



Bücherhallen Hamburg



**FRAUKE STEINHÄUSER**

# **The Hamburg Bücherhallen in Nazi Germany**

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## PREFACE

When all is going well, public libraries are just an ordinary part of everyday life. People visit them in the same matter-of-course way that they go to work or school. Like a local supermarket, libraries respond to needs and demands and are places for communication, personal growth, curiosity and a thirst for knowledge. Ideally, they will be open to everyone – and indeed, even pleasant places to be. In modern jargon they would be described as easily accessible and customer-oriented service providers. That is why, especially these days, the decision of the Hamburg Bücherhallen – the city's public libraries – to engage with and explore their own history during the Nazi era is so revealing. And because the Bücherhallen are marking their 125th

anniversary and no such celebration can ever take place in this country without the institution in question critically appraising its own history. Most importantly, however, because it illustrates how totalitarian ideas and actions can so readily become entrenched in an institution widely considered to be inclusive and empowered. An institution that for many people is a trusted place of diversity and plurality of opinion. Frauke Steinhauser's study charts the way in which individuals took decisions that disempowered, marginalised and silenced others. It shows how they embarked on this route out of obedience or conviction, or because it seemed appropriate to do so. And it reveals how others – readers and employees alike – were affected by these de-

cisions on account of their ethnic background or beliefs, or because of absurd racist categorisations.

It is the immediacy of the research that shines a spotlight on these individuals and their fallible decisions, and above all on the inhuman and fatal consequences these decisions had.

This study makes an important contribution to ensuring that we see and understand the specific mechanisms by which totalitarian power takes hold in everyday life, whenever this may happen – and are able to take resolute steps to counter it.

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**Ansgar Wimmer**

Chairman of the Board

Alfred Toepfer Foundation F.V.S.

## HOW THIS BROCHURE CAME ABOUT

In the spring of 2022, a local woman contacted the Hamburg Bücherhallen. A volunteer in the *Stolperstein* ("stumbling stone") movement, she was researching the fate of the Guradze family from Hamburg. She and a friend of the family wanted a commemorative *Stolperstein*, a plaque, to be laid on the pavement in front of the entrance to the former Mönckebergstrasse branch of the library for the family's daughter, Hedda Guradze – along with an acknowledgement from the Bücherhallen of their former employee, as Hedda Guradze used to work there. She was dismissed in 1937 for being Jewish, emigrated to the USA and took her own life in 1945. The *Stolperstein* was inaugurated by Jana Schiedek, Hamburg's state councillor for culture and the me-

dia, in the spring of 2023. Anyone who visits the café that is now to be found in the temple-like pavilion on Mönckebergstrasse may stumble over the stone that was laid to commemorate Hedda Guradze.

The commissioning of this commemorative stone inevitably raised further questions: Were there other Jewish employees at the Bücherhallen and what became of them? How did the Bücherhallen staff, with their great affinity with literature and education, behave during an era of demagogic and propaganda?

These questions had only been partially answered in the chronicle "*Eine Jahrhundertgeschichte*" (A Century of History), which was published in 1999 to mark the centenary of the Bücherhallen and also explored the Nazi period, because the doc-

uments handed over to the State Archive were not fully accessible at that time.

This situation changed in 2022 when extensive source material became available and allowed a more thorough investigation. This brochure is an abridged version of "*Die Bücherhallen Hamburg im Nationalsozialismus*" (The Hamburg Bücherhallen in Nazi Germany), a study compiled by the historian Frauke Steinhäuser. She presents the people who worked for the Bücherhallen from the 1930s to the post-war period, thereby illustrating how the institution that is the Bücherhallen behaved.



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**Frauke Untiedt**

Library Director of the  
Hamburg Bücherhallen



Mönckebergstrasse branch, 1925; Bücherhalle Harburg archive

## PROLOGUE

When Reich President Paul von Hindenburg appointed NSDAP “Führer” Adolf Hitler as Reich chancellor at 11 am on 30 January 1933, the clocks did not stop ticking in Hamburg. For most people in the German Reich – apart from those who had been carefully monitoring political developments in the German Reich and could well imagine the threat that was now looming for all those whom the Nazis deemed unacceptable – everyday life simply continued at first.

It was a Monday, and at midday Richard Ohnsorg opened the doors of the library on Mönckebergstrasse in the centre of Hamburg – as he did every weekday – to those wishing to borrow books. In the working-class district of Hammerbrook, chief librarian Julia Curjel did the same at the branch there, as did her colleague Lilli Volbeh in the Eppendorf district with its greater proportion of university-educated residents.

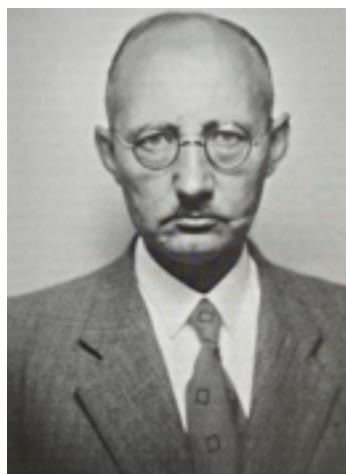
Was the handover of power to the NSDAP even a topic of conversation among the staff? Who welcomed this

development, who was alarmed, who was indifferent? Or was it perhaps not politics that was discussed on that fateful morning but rather, as is so often the case among colleagues at the start of the week, who spent their free Sunday in which amusing way? Or perhaps there was no chat at all and everyone who was working at the counter or behind the scenes immediately set to work dealing with the large numbers of library users.

Given the lack of contemporary sources, we can only speculate about the mood that prevailed among the staff of the Hamburg Bücherhallen. But one thing is certain: after 30 January 1933 it took only a few months for Nazi policy to dramatically transform the work and lives of Bücherhalle staff and library users and establish a *völkisch* (ethnic nationalist), antisemitic dictatorship of the written word.

## THE FIRST MONTHS

While Richard Ohnsorg and his colleagues were continuing to go about their usual duties at the Bücherhallen on 30 January 1933, their superior, the library's Director Wilhelm Schuster (1888-1971, member of the NSDAP, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, more commonly known as the Nazi Party, from May 1933)<sup>1</sup> found himself experiencing a surge of new energy. A staunch anti-republican and national conservative, he immediately took steps to ensure that the Hamburg Bücherhallen adapted to and operated henceforth in line with the Nazis' philosophy and principles – not only out of a desire to hastily comply, but also out of ideological conviction. Even prior to 1933 he had already purchased literature by those belonging to the "New Right" for the Bücherhallen.<sup>2</sup>



Wilhelm Schuster (1888-1971), Bücherhallen director from 1931 to 1934, undated; BArch R 9361-V/36365

Almost immediately after the Nazis came to power, he convened a meeting on Saturday, 18 March 1933 to prepare the chief librarians of the various branches of the Bücherhallen for the changed political situation and the measures this entailed. The meeting was attended by Martha Böhmer (Kohlhöfen branch), Hedwig Dietrich (Rothenburgsort branch), Julie Hansen (Barmbek branch), Ilse Paschiasius (Eilbek branch), Richard Ohnsorg (Mönckebergstrasse branch), Julia Curjel (Hammerbrook branch) and Lilli Volbehr (Eppendorf branch).<sup>3</sup> Schuster began by defining the public library's new role in the Nazi state: "[It] must serve the entire population and embrace all schools of thought that are essential and constructive for development. Since these are first reflected in literature, the library's collection becomes, as it were, the mirror of any new intellectual movement."<sup>4</sup> In his speech to the government five days later, Hitler provided the framework for this: "Simultaneously with this political purification of our public life, the Reich Government intends to undertake a thorough moral purging of the German *Volkskörper* [body politic]. The entire system of education, the theatre, the cinema, literature, the press and radio, they will all be used as a means to this end [...] They must all work to preserve the eternal values residing in the essential character of our *Volk* [people]."<sup>5</sup> For Germany to be able to assume the

leading role in the "reorganisation of Europe", the "intellectual structure" of the population and thus also its thoughts, its attitudes and its values had to be "shaped" according to Nazi ideology.<sup>6</sup> The public library, which reached a large number of people with its range of services, had an important role to play in this.

### **Hasty removal of books from the shelves**

Following his introductory words, Schuster gave instructions for the collection's development and regarding the selection of "books to be purged".<sup>7</sup> No official list of such books yet existed. Books of the "new intellectual movement" hardly needed to be acquired any longer, he confidently asserted. On the other hand, the political shift required the collection to be "unburdened" of such works that "could be detrimental to the new will of the nation". Those taking part in the meeting then discussed exactly which books were to be "weeded out and withheld". The individual titles were not to be destroyed until a final decision had been announced, however; only the respective book cards needed to be removed immediately from the catalogues for library users. The minutes of the meeting do not even hint at any objections from the librarians present. Instead, following Schuster's instructions they efficiently and pragmatically discussed the steps that needed to be taken to remove the books. This cultural



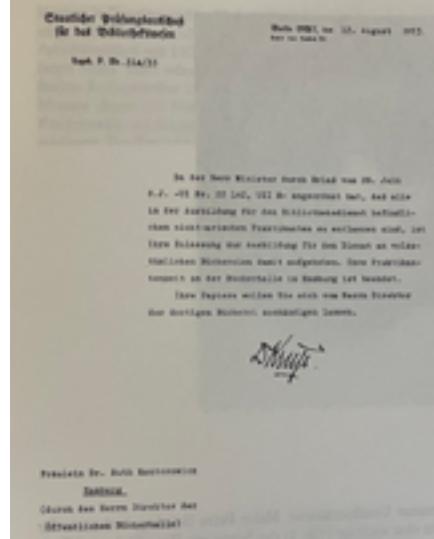
cull was an item on the agenda that was worked through just like all the others. Several pages long, the list drawn up during the meeting encompassed 93 works of non-fiction by Jewish, socialist or communist authors such as Gustav Landauer, Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg. In addition, it included 39 works of fiction, including those by Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich Mann and Ernst Toller.<sup>8</sup> A few days later, the chief librarians of the Bücherhallen branches also gave some thought to the criteria they could use to identify undesirable titles and to which collections would need to be checked through in their entirety: "Until such time as general guidelines have been issued for the removal of specific books, the Socialism section is to be examined for the presence of popular introductory works; the same applies to the Russia section. If applicable, the books are to be withdrawn from service."<sup>9</sup> In all, Bücherhallen library staff removed a quarter of the entire collection between 1933 and 1935. On 22 April 1934, the order was given to transport the purged titles to the Kohlhöfen branch of the Bücherhallen.<sup>10</sup>

The Nazi ideology did not leave its mark only on the collections of the Bücherhallen, however. Far more serious were its effects on the people who worked there. The first member of staff was already dismissed on antisemitic grounds in 1933.

### Dismissed: Ruth Kantorowicz, trainee

When in the autumn of 1932 Ruth

Kantorowicz discovered a letter from the Berlin-based State Examination Board for the Library Sector in her letterbox, she was delighted to learn that she was to be able to begin training as a public librarian at the Hamburg Bücherhallen on 1 October 1932.<sup>11</sup> Born in the city's Eimsbüttel district in 1901, the only child of a Jewish doctor and his Jewish wife, Ruth Kantorowicz had initially studied law and political science at Hamburg University – unusual subjects for a woman at that time.<sup>12</sup> Her dissertation was published in 1930. Unable to find a suitable position, however, she decided in 1932 to apply to train as a public librarian. Ruth Kantorowicz's time at the Bücherhallen was to have officially ended on 30 September 1933.<sup>13</sup> In mid-August 1933, however, she received another letter from the examination board – this time handed to her by Bücherhallen Director Schuster. Without any preamble or personal form of address, the board baldly informed her that, according to a decree of the Prussian Ministry of Science, Art and Education dated 28 July 1933, all "non-Aryan library service interns" were to be dismissed. Her admission to the training was thereby revoked and her "internship" at the Bücherhallen terminated.<sup>14</sup> In one fell swoop, this dashed her hopes of being able to earn her living as a public librarian in future. Already considered shy and reserved, she was henceforth described by acquaintances and friends as particularly fearful, intimidated and "lacking direction in life".<sup>15</sup>



*Top: Notice of dismissal dated 17.8.1933; Prégardier archive  
Bottom: Ruth Kantorowicz, dismissed from her training at the Bücherhallen in August 1933, murdered at Auschwitz in 1942, undated; Prégardier archive*

The following year she took a far-reaching decision. She converted to Catholicism and from 1936 lived in a convent in the Netherlands. Neither her conversion to Christianity nor her exile were able to save her life, however. On 2 Au-

gust 1942, over 200 Catholic Jews in the Netherlands, which by then was occupied by Nazi Germany, were deported to Amersfoort concentration camp. Ruth Kantorowicz was among them. From Amersfoort she was transferred via Westerbork camp to Auschwitz extermination camp, where she was murdered immediately upon arrival on 9 August 1942.

### The end of autonomy

Radical changes also affected the status of the Bücherhallen and its two foundation bodies, the Working Committee and the Board of Directors. The former ran the foundation's operations and comprised seven people that the Board of Directors had appointed from among its members.<sup>16</sup> The Board of Directors had at that time 17 members who would decide on more important issues.<sup>17</sup>

The Working Committee met for the last time on 30 December 1932,<sup>18</sup> while the last meeting of the Board of Directors was held on 12 December 1930. The latter's next meeting took place on 28 June 1935 and served to disband it. Only a few members apart from the chairman Eduard Hallier were present: "The remaining gentlemen had excused themselves or resigned," according to Hallier.<sup>19</sup> Research into the absent individuals reveals that he was deliberately not telling the truth: most had been excluded for political reasons or because they were Jewish. They had not stepped down voluntarily. Richard Robinow, an assimilated Jew, later commented

on his expulsion from the Working Committee. Like his great-grandfather before him, he had always regarded it as his duty "to engage in a voluntary, charitable activity, not only within the Jewish community but also for the benefit of the general public".<sup>20</sup> But then, as Robinow explained, he was forced "to resign under Nazi rule". He noted, matter-of-factly: "Here too, I was not granted a single word of farewell after more than 30 years of service. [...]"

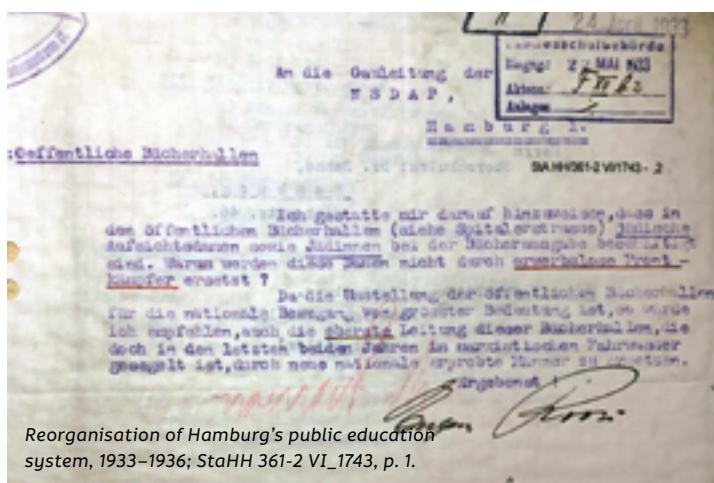
Erwin Garvens, who had to leave the Board of Directors because he had already been forced to retire from his role as director of the Hamburg Court of Auditors on account of "hostility to the regime motivated by conservative views", made a more embittered impression. Furthermore, his wife was deemed "half-Jewish" according to the racial categories defined by the Nazis. When, following his expulsion from the Bücherhallen, he was also thrown out by the Association of

Friends of the Kunsthalle and by the Patriotic Society, he angrily wrote in his dairy: "You can do your dirty work yourselves".<sup>21</sup>

By issuing revised statutes, the new Hamburg Authority of Folklore, Church and Art also revoked the foundation's autonomy, with the Bücherhallen henceforth to form part of the authority. The Working Committee no longer existed and the Board of Directors was only permitted to have eight members.<sup>22</sup> When it convened again on 17 October 1935, it was exclusively made up of NSDAP members and sympathisers. Hallier, the old and new chairman, declared that he would "naturally" continue to run the enterprise according to Nazi principles.<sup>23</sup>

### Denunciation attempts

On several occasions Bücherhallen employees also became the target of denunciations. On 25 April 1933 the following letter was received by the head of the highest-level regional administration of the



NSDAP Hamburg:

This was a classic case of denunciation. The sender, a Hamburg businessman named Eugen Roos who was born on 10 July 1889, had fought at the front during the First World War<sup>24</sup> and presumably hoped to benefit from his complaint himself. His letter was to prove dangerous for one of the librarians at the Bücherhallen branch in Mönckebergstrasse: Hedda Guradze.

#### **Dismissed:**

#### **Hedda Guradze, librarian**

From 1923, Hedda Guradze had studied art history, literature and archaeology in Kiel, Freiburg and Munich and wanted to do a PhD.<sup>25</sup> As her parents were no longer able to support her financially, she abandoned her studies to train as a public librarian. She took her diploma exam in Berlin in 1929 and began working at the Bücherhallen in Hamburg on 1 March 1930. At the Mönckebergstrasse branch of the library she was mainly responsible for the subject catalogue – a job that required precision and extensive knowledge. Being an expert in modern literature, she also wrote book reviews. She was bright, as her colleagues later said of her. She loved art and music, took painting lessons, played the guitar and sang as she played. She would also go into the countryside often with friends, could ski, had her own folding kayak and did gymnastics. It sounds like a fulfilling life. But then she was affected by the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which was enact-

ed by the Nazi regime on 7 April 1933. Anyone unable to prove by birth or marriage certificates that no Jews were among their parents or grandparents was dismissed or forced to retire. Hedda Guradze's parents had been christened as Protestants, but her mother had Jewish parents and her father's Georgian ancestors had converted to Judaism centuries earlier. When her father was forced to retire for this reason, he applied to be declared as "*deutschblütig*"<sup>26</sup> – of German blood. A ruling in his favour would mean that Hedda Guradze would only be classified as a "*Mischling*", a derogatory term to describe a person of mixed race, under the Nazi racial categories and not dismissed.<sup>27</sup> All her hopes were pinned on this. Her duties at the Mönckebergstrasse library now included revising the subject catalogue and sections such as "History of Literature", "Art" and "Natural Scientists and Doctors" to bring them into line with the Nazi ideology. A new category was to be created: "Race Theory and Racial Hygiene". Together with fellow librarian Friedo Lampe, she also looked through the entire collection of books on the shelves and deleted titles classified as "obsolete or no longer contemporary" from the catalogues and directories. Between April 1935 and March 1936 alone, this applied to around 1,500 books.<sup>28</sup> On 14 April 1936, the Reich Ministry of the Interior rejected the application submitted by Hedda Guradze's father.<sup>29</sup> She was thus regarded as a "full Jew" and received notice



*Hedda Guradze circa 1935; Seydelmann, private collection*

of her dismissal, effective 31 December 1936.<sup>30</sup> However, she could still see one chance of continuing her employment. In late 1935 the Nuremberg Laws had prevented her planned marriage to a non-Jewish Hamburg businessman. By submitting a marriage approval request to the Hamburg Ministry of the Interior, the couple applied for an exemption.<sup>31</sup> Marriage would have protected Hedda Guradze. When she informed Albert Krebs, Wilhelm Schuster's successor from 1934, of this request, he concluded a temporary follow-up contract with her that would allow her to keep her job until 31 March 1937.<sup>32</sup> The request was also rejected, however, and Hedda Guradze had to leave the Bücherhallen on 28 February 1937.<sup>33</sup> In addition, she and her fiancé separated. She emigrated to the USA in 1939.<sup>34</sup> As she had towards the end of her time in Hamburg, she alternated between

phases of great optimism and bouts of complete hopelessness there. It was difficult for her to find work as a refugee, and when she did find a job it never lasted very long. When she learnt in early 1945 that her mother had been deported and the whereabouts of her sister were unknown, she lost all of her strength. At the age of just 40, Hedda Guradze took her own life on 30 June 1945.

### **Book burnings**

The titles that had been removed from the collections of the Hamburg Bücherhallen from mid-March 1933 onwards were not affected by the public book burnings that took place in Hamburg on 15 and 30 May 1933 as part of the propaganda campaign "Against the Un-German Spirit". Thanks to their hasty compliance with the requirement to "purify" their collections, the Bücherhallen libraries had already reached the "campaign target" weeks earlier.<sup>35</sup> The situation was rather different in the city's Bergedorf district. According to local newspaper *Bergedorfer Zeitung*, "more than 500 books" from the municipal library were thrown onto the fire,<sup>36</sup> following a joint rendition of the "Deutschlandlied" (the German national anthem), at a "flame ceremony of the Bergedorf youth" that was held during the third phase of book burnings on 24 June 1933. The library's inventory designates 414 titles as "burnt books"; these had previously been removed by staff from the complete collection of 9,857 books.<sup>37</sup>

### **Handover of books to academic libraries**

On 16 May 1933, the German book trade's *Börsenblatt* magazine published the first "officially recognised" list, which was "mandatory for Prussia", of the books to be removed for the purposes of "purging libraries of subversive and anti-state literature". The books concerned were to be divided up into three groups: those to be destroyed, those to be placed in a "poison cabinet" and only handed out in exceptional cases, and those to be thoroughly examined once more.<sup>38</sup> The list was intended as a guideline, to be used until the first official lists of banned books were issued throughout the Reich in 1936. Furthermore, the Bücherhallen had already been ordered in November 1933 to remove all Masonic literature.

According to a decree issued by the Prussian Minister of Science, Art and Education, academic libraries were not required to discard any books and were allowed to collect all titles for research purposes.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, public libraries would often hand books over to them in order to rescue the volumes in question. Altona Municipal Library for example already handed books that it had purged from its collection over to the Hamburg State and University Library in May 1933.<sup>40</sup> In 1937, a Reich-wide decree officially instructed public libraries to hand over rejected books for academic purposes, whereupon the Bücherhallen libraries submitted 367 to the State and University Library.<sup>41</sup> Hamburg

University's Department of German Literature also recorded 278 new arrivals from the Bücherhallen.<sup>42</sup>

### **"White" lists**

In a parallel step, various lists were issued in an attempt to help public libraries rebuild their collections in a manner consistent with Nazi ideology. In late 1933, the first nationwide "white list" defined some 300 novels with völkisch-racist content.<sup>43</sup> Founded in mid-1933, the German Central Department for the National Library Sector also wanted to provide support with lists such as "The new nationalism and its literature". The same applied to the booklets entitled "Das neue Deutschland" (The New Germany) that the Leipzig Institute for Reading and Writing Studies published in cooperation with the Hamburg Bücherhallen. They contained recommended books on subjects such as "What National Socialism wants" or "The leaders of the new Germany".<sup>44</sup> The brochure "Zur Judenfrage" (On the Jewish question) from the *Buchberichte* (Book Reports) series was distributed free of charge to readers in Hamburg. The titles it contained included the "Handbook of the Jewish Question" by the völkischantisemitic publisher Theodor Fritsch, one of the intellectual pioneers of National Socialism, and the antisemitic conspiracy theorist pamphlet "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Jewish World Policy" by the leading NS ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. There were also *Buchberichte* on "Racial hygiene, why and how?" and, already in prepara-

tion for war, "Air protection is a national duty".<sup>45</sup>

### **Portraits of Hitler and swastika nailing**

In late 1933, the central office at the Bücherhallen ordered a portrait of Hitler for every one of its branches. Later, busts of Hitler were installed, and slogans by Hitler and Goebbels about the role of "the book" were displayed on the wall.<sup>46</sup> Members of the Hitler Youth (HJ) were given special tickets that allowed them to use the Bücherhallen libraries for free.<sup>47</sup> At the beginning of 1934, the Bücherhallen made a donation to a "swastika nailing". Referencing this, the minutes of the management meeting on 17 March 1934 record the following: "A sign, 20 cm high, with the name of the organisational unit and the Bücherhalle branch stamp in red and white paint, will be affixed to the swastika in Mönckebergstrasse on 19 March 1934 by a delegation comprising Dr Schuster, Miss Drössler, Miss Bachler and Mr W. Schmidt."<sup>48</sup> The money raised among the staff was donated to Nazi organisations; anyone who gave a donation was allowed to publicly hammer a nail into the oversized swastika.

### **Dismissed: Karl Pütz and Herbert Fenske, librarians**

There were also dismissals at Harburg Municipal Library. The first to be affected was the library's director, Karl Pütz (1889–?).<sup>49</sup> In early 1934 he had sent 177 works of non-fiction to Göttingen University Library in order to rescue them.<sup>50</sup> A former

member of the SPD, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, he was given notice a short time later on political grounds.<sup>51</sup> He joined the NSDAP in 1937, which proved advantageous for his professional career: in 1938 he was reinstated as a librarian at Wiesbaden Public Library.<sup>52</sup>

On 1 April 1934, Karl Pütz was succeeded as the library's director by his colleague Herbert Fenske (1902–1980). Fenske had also been a member of the SPD, though this clearly did not hinder his promotion. From 1935, he belonged to the two mass organisations affiliated to the NSDAP: the German Labour Front (DAF) and the National Socialist People's Welfare (NSV). However, he was also dismissed on 31 December 1937 because his wife, according to the Nazi racial categories, was considered "half-Jewish". Shortly beforehand, Fenske wrote a letter to Albert Krebs, by then the director of the Bücherhallen, which he began with a sarcastic remark: "Dear Mr Krebs! My work at the Harburg library has come to an end. My wife's imprudent choice of ancestry has led to my dismissal."<sup>53</sup>

He proposed to Krebs that Harburg librarian Johanna Schaar should succeed him as director, but on 1 January 1938 the post was given to Hans Engelhard, a librarian who had been an NSDAP member since early 1932.<sup>54</sup> Back in July 1933, Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess had already ordered that NSDAP members who had joined the party before it came to power should be given preference when positions needed to be filled.

Herbert Fenske was unemployed for more than a year until he found a job as a bookkeeper with a Hamburg bank at the end of 1938. He became a soldier when the war began in 1939. After the war ended in 1945 he returned to Harburg as the library's director.<sup>55</sup>

### **Innovation in Eppendorf**

On 16 August 1933, the Eppendorf branch of the Bücherhallen, in the public baths on Görnestrasse, celebrated its reopening as Germany's first entirely open-stack library.<sup>56</sup> Readers were now able to select their own literature from the shelves and no longer depended on decisions taken for them by librarians. However, the decisive factor in this was neither the certainty that readers could be trusted to choose their own books, nor a desire to foster democratic educational processes. The main reason was a shortage of staff in view of the sharp rise in users – and the knowledge that only Nazi-conformist literature was available in any case. This nonetheless constituted a trailblazing modernisation, as such open-stack libraries only became commonplace in Germany after the Second World War. Last but not least, this pioneering achievement was a good reflection of the professional career of Lilli Volbehr, the chief librarian at the Eppendorf branch at the time.

### **Lilli Volbehr, librarian**

Lilli Volbehr (1890–1978) had completed her training as a librarian with the Bücherhallen in 1913 – "[o]



Lilli Volbehr (left), 1949;  
Bücherhallen archive

ut of love for literature", as she once said.<sup>57</sup> She remained there throughout her 44-year career, almost always in managerial positions. From June 1927 to March 1936 she ran the Eppendorf branch and then the central department of the Kohlhöfen branch for a year.<sup>58</sup> Like her superior Schuster, she joined the NSDAP shortly before the party stopped admitting new members on 1 May 1933. As was the case for all public library employees, she was also required to be a member of the Association of German Public Librarians (VDV). This automatically made her a member of the DAF in 1934, and in 1939 she also joined the NSV.<sup>59</sup> From July 1937 until her retirement in 1957, Volbehr was chief librarian at the Mönckebergstrasse branch of the Bücherhallen.<sup>60</sup>

In late 1946, despite Volbehr's NSDAP membership, the Hamburg Ex-

pert Committee for the Exclusion of National Socialists approved her unrestricted continued employment because she had not held any office within the party.<sup>61</sup> She is a prime example at the Hamburg Bücherhallen of all the many highly dedicated female librarians of that pioneering generation for whom their profession was always a vocation – regardless of the prevailing political circumstances. She actively implemented the instructions issued as a result of the Nazi policies on literature and public libraries and supported the antisemitic measures. In the post-war period she accepted no responsibility for this and uttered no word of apology for the marginalisation of her Jewish colleagues or those dismissed for political reasons.

### Fighting for the right to work

An article that Volbehr published in the VDV magazine *Die Bücherei* (The Library) in 1934 offers a remarkable insight into the way she perceived her professional role. In the article, which was entitled "The role and rights of women in professional library work", she campaigned for the continued employment of female librarians.<sup>62</sup> This was prompted by what she saw as their uncertain future in the Nazi state. For example, in a speech he gave at the opening of the exhibition "Die Frau" (The Woman) in March 1933, Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels

had proclaimed: "The first, best and most suitable place for the woman is in the family".<sup>63</sup> Against this backdrop, Volbehr wrote with alarm: "But at a time when a woman's professional employment is one of the most controversial issues, when the call 'women belong in the kitchen' threatens to confuse the entire sense of what it means to be a woman, when the women in our profession are also gripped by the fear that this profession, to which they feel a calling and to which they have devoted all their strength, could suddenly be closed to them – at a time such as this it must surely be appropriate to highlight the questions that it seems vital to answer when it comes to the employment of a woman as a public librarian: 1. Does the occupation of public librarian suit the female disposition, and do women have the aptitude to carry out this profession.

2. Does the public library require the work of women, and in what respect can they in particular play a valuable role in the work being done to strengthen the *Volksganze* [the entirety of the German people as an ethnic entity]."<sup>64</sup>

She then goes on to argue that only



Page 1 of Volbehr's article in the VDV magazine *Die Bücherei*, volume 2/3, 1934

if women, whom she saw as standing for “motherliness”, and men, to whom she attributed “intellect”, worked together would public libraries be able to perform the important function assigned to them by the Nazi rulers: namely to become “tools for shaping the national community in the National Socialist state”. Volbehr by no means believed that working together meant equality, however. She always viewed women’s activities as merely complementing those of men.

In fact, Marie Friedrich, Martha Böhmer and she herself all held positions of responsibility as the chief librarians of Bücherhallen branches. However, the post of Bücherhallen director, with its political and representative roles, was always held by men – this remained the case until 1996. Martha Böhmer only assumed directorial duties temporarily when Director Rudolf Joerden was drafted into the *Wehrmacht*, the German armed forces, in 1940.<sup>65</sup> The same applied to Marie Willich, who stood in for the Altona library director while he was engaged in military service but had to step down when the new director was appointed after the war ended.<sup>66</sup> In Harburg, Johanna Schaar even had to relinquish her post as director to a newly appointed colleague in 1938 but then had to stand in for him again during his military deployment during the war.<sup>67</sup>

### **Book fair in Hamburg**

The “German Book Fair in Hamburg”, whose sponsors included the

Bücherhallen, took place at the Museum für Kunst and Gewerbe from 26 November until 6 December 1933. When Hamburg’s Governing Mayor Carl Vincent Krogmann (NSDAP) entered the room, all those present rose to their feet and, according to local newspaper *Hamburger Nachrichten*, “accorded him the German salute. Then SA [Sturmabteilung, the stormtrooper division] men marched in and took up positions against the back wall and, in a double row, in the central aisle.” The speakers spoke in front of three oversized swastika flags and behind a “guard” of four SA men.<sup>68</sup> Ten months after the transfer of power, this was a cultural event being guarded and framed by members of a far-right paramilitary combat organisation. Besides Wilhelm Schuster, the librarians Martha Böhmer and Julie Hansen were among the guests invited to attend the opening event.<sup>69</sup> The Bücherhallen libraries had their own booth to advertise their services, and Wilhelm Schuster gave a rousing speech entitled “What is subversive literature?”<sup>70</sup> As director of the Bücherhallen, he actively promoted its further development as the city’s largest public education institution and propaganda tool of the Nazi state. When he took over as Bücherhallen director in 1931, the libraries were suffering from considerable cost pressure as a result of the global economic crisis and at the same time had to cope with a huge influx of readers due to high unemployment. Nonetheless, he succeeded in modernising them



*Opening of the German Book Fair in Hamburg on 26.11.1933; invited guests included Wilhelm Schuster, Martha Böhmer and Julie Hansen from the Bücherhallen; Hamburger Nachrichten, 27.11.1933*

and consolidating their reputation as a “significant metropolitan system”.<sup>71</sup> Following the transfer of power, he voiced vehement support in his role as VDV official for the public libraries to be integrated into the Nazi state and called upon them to use their resources to help shape the “new German people”. He quickly and consistently implemented the corresponding measures at the Bücherhallen. Ultimately, he also benefited personally from the adaptations he effected: in May 1934 he left Hamburg and became the director of Berlin City Library and the library school there.

### **Murdered: Max Karfunkel, assistant worker**

In June 1934, the Welfare Authority assigned the welfare recipient Max Karfunkel (1872-1943) to the Kohlhöfen branch of the Bücherhallen as an “assistant worker”.<sup>72</sup> Karfunkel

was from a Jewish family and had been christened a Protestant. In his youth he had been sentenced to a number of short spells in prison for minor offences. From 1900, he was a self-employed businessman working mainly in Russia and Finland; he spoke several languages. However, the global economic crisis caused the work to dry up at the end of the 1920s. As a self-employed person he was not entitled to unemployment benefit, so in 1929, entirely penniless, he began drawing welfare. He was sentenced once again in 1931, this time for fraud.

Max Karfunkel's time at the Bücherhallen ended as scheduled in 1935. In June 1938, the criminal investigation department of the Hamburg police imprisoned him in Sachsenhausen concentration camp along with several hundred other men, some of whom likewise had criminal records, in an operation named "work-shy Reich". He returned to Hamburg following his release in September 1938. On 15 July 1942 he was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, where hunger, cold and epidemics were the order of the day. He died there, at the age of 70, on 21 January 1943. The Bücherhallen had not sacked Max Karfunkel, as he was only employed there on a temporary basis – albeit several times a week for a whole year. Were none of his colleagues interested in what became of him? Did chief librarian Martha Böhmer later not even remember him?

*Albert Krebs, 1960; Hans Peter de Lorent/Täterprofile vol. 3*

## THE KREBS ERA

On 1 September 1934, Wilhelm Schuster was succeeded as director of the Hamburg Bücherhallen by Albert Krebs (1899–1974) – an "old veteran" of the NSDAP.<sup>73</sup> As early as 1922, Krebs, who had a PhD in literary studies, had joined a "covert local group" of the NSDAP, which had been banned in Prussia at that time. In 1925 he was responsible for training work at the *völkisch*-antisemitic German National Association of Commercial Clerks (DHV) and joined the newly founded NSDAP in 1926. In Hamburg, he became an NSDAP local group leader in 1926 and NSDAP Gauleiter in 1928. He stepped down from this position a short time later due to conflicts with the SA. Subsequently, he was editor-in-chief of the NSDAP daily newspaper *Hamburger Tageblatt*. In 1932, Adolf Hitler personally expelled Krebs from the

NSDAP and dismissed him from his role as editor-in-chief because he had violated one of his instructions regarding press reporting. Although Krebs later had the opportunity to rejoin the party, he did not do so. Hamburg Reich Governor Karl Kaufmann appointed him director of the Bücherhallen in 1934; despite his expulsion from the NSDAP he was still well regarded in the highest party circles.

## Emigrated: Lotte Benett

Shortly before Albert Krebs took up his post, another Bücherhallen librarian was dismissed – following a denunciation, but not because she was Jewish. Charlotte "Lotte" Benett (1910–1971) was forced to leave Germany for political reasons.

"I read whatever I could lay my hands on. I had an endless source of books there at the library, but I was especially interested in the fates of those most courageous pioneers of the women's movement."<sup>74</sup> Lotte Benett's memories of her first few weeks at the Eppendorf branch in 1927 sound as if she had found her dream job – hardly the norm given the opportunities open to the daughters of working-class families in the early twentieth century. Despite her good grades, Lotte had to leave school with only a primary school certificate and was not allowed to learn a trade. Her parents' meagre earnings were just enough to cover the costs of her brothers' training – she would get married in any case, they assumed. She worked as a maid, though this did at least



require her to also attend a vocational school. A teacher asked her whether she would like to work at a library on the side, and introduced her to a librarian friend of hers: Lilli Volbehr, at the time chief librarian at the Eppendorf branch of the Bücherrhallen. At 17 years old, Lotte Benett loved the idea. She gave up her job as a maid and, because she was only able to work part-time at the library and didn't earn enough, also found herself a part-time job as a sales assistant. Soon afterwards she was given a full-time position. She joined the youth organisation of the KPD, the Communist Party of Germany, in 1930, but in 1932 switched to the underground resistance group "Red Fighters" that had been established by former left-wing SPD members.<sup>75</sup> Lotte Benett described the effects on the Bücherrhallen of the transfer of power in 1933 as dramatic: "The library was completely unable to function during the period of upheaval. Lists of banned books would arrive constantly, and would often be revoked the next day. Every reader was entitled to complain and demand the removal of any book. 'Still left over from Marxism' became the constant purging motto. A huge number of books were removed." At the same time, the Eppendorf branch was one of the few places where the politically like-minded could meet inconspicuously, disguised as library users, and share information. The "Red Fighters" group was broken up in 1934, with over 300 of its approximately 2,000 members across the Reich being imprisoned in

concentration camps. This also happened to one of Lotte Benett's comrades, who came to visit her at the library after his release: "He looked pale, had terrible dark rings under his eyes, and was limping badly. [...] The welling tears prevented me from returning his smile. [...] While I was putting my books onto the shelves, he spoke briefly: 'Be quiet. It wasn't so bad. They didn't find out anything. Greet the others.' Inconspicuously, I carried on sorting the books. We'd had a new colleague for a while, who for a second looked over at me."

A short time later Lotte Benett was denounced – by Walter Schmidt, who had been an assistant at the Eppendorf branch since 1933 and presumably was the "new colleague". Schmidt reported Lilli Volbehr on 12 April 1934, claiming that he had observed how Lotte Benett and her colleague Luise Kahl had taken stamps from the library to use themselves. Volbehr immediately relayed this information to Wilhelm Schuster, who came to the Eppendorf branch "to question them". Lotte Benett and Luise Schwarz admitted "after a lengthy interrogation" that they had indeed taken stamps. Despite the extremely small value of the purloined stamps, both were dismissed that same day.<sup>76</sup>

It is not known whether Luise Kahl was likewise a member of the political resistance. It is possible that both of them took the stamps to use for letters to their comrades in exile. In her unpublished material, Lotte Benett did not mention why she had been dismissed "for political rea-



*Lotte Benett (left), circa 1930, in front of the Eppendorf branch; Christiane Uhlig/Estate of Lotte Schwarz*

sons", as she called it. However, she wrote later that "[c]hance saved me from a worse fate [!]," meaning that she could have been sent to a concentration camp.

In June 1934, she finally fled to Zurich, where she worked as a maid again. In 1938 she began working as a librarian at the Centre for Social Literature (now the Swiss Social Archives) – which at the time was also the most important port of call in Zurich for intellectual émigrés.<sup>77</sup> In late 1944 she married the architect

Felix Schwarz, and in 1948 gave up her job at the Centre. Lotte Schwarz, née Benett, died of cancer in 1971 at the age of just 61.

### The informer

Walter Schmidt, who had denounced Lotte Benett, played an obscure role at the Bücherhallen. From August 1933 he worked on a voluntary basis for the library, and from 1 January 1934 as a cashier at the Eppendorf branch.<sup>78</sup> He joined the NSDAP in 1937 and was also a member of the DAF, the NSV and the National Socialist Reich Warriors Association. He was drafted into military service in 1941. In June 1945 he returned to the Bücherhallen.

During the course of Schmidt's denazification process, the Advisory Committee on Libraries contacted Bücherhallen Director Joerden in 1946 to enquire about Schmidt's stance on National Socialism and his political activities during the Nazi period. In response, Marie Friedrich, who succeeded Lilli Volbehr as chief librarian at the Eppendorf branch and was not a former NSDAP member, wrote that Krebs had advised her at the time to be "careful with Mr Schmidt with respect to political matters because politics had also played a part in the change in management. Consequently, I kept pretty much away from political discussions with Mr Schmidt, especially since I knew that he was close

*Even children were to be indoctrinated into Nazi ideology by being offered appropriate books to read; here at the Kohlhöfen branch in 1936; StaHH*

to the party and liked to see himself as the library's political watchdog."<sup>79</sup> She also said that this was the very reason why something Schmidt said in June 1945 annoyed her so much. Joerden told the committee what this was all about, explaining that Schmidt had always given the impression that he was an NSDAP member and had political connections. This was why he had been treated with caution by the rest of the staff, "who almost without exception were not members of the NSDAP," Joerden continued. Under these circumstances, he said, it was only natural that "it would create annoyance when this colleague of all people talked in 1945 about disguising himself and claimed to be an old communist". The committee classified Schmidt in Category IV, "follower", but recommended that he be allowed to remain in his position. Schmidt stayed at the Bücherhallen until his retirement in 1963.

### A tool of the Nazi regime

As far as Wilhelm Schuster was concerned, the role of public libraries was to help educate the entire population in Nazi doctrine. Krebs, who succeeded him as Bücherhallen director, believed by contrast that closer cooperation with party organisations was the best approach in view of the state's continuing financial difficulties – because attracting readers there was better than "indiscriminatory propaganda targeted at the masses". By incorporating the Bücherhallen into "the overall structures of public education work", the idea was for the libraries to become the central source of materials for the "HJ, political organisations, SA, adult education centres, Strength through Joy leisure organisation etc., to which all of these groups will be able to turn with their wishes and requirements."<sup>79</sup> The closer one of these groups worked with the public libraries in future, believed Krebs,



"the better it could expect its specific book requests to be met." To prevent "Nazi groups" from setting up their own libraries, such measures had already been demanded for public libraries at the VDV conference in September 1933.<sup>80</sup> Krebs thus explicitly defined the Bücherhallen not only as a service provider for the Party and its organisations, but also as a kind of implementing organisation that formed an integral part of them.

Nearly three years after the Nazis came to power, the Hamburg Bücherhallen had consistently aligned their book collections and their public relations activities with Nazi ideology. Literature on the subject of "race" provided a pseudo-scientific justification for excluding Jews, those who had been classified as Jews, as well as members of the Sinti and Roma communities, and culminated a few years later in the Shoah and the Roma Holocaust. Books about "racial hygiene" contained equally scientifically untenable explanations of the inheritability of criminal traits and anti-social behaviour, and of the necessity of the law, adopted in late 1933, "for the prevention of offspring with hereditary diseases" that legitimised forced sterilisation and the murder, from 1941 onwards, of more than 200,000 physically or mentally ill people, or those labelled as such, at special killing centres. Last but not least, "military science" gave a propaganda boost to war mobilisation efforts, which led to the Second World War begun by Germany

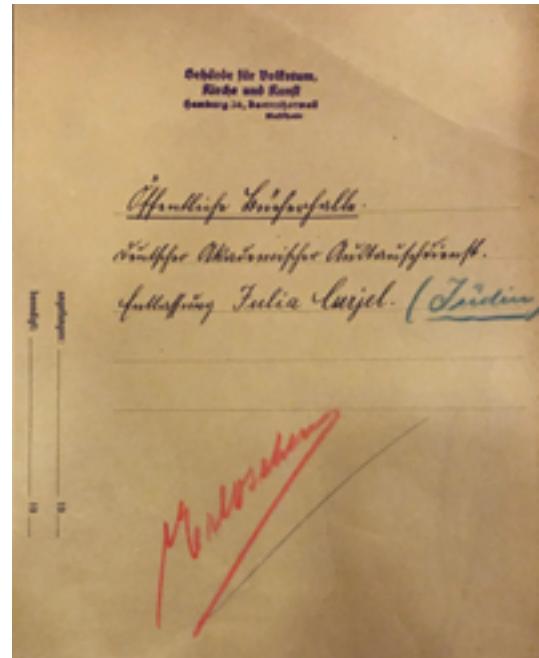
four years later and over 60 million deaths. It is inexcusable that such erudite individuals as the Bücherhallen librarians were unable to foresee that this – or at least something similar – might happen, but instead actually helped bring it about by making the relevant literature available.

#### **Dismissed: Julia Curjel, librarian**

Hamburg Nazi party offices and authorities continued to receive denunciations and complaints about Jewish librarians. There were enquiries, appeals and, finally, the blunt demand to put an end once and for all to a "state of affairs that is incompatible with National Socialism". This affected not only Hedda Guradze, but also another of the Bücherhallen librarians: Julia Sophie Curjel (1881–1975).

Julia Curjel had worked at the Hamburg Bücherhallen since 1901 and had thus already been employed there during its early years. Her family belonged to the Jewish community.<sup>81</sup> When a branch of the library was established in the then densely populated working-class district of Hammerbrook in May 1912 – it was housed in the public baths on the corner of Süderstrasse and Heidenkampsweg – she was appointed its chief librarian.<sup>82</sup> Around a quarter of the library users were young people.<sup>83</sup>

In 1934, Julia Curjel began to suspect that her colleagues were spying on her because of her Jewish faith. As she later reported during her com-



File from the 'Behörde für Volkstum, Kirche und Kunst' marked "Dismissal Julia Curjel" and, in brackets, "Jew"; StaHH

pensation proceedings, these colleagues, who had been appointed by the Nazi personnel office, would repeatedly attempt to provoke her into making "rash remarks" that would have led to her immediate dismissal and possibly even her arrest. In the end, she turned to her superior Albert Krebs for help, as she clearly trusted him.<sup>84</sup> After the war, he retrospectively blamed the Gestapo: "A former communist, who after a lengthy period of imprisonment in a concentration camp had been assigned to the Hammerbrook branch of the Bücherhallen by the Gestapo, ostensibly on parole but probably to spy on Miss Curiel, was removed again."<sup>85</sup>

On 11 October 1935, 34 years after

she had begun working at the library, Julia Curjel was suspended and then forced to retire on 30 June 1936 for being Jewish. In an essay he wrote about the Bücherhallen, Albert Krebs also made reference to this – although he played the situation down and was pleased that Curjel, unlike Hedda Guradze, had not made his life as Bücherhallen director difficult: “[I]ncidentally, this employee [Julia Curjel, F.S.] not only had a happy disposition, but also a consciousness of her Jewishness that made her fate [...] somewhat easier. She was very much a member of her community, suffered with it and was able to find comfort and strength in such togetherness. It was quite different with Miss Guradze. She complained again and again, claiming that she was a complete stranger to

the Jewish world.”<sup>86</sup>

In June 1936, the Gestapo forced Julia Curjel to move out of her flat. She had to sell her furniture and household items – including some 300 books and notes – at knock-down prices or leave them behind. When in mid-1938 she stopped receiving her pension and the antisemitic persecution became increasingly unbearable, she decided to emigrate. She fled to England on 16 August 1939, where she stayed with an uncle in Manchester.<sup>87</sup> In late 1941 she found a job there as an assistant at the public library. Clearly she already had a more than sufficient command of English by then. In June 1947 she returned to Hamburg at the age of 65.

Krebs' post-war remarks about the persecution and disenfranchisement that Julia Curjel and Hedda Guradze also had to suffer shine a revealing spotlight on the way he viewed himself and, above all, on his antisemitism: "My personal attitude as a former nationalist, national socialist and antisemite was simple: my antisemitism had nothing to do with collective condemnation or collective persecution; it was directed only against that Jewish minority which, in my opinion, harmed the German people by dint of its frequently [!] very loud and conspicu-

ous activity. That was not the case here." He attempted both to justify his antisemitism and to put it into context by making reference to anti-semitic justifications. In the case of Hedda Guradze, on the other hand, he found it "quite plausible" in hindsight that her father's ancestors had been "Aryan", as he had in his words seen her father and "photographs of family members".<sup>88</sup> This makes it very doubtful that he really was a "former" antisemite.

## Goebbels caricature and satirical poem

On 10 January 1935, party member Carl Schmidt wrote to the Hamburg NSDAP *Gauleiter* to complain that foreign newspapers containing Nazi caricatures were being used as wrapping paper at the Mönckebergstrasse branch of the Bücherhallen.<sup>89</sup> He attached an example – an excerpt from the Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* – along with a German translation of it. The complaint landed via the Authority of Folklore, Church and Art on the desk of Albert Krebs, who immediately ordered foreign newspapers to be disposed of in future when waste paper was purchased.<sup>90</sup>

## **Friedo Lampe, librarian**

At that time, the librarian and deputy Bücherhallen Director Richard Ohnsorg was still chief librarian at the Mönckebergstrasse branch. A short time later, at the end of March 1935, he took early retirement in order to devote himself entirely to the Niederdeutsche Bühne theatre that





*Friedo Lampe (1899-1945), librarian at the Mönckebergstrasse branch and writer, undated; in the public domain*

literary scholar Annette Hoffmann explains, the ban put him in the paradoxical situation of being required as a Bücherhallen librarian to purge the libraries of undesirable authors, a group to which he now belonged himself.<sup>94</sup>

The banning of the novel was not the biggest problem, however. Lampe's life could have been in danger if he had been prosecuted for his homosexuality. In June 1935, the Nazi state had further tightened Paragraph 175 of the Reich Criminal Code, which criminalised sexual acts between male persons. Between 1933 and 1945, around 50,000 men were convicted for even an alleged violation of this paragraph, with 5,000 of them being sent to a concentration camp. But nothing happened to Lampe, even though he lived more openly as a homosexual at the time.<sup>95</sup> He was even promoted. One reason no doubt was the fact that he too had been an NSDAP member since 1 May 1933.<sup>96</sup>

His life as a librarian did not satisfy him in the long term, however. In 1937 he moved to Berlin to work as an editor at the Rowohlt publishing house.<sup>97</sup> Just a few days before the end of the war, on 2 May 1945, Friedo Lampe was shot and killed by Soviet soldiers, who apparently thought he was a member of the SS on the run because he no longer looked like the photo in his military passport. The cross at his grave bears the inscription "You are not alone."

he had founded, which later became the Ohnsorg Theater. Though not an NSDAP member, he did belong to the NSV and in 1942 also joined the National Socialist Alumni League of German Students, the NSAHB.<sup>91</sup> His successor was Friedrich "Friedo" Lampe (1899–1945), a writer and librarian with a PhD in literature studies who had started out as an assistant at the Eppendorf branch in 1932.<sup>92</sup>

Lampe continued his writing even after becoming a librarian. In the autumn of 1933, Rowohlt-Verlag published his novel "Am Rande der Nacht" (At the Edge of the Night), which featured scenes – which Lampe described as "fleeting, as if in a film" – from a Bremen harbour pub.<sup>93</sup> However, the book was banned almost immediately after its publication by the Berlin Central Police Department for the Prevention of Indecent Images and Writings for Prussia. Lampe, himself a homosexual, had openly described homosexuality and sadomasochistic relationships in the novel. As the

### **Official "List 1" of "undesirable literature"**

While Albert Krebs continued to consistently align the Bücherhallen libraries with Nazi ideology; while Hedda Guradze fought desperately to be recognised as "Aryan" and thus to get her previous life back; while Julia Curjel was suddenly no longer needed after more than 30 years of a fulfilled working life and sat alone in her flat in Eppendorf; while Lotte Benett was building up a new life for herself in exile in Switzerland and Friedo Lampe had affairs with men, daily work life for most of the staff at the Hamburg Bücherhallen continued unchanged.

In October 1935, the Reich Chamber of Literature issued "List 1" of "harmful and undesirable literature" – the first Reich-wide and binding list of books to be removed. A year later, Albert Krebs informed the Bücherhallen chief librarians that such lists would in future be compiled by the Gestapo, who would also pick up and destroy the banned books themselves.<sup>98</sup> Time and again, however, books would also be taken off the banned lists again. In late October 1936, for example, the Reich Department of Public Libraries reapproved a book entitled "Der Weg in die Technik" (The Path to Technology) by Franz Maria Feldhaus that the Reich Chamber of Literature had banned on political grounds in 1934. In June 1936, Gestapo officers had confiscated the book from the Eilbek branch of the Bücherhallen.<sup>99</sup> As certain publishing houses were also banned, the public libraries also had



An article about the opening of the Veddel branch in the NSDAP newspaper Hamburger Tageblatt on 3.11.1937.

to remove their books and replace them with the same titles from Nazi-compliant publishing houses. For example, the Bücherhallen were ordered in July 1939 to remove the Malik Verlag edition of Lev Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina" and buy a copy from another publisher instead.<sup>100</sup> At the end of November 1938, the chief librarians were also required to remove sheet music and opera librettos by Jewish authors and send them to the Kohlhöfen branch, which in turn handed them over to the Municipal Music Library, which at the time was still independent.<sup>101</sup> After inspecting them, the latter offered to return the works by the non-Jewish composer Wilhelm Kienzl, which had been sent along with them by mistake.<sup>102</sup> Everything carried on as usual.

### Exchange programme with England

As part of an international exchange programme, the Bücherhallen sent the librarian Lotte Weisshaar on a two-month secondment to the public libraries in the English city of Coventry at the end of February 1936. In her place, the librarian Helen Wolter came to Hamburg.<sup>103</sup> After the war, Krebs also commented on this exchange: "One of our librarians, who had worked [...] for a number of months at an English public library, reported that she had encountered [...] a strange war mentality over there. However warmly she had been received herself, people had been very suspicious and unfriendly in their remarks about Germany and German policy, even back in the summer of 1936. This was at a time when people in Germany, and most party members, definitely still believed in, and above all wanted, a policy of peace."<sup>104</sup> Certainly the overwhelming majority of the German population were not yet thinking in 1936 of a war in which Germany and they themselves would be involved. In conjunction with a comprehensive rearmament programme, however, expanding Germany's "Lebensraum" in Europe was the main goal of Nazi foreign policy. It is hardly surprising therefore that this development was viewed with suspicion abroad.

### Veddel branch and specialist department open

1937 saw the first new Bücherhallen branch open during the Nazi era. On

3 November, the Veddel branch was inaugurated in the presence of the Hamburg Cultural Senator, a representative of the Reich Chamber of Literature, representatives of the Hitler Youth (HJ), League of German Girls (BDM) and National Socialist Women's League (NSF), several librarians and school head teachers, as well as the local press.<sup>105</sup>

That same year, the Hamburg Specialist Department for Public Libraries was established. Its role was to oversee the 57 volunteer-run public libraries in the Hamburg region. On 1 January 1939 the specialist department was subordinated to the Hamburg cultural administration authority, and affiliated to the Bücherhallen on 1 September 1940.<sup>106</sup> This meant that the latter's director was also the director of the specialist department, though in budgetary terms it was still part of the cultural administration authority<sup>107</sup> until the Bücherhallen also took over its staff on 1 January 1949.<sup>108</sup>

## THE JOERDEN ERA

When the guidelines for public libraries were published on 26 October 1937, the adaptation of public library collections to Nazi ideology was deemed complete throughout the Reich, and this was also the case at the Bücherhallen. Instead of having regional libraries or municipal library systems that operated independently, as had been the case in the Weimar Republic, a library system now existed that was centrally controlled Reich-wide, hierarchical

in structure and uniform in terms of its organisation, with a precisely defined educational mandate.<sup>109</sup>

On 13 December 1937, Director Krebs issued a circular to the chief librarians "in light of current circumstances" to expressly notify them that all employees were to greet visitors with the words "Heil Hitler". Greeting them by saying "Guten Morgen" or using "Auf Wiedersehen" to say goodbye to them constituted a "breach of discipline".<sup>110</sup> In the character reference she wrote for Krebs in 1949 for the purposes of his denazification process, however, the librarian Julie Hansen said: "When I asked him occasionally how we should behave towards Barmbek readers who refused as a matter of principle to give the Hitler salute, he just said with a laugh "I'll leave that up to you" – and that was that."<sup>111</sup> There is no way of knowing whether Krebs was really so nonchalant in the way he dealt with this matter, though it seems doubtful in view of his rigorous instructions.

On 1 April 1938, Krebs' patron, the Hamburg Reich Governor Karl Kaufmann, gave his career a boost when he made him the senior executive of the cultural administration authority, a position that also gave him responsibility for the Bücherhallen. In September 1940 he was promoted to the position of senate director.<sup>112</sup> He was succeeded as Bücherhallen director on 1 August 1938 by Rudolf Joerden (1901–1985),<sup>113</sup> a librarian with a PhD in education. As a teacher at the Pedagogical Academy in Frankfurt am Main, he had been

transferred to a primary school on 1 April 1933 on the basis of Section 5 (1) of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. Though the precise reason for this demotion is not known, the Frankfurt institution did have a reputation as a "red academy".<sup>114</sup> Joerden was not deemed entirely unacceptable by the Nazi state, however. From 1935 he ran Wiesbaden City Library and moved from there to Hamburg. As soon as he took over at the Bücherhallen, he decided to carry out a "streamlined organisation and internal restructuring of the overall operation" and to expand the main library. Though his aim was to relieve the burden on the individual branches, this was also consistent with the Nazi principle of centralisation. Furthermore, the librarians were to draw up a standardised "catalogue" for all the Bücherhallen libraries.<sup>115</sup> Joerden also addressed the significantly decimated collections and poor financial resources that the Bücherhallen still had by comparison with other big city libraries. As a result, Hamburg Reich Governor Karl Kaufmann did then drum up donations that allowed at least the Mönckebergstrasse and Eilbek branches to be renovated.<sup>116</sup>

### **Groß-Hamburg-Gesetz**

On 26 January 1937, the Reich government had already passed a law, due to come into force on 1 April 1937, that was to have a major impact on the Bücherhallen: the *Groß-Hamburg-Gesetz*. It expanded the territory of the city of Ham-



Rudolf Joerden (1901-1985), Bücherhallen director from 1938 to 1967, undated; Bücherhallen archive

burg by 80 percent, increasing its population by 40 percent. Various Prussian villages such as Billstedt, Lokstedt and Finkenwerder were incorporated into Hamburg, as were the towns of Altona, Wandsbek and Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, which, like Bergedorf, lost their independence as a result. The same applied to their respective libraries, which became branches of the Bücherhallen. Though implementation of the law had been completed in political and administrative terms by 1 April 1938, the incorporation of the municipal libraries took significantly longer. At the management meeting on 5 June 1939, Rudolf Joerden announced that the libraries of the towns that had now been incorpo-

rated into Hamburg and, as part of the same process, the music library, would come under the management of the Bücherhallen from 1 July 1939.<sup>117</sup> Because of the war, however, the merger did not begin until 1 September 1940 and was finally completed on 1 April 1941.<sup>118</sup> With the addition of Altona and its districts of Gross-Flottbek, Stellingen and Eidelstedt, Wandsbek and its Tondorf neighbourhood, Harburg with Wilhelmsburg and Wilstorf, plus the music library, the Bücherhallen now had 18 rather than eight branches, with a total collection comprising nearly 200,000 publications. There were also 25,000 volumes of sheet music at the music library, which at the time was the second largest of its kind in the German Reich.

It is not surprising that such a major change also had the potential to cause conflict. Martha Böhmer, who had been in charge of the Büchermann Hall ever since Rudolf Joerden was drafted into the *Wehrmacht* in August 1940, reprimanded Wilhelm Krebs, a retired headmaster who



The 'Groß-Hamburg-Gesetz' saw the municipal libraries in Altona, Harburg and Wandsbek incorporated into the Bücherräume system: StaHH

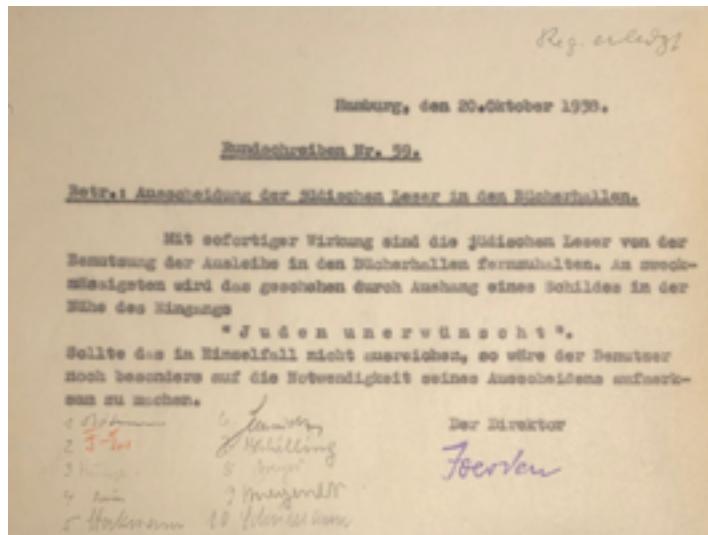
had founded and still ran Wandsbek library, in no uncertain terms in late July 1941: "Wandsbek Public Library is so very much your own personal creation that you will doubtless find it difficult to give up or change the character of certain things that you have established there. However, this will be necessary because you have now been incorporated into the Hamburg Public Libraries and will certainly need to give up all of your resistance, be it minor or in many cases considerable, to the planned changes."<sup>119</sup> It isn't difficult to imagine how the significantly older Wilhelm Krebs felt about being admonished in this way by a younger woman who was also his superior. Based in Altona Museum, Altona Municipal Library found itself in a particularly complicated situation. In 1931, the town of Altona had merged its municipal library, public library and museum library to facilitate their administration and make life easier for readers. Helmut Groos, who had a PhD in philology and was the head of the public library, became the director of the new "unified library". Now, however, the individual elements had to be separated again and Groos' status clarified.<sup>120</sup> A special role was played by the music library. Because integrating it into the Bücherrhallen system had been a very costly process, the post of director, which had previously been paid by the Education Author-

ity and had been held since 1930 by a teacher, Dr Rudolph Tschierpe, was abolished. Born in 1893, Tschierpe, who until 1933 had been an SPD member and music journalist at the SPD newspaper *Hamburger Echo* and a member of the NSDAP from 1937, then continued to work three days a week on a voluntary basis.<sup>121</sup>

### **Jewish readers are excluded**

By the autumn of 1938, Jews had been stripped of almost all of their basic rights, had lost their jobs and thus their incomes, and had been forced to adopt an additional first name, Sara for women and Israel for men. From 20 October 1938 they were also no longer permitted to enter the *Bücherhallen* – a further restriction on their lives, as many of them could no longer afford to buy books as they became increasingly impoverished. This also deprived them of a place where they could meet socially. This order was issued by Rudolf Joerden without reference to any Reich-wide law and thus apparently at his own discretion.<sup>122</sup>

Less than two weeks later, he stipulated that certain works by Jewish authors should be destroyed directly at the Bücherhallen libraries. Others were to be handed out only to those holding a student card, while the rest were to be sent to the Kohlhöfen branch, which passed them on to the State Library.<sup>123</sup> Five days later, during the night from 9 to 10 November 1938, the violence against Jews escalated across the Reich.



## THE BÜCHERHALLEN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On 1 September 1939, Germany's armed forces, the *Wehrmacht*, invaded Poland and the Second World War began. Since July, the Bücherhallen had been ordered by the Reich Department of Public Libraries to acquire more "books about the east". Titles such as "Uns rief Polen" (Poland called us) and "Das Deutschtum in Polen" (Germanness in Poland) were supposed to convince readers of the alleged lawfulness of the occupation.<sup>124</sup> One week after the invasion, Joerden stressed to the branch managers how important the Bücherhallen libraries were in the war. He said that they were now "vital" because they could supply the population with the books "that they need more than ever in these great and difficult times, both for

education and for reflection and relaxation". He also called upon everyone to attend air-raid protection and first aid courses.<sup>125</sup>

The librarian Meinhard Ufen was one of the members of staff who had already been drafted into the *Wehrmacht* at the end of August 1939. According to information from the military authority, he died in an accident on 28 August 1939. In fact, 24-year-old Ufen had hanged himself at the Theodorstrasse barracks in Hamburg-Altona one day after his enlistment – information that would have been too negative given the prevailing victorious mood.<sup>126</sup>

The Bücherhallen quickly adapted to the wartime circumstances. From 4 September 1939, staff were already arranging standby shifts to cover the nights, weekends and public holidays.<sup>127</sup> In the public area, a map was to depict "in impressive manner the daily advances of our *Wehrmacht* by means of little flags or the like", with

From 20.10.1938, Jewish readers are no longer permitted to enter the Bücherhallen; StaHH

the daily military report to be displayed directly next to it.<sup>128</sup>

At the end of September, the Reich Department ordered that all books about England and France be checked to determine whether they were likely to "undermine the strength needed to endure and the will to win on the German side in terms of the issues they raised and the way they dealt with them." If so, the books in question were to be removed. The same applied to books about the Soviet Union.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, staff were supposed to display brochures about the war in a clearly visible place.<sup>130</sup>

Even when the Allies launched their first air raids on Hamburg in May 1940, the librarians continued their work at the Bücherhallen with efficiency and dedication. They developed a new system for works of non-fiction, drew up new rules for cataloguing, packed parcels of books for barracks, Reich Labour Service camps and military hospitals and organised exhibitions. In the autumn of 1940 they also took part as usual in "German Book Week", providing guided tours and reading-aloud sessions for children. The only difference now was that a British landmine was on display among the books – a trophy of the war against England.<sup>131</sup> At that time, all the Bücherhallen branches were run by women. Library users were also women for the most part, plus the usual children and adolescents.

From mid-1941, the production of books was reduced by over 60 percent due to a shortage of paper. Only books important for the war effort were to be produced, which also affected the range on offer at the Bücherhallen.<sup>132</sup> From 1942, the number of books that could be borrowed per person had to be severely limited, as did the number of new readers who could be registered.

### **Expropriation of Jewish property**

The Bücherhallen had already sacked those members of their staff who were Jewish or labelled as Jews and had banned Jewish readers from entering the libraries. Now they also enriched themselves by appropriating the property of Jews who had emigrated or been deported. On 11 June 1942, Martha Böhmer noted that the "department for the use of confiscated assets" had offered the

Bücherhallen "books from Jewish ownership".<sup>133</sup> Though such books had previously been sold at auction, the head of this department now believed that they would be in better hands at the Bücherhallen. The books in question came from a "significant collection from a Jewish dentist" that was being held at the Dammtorwall bailiff's office. Böhmer quickly made her way there and selected "around 130 well-preserved volumes of instructive and aesthetic content". She had to pay only a minimal fee, so essentially the Bücherhallen received the books free of charge. Afterwards she requested the person in charge at the department to notify her if another collection of books was to be auctioned so that she could again select suitable titles beforehand.

In fact, less than two months later she and the librarian Annemarie Ribbentrop were once again able to select books for the Bücherhallen from a large collection being held by the auctioneer Heinrich Schopmann on Hohe Bleichen. Both took 70 books with them. Around four weeks later, Schopmann held another auction, this time at the Jewish old people's home on Kurzer Kamp in Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel. He had previously announced the date of the auction, as well as some additional information, in the local newspaper *Hamburg*

*Tageblatt*.<sup>134</sup> The contents of "roughly" 22 flats were to be sold. This time, it was the librarian Hedwig Laudi who chose around 70 books for the Bücherhallen. The old people's home in question was the Mendelson-Israel-Stift, which the Nazi rulers had designated a "Jews' house" in 1939. 23 of the home's residents had been deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto on 19 July 1942.<sup>135</sup> It was their property that Schopmann was selling at auction and that the Bücherhallen were taking for their own benefit. Hedwig Laudi would certainly have known how the auction had come about. From 1942, "Jews' houses" had to be designated as such; it is also hardly likely that over 20 people would have died in such rapid succession. Furthermore, it had been stated in the advertisement that the auction was being conducted "on behalf of an official department".

On 4 and 5 September 1942, Martha Böhmer, together with the music library's director Rudolf Tschiere and the librarian Marga Plitt, went to the office of the chief financial president to select around 200 books and 40 volumes of sheet music "free of charge" that had been left by Jews. The Mönckebergstrasse branch received around 70 of these books, while all of the sheet music was given to the music library. In total, at least 570 books and 40 volumes of sheet music that had been formerly owned by Jews and then seized by the City of Hamburg were thus to be found in the Bücherhallen collections.



*The Bücherhallen also benefitted from property confiscated from Jews deported from an old people's home in Fuhlsbüttel; the ad announcing the auction in the Hamburger Tageblatt from 29.8.1942 is shown here.*



*The devastated Hammerbrook district with the high-rise bunker where the Bücherhallen moved around 9,000 books and volumes of sheet music for safekeeping, undated; Rothenburgsort district archive*

### **Removal of collections**

The Bücherhallen libraries ceased operating in the wake of the heavy bombing raids on Hamburg in the summer of 1943. Most of their buildings were badly damaged or completely destroyed. On 22 February 1944, the cultural administration authority notified the State Library and the Bücherhallen, among others, that cultural assets could be placed in a tunnel under the motorway in the Veddel district for safekeeping.<sup>136</sup> The Kohlhöfen, Mönckebergstrasse, Eppendorf, Veddel and Harburg branches applied to have in total around 5,100 banned books and titles that had been set aside brought there, together with a number of particularly rare or valuable volumes and some sheet music. The Altona branch reported that around

800 valuable reference works that it had loaned to the State Library were being kept in the flak tower on Heiligengeistfeld. It is possible that these were the books that had been handed over from May 1933 onwards.<sup>137</sup>

As an inspection revealed, however, the motorway tunnel proved unsuitable for storing cultural assets, so the cultural administration authority made rooms available in the Hammerdeich high-rise bunker. Around 7,000 books and 1,300 volumes of sheet music were taken there in May 1944, with another 500 or so books from the Hammerbrook branch being added at the end of 1944.

### **Everyday life at the libraries during the bombing**

In June 1944 the Wilhelmsburg branch of the Bücherhallen was completely destroyed in the bombing. All the windows and doors were blown to smithereens, reported the librarian Agnes Krieg, "[t]he walls have been partly knocked down or caved in, as has part of the ceiling.

Some shelves are still standing, while others have collapsed, with probably half of the books buried under rubble and the rest still on the shelves. Most of the furniture appears to be undamaged. Most of the lamps and all of the curtains have been shattered or torn to shreds."  
When the building of the Kohlhöfen branch was severely damaged by an aerial mine in April 1945, staff dug the books out from under the rubble. The Wandsbek, Barmbek, Eilbek, Rothenburgsort and Altona Eidelstedt branches were destroyed, while the Altona Gross-Flottbek and Stellingen branches had to be evacuated, as did the Eppendorf branch, which was assigned rooms at the then Museum of Ethnology on Rothensee instead.<sup>138</sup>

The Hammerbrook branch of the library was in ruins, as indeed was the entire district. In October 1943, the Office for War-Essential Operations (AKE) assigned rooms in the Catholic school at Alsterdorfer Strasse 73 to the Bücherhallen so that a Winterhude branch could be set up. The rescued books and shelves had been stored at the Kunsthalle by police officers and Wehrmacht soldiers on behalf of the AKE.<sup>139</sup> On 20 and 21 January 1944, four prisoners of war, together with uniformed members of the HJ and BDM, had to help move them from the Kunsthalle to Winterhude. The new branch opened on 17 April 1944 with a small ceremony held in the presence of Senate Director Krebs and all the Bücherhallen chief librarians. Another branch was founded in a school on Breiten-

felder Strasse in Eppendorf in March 1945. Though lending had declined following the start of the war, it nearly doubled between 1940 and 1945 – despite the collections being much depleted and the buildings partly destroyed.

Grete Grau, chief librarian of the Hammerbrook branch and Julia Curjel's successor, did not live to see the new branch open in Winterhude. At the age of 46, she had taken her own life on 24 October 1943.<sup>140</sup> The destruction of "her" library and the death of many of her readers had apparently robbed her of the will to live. As her colleague Gertrud Rosenbaum later reported, she would often cycle through Hammerbrook after the heavy bombing raids in the summer of 1943, would turn over the corpses lying on the side of the path and wonder which of them were those of her readers. In addition, she had family problems.<sup>141</sup>



*Margarethe "Grete" Grau (1897-1943), chief librarian at the Hammerbrook branch (destroyed in the summer of 1943), took her own life, undated; Seydelmann, private collection*

## NO STUNDE NULL

The Second World War ended in Hamburg when the city was surrendered to the British army without a fight on 3 May 1945. Whole city districts were in ruins, and people were flocking to Hamburg from every direction: those returning from the surrounding region or fleeing from areas occupied by the Red Army as well as Wehrmacht soldiers and liberated concentration camp inmates, forced labourers and prisoners of war. Hundreds of thousands were living in emergency accommodation. No trams or buses were running, and the city was dark after sunset as there was no public lighting. The British occupiers banned all Nazi organisations, dismissed thousands of civil servants and municipal employees with Nazi backgrounds by November 1945 and, together with "untainted" Germans, attempted to set up a functioning system of administration. However, many Nazis were soon reinstated because their professional expertise was indispensable.

The Bücherhallen did their best to quickly supply the local population with literature again. The library buildings in Eilbek, Barmbek, Rothenburgsort, Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, Wandsbek and Eidelstedt no longer existed, however, and the Eppendorf, Kohlhöfen, Harburg-Heimfeld and Stellingen branches had had to shut down. Over 80,000 books had been destroyed, including around 10,000 books that had been out on loan in bombed-out flats. The rest

of the branches, including those in Mönckebergstrasse, Altona and Winterhude, were at least able to reopen in the autumn of 1945, as was the music library.<sup>142</sup>

### Removal of Nazi literature

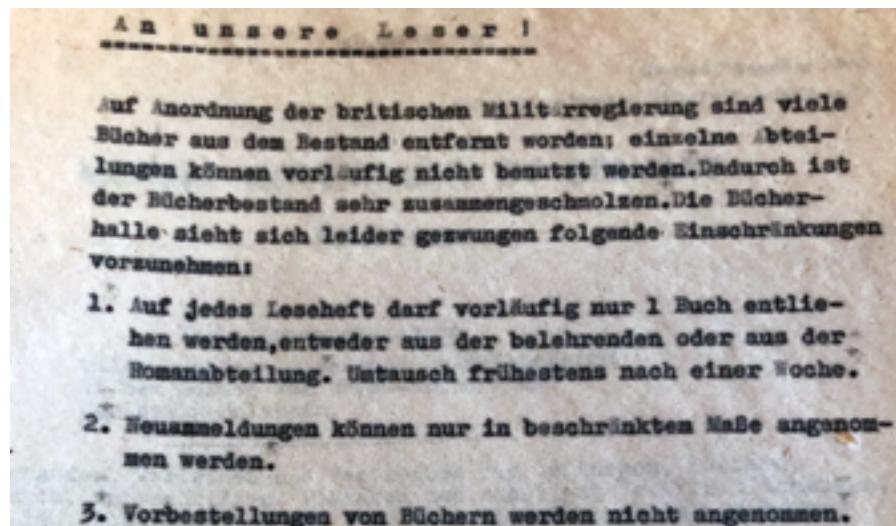
For this to happen, however, certain conditions needed to be met. First, any titles generally deemed to be "National Socialist, fascist, anti-Bolshevik, anti-democratic or antisemitic" in nature were to be removed from the collections.<sup>143</sup> Albert Krebs, still the senate director at the cultural administration authority, is a good example of the flexibility with which staunch National Socialists adapted to the new political circumstances. On 6 Mai 1945, three days after Hamburg was handed over to the British, he and the Bücherhallen librarians diligently set to work drawing up guidelines for the removal of Nazi works, which also included taking out individual pages. The branches were to use these guidelines to check their own collections. "The former NSDAP functionary Albert Krebs of all people, who [...] in December 1935 had ordered that the Hamburg Bücherhallen be brought into line with the principles and requirements of National Socialist ideology," write Bücherhallen chroniclers Matthias Gretzschel and Anne Buhrfeind, "was now making it clear to the librarians which guidelines they should use to 'denazify' their collections."<sup>144</sup>

The representative of the military government proved to be much stricter than Krebs and the librari-

ians, however: all books that were even suspected of meeting the above requirements were to be removed and then subjected to a thorough case-by-case examination. A short time later, the military government laid down more precise criteria for removal, defining five categories in a letter to the Bücherhallen dated 19 July 1945:

- "a) Books that 'disseminate National Socialist or related völkisch ideas (including racial studies and racial hatred.)' [...]
- b) Books that propagate fascist or anti-democratic ideas [...], likewise official publications of party organisations and all school books.
- c) Books that attempt to sow discord between or incite contempt for the United Nations. [...]
- d) Books that spread 'militaristic ideas, including ideas relating to a Greater Germany and German imperialism'. [...]
- e) Books that contain incitement to riot and disorder, or in any way to disrupt the activities of the military government."<sup>145</sup>

In total, the Bücherhallen weeded out 36,700 books. Together with the books that had been destroyed as a result of the war, this reduced their collections by around 120,000 titles. This left around 165,800 books, meaning there was on average fewer than one book for every ten people in Hamburg.<sup>146</sup> Thus the Bücherhallen were forced to continue imposing restrictions: users were only allowed to borrow one book per week, the libraries in the city centre accepted no new readers for



six months, and people in the suburbs could only join if they donated a book to the library.<sup>147</sup>

But what was to be done with those books that had been removed from the collections? It is unclear whether the majority were turned into waste paper, as had been requested in February 1946. The Bücherhallen handed over at least some of them to the State and University Library for academic purposes between 1946 and 1948.<sup>148</sup>

The Cold War also left its mark on the Bücherhallen in early 1949. Whereas "anti-Bolshevik" literature was still supposed to be removed directly after the war ended, a "total ban" on books imported from the Soviet occupation zone now applied throughout Germany.<sup>149</sup>

#### Books for democracy

On 1 August 1945, Rudolf Joerden resumed his work as Bücherhallen director. At that time, the Bücherhallen also provided special services

Notice displayed in the city centre branches in August 1945; Bücherhallen archive

for certain groups of readers. From the collections of books provided by the German Relief Association for the Care of Refugees from the East Living in Bunkers and Camps, they would regularly put together parcels for these people. They created similar parcels for the Neuengamme internment camp, a former concentration camp that the British military government was using to house as many as 10,000 suspected war criminals, SS members, Nazi functionaries and state officials heavily tainted by their Nazi past.<sup>150</sup> Ironically, Albert Krebs, who had been suspended on 25 July 1945 by order of the military government and was interned in Neuengamme until July 1946, was probably also in this camp at the time.<sup>151</sup>

In October 1946, Lilli Volbehr handed a letter to the British-Jewish publisher Victor Gollancz, who was visiting the Bücherhallen and was

*Mönckebergstrasse branch 1949, chief librarian Lilli Volbehr (pictured here wearing a hat); Bücherhallen archive*

well-disposed to the libraries. In it, she complained about the situation in which the Bücherhallen found themselves: "Around 15,000 readers are currently registered with the [...] Bücherhallen, thousands more want to become members but have to be rejected because there is neither enough space nor enough books. All of them are in great need, yet it is not possible to help them, neither the worker who wishes to read technical literature or political texts, nor the student who requires books for his studies, nor the harried housewife, the older person or the youngster, all of whom want a book for entertainment and relaxation during their meagre hours of leisure. [...]" She attached a list of "urgently desired books" to the letter.<sup>152</sup> Martha Böhmer, Rudolf Joerden and a "Committee for the Rebuilding of the Hamburg Public Library System" that was established at the Bücherhallen also attempted to secure financial and material support for the libraries. They approached senators, unions, publishing houses, the Hamburg Church Authority, the press and the British military government.<sup>153</sup> Last but not least, the committee made a passionate appeal to the people of Hamburg, asking them to donate books.<sup>154</sup>

### **Books donated from abroad**

"We were not popular in the world," noted the librarian Ruth Sierks in a commemorative publication issued



by the Bücherhallen to mark its fiftieth anniversary<sup>155</sup> – a breathtaking understatement in view of the millions of deaths worldwide that Nazi Germany had caused through war, the Shoah, the Roma Holocaust and the murder of patients. Sierks expressed her gratitude for the many donations from abroad that reached the Bücherhallen nonetheless. From 1947, most of these books were donated by an English organisation that German emigrants had founded jointly with the Labour Party.<sup>156</sup> Books for children and young adults were given by the Swiss aid organisation Schweizer Europahilfe, while the American Library in Stuttgart sent 225 publications in German and English. The "German-English Readers' Association" in Hamburg made its library of 4,000 books available to the Mönckebergstrasse branch. A very special donation arrived in December 1948, again from Switzerland – from former Bücher-

hallen librarian Lotte Schwarz, née Benett. "Her concern was [...] also for the Hamburg libraries," wrote her biographer Christiane Uhlig, "as they were on the brink of collapse, as Lotte discovered from the correspondence she had begun with her former boss at the library."<sup>157</sup> This former boss was Lilly Volbehr, who was able to report to her colleagues that the Mönckebergstrasse branch had subsequently been sent four boxes of books from the Swiss Workers' Welfare Association.<sup>158</sup> Given the circumstances under which Lotte Schwarz had been forced to leave the Bücherhallen in 1934 following a denunciation in which Lilly Volbehr had been actively involved, her initiative was extremely generous in not only material but also human terms. In early 1949, the Danish Red Cross also sent 10,000 books from the Danish refugee administration to the Bücherhallen.<sup>159</sup>

## **Election of Board of Directors and Works Council**

On 17 December 1946 a new Board of Directors was elected at the Hamburg Bücherhallen.<sup>160</sup> Culture Senator Ludwig Hartenfels was elected as its chairman; Werner Kindt, who was responsible for popular culture at the cultural administration department, as his deputy, and Finance Senator Walter Dudek as treasurer. At the same meeting a revised version of the statutes was adopted. Eduard Hallier had already applied to the cultural administration authority in 1945 to be included in the Board of Directors – failing to recognise that it had now become a democratically elected body again. Hallier's application was rejected because of his Nazi past. In late 1946 the authority notified Joerden that Hallier had been rehabilitated, and on 20 October 1948 the Board of Directors voted him in as an additional member.<sup>161</sup> There had also been a works council at the Bücherhallen since the end of 1946.<sup>162</sup>

## **“Denazification” of Bücherhallen staff**

On 2 February 1946, the military government's Education Control Unit informed Hamburg's cultural administration authority that it should set up a committee to handle the denazification of librarians. It was to be made up of librarians who were neither chief librarians nor tainted by having a Nazi background.<sup>163</sup> As an “Advisory Committee” its job was to compile a short report on each individual for the military government,

whose representatives would then classify the librarians as belonging either to one of five categories – from “exonerated” to “mainly guilty” – if suspected of Nazi involvement, or to none of these if not. This also determined whether they would be dismissed, could continue their employment or would be employed as new members of staff.

The report of the Advisory Committee was not to be based solely on responses to the questionnaire, however. The British military government felt that it was important for the committee's members to know the people they were judging as well as possible.<sup>164</sup> After having been checked by the Education Control Unit, the Advisory Committee comprised Robert Dwenger from the Museum of Ethnology, Edith Bugge from the State Library and Hans-Harald Breddin from the Bücherhallen.<sup>165</sup>

On 18 January 1946, the cultural administration authority sent the Education Control Unit the lists it had requested with the names of all the librarians in the libraries under its control.<sup>166</sup> 33 members of staff were listed for the Bücherhallen.

For the study on which this brochure is based, the denazification files of 19 of the 33 librarians were analysed. Almost all the questionnaires were completed in mid-January 1946, and almost all of the librarians added their signatures to confirm that the information they had given was true. It can therefore be concluded that the librarians completed the questionnaires at work. Seven of the 19

librarians had been members of the NSDAP, including Rudolf Joerden, Otto Engelbert, Wanda Droeßler, Rudolf Tschierpe and Elisabeth Propach, who from September 1945 ran the Hamburg library courses and was later head of the library school.<sup>167</sup>

Like Engelbert, Joerden had also been a member of the SA. Most of the librarians had (also) belonged to the DAF and/or NSV. Elisabeth Propach and Gertrud Seydelmann were members of the National Socialist Women's League (NSF), a wing of the NSDAP.<sup>168</sup> 13 librarians were not assigned to a category, while five were classified as “exonerated” (Category V) and one was assigned to a higher category, probably IV (“follower”). The two examples given below shed some light on the typical ways in which denazification proceedings were conducted for librarians and the strategies they used to justify their actions and exonerate themselves.

### **Example: Hans Engelhard**

Engelhard, who had succeeded Herbert Fenske as chief librarian of the Harburg Bücherhallen branch, had already been dismissed in 1945.<sup>169</sup> He had been a member of the NSDAP from early 1932, and a block leader from 1938. He was head of a factory cell in the DAF and a member of the NSV, the Reich Colonial League and the Reich Air Protection League. The fact that he had already joined the NSDAP before 1932, had held offices there and in the DAF, and was also a member of other associations

affiliated to the NSDAP or organisations supported by it, identifies him as a staunch National Socialist. During his denazification proceedings Engelhard sought to justify himself by portraying himself as a naive person who had believed that the “deplorable state of the country” could only be remedied by “national”, that is to say *völkisch*, socialism. He even claimed to have been “critical” and “oppositional” because, despite being called upon to do so, he had not accepted any office in the NSDAP, which allegedly responded by actually throwing him out of the party for a short time. He said that he only gave in “[u]nder pressure” from a superior. These explanations did not convince the British military government, which ordered that he be dismissed with effect from 1 August 1945. In 1947 the Advisory Committee rejected Engelhard’s application for his denazification proceedings to be repeated. He applied again in 1949.

What is remarkable is that almost all of his librarian colleagues then exonerated him by issuing denazification certificates known as “*Persilscheine*”. Marie Willich, who worked with Engelhard at the Altona branch from 1941 to 1943, recalls his “regret” at being unable to leave the NSDAP again and drummed up the support of virtually the “entire staff”, who had got to know him as an “opponent of the NSDAP and its fanatical impacts”. Helmut Groos – chief librarian from 1938 to 1942 at the Municipal Library, which then became the Altona branch, member of

the NSDAP from 1943 and classified as Category V in the denazification proceedings<sup>170</sup> – noted that Engelhard had not approved of “the Nazi policy on the Jewish question”, while Hans-Harald Breddin even wrote on behalf of the Hamburg Bücherhallen to affirm that Engelhard had once stood in “resolute intellectual opposition to the system”. This was the same Breddin who, as a member of the Advisory Committee, had agreed in August 1945 to Engelhard’s dismissal. Last but not least, Ulrich Streich, librarian at the specialist department, confirmed Engelhard’s account of how he had been briefly thrown out of the NSDAP. Since his dismissal, Engelhard had worked as a night watchman and builder; because of this, and in view of the character references provided, the Advisory Committee downgraded Engelhard back to Category V on 13 January 1949, commenting that the three and a half years of manual labour could be considered “sufficient atonement”.<sup>171</sup>

### **Example: Gertrud Seydelmann, née Rosenbaum**

Gertrud Seydelmann, née Rosenbaum, who was chief librarian at the Veddel Bücherhallen branch from 1938, stated in her questionnaire that she had been a member not only of the NSF from 1937 to 1943, but also of the BDM from 1935 to 1937 and of the NSV from 1939 to 1943. Following her interview at the Bücherhallen in 1935, as Seydelmann explains in her autobiography “*Gefährdete Balance*” (Endangered Balance), Albert

Krebs had told her: “Just join some organisation or other, then we’ll take you.”<sup>172</sup> This prompted her to sign up with the BDM. However, until 1938 the BDM would only admit girls and young women up to age 18.<sup>173</sup> Seydelmann was already too old for this organisation in 1935, in other words, and certainly would have been much too old in 1936, which is the year her autobiography claims that she joined.<sup>174</sup> When their membership ended because of their age, BDM members were not automatically admitted to the NSF either, despite Seydelmann writing that this was the reason for her NSF membership from 1937. In view of this and other contradictory comments she made when telling her “denazification story”, the most plausible explanation is that 22-year-old Gertrud Seydelmann already joined the NSF to advance her career in 1935, later benefited again from her membership but then attempted after the war – in a bid to deny her Nazi sympathies and shrug off any responsibility – to make it appear that she had had no choice in the matter. An alleged interrogation by the Gestapo in 1941 also enabled her to qualify her membership of a wing of the NSDAP by portraying herself as an “opponent of the regime” engaged in “passive resistance”.<sup>175</sup> The Advisory Committee did not assign her to any of the five categories, so there was nothing to stop her from continuing her employment.

## Suppressing the past rather than accepting responsibility

Five years after the end of the war, at least the worst of the damage to the Bücherhallen libraries caused by the bombing raids had been repaired, and their staff were looking ahead to the future, as were the majority of Germans. Dismissed by the Bücherhallen, the Jewish librarian Hedda Guradze had taken her own life in exile. Her Jewish colleague Julia Curjel had returned to Hamburg but was living there in poverty; her compensation proceedings, which began in 1947, dragged on for nearly ten years. Lotte Schwarz, who had fled from Nazi Germany for political reasons, had laboriously built a new life for herself in Switzerland.

On Saturday, 19 November 1949, a major event was held in the Kaiser- saal of Hamburg Town Hall to cel- ebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hamburg Bücherhallen. Speakers included Eduard Hallier, who by then was 82, and Bücherhallen Director Rudolf Joerden. The German stud- ies scholar Erich Trunz (1905–2001) gave a speech on “Hamburg poetry in the age of the Baroque and the Enlightenment”.<sup>176</sup> But did those present know who the speaker actu- ally was? Erich Trunz was a professor of contemporary German language and literature at Kiel University. However, he had also been an NS- DAP member since 1934, an NSDAP training instructor in North Holland in 1934/35, professor of contempo- rary German literary history at the “German University” in Nazi-occu-

Lettuce Hqrs.,  
Wingate

**MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY**

**Verwaltung der Hansestadt Hamburg, 1945**

**Fragebogen**  
**PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Gemäßigter Befehlspunkt**

**WARNING:** In the interests of clarity this questionnaire has been drawn up in both German and English. Every question must be answered in English. If you do not speak English, you will need to provide an English or other language translation. All supplementary questions are in English. There is not enough space in the questionnaire.

**(156)**

**A. PERSONAL**  
**PERSOENLICHKEIT**

Name Wolfgang Ausweiskarte No. T.E. 26/2704  
Name (Chinese) Wolfgang Identity Card No.  
Name (Japanese) Wolfgang

Address 27, Juli 1913 Maiden Name Wolfgang  
Place of birth Hamburg Current Address 15, Johannisallee 42  
Citizenship Deutsches Reich Birth date 15.11.1913  
Religious affiliation Protestant Birth place Hamburg  
Professional position Lehrerin für d. Volksbildung Current position Lehrerin für d. Volksbildung  
Former position Lehrerin für d. Volksbildung Previous position Lehrerin für d. Volksbildung  
Former place of birth Hamburg

**B. MITGLIEDSCHAFT IN DER NSDAP**

1. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Mitglied der NSDAP? 1933  
2. Name Wolfgang  
3. Datum 15.11.1913

4. Haben Sie jemals eine der folgenden Stellungen in der NSDAP bekleidet?  
(a) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None  
(b) **GAUHAUPTLEITER**, oder Parteisekretär innerhalb eines Gaues? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None  
(c) **REICHSLAUFER**, oder Parteisekretär innerhalb eines Kreises? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None  
(d) **GAUZUGLEHRER**, oder Parteisekretär innerhalb einer Gruppe? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None  
(e) **NS-Beamer in der Parteizelle**? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None  
(f) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
Find the following None

5. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Mitglied der NSDAP? 1933  
6. Name Wolfgang  
7. Datum 15.11.1913

8. Haben Sie irgendwann eine der folgenden Stellungen in irgend einem der folgenden NSDAP-Organisationen bekleidet? Nein 15.11.1913  
a) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
b) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
c) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
d) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
e) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913  
f) **NS-Beamer in der NSDAP**? Nein 15.11.1913

9. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Mitglied des KORPS DER POLITISCHEN LEITER? 1933  
10. Name Wolfgang  
11. Datum 15.11.1913

12. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913  
13. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913  
14. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913

15. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913

16. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913

17. Wenn ja, seit wann ein Leader or functionary of any other NSDAP office or organization? Nein 15.11.1913

**C. MITGLIEDSCHAFT IN NSDAP HELFERSORGANISATIONEN**

Geben Sie hier an, ob Sie ein Mitglied waren und in welchen Organisationen Sie an den Tropenien der folgenden Gruppen, abgesonderten Verbänden und besonderen Organisationen des NSDAP-Hilfswerks waren.  
a) **NS-Beamer in den Stämmen und Anstellungen und einer Sonderstellung dieser Truppe** Nein 15.11.1913

**D. NSDAP PARTEIAFFILIATION**

1. Haben Sie jemals eine Mitgliedschaft in der NSDAP? Nein 15.11.1913  
2. Wenn ja, seit wann? 1933  
3. Name Wolfgang  
4. Datum 15.11.1913

5. Haben Sie jemals eine der folgenden Positionen in der NSDAP? Nein 15.11.1913  
a) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
b) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
c) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
d) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
e) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
f) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913

6. Wenn ja, seit wann? 1933  
7. Name Wolfgang  
8. Datum 15.11.1913

9. Haben Sie irgendwann eine der folgenden Positionen in irgend einer der folgenden NSDAP-Organisationen bekleidet? Nein 15.11.1913  
a) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
b) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
c) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
d) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
e) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
f) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913

10. Wenn ja, seit wann? 1933  
11. Name Wolfgang  
12. Datum 15.11.1913

13. Haben Sie irgendwann eine der folgenden Positionen in irgend einer der folgenden NSDAP-Organisationen bekleidet? Nein 15.11.1913  
a) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
b) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
c) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
d) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
e) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
f) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913

14. Wenn ja, seit wann? 1933  
15. Name Wolfgang  
16. Datum 15.11.1913

17. Haben Sie irgendwann eine der folgenden Positionen in irgend einer der folgenden NSDAP-Organisationen bekleidet? Nein 15.11.1913  
a) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
b) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
c) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
d) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
e) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913  
f) **NSDAPLEITER**, oder Beamer in einer Zelle, die einem anderen unterstellt war? Nein 15.11.1913

18. Wenn ja, seit wann? 1933  
19. Name Wolfgang  
20. Datum 15.11.1913

**E. NSDAP "ASSISTANT" ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES**

Indicate whether you were a member and the extent to which you participated in the activities of the following NSDAP affiliated organizations or supervised organizations.

*First page of the denazification questionnaire filled out by the librarian  
Gertrud Seudelmann, née Rosenbaum; StaHH*

pied Prague from 1940 to 1945, while at the same time being deputy lecturer leader in the National Socialist German Lecturers League, as well as head of the "Science Office" in Prague from 1942 to 1945.<sup>177</sup> Trunz's career as a Nazi academic, who had addressed the "great questions of a new *völkisch* poetry", ended in 1945, after which no German university was initially willing to employ him.<sup>178</sup> So what were the criteria for selecting Trunz as speaker? The Hamburg cultural administration authority and the Bücherhallen apparently

had no qualms about inviting him to be guest speaker, though German studies scholars not tainted by a Nazi past must surely have been available. Here too, there can be no talk of any carefully considered acceptance of historical responsibility during the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

## CONCLUSION

From 1933, the staff of the Hamburg Bücherhallen, rather than resisting it, actively and efficiently facilitated the transition from democracy to dictatorship at their workplace. Librarians who were politically unacceptable, Jewish or classified as Jewish were dismissed; by removing books that did not conform to Nazi ideology, by revising catalogues and systems, by building up new collections and by offering numerous services, the Bücherhallen libraries were transformed into a tool of the unjust Nazi regime. Through their work, the librarians and assistants also helped ensure that the population supported the abandonment of democratic principles, the marginalisation and even extermination of those of their fellow citizens who were Jewish or classified as Jewish, and the militarism and megalomaniac fantasies of the Nazis, which culminated in a world war that cost millions of people their lives. And all of this in the vain hope of finally being acknowledged and better funded and equipped by the State of Hamburg. Though it is true that the Hamburg Bücherhallen libraries were modernised and increasingly adopted an open-stack approach during the Nazi era, which put them in a leading position in the German Reich, this evolution ended when almost all of the libraries were destroyed during the war.

Admittedly, not all of the librarians embraced the Nazi ideology: with the exception of Lilli Volbehr, the women of the “pioneer generation” did not join the NSDAP, for instance. Nonetheless, no contemporary sources contain any indication of sympathy or even solidarity with those persecuted. Neither Hedda Guradze nor Julia Curjel mention anything of this kind in their testimonies. The only librarian who was part of the political resistance and also had to leave Nazi Germany for this reason was Lotte Schwarz, née Bennett. As a result of her political socialisation, she even arranged for donated books to be collected in Switzerland in the post-war period and sent to the Bücherhallen out of a sense of solidarity with the library that had dismissed her following a denunciation. All the other librarians carried out the various instructions that were issued between 1933 and 1945 and in some cases even came up with ideas themselves for

how to spread Nazi ideology among readers more effectively – even if it was the Bücherhallen directors Wilhelm Schuster, Albert Krebs and Rudolf Joerden, who all belonged to the NSDAP out of conviction and for career reasons, who actually drew up or passed on the orders. What is striking is that the same librarians and the same Director Joerden who made the Bücherhallen look like a trailblazing pioneer of Nazi “popular education” then effected the transition from dictatorship back to democracy with the same degree of dedication and compliance after the war ended in 1945. This may be suggestive of an apolitical stance, as if the staff of the Bücherhallen were only ever interested in supplying the population with literature. However, this attempt to pretend that their professional actions were not politically motivated had and will always have fatal consequences if the political system in question is a dictatorship bent on destroying people. Anyone who supported and helped to spread a political ideology at their workplace, such as happened at the Bücherhallen between 1933 and 1945, was acting politically even if they did so not out of conviction but out of an opportunistic desire to profit from it.

Just like in many other companies, associations and organisations, the transition from dictatorship to democracy that began in 1945 also took place at the Bücherhallen without any acknowledgement of responsibility, let alone guilt. The way people often sought to distance themselves from National Socialism in the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany was a phenomenon that was accompanied by continuities – in terms of personnel, institutions or mindsets – with the Nazi era well into the post-war period. Ignoring and suppressing what had happened characterised many people’s relationship with their own past, and this was also the case at the Bücherhallen. In the 1945 commemorative publication, Director Rudolf Joerden, a former member of the NSDAP and the SA, wrote about the “dark destiny that befell our people in recent decades”, apparently referring not only to the Nazi era but also to the Weimar Republic. Though Lilli Volbehr did mention Hedda Guradze and Julia Curjel in her contribution – the librarians who had been persecuted and dismissed for being Jewish – she portrays their marginalisation as a matter of destiny, as

an inevitability in which she was not involved. A list at the end of her contribution, headed "We mourn the following employees who were victims of the war", reveals who the Bücherhallen viewed at that time as the real victims of the Nazi era: those Germans who died in or as

a result of the war. Lilly Bieling and Annemarie Eckhoff paid tribute to Hedda Guradze in the trade journal *BuB* in 1952, but there is no trace of an apology or acceptance of responsibility there either. It was to be decades before this changed.

## EPILOGUE

In 2023, the Hamburg Bücherhallen<sup>179</sup> sponsored a *Stolperstein* ("stumbling stone") to commemorate Hedda Guradze, the Jewish librarian who had been dismissed and took her own life in exile. It is located in front of her former workplace, the then Mönckebergstrasse branch of the library on Barkhof, at the beginning of Spitalerstrasse.<sup>180</sup>

During the Nazi era, however, the Bücherhallen had not only dismissed Jewish employees but also enriched themselves by appropriating the property of Jews who had fled into exile or been deported. It is not known what happened to these 570 or so books and volumes of sheet music. It is possible that items of stolen Jewish property are still to be found in the collection removed from the former music library, which encompasses more than a thousand books and volumes of sheet music. There were certainly stolen items at the Wilhelmsburg branch of the library, as evidenced by ex libris stamps, as well as in a collection of around 1,000 historical children's books.

The books from Wilhelmsburg were already handed over to the State and University Library (SUB) of Göttingen in the 1930s, while the children's books went to the SUB Hamburg in 1996/97.<sup>181</sup>

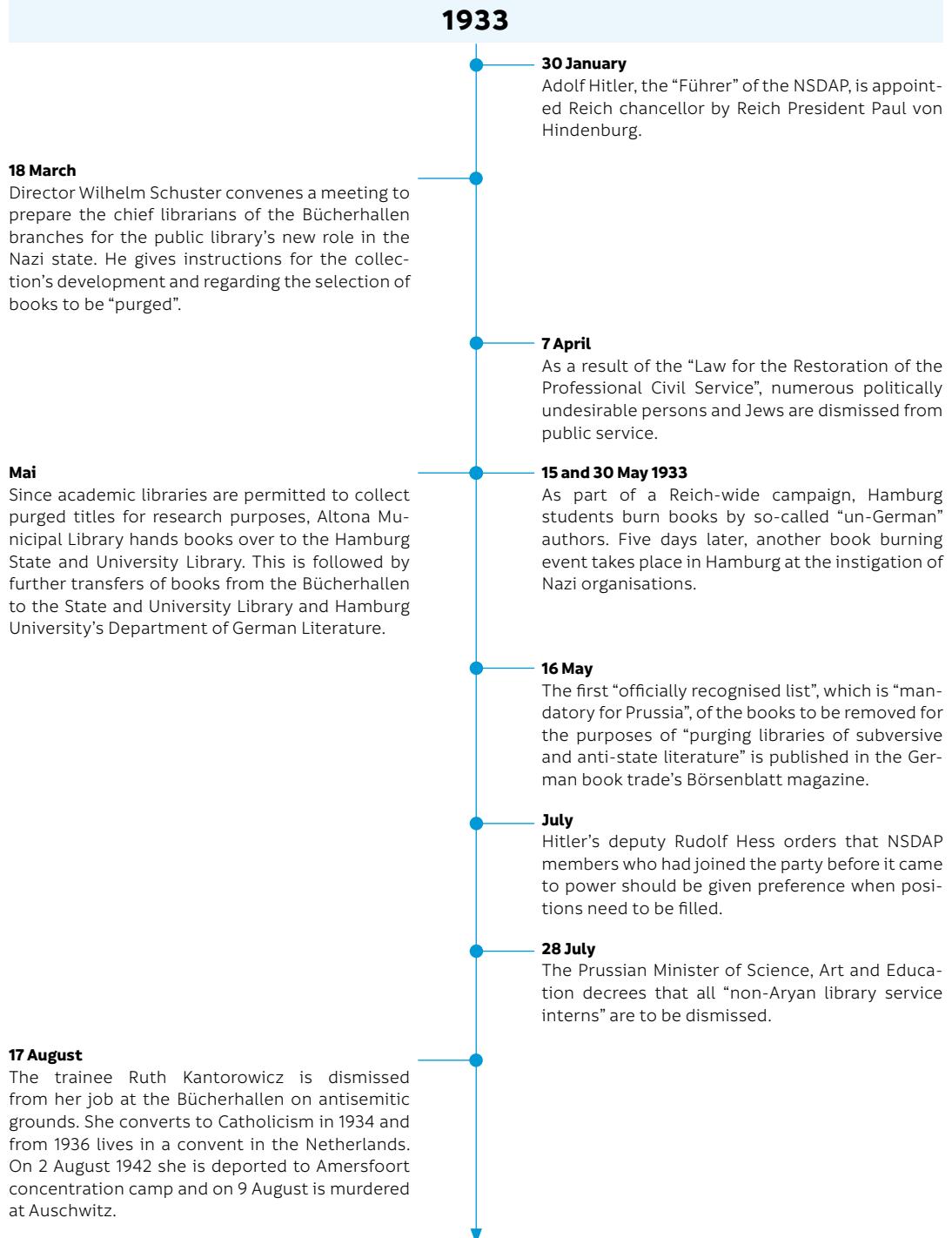
Since January 2022, a project funded by the German Lost Art Foundation in Magdeburg has been helping public libraries all over Germany to check their collections for the presence of property looted by the Nazis.<sup>182</sup> It is being carried out in cooperation between the German Library Association (dbv) and the Berlin School of Library and Information Science (IBI) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Fifteen public libraries in eight of Germany's states have already had their collections examined during the course of the project. In 2024 the Bücherhallen Hamburg also applied to take part in the project so as to receive professional support with the inspection of any of their stocks that still date back to the war and pre-war period.<sup>183</sup>

## TIMELINE

# THE BÜCHERHALLEN IN NAZI GERMANY

### Bücherhallen

### Hamburg and the German Reich



**26 November to 6 December**

The Bücherhallen sponsor the "German Book Fair in Hamburg", at which SA men act as "guards" and Bücherhallen Director Wilhelm Schuster gives a speech on "subversive literature".

**Ende 1933**

The central office of the Bücherhallen orders a portrait of Hitler for every branch, followed by busts of Hitler and wall slogans by Hitler and Goebbels. Members of the Hitler Youth are given tickets to use the Bücherhallen free of charge. In early 1934, the Bücherhallen make a donation to a "swastika nailing", with money having been raised among the staff.

The Hamburg Bücherhallen compile lists of recommended Nazi books which they make available, in some cases free of charge, to readers.

**Ende 1933**

The first Reich-wide "white list" of around 300 novels with völkisch-racist content appears. In the first year following the transfer of power, basic rights are curtailed, the first concentration camp is built, Jewish companies are boycotted, unions are banned and all political parties except the NSDAP are disbanded.

**1934****April**

Herbert Fenske becomes new chief librarian in Harburg after Karl Pütz is dismissed from his post for political reasons, having been a former member of the SPD. From 1935, Herbert Fenske belonged to the German Labour Front and the National Socialist People's Welfare, but was likewise dismissed on 31 December 1937 because his wife was considered "half-Jewish" according to the Nazi racial categories.

Lotte Benett is dismissed from the Eppendorf branch for her involvement in the political resistance. In June she flees to Zurich, where she is able to work as a librarian again from 1938.

**15 September**

Albert Krebs replaces Wilhelm Schuster as Bücherhallen director.

**30 January**

As a result of the "Law on the Reconstruction of the Reich", German states lose their sovereignty and parliaments.

**1935****28 June**

The Board of Directors meets for the last time. Most members had already been excluded on political grounds or because they were Jewish. The foundation's autonomy is revoked, with the Bücherhallen henceforth to form part of the Hamburg Authority for Folklore, Church and Art.

**16 March**

In line with the new law for the "build-up of the Wehrmacht", compulsory military service is introduced and armament begins.

From 1935, the Board of Directors is made up exclusively of NSDAP members and sympathisers.

**11 October**

34 years after she began working at the Bücherhallen, Julia Sophie Curjel, chief librarian of the Hammerbrook branch, is suspended and then forced to retire on 30 June 1936 for being Jewish. On 16 August 1939 she flees to England to escape antisemitic persecution. She returns to Hamburg in June 1947.

**15 September**

The "Nuremberg Laws" are enacted. They provide the legal basis for the racial exclusion and persecution of Jews and those classified as such in Germany.

**October**

The Reich Chamber of Literature issues "List 1" of "harmful and undesirable literature" – the first Reich-wide and binding list of books to be removed.

## 1936

Nearly three years after the Nazis came to power, the Bücherhallen have aligned their collections and public relations activities with Nazi ideology.

The first official Reich-wide lists of banned books appear. In 1937, public libraries are officially instructed to hand over rejected books for academic purposes to appropriate libraries.

## 1937

**28 February**

The librarian Hedda Guradze is forced to leave the Bücherhallen after she and her family spent years trying to appeal against the Nazi categories that classified her as a "full Jew". A request to be permitted to marry a non-Jewish Hamburg businessman is also rejected. The relationship breaks down and in 1939 she emigrates to the USA, where she takes her own life on 30 June 1945.

The Hamburg Specialist Department for Public Libraries is established, its role being to oversee the 57 volunteer-run public libraries in the Hamburg region. It is affiliated to the Bücherhallen on 1 September 1940.

**26 January**

The Greater Hamburg Act is passed. It expands the city's territory by 80 percent, increasing its population by 40 percent.

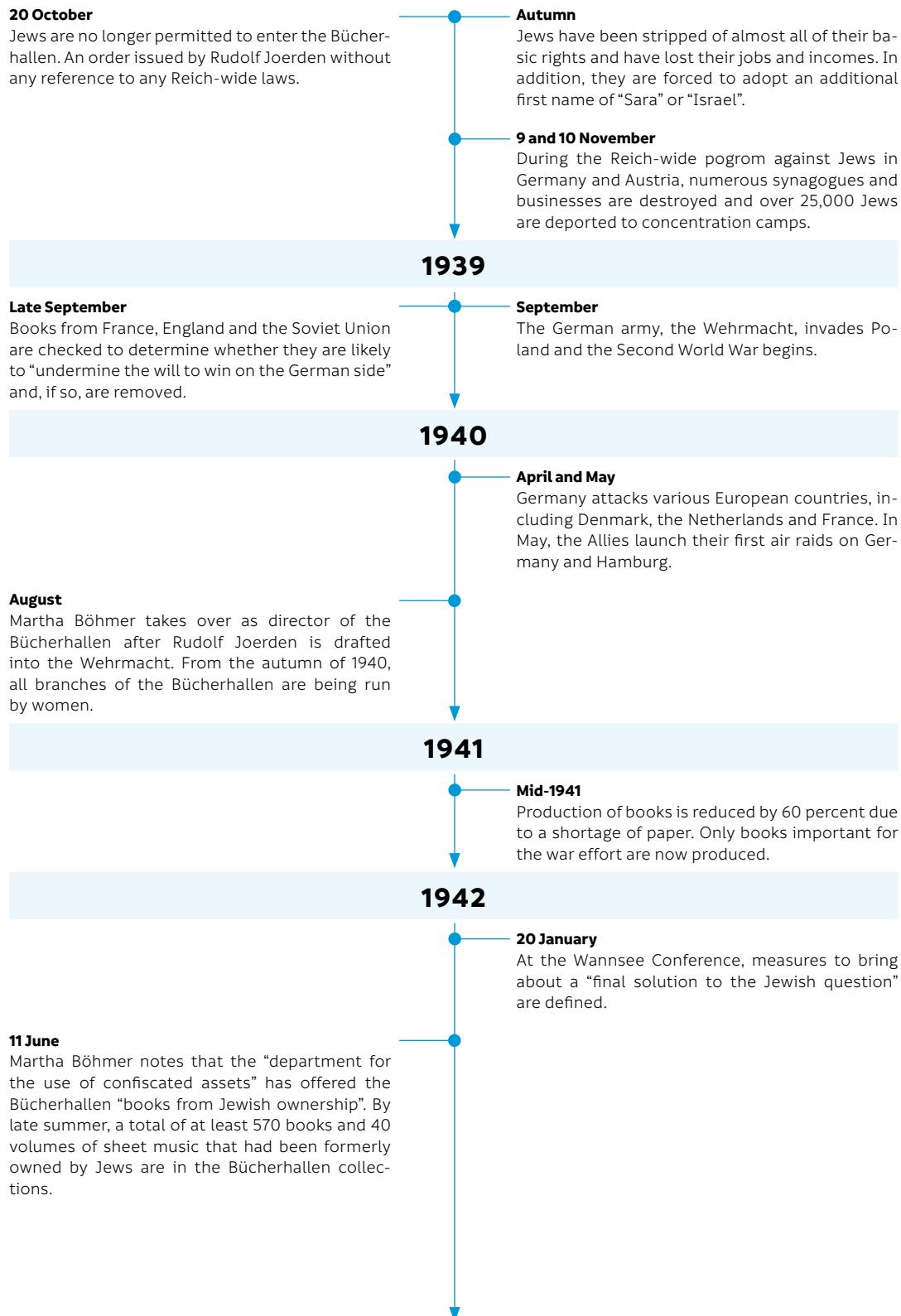
**26 October**

Guidelines for public libraries are published: the adaptation of public library collections to Nazi ideology is deemed complete throughout the Reich. The result is a centrally controlled, hierarchical and uniformly organised library system with a defined educational mandate.

## 1938

**August**

Education expert and librarian Rudolf Joerden becomes the new Bücherhallen director after Krebs is made senior executive of the cultural administration authority.



## 1943

### 21 January

Max Karfunkel dies in the Theresienstadt ghetto, having been deported there on 15 July 1942. From June 1934 he had spent a year working several times a week at the Kohlhöfen branch as an "assistant worker". This position was assigned to him by the Welfare Authority because he was a welfare recipient.

### 18 February

Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels gives his "Sportpalast speech" in Berlin, in which he calls for a "total war". On the same day, Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans are arrested by the Gestapo while distributing flyers.

### Summer

The Bücherhallen cease operating. Most of their buildings are badly damaged or completely destroyed.

### Summer

In July, the Allies launch heavy bombing raids on Hamburg in "Operation Gomorrah".

## 1944

### 20 and 21 January

Four prisoners of war have to help HJ and BDM members move books and shelves rescued from the Kunsthalle to a Catholic school in Winterhude. The new Winterhude branch opens with a small ceremony on 17 April. In March 1945, another new branch opens in a school in Eppendorf.

### May

Around 7,000 books and 1,300 volumes of sheet music are taken to the Hammerdeich high-rise bunker for safekeeping. 500 more books from the Hammerbrook branch follow in late 1944.

### 6 June

The troops of the Western Allies land in Normandy in France and recapture territory occupied by Nazi Germany.

## 1945

### Summer

Books deemed "National Socialist, fascist, anti-Bolshevik, anti-democratic or antisemitic" have to be removed from the collections. The Bücherhallen weed out a total of 36,700 books.

### August

Rudolf Joerden takes up his position as Bücherhallen director again. Albert Krebs, who was suspended on 25 July 1945 by order of the military government, is detained at the former Neuengamme concentration camp until July 1946.

### 3 May

The Second World War ends in Hamburg when the city is handed over to the British army without a fight. This is followed on 9 May by Germany's unconditional surrender.

### 17 July and 2 August

The leaders of the victorious Allied powers – the USA, United Kingdom and Soviet Union – meet in Potsdam to discuss the post-war order in Europe and Germany. France then agrees to the decisions taken at the Potsdam Conference.

The Bücherhallen attempt to quickly supply the local population with literature again. The branches in Eilbek, Barmbek, Rothenburgsort, Harburg-Wilhelmsburg, Wandsbek and Eidelstedt no longer exist, while those in Eppendorf, Kohlhöfen, Harburg-Heimfeld and Stellingen have to shut down. The rest of the branches are able to reopen in the autumn of 1945.

1949

19 November

The 50th anniversary of the Bücherhallen is celebrated in the Kaisersaal of Hamburg Town Hall. One of the speakers is Erich Trunz, a German studies scholar with a Nazi past. Bücherhallen Director Rudolf Joerden plays down the Nazi period, and there is no trace of any apology or acceptance of responsibility towards those members of staff who were persecuted.

May

The Basic Law comes into force in the Federal Republic of Germany, while in the German Democratic Republic the German People's Congress approves the constitution.

## ENDNOTES

**1** Cf. Angela Graf, "Wer ein Deutscher ist, der folgt dem Ruf!", Wilhelm Schuster, Vorsitzender des Verbandes Deutscher Volksbibliothekare, in: Sven Kuttner/Peter Vodosek (eds.), *Volksbibliothekare im Nationalsozialismus. Handlungsspielräume, Kontinuitäten, Deutungsmuster*, Wiesbaden, 2017, pp. 37–66; Angela Graf, Antirepublikaner und Netzwerker. Wilhelm Schuster, Direktor der Hamburger Öffentlichen Bücherhallen von 1931 bis 1934, in: *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 98 (2012), pp. 101–125; Zdzislaw Gebys, Wilhelm Schuster, in: Michael Fahrbusch/Ingo Haar/Alexander Pinwinkler (eds.), *Handbuch der völkischen Wissenschaften*, 2nd thoroughly extended and revised ed., part vol. 1, Berlin/Boston, 2017, pp. 747–749.

**2** Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StaHH) 614-1/38\_3 vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 24.9.1932; cf. Graf, Antirepublikaner, p. 119.

**3** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 18.3.1933.

**4** ibid.

**5** Dietrich Strothmann, *Nationalsozialistische Literaturpolitik. Ein Beitrag zur Publizistik im Dritten Reich*. 4th ed., Bonn, 1985, p. 66, cited from Christine Koch, *Das Bibliothekswesen im Nationalsozialismus. Eine Forschungsstandsanalyse anhand der Fachliteratur*, Marburg, 2003, also diploma thesis, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 7.

**6** Cf. Friedrich Andrae (ed.), *Volksbücherei und Nationalsozialismus. Materialien zur Theorie und Politik des öffentlichen Büchereiwesens in Deutschland 1933–1945*, Wiesbaden, 1970, p. 11.

**7** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 18.3.1933, all quotations in this paragraph taken from there.

**8** ibid.

**9** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 22.4.1933.

**10** ibid.

**11** Cf. Anne Mohr/Elisabeth Prégardier (eds.), *Passion im August (2.–9. August 1942). Edith Stein und Gefährtinnen: Weg in Tod und Auferstehung*, Annweiler, 1995, p. 113.

**12** For this and all subsequent biographical references to Ruth Kantorowicz, cf. Dietrich Rauchenberger, *Biografie Ruth Kantorowicz*, in: *stolpersteine-hamburg.de* [accessed 08.02.2024], and Paul F. W. Hamans, Edith Stein and Companions. On the Way to Auschwitz, San Francisco, 2010, pp. 95–104.

**13** Cf. StaHH 363-6\_1679 and Peter Vodosek, *Die bibliothekarische Ausbildung in Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis 1970*, in: *Lifelong Education and Libraries*, 2 (2002), pp. 1–28, here p. 7.

**14** Letter to Ruth Kantorowicz from State Examination Board for the Library Sector dated 12.8.1933, printed in Mohr/Prégardier (1995), p. 11; after 17.1.1938 only NSDAP members were permitted to take the examination of the State Examination Board for the Library Sector, cf. archives of the Bücherhalle Harburg.

**15** Mohr/Prégardier (eds.), *Passion*, p. 117.

**16** StaHH 131-10 II\_443.

**17** StaHH 614-1/38\_2 vol. 3.

**18** StaHH 614-1/38\_2 vol. 4.

**19** StaHH 614-1/38\_1, minutes of meeting on 28.6.1935.

**20** StaHH 622-1/193, all quotations in this paragraph taken from there.

**21** StaHH 622-1/124 entry "Freitag, 20. September [1935]"; StaHH 131-10 I S\_1933 Ja VI 8.

**22** StaHH 614-1/38\_1, minutes of meetings on 28.6.1935 and 15.10.1935; cf. also StaHH 135-1-1-IV\_5322 Öffentliche Bücherhallen, 1922–1945.

**23** StaHH 614-1/38\_1, minutes of meeting on 15.10.1935.

**24** Kriegsranglisten und -stammrollen des Königreichs Bayern, 1. Weltkrieg 1914–1918, vol. 16366, in: ancestry.de [accessed 2.1.2024]

**25** For all biographical references to Hedda Guradze, see Sabine Gummahn, Hedda Guradze, *Volksbibliothekarin bis 1937. Eine Rekonstruktion ihres Lebens*, Hamburg, 1995, homework assignment for diploma exam at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, Department of Libraries and Information, Hans Böve/Hildegard Thevs, "Margarethe Guradze (geborene Marchwald)", online: *stolpersteinehamburg.de* [accessed 15.12.2023], Lilly Bieling/Annemarie Eckhoff, Hedda Guradze, in: *BUB 4* (1952), 9, p. 855 f., here p. 855; and StaHH 314-15\_FVg 4902 Hedda Guradze.

**26** Cf. Gummahn, p. 51.

**27** For more information on the Reich Citizenship Law and the lengthy bureaucratic processes for Jews attempting to apply for exemption, see Beate Meyer, "Jüdische Mischlinge". *Rassenpolitik und Verfolgungserfahrung 1933–1945*, Munich/Hamburg, 1999, pp. 105–108.

**28** StaHH 614-1/39\_45 Mönckebergstrasse.

**29** Rolf Faber, Dr. Ernst Siegfried Guradze, Amtsgerichtsrat, in: Rolf Faber / Karin Rönsch, Wiesbadens jüdische Juristen. Leben und Schicksal von 65 jüdischen Rechtsanwälten, Notaren, Richtern, Referendaren, Beamten und Angestellten, Wiesbaden, 2011, pp. 69–71.

**30** Cf. StaHH 614-1/38\_10 vol. 1, letter from Albert Krebs to Eduard Hallier dated 28.11.1936.

**31** For more details of the marriage approval requests, also relating to Hamburg, see Meyer, "Mischlinge", especially pp. 166–169.

**32** Cf. StaHH 614-1/38\_10 vol. 1, correspondence between Krebs and Hallier, 28.11.1936–21.12.1936; however, while Hallier names 31.1.1937 as the date on which the new contract was due to end, Krebs talks of 31.3.1937. Since Hedda Guradze was given notice as per 28.2.1937, 31.3.1937 is likely to have been the correct end date according to the contract.

**33** Cf. StaHH 614-1/38 HOB\_3 vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 24 February 1937; see Gummahn for detailed information about Hedda Guradze's life after her dismissal and her emigration.

**34** Cf. Böve/Thevs; cf. StaHH 522-01\_0992\_b\_19251 Margarethe Guradze's religious tax card, with note relating to her daughter Hedda and the latter's emigration date.

**35** Jan Hans, Die Bücherverbrennung in Hamburg, in: Eckart Krause/Ludwig Huber/Holger Fischer, Hochschulalltag im "Dritten Reich". Die Ham-burger Universität 1933–45, Berlin/Hamburg, 1991, pp. 237–254, here p. 243.

**36** Bergedorfer Zeitung from 26.6.1933.

**37** Cf. Kultur- und Geschichtskontor Bergedorf [eds.], 100 Jahre Bücher für Bergedorf, Hamburg, 2009, p. 12.

**38** Cf. Herrmann, Prinzipielles zur Säuberung der öffentlichen Büchereien, in: Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel, 16.5.1933, pp. 356–358, online: boersenblatt-digital.de [accessed 20.01.2024], here p. 356.

**39** Cf. Koch, Bibliotheken, p. 64.

**40** Cf. Zugangsbuch der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, May 1933.

**41** For details, see Angela Graf, Hamburg, in: Julius H. Schoeps/Werner Tress (eds.), Orte der Bücherverbrennungen in Deutschland 1933, Hildesheim et al., 2008, pp. 427–450, here p. 433.

**42** Cf. Paul Böckmann, Unveröffentlichte Tagebücher und autobiographische Schriften, in: Gummibum, Hedda Guradze.

**43** Hamburger Nachrichten from 25.10.1933 and Börsenblatt d. Deutschen Buchhandels, 14.11.1933, p. 867.

**44** Cf. Jutta Sywottek, Die Gleichschaltung der deutschen Volksbüchereien 1933 bis 1937, in: Historische Kommission des Börsenvereins des Deutschen Buchhandels e.V. [ed.], Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens 24 (1993), cols. 386–536, here col. 449 f.

**45** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 1, minutes of meetings on 4.11.1933, 17.3.1934 and 9.6.1934.

**46** ibid., minutes of meetings on 13.9.1933 and 22.4.1934, and photographs from Bücherhalle Eilbek in the archives of the Bücherhallen Hamburg.

**47** ibid., minutes of meeting on 16.12.1933.

**48** ibid., minutes of meeting on 17.3.1934.

**49** Jahrbuch der deutschen Volksbüchereien, 2 (1927), p. 127; ibid., 3 (1928), p. 104; Willi B. Gierke/Heino Keschschul/Werner Krüer, Quellen zur Geschichte der Erwachsenenbildung. Findbuch zu den Beständen in staatlichen, kommunalen, kirchlichen, Universitäts- und Gewerkschaftsarchiven zur niedersächsischen Erwachsenenbildung seit 1918, Oldenburg, 1997, p. 13.

**50** Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Korr. zw. d. Verwaltung der Hansestadt Hamburg d. Universitäts-Bibliothek Göttingen u. d. Oberpräsidenten von Hannover, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Bildung, 4–23.7.1946.

**51** Rüdiger Articus, Vom Buch- und Pressewesen im alten Harburg, Hamburg, 1993, p. 54 f.

**52** Bundesarchiv (BArch) R 9361-IX index card / 3337472; StaHH 614-1/38\_16 vol. 3 Letter from Rudolf Joerden to the cultural administration committee dated 17.1.1946.

**53** StaHH 221-11\_Ed 11549 Herbert Fenske; Archiv der Bücherhalle Harburg, Personalunterlagen; StaHH 614-1/38\_44 Harburg und Wilhelmsburg, 1934–1953.

**54** StaHH 614-1/38\_44 Harburg und Wilhelmsburg, 1934–1953; though Engelhardt appears in many documents as "Engelhardt", he spells his own name without a "t", cf. Die Bücherei 5 (1938), vol. 3, p. 128.

**55** StaHH 221-11\_Ed 11549 Herbert Fenske.

**56** StaHH 614-1/38\_41 Eppendorf; for details of the arguments between those librarians who believed that readers should be actively "educated" and those who regarded them as "responsible users", see with reference to Hamburg Matthias Gretzschel, Anne Bührfeind, Hamburgs Bücherhallen. Eine Jahrhundertgeschichte, Hamburg 1999, p. 51 f.

**57** Rudolf Joerden, Lilli Volbehr scheidet aus dem Beruf, in: BuB 9 (1957) 7, pp. 318–320.

**58** Rudolf Joerden, Lilli Volbehr 27. November 1890 bis 13. Mai 1978. Speech given at funeral service, in: BuB 30 (1978) 7/8, p. 538.

**59** StaHH 221-11\_Misc 10763 Lilli Volbehr; ibid, Ed 12066 Marie Friedrich.

**60** Lilli Volbehr, Geschichte der Hamburger Öffentlichen Bücherhallen, in: [Rudolf Joerden (ed.)], Hamburger Öffentliche Bücherhalle 1899–1949. Festscrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen, Hamburg, 1949, pp. 25–62, here p.39; in her denazification questionnaire, however, she states that the date was 1.6.1937, as does Joerden in his speech.

**61** StaHH 221-11\_Misc 10763 Lilli Volbehr.

**62** Lilli Volbehr, Anteil und Anrecht der Frau an der bibliothekarischen Be-rufsausbildung, in: Die Bücherei 1 (1934) 2/3, pp. 25–30, all following quotations also taken from here.

**63** Claus Mühlfeld/Friedrich Schönweiss, Nationalsozialistische Familienpolitik, Stuttgart 1989, p. 61, cited from Michael Opielka, Familie und Beruf. Eine deutsche Geschichte, in: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, published by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, H. B 22–23 / 2002, online: bpp.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/26890/familie-und-beruf-eine-deutsche-geschichte/ [accessed 12.1.2024].

**64** Volbehr (1934) 2/3, pp. 25–30, all following questions also taken from here.

**65** StaHH 614-1/38\_2 vol. 3, letter dated 30.8.1939.

**66** StaHH 614-1/38\_33 Altona, 1938–1954.

**67** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 2. minutes of meeting on 26.11.1941.

**68** Hamburger Nachrichten from 27.11.1933.

**69** ibid.

**70** 135-11-IV\_5263 Deutsche Buchmesse in Hamburg, 1933, containing the report "Ein Gang durch die Deutsche Buchmesse in Hamburg"; though no details of the author are given, it presumably was written by the organizers of the book fair.

**71** Graf, "Wer ein Deutscher ist...", p. 48.

**72** StaHH 351-14\_1357 Karfunkel, Max; all biographical details in the text are to be found there and in: Hildegard Thevs, Biografie Max Karfunkel, stolpersteine-hamburg.de [accessed 10.01.2024].

**73** BArch, R 9361-V/25838 Lebenslauf Albert Krebs, zum Parteieintritt und -ausschluss BArch R 9361-III/577844, all following information about Krebs to be found there.

**74** Christiane Uhlig, "Jetzt kommen andere Zeiten". Lotte Schwarz (1910–1971). Dienstmädchen, Emigrantin, Schriftstellerin, Zürich, 2012, p. 50. All subsequent biographical details and quotes from Lotte Benett, later Lotte Schwarz, were also taken from this publication; a summary of her life can be found in: Cornelia Göksu, "Lotte Schwarz", Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Hamburg (ed.), Hamburger Frauenbiografien, online: hamburg.de/frauenbiografien, entry "Lotte Schwarz" [accessed 10.12.2023].

**75** Cf. Wolfgang Benz, Im Widerstand. Größe und Scheitern der Opposition gegen Hitler, Munich, 2019, p.104 f.

**76** StaHH 614-1-38\_41 Bücherhalle Eppendorf, 1912–1953, file note dated 13.4.1934.

**77** Uhlig, "Zeiten", p. 146.

**78** For these and all other details about Schmidt, unless stated otherwise, cf. Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Personalakte Walter Schmidt.

**79** StaHH 614-1/38\_1, minutes of meeting on 15.10.1935, all other quotations in this paragraph also taken from there.

**80** Cf. Sywottek, Gleichschaltung, cols. 463–466.

**81** StaHH 522-01\_0992\_b Hermann Curjel's religious tax card.

**82** Marie Friedrich, Chronologie der Hamburger Öffentlichen Bücherhallen, in: Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg.

**83** StaHH 311-2 IV\_11644; Hamburgischer Correspondent from 15.5.1913.

**84** StaHH 351-11\_5399.

**85** Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg (FZH), Archiv, FZH\_K 1b, Albert Krebs, "Oeffentliche Bücherhallen", pp. 1–62, here p. 12 f.

**86** FZH\_K 1 b, Albert Krebs, "Oeffentliche Bücherhallen", pp. 1–62, here p. 13.

**87** StaHH 522-01\_0992\_b Julia Curjel's religious tax card; StaHH 351-11\_5399 Curjel, Julia.

**88** FZH\_K 1 b, p. 13.

**89** StaHH 614-1-38\_45 Mönckebergstrasse.

**90** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 1, circular dated 14.1.1935.

**91** StaHH 221-11\_Ed 11994 Ohnsorg\_Richard, Dr.

**92** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meetings on 22.4.1934, 9.3.1935 and 8.5.1935.

**93** Friedo Lampe, Briefe (1956/57), in: Neue deutsche Hefte. Beiträge zur europäischen Gegenwart, vol. 3, 1956/57, pp. 108–22, here p. 108, cited from Annette Hoffmann, Friedo Lampe: Idyllen auf "vulkanischem Grund". Erzählten im Stil des Magischen Realismus während des Dritten Reichs, unpublished dissertation, Universität Freiburg, 2002, p. 46, PDF download: katalogplus.sub.uni-hamburg.de/ufind/Record/565554700?rank=1 [accessed 15.2.2024], p. 50; for further details of the novel and its contents, see Stefan Müller, Ach, nur 'n bisschen Liebe. Männliche Homosexualität in den Romanen deutsch-sprachiger Autoren in der Zwischenkriegszeit 1918 bis 1939, Würzburg, 2011, pp. 430–449.

**94** Hoffmann, Friedo Lampe, p. 53.

**95** Cf. Gertrud Seydelmann, Gefährdete Balance. Ein Leben in Hamburg 1936–1945, Hamburg, 1996, p. 31.

**96** Cf. Hoffmann, Friedo Lampe, p. 51.

**97** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 19.5.1937.

**98** StaHH 614-1/38\_15 Indiziertes Schrifttum im Dritten Reich.

**99** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 1, circular issued by Bücherhallen management dated 2.6.1936.

**100** StaHH 614-1/38\_15 Indiziertes Schrifttum im Dritten Reich.

**101** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 2, circular dated 28.11.1938.

**102** StaHH 614-1/38\_46 Rosenstrasse 16, Musikbücherei, letter dated 2.2.1939.

**103** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 6.3.1936.

**104** FZH\_K 1 b, Albert Krebs, "Oeffentliche Bücherhallen", pp. 1–62, here p. 12.

**105** StaHH 614-1/38\_48 Veddel.

**106** Volbehr, Geschichte, p. 51 f.

**107** StaHH 363-6\_A 122 Fachstelle für das Volksbüchereiwesen, 1944–1951.

**108** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 4.5.1949.

**109** Cf. Sywottek, Gleichschaltung, col. 390.

**110** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 1, circular dated 30.12.1937.

**111** FZH\_12\_Kra-ri\_Personalakten, personnel file for Albert Krebs, statement made by Julie Hansen, retired director of Barmbek Public Library, Hamburg 16 Sept. 1949 (orig.).

**112** BArch, R 9361-V/25838, Lebenslauf Albert Krebs; for detailed informa-

tion about Albert Krebs and his role in the Nazi system in Hamburg, see Hans-Peter de Lorent, *Täterprofile. Die Verantwortlichen im Hamburger Bildungswesen unterm Hakenkreuz und die Kontinuität bis in die Zeit nach 1945*, vol. 3, Hamburg, 2019 pp. 48–74.

**113** For all subsequent biographical details, see Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Personalakte Rudolf Joerden, StaHH 221-11\_Misc 10217, and Andrae, Tun und Denken, in: BuB 37 (1988), 6, pp. 529–533.

**114** Friedrich Andrae, Tun und Denken. Rudolf Joerden 1901–1985, in: BuB 37 (1988), 6, pp. 529–533, here p. 530.

**115** StaHH 614-1/38\_3, vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 26.8.1938.

**116** StaHH 614-1/38\_10 vol. 2, correspondence from 18.1.–7.9.1939.

**117** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 1, minutes of meeting on 5.6.1939.

**118** StaHH 614-1/38\_28 Eingliederung der städtischen Büchereien von Altona, Harburg und Wandsbek sowie der Musikbücherei; all other information in this and the following paragraph also taken from there.

**119** StaHH 614-1/38\_50 Wandsbek und Tonndorf.

**120** StaHH 614-1/38\_38, Altona.

**121** StaHH\_77654, Rudolph Tschirpe; cf. Volbehr, Geschichte, pp. 56–58.

**122** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 1, circular dated 20.10.1938.

**123** ibid., circular dated 4.11.1938.

**124** ibid., circular dated 10.7.1939.

**125** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 1, minutes of meeting of chief librarians on 8.9.1939.

**126** Ibid. and StaHH 332-5 Standesämter\_87 and 579/1939 register of deaths, Meinhard Henrikus Ufen.

**127** StaHH 614-1/38\_12 vol. 3, circular dated 4.9.1939.

**128** ibid., circular dated 19.9.1939.

**129** ibid., circular dated 26.9.1939.

**130** ibid., circular dated 3.10.1939.

**131** Hamburger Tageblatt, 31.10.1940.

**132** StaHH 135-11-IV\_7935 circular issued by Reich Minister Dr Goebbels on the development of German book production, 1942.

**133** StaHH 614-1/38\_14 Politische und kriegsbedingte Maßnahmen, 1935–1945, all subsequent information about the appropriation by the Bücherhallen of books owned by Jews also taken from there.

**134** Hamburger Tageblatt, 29.8.1942.

**135** StaHH 522-1\_992 e 2 vol. 5 Transport nach Theresienstadt am 19. Juli 1942, list 2, copies from 314-15 Oberfinanzpräsident (Devisenstelle und Vermögensverwaltungsstelle) Nr. 24 UA 1–8.

**136** StaHH 614-1/38\_14 Politische und kriegsbedingte Maßnahmen, 1935–1945.

**137** Information provided by Wiebke von Deylen, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg (SUB), by e-mail on 1.3.2024.

**138** StaHH 363-6\_1667 Kriegsschäden.

**139** StaHH 614-1/38\_51 Winterhude.

**140** StaHH 332-5\_326 u. 859/1943, register of deaths, Margaret(h)e Grau.

**141** Cf. Seydelmann, Balance, pp. 171–173.

**142** StaHH 131-13\_241 Organisation und Aufgaben der Öffentlichen Bücherhallen, 1939–1962, therein: Rudolf Joerden, Das Volksbüchereiweisen nach dem Krieg und seine besondere Lage in Hamburg, Sonderdruck, Hamburg, 1946; StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 11.12.1945.

**143** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 12.9.1945.

**144** Gretzschel/Bührfeind, Bücherhallen, p. 94.

**145** StaHH 614-1/38\_16 vol. 3, Schriftverkehr mit der Verwaltung für Kunst und Kulturangelegenheiten.

**146** Rudolf Joerden, Die Entwicklung der Bücherhallen seit 1945, in: [Rudolf Joerden (ed.)], Hamburger Öffentliche Bücherhalle 1899–1949. Festschrift zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen, Hamburg, 1949, pp. 9–24, here p. 12.

**147** Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Unterlagen zur "Aufbau-Kommission", DPD report dated 25.11.[1945].

**148** StaHH 614-1/38\_16 vol. 3, Schriftverkehr mit der Verwaltung für Kunst und Kulturangelegenheiten 1945–1946.

**149** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 12.1.1949.

**150** ibid., minutes of meeting on 11.12.1945.

**151** Lorent, *Täterprofile*, vol. 3, p. 59.

**152** Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Unterlagen zur "Aufbau-Kommission", memorandum from Lilli Volbehr for Victor Gollancz, 14.10.1946; spelling as in the original; the memorandum was translated into English for Gollancz.

**153** ibid., various letters and memoranda from Martha Bohmer, Rudolf Joerden and the "Aufbau-Kommission", 1945/46.

**154** ibid., "Aufruf an die Hamburger Bevölkerung zur Hilfeleistung für die Hamburger Öffentlichen Bücherhallen", undated, probably early 1946.

**155** Ruth Siersks, Hilfe des Auslands, in: [Joerden (ed.)], Bücherhalle, pp. 115–127, here p. 115.

**156** ibid., p. 117 f., all subsequent information about book donations in the post-war period also taken from here.

**157** Uhlig, "Zeiten", p. 204.

**158** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 8.12.1948.

**159** ibid., minutes of meetings on 9.3.1949 and 8.6.1949.

**160** StaHH 131-13\_241 Organisation und Aufgaben der Öffentlichen Bücherhallen, 1939–1962; Archiv der Bücherhallen Hamburg, Unterlagen zur "Aufbau-Kommission", unsigned, letter from R. Joerden to Senator Walter Dudek dated 22.11.1946.

**161** StaHH 614-1/38\_10 vol. 2, letter from Hallier to Joerden dated 2.1.1946 and letter from cultural administration authority to the Bücherhallen, 27.12.1946; StaHH 363-6\_1683, letter from Hartenfels to Hallier, 28.10.1948.

**162** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of the meetings on 11.7.1946 and 4.9.1946.

**163** ibid., minutes of the meeting on 26.2.1946.

**164** StaHH 363-6\_A 125, letter from the Education Control Unit to the Hamburg cultural administration authority, 2.2.1946.

**165** ibid., letter dated 23.2.1946, and StaHH 614-1/38 HOB\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 26.2.1946.

**166** StaHH 363-6\_A 125 Überprüfung von Bibliotheken und Bibliothekaren durch die Militärregierung, 18.1.1946.

**167** StaHH 221-11\_Misc 10217 Rudolf Joerden, 71821 Otto Engelbert, Ed 12037 Wanda Droeßler, 77654 Rudolph Tschirpe and Ed 12192 Elisabeth Propach.

**168** StaHH 221-11\_Ed 11970 Gertrud Seydelmann, née Rosenbaum.

**169** StaHH 221-11\_F(P) 654 (Hans Engelhard); for the declaration of consent of the Advisory Committee, see StaHH 363-6\_A 125, letter from the Bücherhallen administration to the cultural administration authority, 10.12.1945; for details of the narratives staff wrote in an attempt to distance themselves from the Nazis in their denazification questionnaires, see Hanne Lesau, *Entnazifizierungsgeschichten. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen NS-Vergangenheit in der frühen Nachkriegszeit*, Göttingen, 2020.

**170** StaHH 221-11\_F (P) 798 Helmut Groos.

**171** ibid., F(P) 654 Hans Engelhard; for the declaration of consent of the Advisory Committee, see StaHH 363-6\_A 125, letter from the Bücherhallen administration to the cultural administration authority, 10.12.1945.

**172** Gertrud Seydelmann, Von der Kinderbewahranstalt zur Bibliothekarin. Schulerlebnisse von 1916 bis 1935 im katholischen Köln, Schwäbisch Gründl, 1989, p. 237.

**173** Cf. Kurt Schilder, "Hitler-Jugend (HJ)", in: Wolfgang Benz/Hermann Graml/Hermann Weis (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, Munich, 1997, pp. 512–514.

**174** Cf. Seydelmann, Balance, p. 69.

**175** ibid., pp. 43 and 157.

**176** StaHH 614-1/38\_3 vol. 3, minutes of meeting on 30.11.1949.

**177** ibid., minutes of meeting on 30.11.1949; for more about Erich Trunz, see Ernst Klee: Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, p. 621, and Kieler Gelehrtenverzeichnis, online: [gelehrtenverzeichnis.de](http://gelehrtenverzeichnis.de), entry "Erich Trunz".

**178** Christoph Konig (ed.), *Internationales Germanistenlexikon 1800–1950*, vol. 1, Berlin/New York, 2003, pp. 1909–1911.

**179** Since 2015, the Hamburg Bücherhallen have been officially known as the "Stiftung Hamburger Öffentliche Bücherhallen" (Hamburg Public Libraries Foundation) or "Bücherhallen Hamburg" for short.

**180** Commemorative Stolperstein laid for former Bücherhallen employee Hedda Guradze at her last place of work, in: <https://www.buecherhallen.de/blog-artikel/stolperstein-fuer-ehemalige-buecherhallen-mitarbeiterin-hedda-guradze-am-letzten-arbeitsort-eingeweht.html> [accessed 1.4.2024].

**181** Cf. information provided by Frauke Untiedt, director of Bücherhallen Hamburg, on the basis of initial research and correspondence by e-mail with Johannes Mangei, SUB Göttingen, 28.03.2024.

**182** Cf. Norman Köhler, Ein Jahr Erstcheck NS-Raubgut für Öffentliche Bibliotheken, in: *Bibliotheksdienst*, vol. 57 (2023), issue 3–4, pp. 224–229, PDF download: [degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/bd-2023-0027/html?lang=de](https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/bd-2023-0027/html?lang=de) [accessed 20.3.2024].

**183** E-mail information provided by Frauke Untiedt, director of Bücherhallen Hamburg, 26.03.2024.



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