MASS VIOLENCE IN PAMPHLETS

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RIGHT OR WRONG



1 2014 propaganda poster urging Crimeans to vote in the Crimean status referendum: "16 March, we choose" and two maps, linked by "or."

Two months after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in February 2014, a status referendum was held urging Crimeans to vote in favor of breaking away from Ukraine. A propaganda poster calling upon Crimeans to vote reads "16 March, we choose." The poster presents two maps, linked by the word "or," as the alternatives proposed by the referendum: either a National Socialist Crimea, or a Russian Crimea. The poster frames the vote to remain with Ukraine, and against the Russian occupation, as tantamount to support for National Socialism. This image policy is underlined by an ambivalent choice of words: the Russian verb used on the poster means "we choose," but also "we cull" or "select," a practice associated with eradicating what is unwanted. The polysemic verb casts doubt onto the identity of the "we" speaking in the poster: is it the Crimeans who are choosing or rather the Russian occupying forces and their local allies, for whom the referendum is an opportunity to target resistance? In other words, the poster contains an ill-concealed threat while presenting the illusion of democratic choice.

The poster presents false alternatives, of course: the choice is not between going back to past atrocities or forward into a bright future under Russian rule. However, both the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine have been presented against the backdrop of these alternatives. Yet merely stating the obvious – that the historical alternatives given are false – warrants no understanding of why references to historical authority feature promi-

nently in propaganda pamphlets in general, and in Russian propaganda justifying its attacks on Ukraine in particular.

The association of Ukraine with National Socialism, and of Russia with liberty, features prominently in this propaganda. Putin reiterates the historical narrative underlying the imagery of the 2014 poster in his claim in 2022 that the Russian invasion serves to "denazify" Ukraine[1] in order to prevent a "genocide" of Russians.[2] This claim seeks to justify the invasion of Ukraine by casting it as a continuation of the successful battle against National Socialist Germany in World War II, the mainstay of both Communist Soviet and Russian national memory politics that legitimizes the status quo.[3] Analyzing appeals to such historical authority in justifications of acts that seem all but legitimate requires taking into account that, while these appeals may be factually and morally right or wrong, this distinction does not explain how they function. This is particularly obvious in captions.



2 Eugène Atget, *Rue de la Montagne – Sainte Geneviève*, Paris (n.d.).

1 Vladimir Putin: "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]", in: http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843 (February 24, 2022).

2 Vladimir Putin: "Обращение Президента Российской Федерации [Address by the President of the Russian Federation]", in: http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828 (February 21, 2022).

3 Matthias Schwartz, Nina Weller, Heike Winkel: "After Memory: Introduction", in: *After Memory: World War II in Contemporary Eastern European Literatures*, ed. by Matthias Schwartz, Nina Weller, Heike Winkel, Berlin: de Gruyter (2021), pp. 1–20, p. 6.

> With Atget, photographic records begin to be evidence in the historical [process] [*Prozess*]. This constitutes their hidden political significance. [...] At the same time, illustrated magazines begin to put up signposts [...] – whether these are right or wrong is irrelevant. For the first time, captions become obligatory.[4]

Whether captions are "right or wrong" in terms of naming what the image shows is "irrelevant" for the semantization of images. Captions are speech acts rather than mere descriptions because they inscribe photographs into the "historical process," into the articulation of the past as a narrative that leads to the present. This "political significance" of captions is particularly crucial – and hardly "hidden" – in images on propaganda pamphlets that seek to justify mass violence. Such pamphlets often frame their discourse as legitimate by appealing to the authority of seminal texts of the cultural canon. Appeals to authority are often a call to violent action by gesturing towards a historical example and carving out the prospect of the desolate consequences of inaction based on identificatory historical narratives. The story they tell about mass violence is not just that it has been done before, which is factually right, but also that, therefore, it must be done again – which does not easily seem right.

In pamphlets that seek to justify mass violence, the question of "right or wrong" captions is both simple and complicated. While they are often factually, and always legally and morally wrong, authority within a cultural canon transcends the question of "right or wrong" because it is always subject to construction. Our main hypothesis is that justifications of mass violence often invoke and, at the same time, construct historical authority by referencing and re-interpreting key elements of cultural memory. To outline this in the following, we scrutinize a heterogeneous corpus that comprises propaganda posters, murals, websites, and leaflets distributed in print as well as online. While few of them fall under the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s description of the term "pamphlet" as a "short printed work of several pages fastened together without a hard cover," they do fall in line with the *OED*'s further outline of this medium as "of a polemical or political nature."[5] The rationale of our choice of text and image media builds on the fact that "the hybrid quality of the modern pamphlet" must be taken into account,[6] which can best be done by distinguishing between materiality and communicative form: "pamphlets are objects, the pamphletary is an affective politico-literary practice that engages publics and inspires them to act."[7] The different media we discuss are all pamphletary in that they are distributed to a wide public to arouse strong

4 Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (Third Version)", in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 4, 1938–1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2003), pp. 251–283, p. 258; Walter Benjamin: "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit (Dritte Fassung)", in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp (1974), pp. 471–508, p. 458.

5 "Pamphlet", in: *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com/dictionary/pamphlet_n.

6 Sakina Shakil Gröppmaier: "Why Political Pamphlets Still Matter", in: *Public Seminar*, https://publicseminar.org/essays/why-political-pamphlets-still-matter/ (October 12, 2022), ¶ 7.

7 Gröppmaier: "Why Political Pamphlets Still Matter" (2022), ¶ 11.

emotions such as fear, anger, and vindictiveness, with the aim of inspiring audiences to approve of certain (nationalist, illiberal, fundamentalist) policies that endorse violence.

Four points need to be considered in order to understand the logic of references to historical authority in pamphletary media that seek to elicit participation in, support for, or at least tolerance of the perpetration of mass violence: first, cultural trauma is a seminal alley of invoking historical authority; second, what is said is as important as what remains unsaid in captions; third, emotional investment overrules historical fact (or the lack thereof); and finally, the construction of authority complicates a linear notion of temporality. Before all this, however, some fundamental concepts require clarification.

JUSTIFICATIONS

Mass violence is by scope, intensity, and complexity the most extreme form of conflict, exerted by groups of people in- and outside war. Mass violence is a descriptive concept developed in history and social sciences to a) understand the link between different forms of violence that occur during mass atrocities and b) avoid legal concepts such as genocide which may describe the same set of events but require proof of intent, which is often difficult and not the actual focus of social sciences and humanities. As Benjamin Valentino defines it: "Mass violence includes killings, but also forced removal or expulsion, enforced hunger or undersupply, forced labor, collective rape, strategic bombing, and excessive imprisonment."[8]

Such acts seem hard to justify yet still regularly occur, as in, for instance, the current conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. During the twentieth century, between sixty and 150 million civilians died in mass killings alone, while there were approximately 34 million battle deaths in international and civil wars during the same period.[9]

After World War II, in the wake of the Shoah, divergent approaches analyzed political, economic, and psychosocial dynamics that cause or promote acts of mass violence, explored sanctioning and restorative justice, and highlighted the possibilities of memorialization. However, these efforts have proven insufficient to prevent further acts. Understanding the persistence of mass violence requires a focus on the transmission of discourses that justify it. While *acts* of mass violence alter political and socioeconomic realities inhabited by surviving victims, perpetrators, accomplices, and their descendants, *justifications* of mass violence establish the linguistic and heuristic parameters for their subsequent juridical, moral, and scholarly evaluation. Justifications thus contribute to perpetuating societal fault lines and set the frame for further conflict.

8 Christian Gerlach: *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2010), p. 1.

9 Benjamin A. Valentino: *Final Solutions: Mass Killings and Genocide in the 20th Century*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2004), p. 1.

"Justification" is an umbrella term, subsuming divergent speech acts which have in common the fact that they seek to make mass violence appear as just, i.e., as the right thing to do. These speech acts include juridical legitimizations, moral vindications, political apologies, praises of superiority, populist incitements, military orders, downplaying, and screen memory narratives. Since mass violence perpetration is "a far-reaching social project" that "requires ideological justification" to encompass diverse actors and motives,[10] justifications of acts of mass violence are negotiated in intersecting key areas of the cultural canon such as the law, historiography, political propaganda, literary fiction, and – of course – popular media such as pamphlets.

Justifications of mass violence given by perpetrators are often dismissed, in politics, media, and research, as pretexts distracting from manifest material, political, and/or geo-strategic agendas. Yet while such agendas do often underlie mass violence, this does not explain what motivates large parts of a population to participate in, abet, or tolerate atrocities. Crucial for eliciting societal support are the reasons for committing mass violence that regimes communicate.

The critical role for ideology, here, is to provide some kind of *justificatory narrative* for the violence: a set of ideas about the meaning, character, and context of mass killing that makes it appear like a *strategically* and *morally* justifiable course of action."[11] Justifications spread by propaganda provide a discursive infrastructure that enables diverse actors with different reasons for participating in, abetting, or tolerating mass violence to voice their actions in terms of one common project. The discursive infrastructure of justifications allows them to view their individual motives (such as profit, appreciation, or acting out hate) and themselves as "just." Yet justifications are "not merely by-products or rationalizations of other 'deeper' motives or causes" but, rather, "vitally rooted in pre-existing ideology."[12] Justifications of mass violence capitalize on widely accepted values and norms, such as striving for security,[13] pity for the weak, and, notably, the authority of identificatory historical models. Finally, "justifications of war are more than 'cheap talk' without normative meaning. Even propaganda refers to an audience which constitutes itself around certain normative expectations."[14]

10 Uğur Ümit Üngör, Kjell Anderson: "From Perpetrators to Perpetration: Definitions, Typologies, and Processes", in: *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, ed. by Susanne C. Knittel, Zachary J. Goldberg, London: Routledge (2020), pp. 7–22, pp. 8–11.

11 Jonathan Leader Maynard: *Ideology and Mass Killing: The Radicalized Security Politics of Genocides and Deadly Atrocities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2022), p. 63.

12 Maynard: *Ideology and Mass Killing* (2022), pp. 63–64.

13 A. Dirk Moses: *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2021).

14 Lothar Brock, Hendrik Simon: "Justifications of the Use of Force as Constitutive Elements of World Order – Points of Departure, Arrivals, and Moving Destinations", in: *The Justification of War and International Order: From Past to Present*, ed. by Lothar Brock, Hendrik Simon, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2021), pp. 503–524, p. 523.

INVOKING CULTURAL TRAUMA

Formulating a "cultural trauma" is a seminal alley for invoking historical authority.[15] Pamphletary media have been instrumental in constructing images of the enemy and soliciting emotional participation in Early Modern religious and political conflict, such as the Thirty Years' War. And they still play this role in the "historical process" in modern conflicts, such as the 1990s Yugoslav wars, notably in the negotiation of the strategic bombing of Belgrade. Strategic bombing comprises at least two traumatic aspects: manifest destruction and the helplessness in the face of an unpredictable and largely unavoidable danger. Such shared experience has a potential to significantly reshape a collective identity, as in the instances of Guernica and Dresden. Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, has undergone aerial bombardment multiple times: in 1941 by the Axis powers, in 1943/44 by the Allies, and in 1999 by NATO. The 1941 Nazi bombardment was named "Operation Judgment" (*Operation Strafgericht*), invoking apocalyptic biblical as well as juridical associations, in order to legitimize mass violence. The bombardment holds a central place in Serbian cultural memory, curated, for instance, in an exhibition at the Belgrade City Museum opened in 2021 on the eightieth anniversary of the 1941 bombing. General Alexander Löhr, chief organizer of the campaign, was put on trial in Belgrade and given a death sentence in the immediate postwar period.

The legacy of the Allied bombings is more complex. During the war, propaganda of the Serbian collaborationist government portrayed the Allied bombers as cowardly killers of children. The April 16–17, 1944 attack was given special prominence as it coincided with Orthodox Easter, notably in one poster with hardly any caption. It depicts a mother holding a dead infant, asking: "Why?" The fact that the poster's caption indicates solely a date and a place suggests that the audience was deemed sensitized enough to grasp the reference.

The 1943/44 Allied bombing was rarely mentioned during the Communist period. Tito's government was a player in the Allied camp, the bombings were coordinated with its forces and were thus a potentially delegitimating episode. Furthermore, Yugoslav partisans presented themselves as the sole liberators of their country and were therefore prone to downplay any assistance. But despite the official repression of memory, the Allied bombing was still not forgotten half a century later, as became apparent during the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia. More limited in scope than its World War II predecessors, this campaign nonetheless had lasting effects, particularly on cultural memory. This time, Serbia was bombed by an alliance composed of both the former Allies (USA, UK, France) and former Axis powers (Germany, Italy). Among the posters denouncing the 1999 bombing, the "Why?" one also made an appearance, this time without the date, because the bombings occured during Easter 1999 as well. The repeated representation of the 1941 Axis bombings in pamphletary literature and other media

15 Jeffrey C. Alexander: "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", in: idem: *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (2004), pp. 1–30.



3 Propaganda poster denouncing the 1943/44 Allied bombing of Belgrade: "Why?", bottom line "Belgrade, April 16–17, 1944".

created a topos of national victimization into which the 1999 bombings could be fed.

Propaganda from Milošević's regime during the 1990s Yugoslav war invoked the World War II bombardments, equating NATO with the Nazis (for instance, in combining both flags), and posturing as a bastion of liberty under assault by the New World Order.[16] The authority of the international condemnation

16 "Serb Art Blossoms Under Bombs", in: *truthinmedia.org*, Special Truth in Media Global

of Nazi crimes and of national trials against Nazi war criminals served as the legitimizing backdrop to portray NATO as a war criminal.

The 1999 bombing of Belgrade has been given an identificatory meaning by the paradoxical operation of emphasizing its singularity while portraying it as a repetition of the 1941 and 1943/44 bombings. To be bombed by both sides fighting a war consecutively, and subsequently by all of them together at once, is the narrative backdrop against which the singularity of a national identity was and still is claimed. The 1999 bombing, and its propaganda linkage to the two series of air raids in World War II, had a lasting effect. NATO accession is a distinctly unpopular policy in Serbia.

In the Belgrade cityscape, the ruined buildings of the Serbian General Staff complex, the police headquarters, and the state television building still testify to the bombing. In the vicinity of the destroyed TV headquarters, a mural serves as a caption for the ruin in the background, articulating the "political significance" of the view onto the destroyed house in the "historical process" in stating: "There is no statute of limitations for the NATO crime," suggesting that the 1999 bombing does not become juridically or morally obsolete with time. The mural contributes to rendering the bombing a lasting wound, an identificatory cultural trauma.

So, too, does a commemorative stone invoking the World War II "Why?" poster, asking both Serbian authorities and NATO "Why" TV employees had to die in the air raid.

In pamphlets, murals (a seminal form of pamphletary literature since antiquity), popular media, and political discourse, the 1999 bombing of Belgrade is negotiated as a cultural trauma, i.e., as a trauma response that "occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity."[17] The victimization caused by the 1999 bombing has been shaped into just such a "horrendous event" in Serbian collective memory. However, the pamphletary media discussed so far denounce rather than justify mass violence. This brings us to the second of the recurrent dynamics.

SAID AND UNSAID

What captions say is as important as what remains unsaid. Appeals to authority in calls for mass violence regularly rely on appropriating the position of victim in reinterpretations of historical narratives that lay claim to moral virtue. There was no doubt a morally and legally questionable targeting of civilians in all three Belgrade air raids. Yet, the crucial question is how these victimizations are decontextualized in their repeated representation in different media. The representation of the 1941 bombings by the Axis powers became a "premediation," shaping the

Watch Bulletins on NATO's War on Serbia, http : / / www . truthinmedia . org / Kosovo / War / PhotoAlbum/photos-art.html (September 9, 2010).

17 Alexander: "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma" (2004), p. 1.



4 This poster, originally from the 1990s, has been repurposed for anti-NATO activism, circulating on reddit and other internet platforms.

representation of later bombings in line with a narrative of national victimization that allows people to bypass the question of *why* Belgrade was bombarded.

> [E]xistent media which circulate in a given society provide schemata for new experience and its representation. [...] What is known about an event which has turned into a site of memory, therefore, seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the 'actual event,' but instead to a



5 Mural in front of bombarded Serbian state TV headquarters, Belgrade (15 August 2021): "There is no statute of limitations for the NATO crime" (NATO zločin ne zastareva).

canon of existent medial constructions, to the narratives, images and myths circulating in a memory culture.[18]

The "Why" trope offered an emotional response that, paradoxically, precluded public debate that could answer the question: Why was Belgrade bombed in 1943/44? Why was Serbia bombed in 1999? How many people died in this bombing? In fact, of the 454 civilian victims, 219 were Albanians and 207 Serbs. How is it that the number of Albanian victims is higher than that of Serbian victims? And what about the fact that over 6,500 Albanian civilians were killed by Serbian security forces during the bombing?[19] Where are their bodies? In light of such

18 Astrid Erll: "Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation and the 'Indian Mutiny'", in: *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. by Astrid Erll, Ann Rigney, Berlin: de Gruyter (2009), pp. 109–138, p. 111.

19 "Human losses during the NATO bombing", in: *Humanitarian Law Centre*, http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=19413 (March 23, 2012).



6 Monument commemorating the death of employees during a 1999 NATO air raid, asking "Why?" (15 August 2021).

hard questions, the Serbian public prefers to deliberate over the dilemma of how to join the EU without also joining NATO. Meanwhile, the West contemplates not the integration, but the pacification of Serbia. Unaddressed and unprocessed, the 1999 bombing stands in the way of dialogue. Claiming the historical position of victimhood allows for a sidelining of contextual questions in favor of justifying acts of (mass) violence. This is, of course, a problematic strategy in that it weaponizes the moral consent that victims of violence need in order to be heard and given credit. A response to this strategy of perpetrators should not consist in abolishing moral consent but rather in taking into account that targeting morality serves the very purpose of producing outrage and emotionalizing debate.

EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT OVERRULES FACTS

A seminal structure in the transgenerational transmission of trauma and the sequalae of perpetration is repression, denial, and non-mourning that become manifest in "gaps in or deformations of language: incoherences, discontinuities, disruptions."[20] Linguistic discontinuities manifest the nescience of facts. Both facilitate decontextualization and the "remediation" of historical references, i.e., their representation, "again and again, over decades and centuries, in different media"[21] that renders them pillars of a memory culture – which, in turn, premediates the representation of future events. Gaps in these constructions of historical authority are filled with emotions tied to texts and icons of historical authority, which leads us to the third aspect: emotional investment overrules historical fact (or the lack thereof).

A striking example is the self-victimizing seminal to the identification of members of the German populist *Querdenker* movement protesting anti-COVID-19 policies, with Sophie Scholl, one of the authors of the White Rose group pamphlets that called upon Germans for peaceful resistance against the Nazi regime. Correspondingly, one of the signs displayed at a rally against COVID-19 policies in Berlin, Germany, on August 29, 2020, stated: "The silent majority is the greatest danger," a quote falsely attributed to Sophie Scholl, a key member of the Munich White Rose anti-Nazi resistance group.



7 *Querdenker* protesting anti-COVID-19 policies (29 August 2020).

20 Gabriele Schwab: *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, New York: Columbia University Press (2010), p. 53.

21 Erll: "Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures" (2009), p. 111.

In their six 1943 pamphlets, the White Rose relied heavily on appeals to authorities from the cultural canon, such as Goethe, Schiller, Aristotle, Lao-Tse, as well as the Bible to elicit support from Germans. The 2020 protests against COVID-19 policies, in turn, reference Scholl as a seminal figure of civil disobedience in German memory culture in a bid to lend legitimacy to the cause. The reference is lopsided, given that Scholl and other members of the resistance group were executed by Nazi authorities in 1943, while the 2020 protesters were guarded by police. Moreover, a considerable portion of the *Querdenker* movement is associated with right-wing extremism that is anything but critical of Germany's Nazi past. This inconsistency in the construction of a pedigree of civil disobedience and victimization by state forces is filled in with the pathos of righteousness and the indignation of the misunderstood.

A Bavarian branch of the leading German right-wing populist party AfD sought to appropriate the historical and moral authority ascribed to Scholl in German cultural memory on a 2017 virtual election poster. Quoting from the first of the historical White Rose pamphlets, the poster claims that "Sophie Scholl would vote for the AfD."[22]

The appropriation of the cultural memory of an anti-Nazi resistance group on a poster published by a right-wing populist party whose members often publicly downplay National Socialism[23] and the Shoah[24] was met with media outrage. As was a speech given by a woman who introduced herself as "Jana from Kassel" at a 2020 rally against COVID-19 restrictions in Hanover, in which she stated: "I feel like Sophie Scholl because I have been active in the resistance for months" (*Ich fühle mich wie Sophie Scholl, da ich seit Monaten aktiv im Widerstand bin*).[25]

This statement disregards the fact that Scholl was only able to be active in the resistance against National Socialism for a few months before being sentenced to death and executed. What is crucial is her reference to Scholl in terms of feelings since they are impenetrable to falsification by historical fact. She also portrays herself as a victim by bursting into tears and fleeing the stage after encountering objection to her identification with Scholl.[26] "Jana from Kassel" re-mediates a feeling of resistance into political resistance and appeals to the historical authority of Scholl in German cultural memory to render her sentiments valid of societal approval.

22 Jacques Tilly: "Über das extremistische Weltbild der Rechtspopulisten von AfD bis Trump", in: *Humanistischer Pressedienst*, https://hpd.de/artikel/ueber-extremistische-weltbild-rechtspopulisten-afd-trump-14009 (January 23, 2017).

23 Juliane Prade-Weiss: "Staging Enmity: Reading Populist Productions of Shame with Jelinek's *On the Royal Road*", in: *Open Research Europe* 3/23, 10.12688/openreseurope.15469.2 (2023), pp. 12–13.

24 Rupert Wiederwald: "Vogelschiss in der Geschichte: Der AfD-Partei- und Fraktionsvorsitzende Alexander Gauland verharmlost in einer Rede die Herrschaft der Nationalsozialisten. Politiker anderer Parteien sind empört", in: *Deutsche Welle*, https://www.dw.com/de/gauland-bezeichnet-ns-zeit-als-vogelschiss-in-der-geschichte/a-44054219 (June 2, 2018).

25 DiveEntertainment47: "Jana aus Kassel fängt an zu weinen als der Ordner aus Hannover sie wegen ihrer Rede konfrontiert", in: *Youtube.com*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJzloVidwVQ (November 21, 2020), 00:00:01–00:00:12.

26 DiveEntertainment47: "Jana aus Kassel" (2020), 00:01:10–00:01:19.

This remediation points out an important aspect of references to authority: while authors refer to historical authorities with a particular (conscious) intent, they convey a plurality of implications – narrative patterns, performance structures, moral validations – that remain implicit, and yet active. Protesting against COVID-19 policies is not the same as justifying mass violence. The protester's reference is nonetheless interesting for the present purpose precisely because she skips the mass violence context of the White Rose pamphlets. This lacuna spells out a resistance to acknowledging or even an outright denial of the widespread perpetration and complicity with Nazi crimes that is transgenerationally transmitted in German society and becomes manifest in right-wing policies. This takes us to the final point.

WARPING TIME

Constructions of authority in cultural memory complicate linear temporality. In referring to historical models in authoritative texts, justifications of mass violence shape the notion of a continuous pre-history. Appeals to authority are crosspoints of re-interpretations of the past and a pre-shaping of the future because they rearrange what Benjamin calls the "historical process." An appeal to what appears to be an ancient element of cultural memory, such as a psalm, is often an act of modernization, re-interpreting the past as a utopian model for present agendas. A striking case in point is the propaganda rhetoric of the so-called Islamic State (IS), which references the Crusades, as, for instance, in the 2014 issue of the magazine *Dabiq,* entitled "The Failed Crusade."[27] Dabiq is a town in the north of Syria where, according to a medieval prophecy cited by the IS, Muslim and non-Muslim armies will meet for the final battle, after which Constantinople and Rome – the centers of Eastern and Western Christianity – will fall. The IS fashions itself after this apocalyptic army, disregarding the inconvenient fact that Istanbul has been under Muslim rule since the fifteenth century, and focusing solely on Rome. The pamphlet grants a clear vision of the mass violence to come: "We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah, the Exalted." The West's attempts to fight back are cast in terms of a futile crusade: "this weak, pitiful, and abortive crusade will be the final one."[28]

> It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the terms *harb al-salib* (the war of the cross) and *al-salibiyyun* (crusaders) entered the Arabic lexicon and, even then, only through an appropriation of European terms [...] in response to an [...] expansionist Europe who now threatened the sovereignty [...] of the Ottoman empire.[29]

27 "Reflections on the Final Crusade", in: *Dabiq* 4 (2014), pp. 32–44.
28 "Reflections on the Final Crusade" (2014), p. 37.
29 Akil N. Awan: "Weaponising the Crusades: Justifying Terrorism and Political Violence", in: *Engaging the Crusades Vol. 2: The Crusades in the Modern World*, ed. by Mike Horswell, Akil N. Awan, London: Routledge (2020), pp. 4–24, p. 6.

Invoking the victimization of Muslims by the cultural trauma of the Crusades, which are indeed a burden to Western church history, might appear to be a reference to ancient history. However, the historical reference cannot actually build on any medieval notion of victimization since the Crusades did not stand out to contemporaries from the many other armed conflicts. What the IS cites is no ancient past but rather a nineteenth-century, anti-imperial historiographical narrative. The reference to the Crusades can be viewed as "audience-tuning," i.e., as an "adjustment of communication to an intended audience" of their propaganda,[30] that audience being, not least, the West. The IS rhetoric responds to president George W. Bush's invocation of the Crusades after the 9/11 attacks: "This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while."[31] Consequently, in IS rhetoric, all non-IS forces are crusaders, which leads to surprising syncretisms such as the "Jewish crusader, former US Secretary of State and US National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger,"[32] who may not have the capital of Catholic Christianity at the forefront of his interests.

Rather than outright ideological conviction, references to historical authority might well be mere pretexts to material or strategic interests. Yet even pretexts are texts that carry implications that shape reception. It is, therefore, too easy to dismiss them as empty talk, since they are part of an ongoing transmission of justificatory terminology, narratives, and heuristics. References to authority that justify or call for (mass) violence profoundly blend times and places to construct fault lines. They require attention because these new fault lines might readily appear to be authoritative cultural heritage, even to critical voices.

30 Erll: "Remembering across Time, Space, and Cultures" (2009), p. 123.

31 George W. Bush: "Address upon Arrival [from Camp David], White House South Lawn", in: *C-Span*, https://www.c-span.org/video/?166087-1/terrorist-attacks-us (September 16, 2001), 00:10:15–00:10:26.

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2 *Projet de l'impôt patriotique, donné par Mad. de Gouges, dans le mois de sept.re 1788*, [Paris] ([1789]), Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, collection Hennin, 10181, http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb40257593r. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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2 Robert Seymour, *The March of Intellect* (ca. 1828), London: British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum

REPRODUCING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

1 Unknown, *Frederick Douglass* (ca. 1877), Washington, D.C.: Brady-Handy photograph collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Online: https://loc.gov/item/2017895330/.
2 Unknown, *Howard Univ., Washington, D.C., ca. 1900 – Law library* (ca. 1900), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Online: https://loc.gov/pictures/collection/anedub/item/2001705791/.
3 Frances Benjamin Johnston, *African American Schoolgirls in Classroom, Learning to Sew* (ca. 1899), Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.
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BORN-TRANSLATED MANIFESTO

1 Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*, adapted by Martin Rowson [Graphic Novel], London: SelfMadeHero (2018), pp. 13–14. Reproduced by permission of selfmadehero. Artwork © Martin Rowson.
2 Stefanie Kremmel, *Der Lebenslauf der Übersetzung. Die Transkulturalität des Kommunistischen Manifests*, Vienna: University of Vienna (2022), p. 325. © Stefanie Kremmel.
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MATERIAL FOR AGITATION

1 *Gegen Young-Plan, Massenelend und Faschismus: Für ein freies, sozialistisches Deutschland (Richtlinien für den Wahlkampf 1930)* (= Instruktionen für die Wahlarbeit), Heft 1, Zentralkomitee der KPD: Berlin (1930), frontmatter.

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MASS VIOLENCE IN PAMPHLETS

1 2014 propaganda poster urging Crimeans to vote in the Crimean status referendum. Source: Andrew Lubimov, AP images.
2 Eugène Atget, *Rue de la Montagne – Sainte Geneviève*, Paris (n.d.). Source: ImageZeno.org, ID-no. 20001850032, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64881668.
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4 Unknown, Serbian anti-NATO poster, https://www.reddit.com/r/Hasan_Piker/comments/17slihf/nato_serbian_antinato_poster_1990s/.
5 Juliane Prade-Weiss, Mural in front of bombarded Serbian state TV headquarters, Belgrade (15 August 2021). © Juliane Prade-Weiss.
6 Juliane Prade-Weiss, Monument commemorating the death of employees during a 1999 NATO air raid (15 August 2021). © Juliane Prade-Weiss.
7 Unknown, *Querdenker* protesting anti-COVID-19 policies. © picture alliance / SULUPRESS.

IDA WELLS'S PRINT ACTIVISM

1 Miss Ida B. Wells: *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law In All Its Phases*, New York: The New York Age Print (1892), cover, in: Ida B. Wells, *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusader*, ed. by Mia Bay, New York: Penguin (2014), p. 57.