [1937/38]: 7–9, 23–5, 39–41, 56–8) an extensive and very interesting report of his visit, under the title ‘Angla SAT-ano en Sovetio’. Although Aldworth concluded that ‘despite the shortages, crudities and continuing poverty of the country, there is already something about the USSR that we must consider as the basis and beginning of a great and beautiful future’ (p. 57), he was expelled from the British Communist Party for his willingness to reveal too much: *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 3.

with non-Communist labor organizations—addressing its proposals to the same people whom until recently it had insulted as ‘social fascists’.

Influenced by signs of a new orientation in the Communist movement, hopes were temporarily revived for rapprochement between SAT and IPE.⁸⁷ A resolution of the IPE Congress in Antwerp declared no longer valid that part of IPE’s founding declaration of 1932 that called for opposition not only to *sennaciismo* but also to social democracy.⁸⁸ While there were perhaps reasons for optimism about the possibility of an accord, the western members of IPE did not take into consideration the situation of their Soviet comrades. The Leningrad IPE center declared all joint activity with Trotskyists impossible, along with cooperation ‘with organizations that defy the fortress of the worldwide proletariat, the Soviet Union’.⁸⁹ Hardly surprisingly, SAT declared that viewpoint unacceptable.⁹⁰

Feelings of perplexity and anger grew among western members of IPE about the position of their Soviet section. In fact, skepticism in the ranks of IPE about SEU’s good judgment was fueled by rumors that the Soviet side—in analogy with the Soviet Union’s joining the League of Nations in September 1934—was interested in normalizing its relations with the neutral Universal Esperanto Association.⁹¹ The western IPE members, in whose opinion the neutral movement ‘tolerates and even supports fascist ideology’, refused to believe that SEU would join ‘the reactionary UEA’.⁹² But soon SEU itself admitted that it was considering the possibility of such cooperation on the grounds that, faced with the fascist

⁸⁷This reorientation to the tactic of the popular front was officially proclaimed by Georgi Dimitrov at the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, which opened in Moscow on 25 July 1935: E.H. Carr, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930–1935*, London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982, pp. 403–7.

⁸⁸‘Rezolucio pri batalo por paco kaj kontraŭ faŝismo’, *Sur Posteno* (international edition) 3 (1935): 189–190; cf. *Internaciisto* 2 (1932): 85–6.

⁸⁹*Sennaciulo* 11 (1934/35): 83; *Sur Posteno*, 1936, 41 (March): 2.

⁹⁰Letter of SAT to the IPE Center, 9 Nov. 1935, in *Sennaciulo* 11 (1934/35): 83–4; *Sur Posteno*, 1936, 39 (Jan.): 3.

⁹¹Cf. Sikosek (2006), p. 177.

⁹²A.R., ‘Per tuta forto por IPE’, *Sur Posteno* (international edition) 3 (1935): 155.

threat, the proletariat must, in principle, also cooperate with ‘bourgeois intellectuals’.⁹³

This clarification of the position of SEU indicating an opening to the neutral movement—always in line with Comintern policies—was the last substantial communication of SEU’s Central Committee to appear in the Esperanto-language press. In 1936, the contact of western IPE members with the center in Leningrad became increasingly sporadic and finally ceased altogether⁹⁴ and participants in the Third IPE Congress, in August 1937 in Paris, voiced resignation to the inevitable: ‘We must accept that Soviet comrades have difficulties about which we can only speculate, not know.’⁹⁵

Hope was not wholly lost that contact with Soviet Esperantists would be restored. It seemed too incredible that an organization which at the end of 1936 had 11,873 members could suddenly vanish.⁹⁶ At the beginning of 1937 *Sur Posteno* reported greater SEU activity in support of the anti-fascist war in Spain; over 500 letters of greeting from Soviet labor collectives to Spanish comrades were organized and Esperanto literature was sent to Esperantists fighting in the International Brigades.⁹⁷ SEU even produced some publications: in the first six months of 1937 translations of the new Soviet constitution and of two works by Stalin were published. But the fact that darkness was falling on Esperanto life in the Soviet Union was made abundantly clear with the cessation of Esperanto-language radio broadcasts. Shortly before December 1936 the broadcasts from Minsk had stopped, and in January 1937 those from Leningrad followed. The Soviet ambassador in Paris explained that the Soviet radio stations were no longer broadcasting in Esperanto ‘for “technical reasons”, but also because they are already broadcasting in several other languages’.⁹⁸

⁹³ IPE Center and SEU Central Committee, ‘Proleta esperantistaro kaj la neŭtraluloj’, *Sur Posteno*, 1936, 40 (Feb.): 1–2. This article was probably written in the second half of 1935. The IPE Center specifically instructed that IPE groups ‘should address themselves to the neutral groups with a proposal to cooperate in working for peace and against fascism’: *Informilo. Interna organo de la IPE-centro*, 1935, 3 (Dec.): 6.

⁹⁴ *Sur Posteno*, 1937, 54 (June): 3.

⁹⁵ Nikolao Ecert (August Schwenk), ‘Konciza raporto pri la 3-a IPE-Kongreso’, *Sur Posteno*, 1937, 56 (Oct.): 5–6 (quotation p. 5).

⁹⁶ *Sur Posteno*, 1937, 52 (Apr.): 2.

⁹⁷ ‘SEU k antifaŝista batalo en Hispanio’, *Sur Posteno*, 1937, 52 (Apr.): 2.

⁹⁸ *Internacia S.O.S. Bulteno*, 1938, 62 (Jan.): 3; cf. *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 24.

Esperanto, then, had become superfluous. Thomas Aldworth, of Britain, who in 1936 was a guest of the Esperantists in Leningrad, also noted this silence; his letters were returned to him stamped ‘unknown’.⁹⁹

Thus, the second column of support for IPE collapsed—less than five years after the Nazi strike against its German section. The remaining leaders of IPE, now reduced to an organization of a few hundred western European members, struggled painfully against the complete paralysis of its now tiny International. Finally all that was left to discuss was whether it made sense to continue the organization’s existence. Too late, IPE discovered that in the effort to put Esperanto at the service of the class struggle there was no need to hide enthusiasm for the language itself—‘that the mere defence of Esperanto itself in the present world situation is a battle against fascism, for democracy and culture, for peace, freedom of ideas, for race equality, for internationalism’¹⁰⁰ and that the separation of ‘neutralists’ from workers in the Esperanto movement could no longer be justified. A few members, particularly in Britain, decided on the radical step of recommending the dissolution of the current IPE, freely confessing that ‘we, party esperantists [...] must be numbered among those whom Comrade Dimitroff has named “self-satisfied sectarians”’.¹⁰¹ Surprisingly, on this occasion Communist discipline proved ineffective in the IPE: by a large majority the British members rejected the proposal to dissolve.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Sennaciulo* 14 (1937/38): 3. Aldworth supposed that his article series on his visit to the Soviet Union ‘brought harm’ to the Esperantists who helped him during his stay. One of them was Izrail Maizel, arrested in October 1937. He survived hard labor: Stepanov (1990), p. 77. Stepanov also deals with the fate of other Leningrad Esperantists.

¹⁰⁰ Circular (‘To all Communist Esperantists’) by Gladys Keable, general secretary of IPE, 20 Oct. 1938, p. 2; a copy of the five densely typed pages was kindly provided by Edward Ockey.

¹⁰¹ Circular by Keable, p. 2; Dimitrov in the Seventh Comintern Congress, cf. Carr, *Twilight of Comintern*, p. 406. According to information from William Keable, noted by his son Ken (10 Nov. 1981), the British Communist Party decided to end the existence of IPE; the causes, not revealed at the time, were the silencing of SEU and the fact that the Soviet Party, asked for an explanation, provided no reply: English-language note by Ken Keable, communicated to the author on 26 June 2013.

¹⁰² During the annual meeting of the British Workers’ Esperanto Association (BLEA) in Glasgow, Easter 1939.

The Proletarian Esperantist International (IPE) endured until the Hitler-Stalin pact of 23 August 1939—which caused the complete collapse of all hopes for an anti-fascist alliance of communists, socialists and progressive members of the bourgeoisie. A week later the Second World War began. In due course IPE ceased to exist. Among the victims of war and genocide were two of the French IPE leaders, Marcel Boubou and Honoré Bourguignon, who perished in the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Bourguignon was primarily active in the International Association of Revolutionary Esperanto Writers (IAREV) and published, as of 1934, the journal *Infanoj sur Tutmondo*. See the publication of his son Lucien Bourguignon (2001). Another French activist in IPE, Georges Salan, was deported to Germany in 1944 as a member of the resistance; his book *La nuda vero. Originala raporto pri propraj travivaĵoj en naziaj koncentrejoj 1944–1945* (Nîmes, 1975) was dedicated to Boubou and Bourguignon.

7

Socialism and International Language

Internationalism Before and After the Revolution

Marxist-Leninists always considered it important for their actions to be rooted in theory. Convinced that historical evolution follows definite laws, they were careful to justify their policies theoretically and to demonstrate harmony between theory and practice. To understand the reasons why the Esperanto movement was extinguished in the Soviet Union, after two decades of official tolerance and even of goodwill, we will attempt to analyze the relationship between socialism and the idea of an international language.¹ Three questions arise. First, can we explain the disappearance of Esperanto in the Soviet Union in terms of the tradition of socialism, particularly its Marxist variant? Second, do the ideas behind socialism provide theoretical justification for the existence of an Esperanto movement? And, third, what was the nature of the efforts taken by the Esperantists in the Soviet Union to formulate a theoretical basis for their activities?

¹An overview of the topic is provided by Duličenko (2003).

Ever since the seventeenth century, the idea of a universal language, whose need was recognized by such philosophers and scientists as Descartes, Comenius and Leibniz, has also formed a constituent part of the projects of prominent proponents of utopian socialism. The dream of a united humanity obedient to reason and rejecting superstition—a world in which social inequalities and national differences would disappear—conjured up the idea that humankind might return, in linguistic communication as in other areas, to a kind of paradisaic state. The founders of ‘scientific socialism’, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who further developed the tradition of the early utopian socialists, omitted attention to the question of the linguistic unity of humankind under communism—except for, peripherally and partly in jest, commenting on the language planning efforts of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Wilhelm Weitling.

The way to greater understanding, nevertheless, lies in the general theories of Marx and Engels, particularly their views on the relationship between socialism and nationalism. According to Marx and Engels, the nation emerged along with the formation of the bourgeois-capitalist world and will disappear with its destruction. ‘In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.’²

On the other hand, Marx and Engels, totally fixated on the primacy of class struggle, accepted the growth of nations as carriers of progress during the period leading up to the revolution. Furthermore, they regarded the assimilation of smaller peoples and the denationalization of colonies through the worldwide penetration of capitalism, and even wars, as more or less explicitly stimulating the maturation of conditions for the revolution. In this connection, they expressed skepticism about internationalizing efforts by the proletariat at an earlier stage in the process. Marx warned against ‘the international brotherhood of peoples’,³ because this bourgeois phrase obscured class antagonism and deflected attention from the priority of class struggle. True brotherhood of nations

² ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’ (1848), in Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow: Progress, 1969, p. 25.

³ Marx, ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’, Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 3, Moscow: Progress, 1970, p. 22.

could be achieved only by the proletariat, which was itself 'essentially humanitarian, anti-nationalist'.⁴ Only through the proletariat's solidarity of action would the revolution be achievable. In other words, Marxism did indeed affirm a final state of worldwide harmony, but on its own initiative it did nothing for the rapprochement of the peoples *in advance of the revolution*.⁵

The setting for the battle of Marx and Engels against their opponents was the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), founded in 1864 and known as the First International. Marx and Engels argued for the principle of centralism, fearing that proletarian struggle at the national level would grow weak if it adopted 'the vague notions of a future society entertained by some dreamers'.⁶ Their opponents, the anarchists, preferred a program of European federalism and saw in the Marxist strategy the additional danger that national minorities might be ignored or even suppressed. It was no accident that two resolutions favoring a universal language accepted by IWA congresses in 1866 and 1867 were proposed by supporters of Mikhail Bakunin and that they were rapidly forgotten after Marx's victory over the anarchists.

The lack of emphasis on internationalism in the labor movement following the disintegration of the IWA, coupled with the silence of Marx and Engels on pre-revolutionary means to advance world unity, did not, however, signify that the working masses ceased viewing nationalism as the expression of the bourgeois class society. In fact, up until the early years of the twentieth century, the workers persisted in the conviction that they were prevented from participation in national culture and that they would find complete individual fulfillment only in a unified world society. The Austrian theorist Otto Bauer called this attitude 'naïve cosmopolitanism'.⁷

⁴ Engels, 'The Festival of Nations in London', Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 6, p. 6.

⁵ Cf. Walter Lippens, 'Staat und Internationalismus bei Marx und Engels', *Historische Zeitschrift* 217 (1973): 529–83.

⁶ Engels, 'The Congress of Sonvillier and the International', Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 23, p. 66.

⁷ Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, Vienna: Brand, 1907, pp. 265 and following. On the topic in general, see Hans Mommsen, *Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979.

Another Austrian, Karl Kautsky, the leading theorist of the Second International, was particularly insistent in encouraging hope for historically determined world unity. In 1887, the year Esperanto was born, he wrote:

The more international communication intensifies, the more we feel the need for a means of international communication, a universal language.

Despite the parallel in time, the prognoses of Kautsky and Zamenhof diverged fundamentally. Kautsky could not yet have known about Zamenhof's proposed solution, but he does mention Volapük to emphasize at the outset that a universal language 'cannot, of course, be arbitrarily invented'.⁸ 'Volapük will not go much beyond the status of a secret language for the few who know it. More likely, one of the already existing languages will probably become a universal language.' In 1908 Kautsky wrote that in a socialist society people will know one or more world languages in addition to their national languages: 'then the basis has been created for the gradual decline and the disappearance, initially of the languages of the smaller nations, and for the eventual fusion of the whole of the culture of humanity into one language and nationality'.⁹ In 1917 he reiterated that 'not the differentiation but the assimilation of nationalities [...] is the goal of socialist development'. Kautsky stressed that mass production requires not the preservation of multilingualism but the linguistic union of humankind: 'Resistance to it is reactionary.'¹⁰

Kautsky's works, particularly those on the problems of nationality and internationality, had significant influence on the world labor movement.

⁸ Kautsky (1887): 448. Shortly before Kautsky's article was published, *Die Neue Zeit* commented on the same subject: 'This [international communication] currently seems to cry out for an international language; for that, however, artificially invented "world languages" are probably in no degree suitable, but probably English will develop into that role' (Guido Hammer, 'Die Zersetzung der modernen Nationalitäten', *Die Neue Zeit* 5 [1887]: 183).

⁹ Karl Kautsky, 'Nationality and Internationality', trans. Ben Lewis, *Critique* 37 (2009): 371–89 (quotation p. 388).

¹⁰ Karl Kautsky, *Die Befreiung der Nationen*, 4th edn., Stuttgart: Dietz, 1918, pp. 47, 51. In *Die Vereinigten Staaten Mitteleuropas* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1916, p. 52) he shows understanding of the effort for a neutral artificial language. But once again he argues that one of the national languages should become world language; opposition to that will be less strong in a socialist society than 'today'.

It was he who first incorporated the question of a world language into the Marxist theory of the stages of economic development. We can consider his article of 1887 as the starting point for the essentially negative Marxist stance on the question of a neutral international language—in the sense that it not only abandoned the idea of a supranational, universal language inherited from the utopian pre-Marxian socialism but at the same time excluded the possibility that linguistic unity would be created by way of an artificial language. The principal problem surrounding the Marxist theory of a world language lies in the fact that it not only ignores linguistic pluralism but even goes so far as to proclaim the marginalization and rejection of smaller languages as an inevitable result of economic progress. This was a radical position with which most Esperantists had nothing in common, because their language aimed to function next to, not instead of, the national languages.

Kautsky never argued for the forced assimilation of nations, but he imagined that the liberated world proletariat would agree, as brothers, to abandon their national connections; however, his orthodox Marxist theory revealed a lack of understanding of the aspirations of smaller nations. In practice, such a position could inspire policies of suppression—what the Jewish Zamenhof described as ‘the desire of strong nations and languages to swallow weak nations and languages’.¹¹ In insistently seeking to subordinate national aspirations to the class struggle, Kautsky in effect came close to linguistic imperialism.

But, even independently of Kautsky’s explicitness, Marxist theory contained justification for the rejection of Esperanto in its requirement that the proletariat not seek linguistic unification before the time was right. Such an effort seemed all the more open to suspicion if it was linked to moral categories. In this connection, Esperanto was particularly exposed to criticism, because Zamenhof and his disciples talked incessantly about ‘the brotherhood of peoples’ and ‘world peace’ and announced the coming emergence of a humane world in such a manner that there was little room left to recognize the laws of economic development and the specific avant-garde role of the proletariat. The rhetoric of the Esperantists certainly found adepts among the working class, but for the leaders of

¹¹ ‘Pri la homaranismo. Responde al P-ro Dombrovski’ (1906), *PVZ* VII 316.

the proletarian movement, whose attention was focused on the realities of the class struggle, this was a symptom of that ‘naïve cosmopolitanism’ to which socialist theory was much indebted, but which, following the transition from utopianism to science, smelled of anachronism.

This was why the spread of Esperanto encountered disapproval from influential Marxist leaders. Particularly the German social democrats sharply criticized the propagandizing of Esperanto among the workers as a remnant of utopian thought, calling it ‘petty-bourgeois folly’ or simply a waste of time.¹² Rarely were they willing to consider the popularity of Esperanto among workers as one expression of the spontaneous tendency to develop the anti-nationalist sub-culture that was inherent in the proletariat.¹³ When, following the outbreak of war in 1914, the workers flocked to the banners of their national leaders, interest in the international language was inevitably pushed into the background. The criticism that to busy oneself with Esperanto was to anticipate the future while ignoring present essentials was made all the more credible by the heightened national consciousness now observable among the socialist parties.

At the beginning of 1918, shortly before the end of the First World War, one of the most important Marxist theorists, the Italian Antonio Gramsci, offered an interesting contribution on the question of a supra-national language. He categorically opposed all formal support for Esperanto by socialists, explaining: ‘They would like artificially to create *consequences* which as yet lack the necessary *conditions*’. Gramsci concluded that Esperanto ‘is nothing but a vain idea, an illusion of

¹² *Sächsisches Volksblatt* (Zwickau), 12 February 1914; cited from *Germana Esperantisto* 11 (1914), issue A, p. 59. We should add that the German Social Democratic Party had a particularly severe position and that before the World War there were also socialists who declared themselves favorable to Esperanto. At the end of 1911 the congress of the Czech social democrats unanimously recommended recruitment for it (*La Kulturo* 1 [1912], 1: 5). British socialists signed a declaration of support for Esperanto (*Das Esperanto ein Kulturfaktor*, vol. 3, Stuttgart: Ader & Borel, 1913, p. 68), and in the Netherlands an outstanding supporter was the prominent socialist Domela Nieuwenhuis.

¹³ Josef Strasser, *Der Arbeiter und die Nation*, Reichenberg: Runge, 1912, p. 29 (new edition Vienna: Junius, 1982, p. 40). Although Strasser, whose work Lenin highly valued, opposed the forced assimilation of national minorities, he, like Kautsky, foresaw the emergence of a single language in socialist society. As for Esperanto, he called the basic idea of its pioneers ‘that conscious language development is possible’ correct, but criticized the Esperantists for lack of understanding that first the evolutionary laws of language had to be found.

cosmopolitan, humanitarian, democratic mentalities which have not yet [...] been shaken by historical critical thinking’.

Gramsci’s article constitutes what is probably the most profound analysis of Esperanto from a Marxist point of view. He makes abundantly clear the reasons why serious attention to Esperanto is unacceptable to Marxists. First, it has its origins in outmoded utopian ideas; second, it seeks to overcome differences of language in the present, and therefore, by an equally utopian jump, outruns the orderly passage of affairs. Like Kautsky, Gramsci puts his confidence in the ineluctable movement to linguistic unification accompanying the process of economic concentration, in which Esperanto has no role. He refuses to accord Esperanto even a temporary status as an auxiliary language and directly questions whether there is even a need for international communication at the lower levels: ‘The majority of citizens [...] carry out their activity stably in a fixed place and do not need to correspond too often by letter with other countries.’¹⁴

Not directly related to Gramsci is Lanti’s confirmation in 1920 that ‘the socialist leaders come close to boycotting our publicity [for Esperanto]’. He turned for help to Romain Rolland. Rolland’s reply was positive: he declared that if the Communist International did not pay attention to the question of an international language the International would remain ‘just a word’. Rolland complained that the French socialist press does not give enough space to the ‘great international questions of a general interest—not exclusively socialist, but human’.¹⁵

Gramsci’s article on Esperanto appeared a few months after the October Revolution, which inspired communists in all countries to hope that world revolution was not far off. Lenin, creator of the Soviet state, expected that the proletariat in the developed countries would soon follow the Russian lead. Like earlier theorists of socialism before him, Lenin imagined that ‘The aim of socialism is not only to end the division of mankind into tiny states [...], it is not only to bring the nations closer

¹⁴‘A Single Language and Esperanto’, *Il Grido del Popolo*, 16 February 1918, reprinted in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985, pp. 26–31 (quotations pp. 27, 29–30).

¹⁵Letter from Romain Rolland to E. Lanti, 14 April 1920, in *La Vie ouvrière*, 23 April 1920, p. 3; quoted in *Esperantista Laboristo* 1 (1920), 4 (May): 2. Cf. Panchasi (2009), p. 151.

together but to integrate them.’¹⁶ But because Lenin primarily considered the situation in the territory of the Tsar and saw great revolutionary potential in the minorities rebelling against Tsarist Russification policy, he believed it inevitable that the Marxist position on the national problem would be revised. Against considerable resistance, particularly from Rosa Luxemburg, he advanced the view that the working class should campaign for the equal rights of nations and even that the right of oppressed nationalities to secede from the state should be guaranteed.

Lenin’s wish to win the confidence of the non-Russian peoples was nowhere more evident than in the field of language. He argued that populations should have schools in which instruction was delivered in the mother tongue,¹⁷ and in February 1920 he personally ordered Stalin to see that interpreters were available in all army units: ‘This is absolutely essential—as far as language is concerned there must be every concession and the maximum of equality.’¹⁸ His uncompromising position culminated in the famous statement ‘No privileges for *any* nation or *any* one language!’.¹⁹

However, Lenin strongly opposed transfer of the principle of self-determination to the Party; on the contrary, the structure of the Party had to be centralist. The ‘amalgamation of the workers of all the nationalities in a given state in united proletarian organizations’²⁰ should serve as a prototype of the ideal communist state of the future. Clearly, for Lenin as for Marx, priority should be given to coherence in the socialist movement and, after the victory of socialism in the various national settings, they too should—freely—meld into one.

Self-determination, then, was an exception to the general premises of centralism. Lenin insisted that this exception was ‘absolutely essential in view of reactionary Great-Russian nationalism’.²¹ He sharply opposed a compulsory

¹⁶ ‘The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination: Theses’ (1916), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 22, Moscow: Progress, 1964, pp. 143–56 (quotation p. 146).

¹⁷ ‘Resolutions of the Summer, 1913, Joint Conference [...]’, Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, 1963, p. 427.

¹⁸ ‘Telegram to J.V. Stalin’, Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 30, 1965, p. 373.

¹⁹ ‘The Working Class and the National Question’ (1913), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, 1963, p. 92.

²⁰ ‘Resolutions of the Summer [...]’, p. 428.

²¹ ‘A Letter to S.G. Shahumyan’ (1913), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, 1963, p. 501. On the dispute between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg see particularly ‘The Right of Nations to Self-

state language, and therefore the openly proclaimed priority of Russian.²² He defended this position all the more vigorously because at the same time he was convinced that people living in Russia, if freed from all pressure, would themselves understand the advantages of knowing the Russian language: ‘the requirements of economic exchange will always compel the nationalities living in one state [...] to study the language of the majority’, that is, ‘to study the language most convenient for general commercial relations’.²³

Lenin did not leave any precise statements about how or in what direction the process of linguistic unification would proceed *on a worldwide scale*. The formation of the world language was not explicitly addressed. The above statement evidently referred only to Russia. But it did not exclude the interpretation that Lenin expected a similar, economically dictated, solution to the problem of international communication.

In fact, it seems that on this point Lenin agreed with Kautsky, regardless of his condemnation of Kautsky’s ‘great power chauvinism’. A brief summary of an essay on the national problem contains a table that Lenin evidently borrowed from Kautsky. It addresses the growing significance of English and, to a degree, French and German; in parentheses the following is added: ‘English, or perhaps & Russian, may be a world language’.²⁴ Lenin said much the same thing four years later, when, shortly after the October Revolution, Carl Lindhagen, mayor of Stockholm, asked him whether the Soviet government would be willing to join an international convention on the introduction of a world language (Lindhagen had Esperanto in mind) in all schools. ‘We already have three world languages’, Lenin replied laconically, ‘and Russian will be the fourth’. In any case, Lenin did not consider an artificial language for this role.²⁵

That in Lenin’s theory there was no room for an international language like Esperanto is perhaps most clearly seen in his description of

Determination’ (1914), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, 1964, pp. 393–450.

²² ‘Corrupting the Workers with Refined Nationalism’ (1914), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, p. 290.

²³ ‘Critical Remarks on the National Question’ (1913), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, p. 20.

²⁴ ‘Theses for a Lecture on the National Question’, Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 41, 1969, p. 316. In his article ‘Nationality and Internationality’ of 1908 (trans. Ben Lewis, *Critique* 37 [2009]: 386), which Lenin used extensively for his theses, Kautsky named German, English and French as world languages; Russian, he suggested, might become a fourth.

²⁵ Carl Lindhagen, *I revolutionsland*, Stockholm: Åhlén & Åkerlunds, 1918, p. 79.

the character of international culture. In 1913 he emphasized that by ‘the international culture of democracy and of the world working-class movement’ he understood the fusion of the democratic and socialist elements of the individual national cultures, and not—as Jewish socialists misunderstood—‘a non-national culture’: ‘Nobody has proclaimed a “pure” culture, either Polish, Jewish, or Russian, etc.’.²⁶ Within every national culture the struggle between bourgeois and proletarian elements occurs, he maintained, through the ‘indigenous’ language. Therefore, despite the formation of working-class internationalism, the national cultures and languages will continue to exist. Lenin never thought of a culture completely emptied of nationhood whose means of expression would perhaps be Esperanto.²⁷

Lenin’s thoroughly negative relationship to Esperanto was reported by his wife Nadezhda Krupskaja²⁸ and sister Mariia Ulianova.²⁹ Worse, two leading Bolsheviks made similarly unfavorable statements: Nikolai Bukharin in 1920³⁰ and Grigorii Zinoviev in 1923, the latter in a speech to party functionaries in Petrograd, in which he criticized the adepts of Esperanto for their simple-minded approach to the problems of language and nation.³¹ The Soviet Esperanto movement, as far as the theoretical basis of its work was concerned, accordingly found itself in the worst possible position. After Drezen, leader of the Soviet Esperantist Union, in 1922 wrote an essay he described as ‘an attempt at a materialist contextualization of the problem’ of an international language,³² not unreasonably the anarchist Natan Futerfas mockingly commented that Drezen

²⁶ ‘Critical Remarks on the National Question’ (1913), Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 20, p. 24–25.

²⁷ Cf. Alfred D. Low, *Lenin on the Question of Nationality*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1958, p. 54.

²⁸ In an article on foreign language teaching (1923); cited from Bernhard Schiff, *Entwicklung und Reform des Fremdsprachenunterrichts in der Sowjetunion*, Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut, 1966, p. 17. On the attitude of Krupskaja see also *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30), 253, 296–7.

²⁹ See the present volume, p. 199 (note).

³⁰ Letter to the Esperantist Okhitovich, former party member; cited in Drezen (1931a), p. 249.

³¹ Report to the 18th Petrograd region party conference; according to *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), 2 (Nov. 1923): 2. Zinoviev was at that time also the president of Comintern.

³² È. Drezen, *Problema mezhdunarodnogo iazyka. Opyt materialisticheskogo obosnovaniia voprosa*, Moscow: SÈSR, 1922; partial translation: ‘Pri la problemo de lingvo internacia’, *Sennacieca Revuo* 5 (1923/24), nos. 4 (45) to 7/8 (48/49).

'has against him all Marxist authorities'.³³ In such a situation it seemed more prudent (as Drezen intended) to reason purely pragmatically and stress the argument that Esperanto is as essential an aid to communication as the telephone or airplane and therefore needs no explicitly Marxist justification.³⁴

In fact, the spread of Esperanto in the Soviet Union, as we have noted, was continuing apace. The language served as a favored means of facilitating contacts with the outside world, and, conversely, the Esperantists used their 'naïve cosmopolitanism' more and more to raise the prestige of the Soviet Union among their fellow linguists abroad. Official suspicion declined as Esperanto revealed itself as an effective means of enlivening the officially promoted idea of international workers' correspondence. For several years SEU could also benefit from the fact that the Party allowed a certain freedom of action in cultural matters and felt it neither necessary nor convenient to keep checking on whether the various forms of artistic and literary activity conformed to doctrine.

This was still so in the first years of Stalin's reign; SEU's period of prosperity in fact began after the death of Lenin. Changes in Soviet policy priorities—from hope for revolution in other countries to domestic socialist construction—at first did not hinder the work of the Esperanto movement. To the contrary, even in the problematic theoretical field a shift of priorities took place that seemed more advantageous for the Esperantists. It was brought on by a theoretical initiative of Stalin.

Toward a Marxist Linguistics

In 1925 Stalin (who in the same year proclaimed his theory of 'building socialism in a single country') pronounced on the question of how the flowering of national cultures and languages, systematically promoted in the Soviet Union, would contribute to the Communist goal of a united general human culture. He denied that there was any con-

³³ *La Nova Epoko*, 1922, col. 70–1. On the surrounding events see the present volume, p. 165–6, 176.

³⁴ A. Jodko, 'Esperanto de l' marksisma vidpunkto', *La Nova Epoko*, 1922, col. 161.

tradiction between the program of national development and the final goal of communism, constructing the famous formula: ‘Proletarian in content, national in form—that is the general human culture to which socialism approaches.’ As he saw it, the Party’s concern for ‘proletarian content’ would be guarantee enough of the path to an apparently universal, though in fact all-Soviet, community. Regarding the final goal of communism as described by earlier theorists, Stalin was unenthusiastic:

Some people (Kautsky, for instance) talk of the creation of a single universal language and the dying away of all other languages in the period of socialism. I have little faith in this theory of a single, all-embracing language. Experience, at any rate, speaks against rather than for such a theory. Until now what was happened has been that the socialist revolution has not diminished but rather increased; for, by stirring up the lowest sections of humanity and pushing them on to the political arena, it awakes to new life a number of hitherto unknown or little-known nationalities.³⁵

Stalin had for the first time authoritatively dealt with a topic that was understandably of great interest to the Soviet Esperantists. He had rejected the idea of a universal language, but done so in an encouraging context. Namely, he had distanced himself from Kautsky, who envisioned the universalization of one or several major national languages, and pronounced the formation of a worldwide language congruent with the disappearance of all other languages, which was precisely *not* the goal of supporters of a world auxiliary language. So it was not difficult for the Soviet Esperantists to praise Stalin for his disapproval of all assimilationist rejection of languages.³⁶

At around the same time the question of a world language was addressed by a Soviet linguist who was to become more and more important in coming years: Nikolai Marr. In professional circles, Marr was known, as of 1908, for his so-called Japhetic theory of language. He asserted

³⁵ ‘The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East’, J.V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, p. 141.

³⁶ They praised Stalin as the opponent of the theorist of proletarian culture Bogdanov, whose viewpoint on the development of languages was the same ‘great power chauvinism’ as Kautsky’s: A. Tom (Efim Spiridovich), ‘Antipody—I. Stalin i A. Bogdanov’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1926, 14 (40): 7–8.

that the Caucasian languages, along with Sumerian and Basque, constituted the Japhetic language family and that the Indo-European languages came about as a result of the transformation of these Japhetic languages. More generally, Marr described an evolutionary process beginning with a mass of interrelated dialects and leading to ever-larger language units. He considered language as part of the superstructure overlaying the economic basis of society. He denied the existence of national languages and insisted that from the beginning language was class-determined.

Marr increasingly presented himself as an avant-garde campaigner against ‘bourgeois Indo-European comparative linguistics’. Originally, his theory hardly contained any elements that could be considered Marxist, but as of around 1926 he cultivated the view that, because his ideas were aimed at revolutionizing linguistics, they at least conformed with Marxism. Because the notion of a stepwise evolution of languages and their dependence on the economy included the belief that social revolutions also transform languages, it was not surprising that he also addressed the question of the final goal of language development—more precisely the question of the linguistic result of the worldwide establishment of socialism. Marr was convinced that the evolutionary process would culminate in monolingualism.³⁷

Marr was not thinking about any of the existing languages: ‘Individual languages, regardless of their imperialist dispersal, will never become this future unified language.’ The masses, Marr wrote, will themselves have the capability of speeding up the process of linguistic unification by intervening in the existing languages or even independently creating the ‘perfect universal language of humankind’. This point of view—affirming artificial intervention in languages—seemed close to that of the Esperantists. However, Marr, as if dampening their expectations, added that, first, science must be in a position to guide the masses and direct their efforts at linguistic unity along the right paths. At best, he considered Esperanto an indication that the trend to a world language was rooted in the masses:

³⁷On Marr’s theory, see L.L. Thomas, *The Linguistic Theories of N. Ja. Marr*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957; René L’Hermitte, *Marr, marrisme, marristes: science et perversion idéologique. Une page de l’histoire de la linguistique soviétique*, Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 1987; Slezkine (1996); Milka Lähteenmäki, ‘Nikolai Marr and the idea of a unified language’, *Language and Communication* 26 (2006): 285–95.

‘Life will certainly not stand still, and there will appear various surrogates similar to Esperanto, Ido, etc.’³⁸

Marr’s ideas on a future universal language captured the attention of Soviet Esperantists even more than Stalin’s initiative. Their fundamental argument in reaction to Marr was: ‘We don’t claim [...] “scientificity” in our language; we are concerned only that our language should serve our needs, that our language should be used by the masses, because precisely through such use the creative processes of the future world language will come about, because precisely through the language use of the masses the inevitable historical process will be advanced.’³⁹

This point of view was characteristic of the Esperantists essentially from the time of Zamenhof. In response to those scholars who regarded Esperanto as needing reform or who denied its viability, they emphasized the priority of successfully testing the language in practice; the more users Esperanto acquired, the faster the theoretical requirements of linguists would be disproved. This was a wise tactic, followed also by SEU when, perceiving the difficulties of justifying Esperanto on a Marxist basis, it gave priority to strengthening its own organization and demonstrated the practical value of the language.

As long as Esperanto was for the most part ignored by scholars of linguistics⁴⁰ and as long as the Party did not express lack of ideological confidence, this tactic seemed to promise success. Skeptics like Lunacharsky, the People’s Commissar for Education, confessed in 1926 that ‘the facts spoke for Esperanto’.⁴¹ When Marr’s theories pushed the problem of a future world language into public discussion, SEU asked itself whether it should match what was meanwhile its significant organizational strength in practice with parallel achievements on the theoretical side.

³⁸ Quotations from Voldetero, ‘Pri kelkaj scienculaj deklaroj’, *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 10 (62): 6. See also G. Demidiuk, ‘Akademik N. Ia. Marr’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk*, 1925, no. 1 (27): 9–10.

³⁹ Voldetero, ‘Pri kelkaj scienculaj deklaroj’, p. 6.

⁴⁰ This was the situation in pre-revolutionary Russia, with the important exception of Jan Baudouin de Courtenay.

⁴¹ In his message of greetings to the Sixth SAT Congress in Leningrad: *Sennaciulo* 2 (1925/26), 46 (98/99): p. 4. Earlier, in 1912, Lunacharsky criticized ‘consistent cosmopolitans who believe that the future will bring complete unification to the human race, a single common language and a single common culture’: quoted in Ivan Dzyuba, *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968, p. 47.

As of 1926, theoretical interest grew. In that year, the state publishing house produced a collection of articles on Esperanto edited by Drezen.⁴² In October 1926 SEU launched a journal whose contributions dealt chiefly with theoretical questions on the international language.⁴³ Its first issue included a remarkably combative article by the Belarusian journalist and university lecturer Efim Spiridovich,⁴⁴ who later published a series of articles on the theory of language development. On this topic, which was his main interest, Spiridovich rejected the possibility that languages will ‘naturally’ achieve unity under the influence of economic development. Increased internationalization of economics, culture and thought was indeed occurring, and the number of international terms was growing. But a significant contradiction remained: the ‘archaic structure’ of national languages was incapable of fully reflecting the international character of modern thought. To solve this contradiction a linguistic revolution would be necessary, involving ‘conscious intervention of reason’.⁴⁵ The contradiction was most evident in the Soviet Union. There, in harmony with the declarations of Lenin, the languages of formerly oppressed peoples were developing into literary languages, while on the other hand there was a growing need for a unifying language. Without alluding to the possibility of an alternative, for example Russian, Spiridovich asserted that this contradiction could be overcome with an ‘auxiliary international language’. It would be the language of the ‘transitional era’, during which the nations would come together and at the same time prepare the way for the era of communism, of the ‘confluence of nations’, when a fully artificial universal language would arise.⁴⁶

Spiridovich criticized the linguists for overlooking the fact that in the Esperanto movement a new era of linguistic science was beginning, whose

⁴² *Na putiakh k mezhdunarodnomu iazyku. Sbornik statei* (On paths to the international language. Article Collection), Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1926.

⁴³ The journal, appearing sometimes monthly, sometimes bi-monthly, was initially called *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSS* or *SĖSR* (*Informilo de C.K. SEU*), and as of January 1929 *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* (*Internacia Lingvo*). Contributions were almost exclusively in Russian.

⁴⁴ E. Spiridovich, ‘Za novoe iazykoznanie’ (For the new linguistics), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSS* 5 (1926/27): 1–5.

⁴⁵ E. Spiridoviĉ, ‘La skemo de lingva evoluo’ [2], *Sennacieca Revuo* 4/8 (1926/27): 76–9 (quotation p. 79).

⁴⁶ Spiridoviĉ, ‘La skemo de lingva evoluo’ [3], *Sennacieca Revuo* 4/8 (1926/27): 105–9.

chief characteristic was that ‘the masses are taking upon themselves the construction and further progress of their chief instrument—language’.⁴⁷ Even linguistic reformers like Marr refused to acknowledge this phenomenon. Thus, Spiridovich asserted, linguistics must be fully rebuilt and the new Marxist linguistics must firmly incorporate the theory of an international auxiliary language.

Drezen went even further than Spiridovich.⁴⁸ Early in 1928 the State Publishing House in Moscow published an extensive volume in which he described the history of efforts to create a world language; included were 217 projects before Zamenhof and 245 after him. Drezen called Esperanto the crowning achievement of the search for an international language extending over many centuries.⁴⁹ The introduction was written by none other than Marr, who maintained that Drezen’s book contributed ‘to the collection of materials for adequate treatment of the problem of the universal language’.⁵⁰

In the same year, Marr made statements about a future world language that were entirely acceptable for Esperantists. He spoke of the ‘need, without a minute’s delay, for the new international social construction’; we must free ourselves ‘from the limited, as it were natural, resources at our disposal’.⁵¹ Marr’s advocacy of the artificiality of the future world language and his refusal to accept the possibility that a current national language would play the role of the universal language in the future classless society gave some of the Soviet Esperantists enough reasons to see Marr as almost an ally, and to quote him as principal witness for the historical validity of their own goals. An Esperanto-language brochure

⁴⁷ E. Spiridovič, ‘Esperanto kaj lingvoscienco’, *Sennacieca Revuo* 4/8 (1926/27): 150–4 (quotation p. 153).

⁴⁸ On the contributions to the discussion by Drezen and Spiridovich see Aleksandr Dulichenko, ‘Idea mezhdunarodnogo iskusstvennogo iazyka v debriakh rannei sovetskoj sotsiolingvistiki’ (The idea of an international artificial language at the dawn of early Soviet sociolinguistics), *Interlinguistica Tartuensis* 9 (2009): 9–36 (esp. pp. 23–33); also in *Russian Linguistics* 34 (2010): 143–57.

⁴⁹ É. Drezen, *Za vseobščim iazykom. Tri veka iskanii*, Moscow & Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1928; Esperanto translation: Drezen (1991). Cf. Kuznecov (2004), p. 154.

⁵⁰ N. Marr, ‘K voprosu ob edinom iazyke’ (The question of a unifying language), in Drezen, *Za vseobščim iazykom*, p. 9.

⁵¹ N. Ja. Marr, *Iafetičeskaia teoriia*, Baku 1927; German translation in Tasso Borbé, *Kritik der marxistischen Sprachtheorie N. Ja. Marr’s*, Kronberg: Scriptor, 1974, pp. 63–262 (quotation p. 87).

published by SAT tried to popularize Marr's ideas among Esperantists in other countries.⁵²

But the Soviet Esperanto movement lacked a unified position on Marr. Nor was there unanimity in linguistic opinion generally. Spiridovich was criticized by the young linguist Evgenii Bokarev,⁵³ who lectured him in the SEU journal to the effect that linguistics was in no sense unfriendly to an international language. The more the idea gained ground that language was an instrument of social communication and thereby negated earlier metaphysical views on language, the more the idea of an international language would gain attention. Indeed, the greatest representatives of the sociological school founded by Ferdinand de Saussure⁵⁴ acknowledged the need and possibility of an artificial language. Noting the gradual convergence of linguistics and the Esperanto movement, Bokarev emphatically disputed Spiridovich's thesis that Esperanto would acquire its rightful recognition only with the complete reorganization of linguistics.⁵⁵

In his response Spiridovich insisted that the Esperantists should in no way expect support from decadent bourgeois linguistics. He aggressively asked whether Bokarev, who evidently belonged to the sociological camp, intended 'to deny the need to build linguistics on the basis of Marxism'.⁵⁶ Almost a year later, Bokarev published a new article, 'Linguistics and Marxism', in which he sought to find middle ground.

⁵² A.P. Andreev, *Revolucio en la lingvoscienco. Jafetida lingvoteorio de akademiano N. Marr*, Leipzig: Eldona Fako Kooperativa, 1929; Russian-language edition: *Revoliutsiia iazykoznaniiia. Jafeticheskaia teoriia akademika N. Ia. Marna*, Moscow: SĖSR, 1929. This superficially written and in many ways misleading brochure formed the basis for the relevant section of Ivo Lapenna, *Retoriko*, third edition, Rotterdam, 1971, pp. 44–9.

⁵³ Evgenii Alekseevich Bokarev (Bokaryov), specialist in Caucasian languages. After the war he played an important role in the revival of the Soviet Esperanto movement (see vol. 2, chap. 2). See also the book by his daughter: Bokarjova (2010).

⁵⁴ Bokarev names, among others, Max Müller, Hugo Schuchardt, Antoine Meillet, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Otto Jespersen and Edward Sapir.

⁵⁵ E. Bokarev, 'Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk i nauka o iazyke' (International language and language science), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 129–35; translation in Bokarjova (2010), pp. 51–63.

⁵⁶ E. Spiridovich, "'A vse-taki vertsiia!'" Po povodu stat'i tov. Bokareva' ('And yet it moves!' On the occasion of an article by Comrade Bokarev), *Izvestiia Ts.K. SĖSR* 6 (1928): 136–9 (quotation p. 136).

Bokarev declared that Marxism was the only methodological and philosophical basis for linguistics. But because the classic thinkers on Marxism had left behind them only general statements about language, ‘linguistic studies claiming the name of Marxism easily slide into vulgarization and deformation of Marxist methods’. Also Marr’s Japhetic theory, which the public often identified with Marxist linguistics generally, only *contributed* to the future rebuilding; much of Marr’s thinking was not original, his theory contained important methodological errors, and furthermore he was chiefly interested in only one aspect, namely the paleontology of speech. For Marxist linguists it was more important to use the achievements of the sociological school which Spiridovich vainly sought to ignore. Bokarev expressed his confidence that the time would come when Marxist linguistics would turn its particular attention to the Esperanto movement, ‘which should constitute a serious moment in current language policy’. Thus the Esperantists were encouraged to participate actively in the building of Marxist linguistics because ‘It alone is capable of giving the international language a stable theoretical basis’.⁵⁷

Drezen did not involve himself directly in the dispute between Bokarev and Spiridovich, but he made sure that the members of SEU received help in understanding the essential theoretical bases of their own work. In July 1928 the Fourth SEU Congress approved principles written by Drezen on ‘paths to formation and dissemination of the international language’. These principles declared that the Esperanto movement owed its strength only to itself and that ‘planting’ Esperanto from above would not fit its goals. The Esperantists should continue to pin their hopes ‘principally on initiatives from below, on the creativity of representatives of the broad masses’. At the same time, ‘creative Marxist thinking’ should draw conclusions from the successful practices of the Esperanto movement and not ‘silently pass over the problem of the international language’.⁵⁸

At the end of the 1920s the time seemed not unfavorable for linking the future of Esperanto to the construction of Marxist linguistics. The entire cultural life of the Soviet Union was experiencing a period of profound transformation. During the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32), aimed at a

⁵⁷ Evgenii Bokarev, ‘Iazykoznanie i marksizm’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 7 (1929): 203–6.

⁵⁸ Drezen (1929), pp. 39–40.

giant step forward in industrialization, the country experienced a new cultural revolution, whose chief aim was to put education, literature, art and science fully at the service of socialist construction. The Party made more emphatic use of culture as a political and economic power factor, ending a period of several years of relative tranquility in the cultural sphere.⁵⁹

At the same time the Cultural Revolution included elements of spontaneous rebellion against all remnants of the past and against supposed missteps following the October Revolution. Earlier visions of the future Communist society underwent a renaissance. As of 1928, many utopian ideas, including projections of the death of the school and radical projects for the ‘socialist city’, found official favor and support in the Party—which not infrequently was more a consequence than a cause of their attractiveness to the masses mobilized for the building of socialism. It was not only pressure, but also authentic enthusiasm, that drove people to fulfill the goals of the Plan. The heroic, painful struggle in the years of the First Plan strengthened belief in a better future under communism, and anyone able to contribute to the realization of this utopia felt particularly stimulated by the atmosphere surrounding the dawn of the cultural revolution.⁶⁰

Such feelings also animated the Soviet Esperantists. They felt destined to the task of portraying that aspect of the future that concerned the problem of linguistic understanding.⁶¹

Skrypnyk Against Esperantization

Into the middle of this discussion on the building of Marxist linguistics fell a further declaration by Stalin on the problems of nation and language in socialism. In a report to the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in mid-1930, Stalin launched an attack on

⁵⁹See Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘The “soft” line on culture and its enemies: Soviet cultural policy, 1922–1927’, *Slavic Review* 33 (1974): 267–87.

⁶⁰See the article collection Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978.

⁶¹According to an SEU publication, this problem would be solved during the cultural revolution ‘definitively and in line with the revolution’—‘not by some decision of an authoritative body, but on the basis of the creative verve of the working masses themselves’: Kiriushin (1930), p. 31.

those ‘deviators’ who believed that ‘the time has come to abolish national differences’. Those insisting on such a policy, said Stalin, are guilty of Great-Russian nationalism ‘disguised [...] by a mask of internationalism and by the name of Lenin’. Stalin pointed to the dialectics of historical processes. For the moment, namely the period of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, the ‘flowering of national cultures’ was an important characteristic, and only in the future would they merge ‘into one common (both in form and content) culture, with one common language’.⁶²

But Stalin overestimated the capability of his dialectics to convince his listeners. During the Congress, delegates asked him how he reconciled this declaration with his 1925 speech, in which he condemned the theory of a universal language.⁶³ In his reply, Stalin denied any contradiction between the two statements: he continued to condemn the ‘national-chauvinistic’ theory of Kautsky, by which ‘all nations, let us say, within the USSR’ would flow ‘into one common Great-Russian nation with one common Great-Russian language’. In other words, the question of the withering away of national languages and their unification was not a question for individual states, but international; during the construction of socialism in a single country, national languages would in no sense die away, but fully develop and flower. Stalin stated that on this point he continued to accept Lenin’s idea, both in the short-term and more long-term perspective,

that in the period of the victory of socialism *on a world scale*, the national languages are inevitably bound to merge into one common language, which, of course, will be neither Great Russian nor German, but something new.⁶⁴

Even if Stalin denied it, there could be no overlooking the fact that his opinion had changed over the years. In 1925 he emphasized exclusively

⁶² ‘Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.)’ (27 June 1930), Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 373–4, 380.

⁶³ According to an article by Stalin in March 1929, he was earlier obliged to reply to critics who pointed to contradictions between his 1925 speech and Lenin’s concept. But this article was published only in 1949: ‘The National Question and Leninism’, Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 357.

⁶⁴ ‘Reply to the Discussion on the Political Report [...]’ (22 July 1930), Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 5.

the flowering of nations and languages accelerated by socialist revolution, and he refused the possibility of a future common language. His dialectic could not hide the fact that in 1925 he made no distinction between the circumstances *before* and *after* the worldwide triumph of socialism—and that his speech of 1930 was an attempt at retrospective reinterpretation of his earlier and, for a Marxist, almost heretical opposition to the future merging of nations and languages.⁶⁵

Now, in 1930, Stalin felt it necessary to confirm his opposition to a policy of rapid assimilation, while combining it with a revival of the international perspective. This was bound to have a stimulating effect on the Soviet Esperantists. The 1930 initiative represented progress after the speech of 1925. Giving his support to the idea of a universal language, Stalin at the same time emptied it of tendencies that from the time of Kautsky compromised it in the eyes of Esperantists and those working for the rights of small nations. He did not present the development of a universal language as a process of globalization of a national language, but for the first time forecast a language for all people as ‘something new’, as a language of a new kind. In this way Stalin adopted a point of view that was at least very similar to that of Marr.

The Soviet Esperantists, however, could not be entirely happy with Stalin’s speech.⁶⁶ We must consider the situation in which SEU found itself in mid-1930. Its relations with SAT were extremely tense. Furthermore, at just this moment the Esperantists were confronted in their own country by an unexpectedly strong attack from another party functionary. This intervention, already mentioned, requires more detailed scrutiny.

Shortly before the opening of the Party Congress, a speech was published by the Ukrainian People’s Commissar for Education, Mykola

⁶⁵On this see Goodman (1970), p. 720. The article appeared earlier as a chapter in Elliot R. Goodman, *The Soviet Design for a World State*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

⁶⁶At the time the information appeared that Stalin, in Babilov Prison in Baku, learned Esperanto. This was the assertion, in early 1928, of a Russian emigré who once shared a cell with Stalin: *Sennaciulo* 4 (1927/28): 244; Leon Trotsky, ‘Joseph Stalin’, *Life* 7 (1939), 14: 66–8, 70–3 (esp. p. 68); Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, New York & London: Harper, 1941, pp. 118–19, 125. According to his cellmate, Stalin saw Esperanto as the future language of the International. See also Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007, p. 174.

Skrypnyk.⁶⁷ He criticized the Esperantists for their ‘aim of creating a separate non-national people and a separate non-national culture and ideology, substituting it for the goal of separate nations constructing their own national cultures’.⁶⁸ Skrypnyk, an old Bolshevik, was considered not only a supporter of the cultural autonomy of Ukraine, but also as a kind of advocate of all non-Russian communists who feared too great a dominance of Russians in the Soviet Union. He firmly relied on Lenin’s belief that the class struggle was an international phenomenon and that nationalist feelings and antagonisms hindered the forward march of the proletarian revolution. For this reason, he opposed Russian chauvinism, particularly in Ukraine, along with Ukrainian nationalism if it threatened to weaken the solidarity of the Soviet republics.⁶⁹ He particularly distrusted Stalin’s policy on the national problem: as early as 1923 he complained that Stalin, by equating two nationalisms, ‘the ruling great-power nationalism and the nationalism of once oppressed nations’, neglected the paramount battle against “Great-Russian chauvinism” and tended to support ‘the desire of our Soviet apparatus for the “united, undivided”’.⁷⁰

Beginning in late 1929, Skrypnyk grew increasingly uneasy that his program of Ukrainization, although it always remained within the framework of loyalty to the all-Soviet Socialist fatherland, could be denounced as a stimulus to nationalist opposition. It is in this light that we must see his attacks against certain aspects of the publicity of the Esperantists, who, said Skrypnyk, sought to introduce Esperanto into schools in place of Ukrainian and in general proclaimed their language as an escape from national languages and the substitution of national languages with one single international language. He particularly condemned the ‘non-national’ theories of the Esperantists as a petty-bourgeois deviation from the true Communist nationality policy.

On the other hand, Skrypnyk, whose secretary knew Esperanto, in no way called for opposition to Esperanto on principle. He recognized that

⁶⁷ See the present volume, p. 215–6.

⁶⁸ E. Drezen, ‘Antaŭparolo’, in Stalin (1930), p. 5.

⁶⁹ Cf. Martin (2001), pp. 105–12, 345–56.

⁷⁰ *Dokumenty ukraïns’koho komunizmu*, New York, 1962; translated extract in Hans-Joachim Lieber & Karl-Heinz Ruffmann (ed.), *Der Sowjetkommunismus. Dokumente II*, Cologne & Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1964, pp. 115–16.

the language had its significance as a means of international communication, drew attention to the fact that through Esperanto information about the cultural progress of Ukraine had penetrated other countries⁷¹ and even promised support for the Esperanto movement if it remained ‘voluntary’. In fact, considering the conflicts at this time characterizing nationality policy—specifically the relations between the Russian nation and minority nationalities—we have to doubt whether perceived danger from the Esperantists was what motivated Skrypnyk’s warning against *sennaciismo*. It is more likely that his attack against ‘the aim of jumping to a unifying language’ was a hidden declaration of war against Great-Russian chauvinism, which seemed more than ever to threaten Ukrainian identity. A similar interpretation is possible regarding a speech made by another high-ranking Ukrainian party functionary, Pavel Postyshev, at the same congress. Postyshev alluded critically to the fact that in Ukraine there were ‘a few’ who proposed ‘introducing Esperanto instead of Ukrainian’,⁷² seemingly echoing Skrypnyk, whose speech was published a few days before the opening of the 16th Party Congress.

At that Congress, Stalin declared that Great-Russian chauvinism was the most dangerous form of nationalist deviation. All who believed that the time had come to limit the process of the flowering of nations and shift to ‘internationalism’ were blamed for failure to observe Lenin’s teachings. Thus, Stalin, reminding his audience of Lenin’s refutation of ‘non-national culture’, sought to reassure those non-Russian party members made uneasy by too much centralization and assimilation. Indeed, Skrypnyk’s fears seemed for the moment to be dispelled.

The Soviet Esperantists soon evidenced a connection between Skrypnyk’s warnings of ‘Esperantization’ and Stalin’s opposition to premature internationalism. In this same year an Esperanto-language brochure was published containing excerpts from Stalin’s speeches on the national-

⁷¹ As of 1926 an Esperanto-language summary was published: *La Vojo de Klerigo*, covering the most important contributions to the monthly journal *Shliakh osvity* (Russian: *Puť prosveshcheniia*), published by the Office of the Ukrainian People’s Commissar for Education.

⁷² Quoted by Roman Rosdolsky, ‘Stalin und die Verschmelzung der Völker im Sozialismus’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 4 (1964): 268–76 (quotation p. 270). Three years later Postyshev led the campaign against Skrypnyk (see above, p. 274). He himself was killed in 1939.

ities problem.⁷³ In the introduction Drezen, citing Skrypnyk, drew from his criticisms and from Stalin's speech a lesson for Soviet Esperantists, namely that they could not oppose Esperanto to the national languages and treat it as a language 'already capable of forming some separate non-national culture'.⁷⁴

Despite the shock given to the Esperantists by Skrypnyk, their reaction was not merely defensive, since, after all, Stalin had around the same time put forward a challenging prognosis about the future of languages and nations. Following the theses of Marr, which had already stimulated their own efforts in the area of theory, the similar-sounding declarations of Stalin caused the Esperantists to feel called on to contribute still more intensively to clarification of the process of development of a universal language. Drezen emphasized that preparations for this future language must already be made in the period before the worldwide establishment of the socialist order.⁷⁵ Particularly emphatic views on the long-term tasks confronting Esperanto had been presented by Spiridovich. SEU's theoretical journal published in 1930 a series of articles from his pen on the theory of an international language. They appeared in book form in the following year.⁷⁶ Spiridovich now directly posited a criterion for a true Marxist linguistics, namely whether it was aware 'that, just as the bourgeoisie once had to create a language for a new era, namely the national literary language, the proletariat today, on the threshold of proletarian world revolution, faces the task of creating the language of its own era'.⁷⁷ While the main aim of bourgeois linguistics was to work for 'assimilation of "peoples and tribes"',⁷⁸ the proletariat, beginning to mold the languages of oppressed peoples into national literary languages, now needed

⁷³ Stalin (1930).

⁷⁴ This clearly contradicts opinions that were popular among Soviet Esperantists at the time. For example, one of them emphasized in February 1930 that Esperanto 'will become the only world language' and that it 'is not an auxiliary but a natural language, that is, of the coming socialism': M. Krjukov, 'Kulturtaskoj', *Sennaciulo* 6 (1929/30): 226. While earlier, in connection with its conflict with SAT, SEU criticized the specific interpretation of *sennaciismo* articulated by Lanti, it now declared war on the whole concept.

⁷⁵ Drezen, 'Antaŭparolo', in Stalin (1930), pp. 8, 10.

⁷⁶ Spiridovich (1931).

⁷⁷ Spiridovich (1931), p. 4.

⁷⁸ Spiridovich, p. 9.

a linguistics 'principally as the science of the creation of an international language'.⁷⁹

Spiridovich wrote that Marr, opposing the great power thinking of Indo-European linguistics, took a new path, but failed to follow it consequentially. His preference for spoken languages, material for his paleontological studies, caused Marr to imagine the development of the world language as a 'huge leap', whereas in fact the way forward remained quite unclear, not to say that 'for Academician Marr the problem of a transitional language, of an international auxiliary language, does not even exist'.⁸⁰ If, in addition to this, Marr criticized the 'individual' creation of an artificial language and completely ignored the fact that Esperanto owed its success precisely to collective creation,⁸¹ one could only conclude that 'although Japhetic theory has made a major contribution to Marxist linguistics, it cannot form the basis of that science'.⁸²

In the opinion of Spiridovich, the Marxist development of linguistics was already essentially finished. He had in mind the linguistic revolution inaugurated by Esperanto.⁸³ The 'linguistic genius' Zamenhof⁸⁴ intuitively understood the needs of the age and established the theoretical fundamentals of the proletarian movement for an international language. The principle of simplicity 'for the less educated' eased the way to Esperanto 'for the broadest masses' and by giving up his author's rights Zamenhof created the conditions for 'the living collective creation' of Esperanto by the masses.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Esperanto had already become 'a conveyor of a new culture: the culture of the proletariat'.⁸⁶ In the era of transition to communism the language will become ever more perfect, and, in parallel with this process, through 'effective interaction', the

⁷⁹Spiridovich, p. 13.

⁸⁰Spiridovich, p. 43.

⁸¹Spiridovich, pp. 53 and following.

⁸²Spiridovich, p. 57.

⁸³Spiridovich, pp. 3, 81.

⁸⁴See also E. Spiridovič, 'Genia lingvisto venkita de etburĝeco. Fundamentaj momentoj en la lingva teorio de Zamenhof', *La Nova Etapo* 1 (1932): 23–31; republished in brochure form: Kyoto: l'omnibuso, 1976.

⁸⁵Spiridovich (1931), pp. 67–8, 82.

⁸⁶Spiridovich, p. 81.

creation of the national literary languages of the more backward peoples will continue to develop.⁸⁷ In accordance with Stalin's notion that the flowering of nations would create the conditions for their withering away, Spiridovich argued that 'the broad development of national languages in this period is merely a dialectical premise for the unified language of the future, of the *near future*'.⁸⁸ He maintained that the revolutionary shift from spoken dialects to national literary languages was only a transitional step on the road to an even greater linguistic revolution, namely the 'creation of a unifying universal language for the non-national society of the Communist epoch'.⁸⁹ The completion of this second language revolution must therefore be the 'true banner' of Marxist linguistics.⁹⁰

Discussion of the Russian Language

While Spiridovich assigned to the Esperantists the role of revolutionary vanguard in linguistic science, Drezen entered the ranks of opponents of Marr, the prophet of a future artificial world language who had shown himself an unenthusiastic sympathizer of Esperanto. Drezen belonged to a group of young linguists who appeared before the public shortly after the Party Congress. Calling themselves 'Iazykovednyi front', that is the Linguistics Front (shortened to 'Iazykfront'), the group, among whose founding members were also the linguists Georgii Danilov, Timofei Lomtev and Jānis Loja (Loya),⁹¹ opposed both the 'unprincipled eclecticism' of the Indo-European school and, interestingly, also the 'mechanical tendencies' of Japhetic theory. SEU responded favorably to the first manifesto of the Iazykfront.⁹² Indeed it now officially supported efforts to create a Marxist linguistics in competition with Marr's Japhetic school.

⁸⁷ Spiridovich, pp. 95–6, 98.

⁸⁸ Spiridovich, p. 96.

⁸⁹ Spiridovich, p. 98.

⁹⁰ Spiridovich, p. 99.

⁹¹ Also Loja, a Latvian like Drezen, was a longtime Esperantist. The significance of Iazykfront is summarized in Smith (1998), pp. 97–102.

⁹² 'Obrashchenie gruppy "Iazykovednyi front"' (Declaration of the group 'Linguistics Front'), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 8 (1930): 177–8.

Drezen, having already tied the fate of Esperanto to the development of a Marxist linguistics,⁹³ evidently believed that success would come with Iazykfront's help.

For a while it seemed as though this hope would be fulfilled. Adepts of Iazykfront began to conquer university chairs of linguistics, scientific institutes and journals. Their bitter polemics sought to reveal the weaknesses of the Japhetic theory. At the same time, Iazykfront let it be known that it did not intend to throw out all previous achievements of linguistics, particularly those concerned with sociology. But at the end of 1932 it became clear that the support that Marr and his disciples commanded in the Party could not be shaken by the young linguists of Iazykfront. Marr's career was at its zenith. In 1930 he advanced to the vice presidency of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and the Party turned to him for help in its politically motivated reorganization. The degree to which the Japhetic theory merited the epithet Marxist seemed a secondary consideration given its incontestably revolutionary character and the fact that Marr came across as a more uncompromising opponent of the old bourgeois linguistics. If Iazykfront favored 'conquering traditional linguistics without wholesale rejection of all its results',⁹⁴ this 'middle position' exposed it to the accusation that in effect it was simply a group of covert Indo-Europeanists. From there, it was a short step to the destructive conclusion that Iazykfront represented 'the banner of covert reactionaries in linguistics, the banner of our enemies'.⁹⁵

In the years 1931–32 it became clear that Marr's position could be weakened neither by the attacks of Iazykfront nor by the criticisms of Esperantists at the lack of 'leadership to action'. The reason was simply that the elective character of his theory accorded with the intentions of Stalin. If Marr, on the basis of his teachings about the origin and future of language, had sought to formulate a program of language policy, this would have

⁹³ Cf. Drezen's clarifications of SEU's theoretical work: Drezen (1931a); 'SĖSR na iazykovednom fronte' (SEU in the linguistics front), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 291–4.

⁹⁴ Wolfgang Girke & Helmut Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik. Probleme und Genese*, Kronberg: Scriptor, 1974, p. 53.

⁹⁵ F.P. Filin, 'Der Kampf um eine marxistisch-leninistische Sprachwissenschaft und die Gruppe "Jazykfront"' (translated from *Protiv burzhuaznoi kontrabandy v iazykoznanii*, Leningrad: GAIMK, 1932), in Girke & Jachnow (1975), p. 43.

soon exposed the disharmony between the internationalism of Japhetic theory and actual trends in the development of the Soviet Union. The more intensely the path to a universal language was discussed, the sharper the threat of revealing the contradictions between theory and practice.

As we have seen, even in the Party Congress Stalin found it difficult to explain to the delegates the dialectical relationship between the flowering of nations in the current Soviet Union and their unification in the worldwide Communist system of the future. The confusion grew even greater because of the evident contradictions in the process supposedly characterizing the ‘flowering of nations’. In his formula ‘national in form, socialist in content’, Stalin had already alluded to the fact that national cultures would not fully develop without some kind of limits: the national element reaches its limit at the point where it begins to threaten the priority of socialism. However, the careful distinction between ‘national form’ and ‘socialist content’ began to lose its coherence if the contours were blurred, that is, if the ‘socialist content’ became cluttered with national symbols. And that was precisely what happened as of the end of 1931: the ‘socialist content’ required of all the peoples of the Soviet Union was increasingly filled with symbols characteristically Russian. This aspect requires our attention.

The position of the Russian language is a topic that the available writings of Soviet Esperantists almost never mention. This is all the more remarkable because they advanced ideas on the relationship between the principle of linguistic equality and the need for supranational communication that seemed to call for addressing the role of Russian. Instead, the discussion turned almost exclusively on the relationship between *all* national languages on the one hand and Esperanto on the other. For example, from Stalin’s assertion that national languages would merge on the basis of their common socialist content, Drezen concluded that a final confluence *without* influence on national languages by an ‘international auxiliary language’ was unimaginable, because that auxiliary language, that is Esperanto, responding to the current need for international communication, was already based on the national languages, formed unity with them ‘on the basis of the lexical material of modern international science and technology’ and in this way led them to merge.⁹⁶ Earlier, Drezen even declared that the ‘tendencies

⁹⁶ Drezen (1931a), p. 250.

to appropriation of supranational socialist content' contained in Esperanto, 'a language used particularly by the most progressive social strata', were 'even clearer and more striking than in the national languages'.⁹⁷ Neither Drezen nor Spiridovich pointed out that in the non-Russian languages of the Soviet Union scientific and technical terminology was mostly borrowed from Russian.

Such an omission is surprising because the facts are entirely clear. As George P. Springer emphasizes, Esperanto was never officially considered as an acceptable means of communication *within* the Soviet Union, although an objective view could perfectly well have left such a possibility open, for example given the well-known opposition of Lenin to privileging the Russian language.⁹⁸ On the contrary, the aim of the Party was that the many ethnicities of the Soviet Union should use Russian to understand one another and for their part they should feel ever stronger pressure to learn that language. Left to Esperanto was only the role of serving as a link (and a channel of propaganda) to other countries.

Another question is whether the Soviet Esperantists could always distinguish between the two spheres of communication—within and outside the Soviet Union. There are some indications that Esperantists of non-Russian nationality tended to regard Esperanto as in some measure a counterweight to the domination of the Russian language, while on the other hand among Russian (and some foreign) Esperantists there was a tendency to consider the spread of Russian within the Soviet Union as a step toward the worldwide process of 'denationalization' advanced by Esperanto.⁹⁹ The latter ideas seemed to lose viability after Skrypnyk's public warning against the 'Esperantization' of Ukraine,¹⁰⁰ and if, also in

⁹⁷ Drezen (1991), pp. 335–6.

⁹⁸ Springer (1956), pp. 13, 31.

⁹⁹ This tendency was particularly evident among convinced SAT members. Lanti, even after the schism, expressed support for Stalin's Russification policy; see Lanti (1940), p. 44.

¹⁰⁰ We lack detailed information on how the Esperantists in Ukraine related to their native language. We should note that in Ukraine Russian was widely spoken in the cities, while in the provinces use of Ukrainian dominated. Because the Esperantists were concentrated in the cities, they were probably not free of the customary prejudice that it was mostly the less educated people who preferred to speak Ukrainian. A Ukrainian Esperantist of this kind later attacked by Skrypnyk mentioned in a letter to Lanti (2 December 1927), that Krupskaja, Lenin's widow, publicly attacked *sennacismo* and Esperanto and that 'Ukrainian nationalists' halted a series of lectures on Esperanto on the Kharkov radio station after there was talk of the formation of a worldwide culture and the

1930, Stalin condemned the supporters of a ‘single, common language’ in the Soviet Union (because ‘they are, in essence, striving to restore the *privileges* of the formerly predominant language, namely the *Great Russian* language’¹⁰¹), this provided momentary stimulus for those who wished to publicize Esperanto as a kind of guarantee for the equal flowering of the nations of the Soviet Union.

But, at about the same time, one incident revealed how risky it was to launch a discussion of Esperanto in connection with the language problem internal to the Soviet Union. Shortly before the Party Congress, the Ukrainian Esperantist Sergei Sinitsky asked several writers in his homeland for their opinion of Esperanto. Among the published responses, particularly interesting is that of the popular poet Volodymyr Sosiura¹⁰²:

I am amazed that Esperanto is not taught in our schools. That would speed up, in parallel with the organization of small groups among the masses, preparations for the substitution of the Russian language by Esperanto as the state language of the USSR. It would help us to fight faster and more successfully against the so-called local nationalisms by dissolving them. It would put the Russian language in the same place as the languages of the other republics, and the Great-Russian chauvinism along cultural lines would become a local nationalism. Esperanto—a language created on the basis of knowledge of the development of languages—helps us to move through the huge ocean of languages towards the world culture with open eyes. In my opinion, it is necessary, finally, to introduce Esperanto into the practical life of our republics as a language that will become the state language of the USSR and afterwards of the whole world.¹⁰³

Sosiura’s heretical claims were published in SEU’s theoretical journal—however, with an editorial note that pointed out ‘his quite erroneous, anti-Marxist viewpoint’. Sosiura was faulted for opposing the national

dying off of national languages: E. Lanti, ‘Manifesto de la sennaciistoj’, reprinted in Mickle (2013), pp. 62–83 (esp. p. 71).

¹⁰¹ ‘Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.); June 27, 1930’, Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 376.

¹⁰² From the 1920s on, Sosiura’s poems were popular in Ukraine.

¹⁰³ S. Sinitskii, ‘Ukrainskie pisateli ob esperanto’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 8 (1930): 266–8 (quotation p. 267).

forms of language and forgetting the principal matter, namely socialist content. To counter nationalisms—the editors warned—‘we must remove their class roots, but not their languages; in our country no single state language is privileged: the languages of all peoples of the Soviet Union are equal to one another’. Sosiura’s proposal to introduce Esperanto as a state language should accordingly be considered ‘an unnecessary and harmful fantasy, a “leftist-radical” quasi-advance’.¹⁰⁴

We could readily label Sosiura’s proposals as a ‘purely Zamenhofian program’.¹⁰⁵ In essence, they resemble concepts valid in the Esperanto movement long before the founding of the Soviet Union; the so-called Declaration on Esperantism accepted by the First Congress in Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1905 included, among other things, the goal that Esperanto ‘could serve as a reconciling language of public institutions in those countries where different nations fight among themselves over language’.¹⁰⁶ That for the Esperantists the proposals of Sosiura did not seem unorthodox, and that such clearly unrealistic ideas found support among SEU members, is evident from the reaction of the interviewer Sinitsky to the editors’ criticism of Sosiura. It is simply not true—wrote Sinitsky—that Sosiura proposed ‘eliminating the national language forms through the Esperanto language’. On the contrary, Esperanto should have its place next to the national languages—as ‘a state language of the USSR, an auxiliary language, a second language after the national mother tongue’ and must ‘push the Russian language out of its current privileged position’, so that the principle of Lenin would be observed. Because ‘to overlook and deny’, as the editors were doing, ‘that the Russian language through its privileged position offends against the Leninist principle of “no privilege for any nation, for any language” seems clearly anti-Leninist’.¹⁰⁷

Sinitsky courageously tried to defy the current flow of events, using Esperanto as a cudgel to return his readers to the principles of Lenin. Conscious of the political dangers of such an effort, the editors now

¹⁰⁴ *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 8 (1930): 267; cf. R. Nikolskij, ‘Ĉu Esperanto povas esti ŝtata lingvo’, *Internaciisto*, 1931, 27/28 (Nov.): 224.

¹⁰⁵ Duc Goninaz (1993), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *EeP*, p. 418–19. See also Michel Duc Goninaz, *Lingvoj, gentoj kaj lingva politiko*, Liège: Someraĵ Universitataj Kursoj, 1974, pp. 30–1.

¹⁰⁷ S.P. Sinitskii, ‘Piŝmo v redaktsiiu’ (Letter to the editor), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 9 (1931): 124–5.

replied more sharply. They accused Sinitsky of adopting ‘a class-based position unfriendly to the proletariat’ by ignoring article 34 of the Soviet constitution, according to which the Russian language no longer enjoyed ‘the privileges of a state language existing in the capitalist order’. Evidently he also did not know the words of Lenin: ‘We, of course, are in favor of every inhabitant of Russia having the opportunity to learn the great Russian language.’ The editors asked Sinitsky whether, then, he perhaps wished to hinder the desire of the working people of the national republics to read the works of Lenin and Stalin, and all party decisions, in the original, along with their efforts to acquire the technological knowledge conveyed by the Russian language. Not understanding ‘that the totality of class interests is more important than national differences’, Sinitsky had turned against not simply ‘the language of Russian landowners, capitalists, priests, police, but against the Russian language in general’. If in so doing he had opposed the idea that non-Russian workers and peasants in the Soviet Union should learn the language of their Russian comrades he was aiming at the separation of nationalities and pursuing ‘counterrevolutionary activity’. In conclusion, the editors proclaimed that Sinitsky’s point of view was ‘a clear example of how poorly the Soviet Esperantists were equipped with the Marxist-Leninist method’.¹⁰⁸

After such a severe dressing-down, nothing was left to Sinitsky and Sosiura other than extensive self-criticism. Both confessed that they were guilty of a ‘crude political error’ in not distinguishing between ‘learning and teaching’ the Russian language and underestimating ‘the significance of the study of Russian for the proletariat of the USSR’.¹⁰⁹

How should we judge this polemic, unique in SEU’s journal, on the position of the Russian language? It is remarkable how little it had to do with Esperanto. The editors dealt in detail with the progressive character of the learning of Russian as ‘a major step forward in the uniting of nations in a higher union’ and made no mention of any contribution by Esperanto in this regard. On the contrary, Sinitsky was condemned because his definition of the role of Esperanto only helped isolate the

¹⁰⁸ ‘Priznat’, a ne uglubliat’ oshibku’ (To confess, but not make the error deeper), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 9 (1931): 125–8.

¹⁰⁹ S. Sinitskii & V. Sosiura, ‘Priznaem svoi oshibku’ (We confess our error), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 9 (1931): 252–3.

nations. In his self-criticism, Sosiura did indeed argue timidly for a worldwide language ‘of which Esperanto constitutes and will constitute an element’, and the editors did not exclude the possibility of the compulsory teaching of Esperanto ‘where all necessary conditions are present’. But missing entirely in the long attack against the two Ukrainians was the previously frequently posited idea, particularly by Spiridovich, of the three-way interrelationship of national languages, an international auxiliary language and a future world language.

Stalin’s prognosis of a universal language was not mentioned on this occasion, though that is in fact not surprising. Relating to the future period after the worldwide victory of communism, it was unsuitable as theoretical support for current Soviet policy. Although Stalin had confirmed the future of internationalism, for the present he clearly gave priority to the ‘flowering of nations’ and linked to that principle criticism of ‘great-power chauvinism’. Thus, he argued for mutual respect among the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union. However—and that must have confused and disillusioned the Soviet Esperantists—the contradictions between official theory and practice were rapidly increasing. The Esperantists were obliged to note that Stalin had not only given no encouragement to preparations for the future language of communism but also in practice was pulling away from the principle of equal rights for all nations in the Soviet Union—a principle that could serve as favorable ground for Esperanto. Toward the end of 1931, Stalin began to ratchet up his policy against non-Russian ethnic groups—at around the same time as the discussion of the function of Esperanto within the Soviet Union, launched by Sosiura, prompted the SEU leadership to confess that the Esperantists must also fight ‘unrelentingly against all manifestations of local nationalist deviation’. The discussion made it clear to the Esperantists that the scheme presented by Spiridovich was no longer valid, namely the idea that not the Russian language (not explicitly mentioned¹¹⁰), but Esperanto, would contribute to the unification of languages under socialism.

¹¹⁰In 1930 the linguist (and Esperantist) Lev Zhirkov made an unusually open judgement: ‘[... the] Russian language—the language of the revolution—can in no way become international, simply because its grammatical structure is too complicated and contains highly archaic characteristics’: Jirkov (1931), p. 37.

Vain Theorizing

Stalin himself realized that hopes raised during the Cultural Revolution threatened the politics of the Party. In October 1931 he defined his position on the correct relationship between theory and practice. In a letter addressed to historians, he condemned the inclination of Communist intellectuals to fruitless theorizing. It was not enough, said Stalin, to rely on ‘written documents’ alone: ‘Who, except archive rats, does not understand that a party and its leaders must be tested primarily by their deeds and not merely by their declarations?’¹¹¹

Stalin’s letter prompted a wave of self-criticism among scientists and intellectuals. The Esperanto movement felt pressure to engage in a similar disagreeable act of ideological repentance. Early in 1932, the SEU Central Committee established a brigade¹¹² with the task of ‘sweeping away once and for all with an iron broom of self-criticism’ all errors, deformities and lapses endemic to the Soviet Esperantists. In line with Stalin’s attacks against de-emphasis of the nationalities problem, it proclaimed an intensified battle against the remnants of non-nationalist thinking. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that for the first time SEU made it clear that theoretical considerations of the language problem were of little importance. Alluding directly to the arguments of Spiridovich, SEU now distanced itself from his ‘battle cry’ that ‘at the heart of Marxist linguistics [...] should stand the language of a new proletarian era—the international language’. Major significance, by contrast, was given to the ‘flowering process of “cultures national in form and socialist in content”’, while ‘the watchword of an international language can naturally be only accessory’.¹¹³ This was a clear statement that Stalin’s ‘history letter’ of 1931 had superseded the enthusiasm awakened by his Party Congress speech a year earlier.

In 1932 SEU nevertheless continued to celebrate the ‘major victory’ contained in a document that for the first time seemed to devote serious

¹¹¹ ‘Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism’, Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 99.

¹¹² The brigade members were Grigorii Burliagov, A. Lobachev, Mikhail Pashchenko and Semyon Podkaminer.

¹¹³ ‘Per fajro de senindulga memkritiko ni kontrolu la tutan fronton de nia laboro’, *Bulteno de CK SEU* 11 (1932): 13–14 (quotations p. 13).

attention to Esperanto in the context of Marxist linguistics.¹¹⁴ The document was the eleven ‘Theses on an International Language’ approved by the Scientific Research Institute of Linguistics in Moscow.¹¹⁵ This institute was linked to the office of the People’s Commissar on Education, which functioned as a center for the supporters of Iazykfront.¹¹⁶ Drezen, as one of the founders of Iazykfront, probably at least influenced work on the Theses.

The Theses stated that one could not ignore Esperanto or present it as ‘members of the linguistic guild’ tried to do, namely ‘as an abortive product, exclusively a petty-bourgeois utopia’. However, at the same time the document stressed that in the Soviet Union at present ‘all efforts to raise the question of a common universal language [...] as a priority of the moment are premature and therefore utopian’. Doubts were expressed that Esperanto could make any significant contribution to the creation of a future language of all humankind: ‘The confluence of national languages leading to one world language is occurring independently of Esperanto.’

Reduced to the role of a modest auxiliary in the present, Esperanto was also subjected in the Theses to a whole series of ideological exhortations, among them the remark that Esperanto ‘was born in a bourgeois milieu’ along with the roots of its so-called internationalism:

The high-minded goals of Dr. Zamenhof and the bourgeois Esperantist propagandists concerning the brotherhood of peoples and worldwide harmony were, [...] like all petty-bourgeois illusions, aids to imperialism.

Accordingly, the ideological content of Esperanto had to be reformulated and more importance given to the proletarian elements in the language.

SEU declared its solidarity with the Theses,¹¹⁷ but Spiridovich refused to sing along with the chorus of approbation. He agreed that his own

¹¹⁴ ‘Krupneishaia pobeda’ (A great victory), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 97–8; ‘Marksisma lingvoscienco turnas sin vizaĝe al la problemo pri lingvo internacia’, *La Nova Etapo* 1 (1932): 115–16.

¹¹⁵ ‘Tezisy o mezhdunarodnom iazyke’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 99–102; Esperanto translation: ‘Tezoj pri internacia lingvo’, *La Nova Etapo* 1 (1932): 116–18.

¹¹⁶ The institute director, Mark Bochacher, and a special representative of Iazykfront, A.M. Ivanov, greeted the SEU Congress at the end of November 1931: *Bulteno de CK SEU* 10 (1931): 131.

¹¹⁷ Ē. Drezen, ‘SĖSR na iazykovednom fronte’ (SEU in the linguistics front), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 291–4.

work contained ‘crude errors’. For example, he admitted that he ‘completely bypassed the problem of the class-based, proletarian character of national literary languages constructed by the proletariat’—which was indirect recognition that he had not given attention to the progressive influence of the Russian language on the vocabulary of the once less-developed minority languages. But his reply amounted to a justification of his central argument, namely that orientation to the goal of the worldwide triumph of communism had to be valid also for linguistics, and that therefore the most important task of that discipline was to build the future language of Communist society. Citing Lenin, Spiridovich insisted that the entire effort of the proletariat should be directed to the ‘definitive goal’—which in no way prevented it from the dialectical capability ‘of establishing and solving urgent tasks *in the conditions of every concrete moment*’. The authors of the Theses, Spiridovich objected, had engaged in a ‘leftist’ flight from the requirements of the transitional period. They evidently saw the flowering of nations and languages ‘*not as a stage in the building of communism but as sufficient to itself*’, while for him the process was ‘*a necessary step in the construction of the future world language*’.¹¹⁸

With Spiridovich’s plea not to lose sight of the longer view, theoretical discussion of the worldwide language of communism essentially ended. Over the Theses, Spiridovich was still dealing with people who, like him, distanced themselves from Marr; but in the same year came new attacks. This time, Marr’s supporters attacked not only Spiridovich but also Drezen and the entire Iazykfront. A book published by the Academy of Sciences sharply criticized the work of Drezen and Spiridovich. Its authors asked rhetorically: ‘Can such formalism hidden under revolutionary phrases about Esperanto as the language of the proletariat be tolerated in the era of proletarian dictatorship?’ They questioned whether the line of argument of Drezen and Spiridovich conformed with Marxism. The international language will develop, they added, only through a united world economy in the era of developing communism, and it will be a language with entirely new qualities ‘incorporating all major achievements of the national languages’.¹¹⁹ About Esperanto they

¹¹⁸ Spiridovič (1932), pp. 157–60. Original: “‘Istinnyi lozung bor’by” v markso-leninskom iazykoznanii’, *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 338–42.

¹¹⁹ The fact that Esperanto is easy to learn did not impress the authors, because, they claimed, ‘the question of the easiness of a language will not have decisive significance under the conditions of

had nothing good to say. Its claims as the ‘language of the proletariat’ were summarily dismissed: ‘The fact that proletarians conduct international correspondence in it does not make it proletarian.’ The publications of Drezen and Spiridovich (his ‘Marxist phraseology’ evidently seemed particularly provoking) were seen as damaging ‘because they constitute an attack by class enemies in the linguistic field of the ideological front’.¹²⁰

Against accusations of this kind there was no defense. By the end of 1932, if not before, SEU’s theoretical journal had lost all confidence that the Esperanto movement could expect any profit from the dispute among the linguists. It grew increasingly clear that further participation in theoretical debate would only put SEU at risk of accusations of ideological deviation. The veteran Esperantist Andrei Andreev noted soberly that the question of evolution toward a universal language was a problem ‘more political than strictly linguistic’.¹²¹

Andreev was aware of precedents. The dissolution of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers in April 1932 showed that insistence on a proletarian, class point of view was unsuited to the period at the end of the First Five-Year Plan. The Party had so strengthened its rule that it could now afford to distance itself from slogans about the growing class struggle. Emphasizing the ‘proletariat’ was no longer necessary after the people had become, with much suffering and sacrifice, though not without enthusiasm at the progress achieved, melded into a united Soviet people. In education, as early as autumn 1931, the direction changed, leaving no room for theories about ‘the withering away of the school’; polytechnic education and other radical experiments were followed by the development of factory-style authoritarian learning. Reforms introduced in 1932–33 brought regimentation also to the university system. Children of non-proletarian

maximum cultural development in the communist society’.

¹²⁰ G.I. Gorbachenko, N.P. Sinel’nikova, T.A. Shub, ‘Vylazka burzhuaznoi agentury v iazykoznanii’ (Attack of the bourgeois agency in linguistics), in *Protiv burzhuaznoi kontrabandy v iazykoznanii* (Against bourgeois contraband in linguistics), Leningrad: GAIMK, 1932, pp. 129–40.

¹²¹ A.P. Andreev, ‘Sovetskoe iazykoznanie za 15 let’ (Soviet linguistics over 15 years), *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 10 (1932): 288–91 (quotation p. 290). Earlier, the same author (‘Lingvo internacia laŭ la marksisma vidpunkto’, *La Nova Etapo* 1 [1932]: 79) expressed the opinion that the Soviet Esperanto movement meanwhile could hardly expect official support: ‘A primary obstacle lies in the current political circumstances, which do not allow for free attention to our ideological “superstructures”.’

origins were given much easier access to higher education. And while the Marxist, highly politicized intellectuals lost influence, the ‘fellow-travelers’ once again advanced. Bourgeois specialists reacquired leading positions in the economic machine. Administrative competence, combined with ideological fidelity, had more negotiable value than enthusiasm for cultural revolution and knowledge of Marxist theory.

Memories of the communist utopia continued as a source of enthusiasm for the work of socialist construction; but, while they made the painful efforts of the present more bearable, in comparison with the ‘present tasks’ they were relegated to the background. At the same time, the Party understood quite clearly that the socialist utopia contained its unsettling elements because it allowed people to measure the present in terms of Marxist goals for the future. This was why Stalin had, in the autumn of 1931, condemned the vain theorizing of Communist intellectuals. A further year elapsed before the Soviet Esperantists finally concluded that it was no longer wise to generate theoretical contributions.¹²² Linking their fate to *Iazykfront* had turned out to be a miscalculation; there were signs that the temporarily pressured Japhetic school had succeeded in keeping the goodwill of the Party. Another, perhaps more important, reason for silence was the new trend in Soviet nationality policy. Although Stalin had still maintained in the Congress of 1930 that among nationalist deviations the chief danger was Great-Russian chauvinism, by 1931 the assaults of the leadership in Moscow were directed exclusively at another form of deviation—local nationalism.

Developments in Ukraine assumed symbolic significance in this regard. After a campaign lasting several months, in February 1933 Skrypnyk was forced to resign from his office as People’s Commissar for Education. In June an ultimatum from the Central Committee ordered that he publicly reject his nationalist deviation. Skrypnyk remained intransigent, but, finally, after continued assaults, chose suicide as a last resort.¹²³ All this took place amidst an enormous human catastrophe: in 1932–33, fol-

¹²²In 1933 SEU was still able to publish the collection of articles *Novye problemy iazykoznaniiia* (New Problems in Linguistics), Moscow: SĖSR, 1933, with contributions by Drezzen, Spiridovich, Loja, Zhirkov and others.

¹²³On 7 July 1933; see the obituary in *Sennaciulo* 9 (1932/33): 108. Cf. Gerhard Simon (1991), pp. 85–86; Martin (2001), p. 348. In 1962 Skrypnyk was rehabilitated.

lowing the merciless campaign of collectivization ordered by Stalin, 3.5 million people died of hunger.

The disappearance of Skrypnyk was, particularly for the Esperantists of Ukraine, a heavy blow, because of all the Soviet leaders he was the only one who took Esperanto seriously¹²⁴ and, despite his criticism of the Esperantists' excessive fervor, he clearly endorsed its right to dissemination in the Soviet Union. More generally, Skrypnyk's death and Stalin's new campaign against local nationalism shed dramatic light on how the Party's position on the nationalities problem had changed—and this in the few short years since Stalin had warned against Great Russian chauvinism, the very means by which Skrypnyk and his fears were eliminated. During the 17th Congress in January 1934 Stalin simply turned Lenin's principles concerning the prime danger of the nationalities problem upside down. Pointing to Skrypnyk's 'deviations', he named the local nationalism of Ukraine as a precedent-making example of the principal danger to fraternal cooperation among the Soviet peoples.¹²⁵

Beyond this change in priorities, however, Stalin did not reformulate the principles of Soviet nationalities policy.¹²⁶ His statement still stood: national cultures and languages should continue to flower in the Soviet Union to create the conditions for their unification in the world Communist society. He did not find it opportune to adapt official theory to the new reality, even if the vision of the future had long since dimmed and present priorities had also changed—namely no longer the equality of nations but all-Soviet patriotism, increasingly dominated by Russian symbols, prevailed. Under these circumstances the Soviet Esperantists' efforts to develop a profile as revolutionary vanguard in the battle for the future universal language met a brick wall. Much as the thesis of 'the withering away of the state' had no importance in the present, so the unification of nations and languages was a matter for the distant future.

¹²⁴ See also 'Tov. Skrypnyk ob esperanto', *Mezhdunarodnyi iazyk* 9 (1931): 216 (extract from an article in *Bilshovyk Ukrainy*, 1931, no. 8). It was certainly no accident that after Skrypnyk's dismissal the Esperanto summary sheets *La Vojo de Klerigo* ceased to appear.

¹²⁵ Stalin declared: 'The chief danger is the deviation against which we have ceased to fight, thereby allowing it to grow into a danger to the state.' ('Report of the Seventeenth Party Congress [...]', Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 369.)

¹²⁶ Cf. Gerhard Simon (1991), p. 150.

Attributing to Esperanto tasks directed at the future did not conform with political reality, and the effort to present it as a necessary auxiliary language beside the ‘flowering’ national languages was equally vain because the function of language for communication among the peoples of the Soviet Union was, to an ever greater degree, fulfilled by Russian.¹²⁷

In fact, by reminding people of the final goal of communism and thereby emphasizing the equality of all languages, the Esperantists were touching on dangerous taboos; in so doing, they unintentionally revealed how far apart theory and reality on the question of nations and nationalities and their relation to socialist internationalism had become. Was this, then, the direct cause of the demise of the Esperanto movement in the Soviet Union? Probably not, because the Party, as already noted, had not provided a theoretical redefinition reconciling Stalin’s statement and contemporary reality, nor, as far as we know, had the Esperantists been officially accused of misinterpreting Stalin and consequently of deviation. More precisely, the situation at the end of 1932 was completely paradoxical. Drezen’s turn against Marr had proved unfruitful; his efforts to find a compromise between the theory of world language and the practical priorities of the transitional period were premature. The disciples of Marr won (if incompletely) against *lazykfront*; unlike the proletarian workers and the leftist teachers, they did not fall victim to the stabilizing process following the Cultural Revolution. Shortly before his death in 1934, Marr was confirmed as the uncontested pontiff of Soviet linguistics—despite the fact that he was certainly not an apologist for the policy of repression that Stalin adopted. In fact, Marr strongly opposed all imperialisms, including the Russian variety, and on occasion tended to put too much stress on the role of national minorities in world history.¹²⁸ Furthermore, we should not forget his strong emphasis on the idea that the universal language of the future could not be any national language, and even less so could it be one of the widely disseminated world languages.¹²⁹ A further two decades elapsed before Stalin publicly confessed that the theories of Marr were unsuited to present Soviet realities. Up to

¹²⁷ Cf. Moret (2010).

¹²⁸ Cf. Kucera (1954), p. 27.

¹²⁹ Marr, *Iafeticheskaja teorija* (German translation: Borbé, *Kritik*, p. 89). Marr, whom Spiridovich criticized primarily for his inconsistent position, in 1933 confirmed the disillusionment of the Esperantists when he stated that Esperanto had been established ‘from above’, without consider-

that point, they were useful to him precisely because they also remained ‘completely nebulous on how to achieve the future worldwide commonality of language’.¹³⁰

As for the Esperantists, we can note that the immediate result of the debate on the development of a Marxist linguistics was their realization that it was no longer useful to participate, indeed that it could be risky to insist on a ‘linguistic revolution’. The Esperantists understood what scorching ground they were standing on in discussing the form and content of a future universal language, particularly in making demands that, in the present environment of practical politics, would put Esperanto in a position of opposition to Russian. The discussion did not result in theoretical justification for the suppression of Esperanto: still in place was the theory that, when presented in 1930, seemed to provide Esperantists with a more favorable basis for activity than ever. But political realities narrowed the possibilities open to the Esperantists to interpret that theory independently and apply it to their goals, so that in the end they preferred to avoid further discussion and the threat of collision between utopia and reality.

Long and difficult was the road followed by the Soviet Esperantists—under the weight of a Marxist tradition leaving no room for a neutral international language—in their efforts to establish for Esperanto a theoretical right to exist. After the ‘shaky situation’ in the 1920s they thought that at the beginning of the 1930s they had achieved a breakthrough: Esperanto seemed to have a chance of a place in the newly defined communist utopia. But they were disappointed. The Party did not favor spontaneous approaches to utopia, even declaring ‘war on the dreamers’.¹³¹ Thus, the Esperantists were pushed back to their starting point. However, even maintaining activity conformable to Soviet circumstances after 1930 became more and more problematic.

ation of its material base; quoted in Jindrich Kucera, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1952, p. 334.

¹³⁰ Duc Goninaz (1993), p. 2.

¹³¹ This is the title of a chapter in Stites (1989), pp. 225–41. The persecution of the Esperantists was, according to Stites, one characteristic of the ‘anti-utopian war’ (p. 293, note 22). Noteworthy is the observation of a contemporary: Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*, London: Harrap, 1938, p. 151 (on ‘idealistic “dreamers”’ and ‘internationalists’).

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