"German Jews," "National Jews," "Jewish Volk" or "Racial Jews"? The Constitution and Contestation of "Jewishness" in Newspapers of Nazi Germany, 1933–1938

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AFTER reading the "Jewish News Bulletin" (Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt) in early 1939, the Romance language scholar Victor Klemperer wrote: "Until 1933 and for at least a good century before that, the German Jews were entirely German and nothing else ... They were and remain (even if now they no longer wish to remain so) Germans ..." Klemperer, a convert to Protestantism, but a "full Jew" by Nazi decree, continued, "It is part of the Lingua tertii imperii [LTI, language of the Third Reich] that the expression 'Jewish people' [Volk] appears repeatedly in the 'Jewish News' ..."

These brief diary excerpts — composed with the fresh memory of the November pogroms of 1938 — illuminate the author’s staunch and defiant contestation of the Nazis’ constitution of “Jewishness” as non-German and his continued adherence to a sense of “Germanness.” The author’s remarks also show him to have been an attentive reader of the last publication of the once extensive German-Jewish press, from which he inferred changes in the use of everyday language. The concept of the “Jewish Volk” was replacing notions of Jewish Germanness as the “Jewish Question” assumed a central place in people’s speech and thoughts about Jewishness. In the language both of the perpetrators and most victims, the terms Jew and German were becoming mutually exclusive. Finally, Klemperer’s comments take a partisan stance in the controversy among German Jews over their Judentum and Deutschtum, the vexed question whose roots can be dated back to the beginnings of Jewish emancipation

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in the late eighteenth century. This often heated debate has informed subsequent scholarship and its two competing “liberal-cultural” and Zionist master narratives of German-Jewish history.2

In versions of the first narrative, the nineteenth century appears as a time of accelerating Jewish acculturation and integration into mainstream society. A once marginalized community socially transformed itself into a prosperous part of the urban middle class. The German Empire’s 1871 constitution completed the removal of restrictions on the German Jews’ civil and political rights and marks their success. As the late George L. Mosse has argued, the commitment of the vast majority of German Jews to values of Bildung and bourgeois civility led them on a path beyond Judaism and toward a sense of belonging to a Jewish “nation.” The concept of a “German-Jewish dialogue” became part of how they perceived their position in the larger society.3 In this vein, German Jews decisively contributed to the country’s advances in cultural, social, political, and economic life, as both liberal-cultural organizations such as the “Central Organization of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith” (Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, CVJ) and liberal historians have argued.

Competing Zionist narratives emphasize the “underside” of this story, i.e., the ongoing social discrimination and rising anti-Semitic movement since the 1870s that fed into Nazi thought after the First World War. For a minority of assimilated intellectuals like Theodor Herzl and the leaders of the 1897–founded Zionist Organization for Germany (Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland, ZViD),4 the rapidly spreading anti-Semitism demonstrated the apparent failure of the Jewish emancipation and “assimilation.”5 A feasible alternative emerged in the shape of a modern national consciousness and remade Jewish tradition that underpinned a quest for a Jewish state in Palestine. Concepts of a “German-Jewish symbiosis” or “dialogue” were, according to Gershom Scho-


3. George L. Mosse, German Jews beyond Judaism (Bloomington, 1985), 82. A survey which is wider in scope, but largely follows the liberal-cultural narrative as well is Michael A. Meyer, ed., German-Jewish History in Modern Times, 4 vols. (New York, 1998).


5. Since the end of the First World War, “assimilation” has become an increasingly derogatory term used by Zionists to ridicule German Jewry in their embrace of Germanness. In its nineteenth-century use, however, the concept resembles what most scholars today characterize as “acculturation,” i.e., the adoption of traits from mainstream society such as language and a national identity without renouncing religious and cultural differences. In this essay, the term is used in this sense. David Sorkin, “Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History,” Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 35 (1990): 27.
lem's postwar pronouncements, "retroactive wishfulfillment" and something "which in fact never took place." 6

Michael Brenner has rightfully questioned the story of a linear Jewish retreat from Judaism and their absorption into German Gentile culture. Instead, he has argued that German Jews negotiated a distinct Jewish identity and invented a Jewish culture that reconnected them to a sense of Jewishness, while ensuring compatibility with the non-Jewish mainstream society of Weimar Germany. As a creative response to the anti-Semitic threat and the need to give meaning to a changing world, a "manifold Jewish Renaissance" — conceived, among others, by the leading cultural Zionist Martin Buber at the turn of the century — took new turns and attracted a growing number of followers. 7 This multifaceted revival, however, was anything but a mere Zionist endeavor. It also included the ranks of the assimilationist CV whose leadership became increasingly concerned with the Jewish component of German-Jewishness. Since the late 1910s, its publications reveal a changing understanding of Jewishness, for example, as a "community of common descent" (Stammegemeinschaft). 8

This essay focuses on the constitution and contestation of Jewishness in mass-circulating newspapers of the 1930s. It will trace the racialization of the category "Jew" and its separation from Germanness in the Nazi Party's Völkischer Beobachter (Vb), whose circulation figures had reached 580,000 in late 1938. Moreover, my study will investigate the initiatives and contestations of Nazi constructs by German-Jewish editors of the liberal-cultural CV Zeitung (CV-Z), and the Zionist Jüdische Rundschau (JR), which, by that time, appeared with 39,500 and 25,300 copies respectively. 9 Next to the emerging media of radio and sound film, these leading newspapers represented a significant cultural medium that offered hundreds of thousands of readers a language through which they could make sense of their situation and negotiate between increasingly conflicting worlds. On the following pages, I will present a comparative reading of the April 1933, September 1935, and November 1938 issues of these

9. While these figures represent a sharp decline for the German-Jewish papers (from the CV-Z's 55,000 and JR's 37,000 copies in 1933), they demonstrate the expansion of the Nazi paper (from 127,500 in 1933). The number of Nazi papers sold, however, was typically considerably less than the number of printed copies. See Margarete Plewina, "Völkischer Beobachter (1887–1945)," in Deutsche Zeitungen des 17. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, ed. Heinz-Dietrich Fischer (Pullach, 1972), 390.
papers, i.e., key phases in the prewar Nazi anti-Jewish policies (April boycott; Nuremberg Laws, and November pogroms) and German-Jewish activities.

Along with the Nazis' segregation of Jews came a linguistic remaking of Jewishness that continued earlier developments in völkisch and racial anti-Semitic discourses and propelled the changes in the ways most German Jews both perceived themselves and came to be seen by the Gentile majority. While historians of Nazism and German Jewry have offered numerous studies of the Nazi regime's anti-Jewish policies and initiatives by German-Jewish communities, they have given short shrift to language and its role in political and cultural life. Many scholars have accepted people's sense of self as "Jew" or "German" as self-evident, often perpetuating a clear-cut divide between the two categories in their own academic writing. Historians, in this way, have failed to account for the multiple intersections between Jewishness and Germanness. They have avoided an analysis of embattled (re-)constructions of these categories that informed Nazi policies and German-Jewish responses.

The relatively few historical studies that focus more extensively on the role of language tend to subsume it under conventional categories of propaganda and ideology, thus making it part of a conceptual grid of top-down manipulation. This view maintains that a supposed "mastermind," such as Nazi chief propagandist Joseph Goebbels, consciously employed simple propaganda slogans and deceptively transformed language in order to win and manipulate followers. Henry Friedlander has suggested that another type of language, the one of the technicians, joined this "language of the propagandists." He has proposed that the bureaucrats and specialists who implemented the genocidal policies used a series of euphemisms in order to disguise their criminality and mislead their victims.

Under the impact of the theoretical debates in cultural history and the widely discussed diaries of Victor Klemperer, which contain his notes on the Lingua ter\textit{tii} \textit{imperi}, historians of Nazism and the Holocaust have slowly become more

10. On prewar Nazi anti-Jewish policies see, for example, Uwe Dietrich Adam, \textit{Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich} (Düsseldorf, 1972) and Karl A. Schleunes, \textit{The Twisted Road to Auschwitz}: \textit{Nazi Policy Toward the Jews} 1933–1939, 2d ed. (Urbana, 1990). On the responses and initiatives by German Jews see Marion A. Kaplan, \textit{Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany} (New York, 1998) and Arnold-Patuck, ed., \textit{Die Juden im Nationalsozialistischen Deutschland} (Tübingen, 1986). For a recent synthesis which blends both these see Saul Friedländer, \textit{Nazi Germany and the Jews}, vol. 1, \textit{The Years of Persecution}, 1933–1939 (New York, 1997).

11. Moshe Zimmermann has pointed to the ongoing use of this dichotomy especially by German scholars. See \textit{Die deutschen Juden} 1914–1945 (Munich, 1997). 139. Steven Aschheim has also problematized the "essentially' understanding of a fixed 'German' or 'Jewish' identity." See his essay "German History and German Jewry: Boundaries, Junctions and Interdependencies," \textit{Leo Baeck Institute Year Book} 43 (1998): 317.

interested in language and its political and cultural dimensions. While Klemperer, too, has tended to treat language within a simplistic manipulative framework, he has given a fascinating account of how the LTI influenced the everyday language of German Gentiles and German Jews. Klemperer, an ardent newspaper reader, has also analyzed the appearance of Nazi language in the press. 13 More recently, Thomas Childers has begun to explore how a focus on language and discourses can contribute to the research on Nazism. Larger studies have yet to be conducted. 14

I will proceed to discuss the constitution and contestation of Jewish identity constructs by drawing on discourse-analytical approaches as part of a broader cultural historical perspective. While the concept of “discourse,” as even historians sympathetic to these approaches admit, is in danger of outliving its usefulness as an analytical tool in the light of an inflationary use, it continues to offer valuable ways of thinking through problems of language, culture, and identities. 15 This methodological perspective allows us to see language not simply as an instrument of manipulation and as an “entity” fully determined by socioeconomic structures. These approaches provide the means to develop postfunctionalist conceptualizations of ideology — to use Geoff Eley’s pointed phrase — “qua discourse” for the study of history. 16 They help us to question the presumably ontological status of the categories “Jew” and “German.” To perceive these categories as constructed serves as a starting point for an analysis of how politico-cultural processes formed and regulated them. Understood in this way, discourses played a key role in ordering the elusive “systems” of representations, “ideas,” and categories within which people lived their imagined relationships, i.e., central components of a concept of ideology used in many traditional historiographical studies. 17


I propose an understanding of language as a meaning-constituting system and a medium that guides speech and informs social action. It achieves its guiding capacity by the help of discourses. Discourses, as distinctly historico-cultural forms, can be thought of as modes of “speaking/writing” and represent “systems of constraints.” Rather than forming a stable and unchangeable core, discourses delineate the limits of what can be said and written. They are embedded in time-and-place-specific power relations that define the place of legitimacy and truth. This study further distinguishes “discursive guidelines” understood as sets of “regularities” that are narrower than the thematic discourses. They emanated particularly from the institutionalized “directives for the use of language” (sprachregelnde Anweisungen) and had a decisive impact on the formation of discourses. Yet, this reading does not reduce historical actors, their minds and bodies, to a mere surface upon which discourses acted. Instead, many journalists, among other people, engaged in practices that I describe as “discursive contestation.” Within the constraints of discourses, they used language to resist discursively imposed identities and reformulate their own and their communities’ sense of self. These activities did not simplistically unfold according to linguistic contexts. Instead, they remained, as Jay Smith argues, linked to “beliefs and values” which, even if themselves guided by linguistic conventions, were not exclusively shaped by them. Beliefs remained “sensitive to the material environment,” which worsened notably for the German Jews in the face of the radicalizing Nazi onslaught in the course of the 1930s.

April 1933: Changing Dominances

In the spring of 1933, the new Nazi-led coalition government abolished the freedom of the press, imprisoned leftist journalists, and closed down opposition papers. The police and SA established a surveillance apparatus over non-Nazi publications and contributed to an unfolding culture of fear and violence. The Nazi press celebrated the victory of the Hitler movement and, in light of the forced demise of competing papers, set its course toward further expansion. The Nazi papers supported the party’s anti-Jewish measures, notably the local boycotts of the stores, lawyers’ offices, and doctor’s practices the boycotters considered Jewish. These actions culminated in the nationwide boycott of 1 April 1933 that served as a manifestation and symbol of the “new Germany’s” anti-Semitic turn. The organizers from the party’s radical wing, however, faced

numerous problems, among others in their attempts to determine if a store was
Jewish. The unclear meanings and boundaries between categories of Jewishness
and Germanness contributed to the often confused practices of Nazi activists in
the streets. The harm suffered by Gentile owners of boycotted businesses
strengthened the position of the more moderate wing of the party that favored
a legalist approach to the regime’s anti-Jewish policies over the party radicals’
avocacy of open violence.20

By that time, the Völkischer Beobachter, the leading Nazi Party paper, was in
the process of changing from a major political opposition publication to a
mouthpiece of the new government.21 Its pronouncements on the “Jewish Question”
were no longer subject to potential prosecution as they had been
during the Weimar period, but had now attained a dominant and legitimate sta-
tus. Headed by the party’s self-styled chief ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, but
increasingly shaped by his deputy at the VB Wilhelm Weiss, the paper main-
tained its pre-1933 character as an exponent of the “combat press” (Kampf-
presse). It still sought to function as a “daily mass rally of the Führer.”22 A closer
look at the VB reveals the impact of key premises of Nazi propaganda as dis-
cussed in Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf.23 On the level of style, this included the
endless repetition of simple statements; on the level of content, it encompassed
seemingly incessant attacks on constructs of “the Jew” as universal threat and
eternal enemy.

A discourse-analytical reading with a special emphasis on subject construc-
tions in the April 1933 VB editions gives ample evidence to the constitution of
the term “Jew” in opposition to “German.” It reveals a continuation of this
dichotomy, reaching from the writings of late nineteenth-century anti-Semites
to Nazi editors of the Weimar period. For example, “No German buys from the
Jew” cited the orders of the Nazi committee that conducted the anti-Jewish
April boycott. Furthermore, an excerpt from a pamphlet on “racial hygiene
and the völkisch state” proclaimed that “[t]here are Germans and Jews in our
country.”24 The VB revealed a linguistic and semantic separation between these

20. See Schleunes, Twisted Road to Auschwitz, 74–91.
21. The Völkischer Beobachter was published in several editions. This study will make use of
the paper’s North German edition which comprised more than two-thirds of the total number of
printed copies. See Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft an der Universität Berlin, ed. Handbuch der
deutischen Tagespresse, 6th ed. (Leipzig, 1937), 81. On the VB see Sonja Nöller, “Der Völkische
Beobachter,” in Passimile Querschnitt durch den Völkischen Beobachter, ed. Sonja Nöller and Hilde von
(1933): 66 and Adolf Dresler, “Aus der Geschichte des Völkischen Beobachters’ und des Zentral-
24. See “Der jüdischen Weltmacht ist der Krieg erklärt: Erste Sitzung des Zentralkomitees,”
Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 1 April 1933, p. 2; [Martin] Stämler, “Scheidung der Rassen!”
Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 8 April 1933, 2d supplement.
two terms: "Jewish" was "non-German" — the Other of "German." As Victor Klemperer observed in his study of Nazi language, "Anything and everything in the section of the LTI relating to the Jews is geared to segregating them as completely and irreconcilably as possible from everything German."25

Yet, Klemperer's position fails to explain the occurrence of constructions that contradict and confuse this seemingly stringent separation. A closer focus demonstrates the complexity even of the Nazi constructions in the VB's April 1933 issues. While the paper talked about "Jews in Germany,"26 a phrase that expressed the difference between Jewishness and Germanness, the VB paradoxically included "German Jews," "German Jewry," and even "Jewish German." After a tirade against "the Jews" in the arts, the paper quoted Hans Hinkel of the Prussian Ministry of Culture: "Naturally, the freelance Jewish-German artist shall have the opportunity to do his work, if he completely subjects himself to the duties of the German citizen . . ."27 The absurdity of this statement by a man who was in charge of the "de-Judaization" of cultural life notwithstanding, the circulation of "Jewish German" did not denote the "stringent separation" between "Jew" and "German" that Nazi propagandists proclaimed. Instead, it indicated, as in the case of "German Jews," intersections between the two terms and the prevalent impact of older liberal discourses that projected the goal of a symbiosis. The fact that these categories were not part of texts written by opponents of Nazism and cited in the VB, but were attributed to leading Nazis, retained some of their former political legitimacy and increased their disruptive potential.

This moment of ambiguity is also apparent in the racial and religious meanings of Jewishness in the VB of April 1933. While conventional readings of Nazi ideology stress its clear-cut understanding of "Jews" as a race,28 a closer focus on discourses reveals that the VB circulated categories with various degrees of racialization that, on occasion, remained strikingly vague. An examination of how often the VB used individual categories reveals that the term "racial comrade" (Rassengenossen) outweighed that of "comrade in faith" (Glaubensgenosse). Since both terms appeared consistently, it is, nonetheless, problematic to speak

27. See "Der Nationalsozialismus ist in allen künstlerischen Dingen grosszügig: Ein Interview mit Hans Hinkel, Kommissar z. b. V. im preußischen Kultusministerium," Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 6 April 1933, 2d supplement; "Emil Ludwig Cohn verkündet die jüdische Weltmacht," Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 1 April 1933, p. 3 and "Die III. Internationale übernimmt die Führung der jüdischen Hetze gegen Deutschland," Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 4 April 1933, p. 3.
28. See, for example, Rupert Breitling, Die nationalsozialistische Rassenlehre: Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Nutzen und Schaden einer politischen Ideologie (Meisenheim, 1971).
of a clear domination of racial connotations over religious ones. The use of the compound constructions “Jew” and “German” supports this ambiguity. In the V B’s coverage of the April boycott, an author wrote, “On many business premises one recognizes ... red posters with the inscription, ‘Recognized German-Christian store.’” On the next page, the paper stated, “Furthermore, through this action Christian companies are made aware of those firms which, in the interest of the German economy, should be solely considered as their suppliers, and that, as a result, they no longer consider themselves dependent on Jewish wholesalers.”

The parallel opposition between “Christian companies” and “Jewish wholesalers” imbued the adjective “Jewish” with pronounced religious meanings due to the predominantly religious category “Christian.” The V B’s coverage of the anti-Semitic April laws also showed similar inconsistencies in the Nazis’ attempts legally to define “non-Aryaniness” — until 1935, the core legal term to separate Jewishness from Germanness. Without conclusive scientific means to determine a person’s race, Nazi laws based the concept of “non-Aryaniness” on the religious affiliation of “one parent or grandparent.”

The ambiguous realm of racial and religious connotations, on the one hand, could strengthen the division between Jewishness and a Christian Germanness by evoking anti-Judaic Christian imagery of “the Jew” as the “Other” and the killer of Christ. Persisting notions of traditional discourses of religious anti-Judaism could legitimize Nazi concepts with racial connotations among religious circles not in support of the regime’s policies. On the other, the ambiguities could also retard the racialization of the term “Jew” and offer, for instance, acculturated German-Jewish journalists a space to construe Jewishness as a mere religion along with others in a concept of the greater German nation.

The beginning of the Nazi regime represented an upturn in the development of the German-Jewish press. As Karin Diehl has shown, these papers experienced a striking revival.


31. See, for example, the definition advanced in the so-called Aryan paragraph of the “Erste Verordnung zur Durchführung des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbefamntum vom 11. April 1933,” Reichsgesetzblatt 1 (1933): 195. The V B discussed this law in “Wiederherstellung des nationalen Berufsbefamntum,” Völkischer Beobachter (Berlin), 9/10 April 1933, p. 2.

32. Karin Diehl, Die jüdische Presse im Dritten Reich: Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Fremdbestimmung (Tübingen, 1997), 266.
the conscious advancement of a Jewish culture and collective identity, which had been underway since the turn of the century. Unlike in earlier decades, this stage was forced on German Jewry by the Nazis and had the character of a "macabre epilogue to a story that had not fully unfolded."33 Still, in 1933, the CV Zeitung, the CV's leading publication, and the Jüdische Rundschau, the ZVfd's official organ, benefited from an influx of German-Jewish journalists who had been dismissed as a result of the Gleichschaltung of the country's press. These papers became an alternative general press and assumed leadership functions in German-Jewish communities.34 As Jacob Boas has pointed out, "the major task of Jewish journalism" was to provide the Jewish community with a "positive counterimage" to the Nazi dehumanization of "the Jew."35 Both papers challenged constructs of Jewishness that Nazi state institutions and papers such as the Volkscher Beobachter sought to impose on German Jewry. While the Jewish newspapers later became subject to scrutiny and harassment by the Nazi Party and state, in the spring of 1933 they were not yet regulated by institutionalized discursive guidelines.

The editors of the CV-Z responded to the Nazi onslaught and remaking of Jewishness during the anti-Jewish April boycott by reiterating their construction of a symbiotic German-Jewishness. With their claim to Germanness, the editors continued one of the CV's core strategies in countering anti-Semitism that the association had used since its foundation in 1893. The paper's editorial of April 6 discussed the ongoing "struggle for our Germanness" and concluded, "We cannot believe that it would be beneficial for Germany if German people [deutsche Menschen] had to lose their faith in themselves and their fatherland." The author explicitly endorsed the validity of a dual German-Jewish identity by writing that "... a later time... will understand that the history of the German Jews— not only of the Jews in Germany— began neither in 1918 nor in 1789 [my italics]." Instead, it was a "development that had started much earlier," when the state finally granted the Jewish population full legal rights.36 Throughout the April issues, the CV-Z often employed the term "German Jews," whereas the phrase "Jews in Germany," separating Jewishness and Germanness, was mostly absent.37 On April 13, Alfred Hirschberg, the CV-Z's

33. Brenner, Renaissance, 8.
34. Since several scholars have discussed the two papers, I have limited my comments to a few general remarks. For the most comprehensive studies see Diehl, Jüdische Presse, 155–220 and Herbert Freedon, The Jewish Press in the Third Reich (Providence, 1992). The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book has repeatedly published studies by former editors or scholars such as Jacob Boas, "The Shrinking World of German Jewry, 1933–1938," Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 31 (1986): 241–66.
37. For the former see Max Wiener, "Pessach-Feier in dieser Zeit," CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 6 April 1933, p. 123; "Bericht im Auswärtigen Amt," CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 13 April 1933, p. 129; [Alfred
editor-in-chief, stressed the “togetherness” of “Jews and non-Jews in the German Volk.” He directly challenged the assault by Nazi propagandists on German-Jewishness by continuing to construe “Jew” and “German” as the basis of a dual identity, however problem-ridden the concept. While seemingly accommodating to the language of the Nazis’ “national revolution” in his use of terms such as “fatherland,” Hirschberg exploited the ambiguous elements of the Nazi discourse displayed in the VB and contested the separation of Germanness and Jewishness.

In contrast to Nazi and Zionist categories of Jewishness, the CV Zeitung advanced an understanding of “German Jews” as a community of shared religious beliefs. The CV-Z printed, for example, a letter-to-the-editor in which a German-Jewish craftsman talked about his colleagues and his own recent dismissal from the job “because of their religion.” This construction corresponds with “German citizens of the Jewish faith” that represented the privileged subject of the CV and denoted its constituency. In every April 1933 issue, the CV-Z displayed this phrase in its subtitle further stressing the construct’s significance.

Yet, reflecting trends of the Jewish Renaissance and the CV’s growing concern with Jewish identity, the CV-Z did not merely construe Jewishness as a religion. The phrase “people of our tribe” figured prominently in texts on Judaism, among others by Max Wiener, a prominent liberal rabbi in Berlin. In a religious context, it belonged to the Torah’s imagery of the twelve tribes of Israel as a central bond between Jews in the Diaspora. Placed in a cultural context, the tribal imagery suggested that “Jews” — just like other imagined “tribes” such as “Bavarians” or “Saxons” — belonged to the greater German Volk. This construction evoked the notion of a “community of common descent” that had been figuring prominently in CV publications since Eugen Fuchs’s leadership in the late 1910s. Moreover, the CV-Z’s April 1933 issues advanced the notion of a “community of fate” (Schicksalgemeinschaft). This term suggested German Jews shared a “character” (Gepräge) that was “similar in nature” (wesensähnlich) based on collective experiences of success and suffering.

Hirschberg], “Feiertag der nationalen Arbeit,” CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 27 April 1933, p. 145. For the latter see “Bericht,” p. 129.

38. [Alfred Hirschberg], “Deutsch-jüdische Wirklichkeit,” CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 13 April 1933, p. 130.

39. See E. e., “Fristlos entlassen,” CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 20 April 1933, p. 141 and the title pages of the CV-Z’s April issues, for example, CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 6 April 1933, p. 117.


41. “Deutsch-jüdische Wirklichkeit,” p. 130 (see n. 38). The notion of a “community of fate” was popularized by Ludwig Holländer, the CV’s director, in the late 1920s. See Barkai, Deutschunm and Judenheim, 77–78.
Disputing the validity of assimilationist CV-Z terminology, the *Jüdische Rundschau* advocated a “new” Jewishness. The category itself was not new but had been central to Zionist projects since the days of Theodor Herzl. The heroic new Jew was the core category around which the collective transformation of the Jews had to evolve. This image played a key role in the ZViD’s attempts to foster a “dignified reassertion of Jewish identity” among German Jews to counter *volksisch* anti-Semitism during the 1920s and 1930s. In the JR, notions of a new Jewishness heavily drew on cultural Zionist discourses shaped by the works of Martin Buber and Robert Welsch.42 Welsch, the JR’s editor-in-chief, used the term “new, free Jew” in “Wear it With Pride, the Yellow Badge,” his famous JR editorial of 4 April 1933. The “new Jew” formed the basis for an identity of the postemancipation era. The category expressed a belonging to the Jewish people, not to the German *Volk*. The new Jew was a “national Jew” (*Nationaljude*) and the only possible “whole Jew.”43 Unlike the CV-Z’s constructs, the Jewish subject in the JR did not conflict with the Nazi separation of Jews and Germans. With the emergence of the brutally anti-Semitic Nazi state, the new Jew became a feasible alternative to the embattled assimilationist German-Jewishness cherished by most German Jews.

The JR, however, did not simply advance terms that presumably stopped short of colliding with Nazi discourse. Like their colleagues at the CV-Z, JR editors alluded to contradictions in Nazi definitions and advanced alternative constructs. Yet, they also went a step further. Dr. Franz Meyer, the ZViD’s general secretary, for instance, cited a postwar letter by a Zionist worker in *Eretz Israel*, “Jewish workers in Palestine... knew that nothing was able to unite people as much into a community for which socialism strove as the community in blood and language, spirit and task that we call *Volkstum*.” Even more pronounced than Welsch’s writings, Meyer’s practices used the Nazi discourse by repeating and, at the same time, subversively disrupting some of its elements. A footnote in Meyer’s text expressed this point more clearly, “It was more than a mere oddity that the term ‘Jewish National-Socialist Group’ was originally (1918) suggested as the name for the first general Jewish workers’ organization in Palestine.”44 The author’s intervention began to unsettle the very meaning of “National Socialist.” While the Nazi discourse set the terms “National Socialist” and “German” against the category “Jew,” Meyer questioned the divide by depicting the new Jew as inherently “nationalist” and “socialist.” This

made it possible—the question of authorial intent aside—to share in the power and growing legitimacy of these key terms in the Nazi dictatorship and critically to support the JR constitution of Jewishness.

In contrast to the G IV–Z, the constitution of Jewishness in the JR eschewed strong religious connotations. It employed distinct racial underpinnings that partially overlapped with Nazi constructs. In his April 4 editorial, Robert Welsch expressed his “grateful[ness]” to the Nazi boycott committee. He cited part of the committee’s proclamation that attempted to define Jewish business to be boycotted, “Religion does not play a role. Business people who are baptized Catholics or Protestants or dissidents of the Jewish race are Jews in the sense of this proclamation.” Welsch used the passage to move away from an assimilated Jewish Germanness that had more and more shed the bonds to Judaism. To support his version of a Jewish subject, he implied the existence of “positive” elements in Nazi language. Like Meyer, Welsch used Nazi categories of racial Jewishness that had become increasingly legitimate under the new dictatorial regime.45

Racial notions in the JR’s constitution of Jewishness found support in Theodor Herzl’s The Jewish State, one of the founding texts of political Zionism, from which the paper extensively cited. The excerpts talked about the “Jewish racial element” and discussed the “personality of the Volk of the Jews.” As the binding component of Jewishness, this personality “can, will, and must not perish”—even at times of “inconceivable suffering.” The prominence of racial and völkisch imagery in Herzl’s text, meanwhile, points to his borrowing from Prusso-German nationalist discourses that influenced the Zionist leader’s thinking.46

These apparent similarities between Nazi and Zionist constructions of Jewishness misled scholars like Klemperer to argue that “Hitler learned from Herzl.” In response to this type of claim, George L. Mosse has argued that the meaning of terms such as “blood” and “race” used in Nazi discourses differed from those employed in Zionist terminology.47 While a discourse-analytical reading supports Mosse’s point—the editorial of April 14 rejected the “inferiority” of “Jewry” as a “race” without questioning the racialism itself—48 it shows overlaps in the practices of JR editors and Nazi writers. A closer attention to subject categories also demonstrates the ambiguities inherent in discursive struggles. Given the privileged position of the Nazi discourse in the racial

48. “Zwischenbilanz,” 147 (see n. 43).
state and the increasingly suppressed voices of the German-Jewish papers, the disruptive potential of their interventions could easily turn into a reification and unwilling support of the contested Nazi categories.

September 1935: The Enforcement of Difference

By the Fall of 1935, the Völkischer Beobachter had become one of the highest circulating dailies in the country. While the paper maintained its status as a quasi-mouthpiece of the Nazi movement and government, it came under growing pressure from the Propaganda Ministry’s press department. In the course of the year, the Nazi control of the media had taken a more radical direction. The earlier period of insecurity and closing down of papers had come to an end. The measures increasingly culminated in an elaborate structure of press directives and postpublication censorship. Though this content control was never as perfected as contemporary journalists and early postwar studies apologetically claimed, the Propaganda Ministry’s discursive guidelines led to a greater uniformity and dissemination of Nazi discourses in the print media.\(^49\) In contrast to the VB editors, who, with the help of Rosenberg, sought to maintain some independence, Joseph Goebbels’s propagandists regarded the paper as a mouthpiece for their policies. In the ensuing conflicts, the press department repeatedly reprimanded the VB during its daily press conferences in Berlin for the violations of directives.\(^50\) While the ministry’s criticism did not aim at the VB’s construction of Jewishness, the reprimands forced the editors, in light of the paper’s weaker position, to pay more attention to the announcements by Goebbels’s men.

The press department’s guidelines contributed to a streamlining of the constitution of Jewishness in the VB’s September issues. Its directives for the use of language by the press enforced the circulation of approved commentaries and speeches from the Nuremberg party rally. Alfred-Ingemar Berndt’s “German News Bureau” (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro) commentary on the Nuremberg Racial Laws, for example, clearly separated the terms “Jew” and “German.” His text set the term “German Volk” against “Jewish Volk” and exclusively talked about “Jewry in Germany” instead of “German Jews.” It also rejected the depiction of Jewishness “only” as a religion in favor of a völkisch entity.\(^51\)

\(^{49}\) See Max van der Brück, “Die Bastion der Sprache,” Die Gegenwart (Frankfurt am Main), 29 October 1956, pp. 27–29. For key works on the Nazi control of the press cf. Jürgen Hagemann, Die Presseleitung im Dritten Reich (Bonn, 1970), Kurt Koszyk, Deutsche Presse, 1914–1945: Geschichte der deutschen Presse, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1972), Norbert Frei and Johannes Schmitz, Journalismus im Dritten Reich (Munich, 1989), and Joseph Wulf, Presse und Funk im Dritten Reich (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).


In accordance with these guidelines, the VB’s remaking of Jewishness lost much of its semantic confusion. The paper almost solely circulated phrases such as “Jewry . . . in Germany,” “Jews living in Germany” or “Jew . . . in Germany.” “The Führer especially stressed,” a brief article addressing Hitler’s remarks on the Nuremberg Racial Laws read, “that the Jews in Germany [my italics] were given opportunities for their own völkisch life in all areas according to these laws.” Furthermore, the author of an article on the XIX Zionist Congress in Switzerland employed “Zionist participants from Germany” along with “American delegation” to distinguish between the attendees from different countries. Thus, he avoided terms that expressed an inherent sense of national belonging such as “German Jews” and used the phrase “from Germany” as a necessary indicator of geographical origin.52

The VB’s September 1935 reconstructions of Jewishness were devoid of many of their prior religious bases and had become increasingly racialized. “Also the criminal statistic proves to us,” the approved text of the anti-Jewish tirade by Gerhard Wagner at the party rally stated, “that the Jewish Volk, because of its racial characteristics, has a disposition for a whole series of grave crimes . . .” The VB quoted the Reichsärzteführer, a leading figure among party radicals, further, “. . . I have to say in advance that the figures kept since 1882 of official criminal statistics of the German Empire again only comprise the confessional Jews [Konfessionsjuden] and if we could calculate them for the racial Jews [Rassejuden], they would have to rise considerably.”53 Wagner’s speech displayed the term “confessional Jews” in opposition to “racial Jews.” In the racist framework of his speech, “confessional Jew” emerged as a distorting term of an older era that was no longer acceptable in the new racial state and had to be replaced by a concept in alignment with Nazi population policies. Even if the racial imagery itself remained vague, racialized notions of blood, which were explicit in phrases such as “racially alien [artfremdes] Jewish blood,” emerged as a clearly determining factor in the VB’s construct of “Jew.” While the paper’s coverage of the September 1935 anti-Jewish laws also emphasized the racial characteristics of Jews by setting the term against “citizens of German and kindred blood [my italics],” the legal definitions continued to resort to religion as the determining factor of Jewishness.54


This growing consistency in the Nazi categories of Jewishness in the fall of 1935 left German-Jewish journalists with less room for disruptive practices than in the spring of 1933. The promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 that turned German Jews into second-class citizens made the activities of the German-Jewish press even more urgent. The hopes of many German Jews to save elements of a German-Jewish synthesis had received a decisive, if not final, blow. Both the CI-Zeitung and the Jüdische Rundschau responded to the new challenges by seeking to provide, as the JR put it, “a guide” for their readers to “find their own way during these times,” which “daily produce new decisions for the Jew.”

The journalists’ activities were met by arbitrary violence and an ongoing harassment, among others by the Gestapo, the Secret State Police. The SD, the SS Security Service, monitored the editors’ published writings. In July 1935, Goebbels appointed Hans Hinkel the Propaganda Ministry’s special commissioner to control “non-Aryans active in cultural and intellectual matters within the area of the Reich.” In coordination with the Gestapo and SD, SS-Sturmbannführer Hinkel’s office supervised the compulsory Jewish cultural organizations and the German-Jewish press. While Hinkel’s officials, at first, only sporadically intervened in the German-Jewish papers, their practices slowly formed elusive guidelines that fostered the treatment of “Jewish” topics and rendered the discussion of “German” matters increasingly problematic. To mention the names of leading Nazis and to discuss their speeches was soon forbidden. In contrast to the mainstream press, guidelines for the German-Jewish press remained vague, leaving the editors, in the light of the Nazi threats to suspend a paper, to attempt to interpret these guidelines themselves. They practiced, as the CI-Z’s Margaret T. Edelheim-Mühlmann put it, a form of “self-censorship.” These activities made it even more difficult to escape the forced submission to the increasingly racialized Nazi categories of “Jew.”

Most dramatically, the CV-Zeitung's ongoing remaking of Jewishness had taken a decisive turn away from a German Jewishness. When the paper was published again in September 1935 after its three-month suspension, the CV-Z displayed the association's altered name in its title: "Central Association of the Jews in Germany [my italics]." It replaced the core self-defining category "German citizens of the Jewish faith" with a term that expressed the separation between "Jew" and "German." In the context of the Nuremberg Laws and the bleak prospect of a future segregated life in the country, the CV-Z's discourse on Jewishness had reached a turning point and henceforth embraced a postassimilationist identity. Turning away from a dual German-Jewish identity, the CV-Z embraced its own version of a "new Jew" who followed the "way to the inner self" (Weg nach Innen) of a "Jewish being" (Wesen). The "inner self," Hirschberg explained in his editorial of September 26, was rooted in a multitude of strictly "Jewish" institutions, like separate schools. The "Jewish being," according to Olga Bloch, evolved around a "feeling of Jewish community" and the "spiritual forces of Jewishness." This change to a rather indistinct new Jewishness not only testified to the impact of physical and linguistic Nazi violence, but also showed an ongoing creativity in contesting Nazi categories under increasingly adverse conditions. Moreover, it continued the CV's reassertion of Jewishness in its construction of a collective identity that built on efforts dating back to the crisis of the early postwar period, when anti-Semitic movements powerfully resurfaced.

In contrast to these striking shifts in the CV-Z, the Jüdische Rundschau continued to produce a national new Jew. Embedded in an antiassimilationist discourse that conceded the reality of the "Jewish Question," the JR's new Jew continued to conflict less with Nazi discourses than older CV counterparts. The JR editors, for example, quoted the Völkischer Beobachter's article on the XIX Zionist Congress. The excerpt stressed the VB's agreement with a speaker who argued that if the German Jews "... had regarded themselves as German Jews of their own free will, who had been respectful of themselves, instead of German citizens of the Jewish faith, they perhaps would still have been free


62. [Alfred Hirschberg, "Planung des jüdischen Lebens," CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 26 September 1935, Hauptblatt and Olga Bloch, "Neue Bücher über Kunst," CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 26 September 1935, 6th Beiblatt. This "new Jewish" subject must not be confused with "new Jew" the CV-Z used in 1932-34 to refer to those fully assimilated German Jews who had often left the communities and whom the Nazis prompted to "rediscover" Judaism. See, for example, "Ein 'neuer Jude' bitter ums Wort," CV-Zeitung (Berlin), 26 July 1934, Hauptblatt.
today to call themselves German Jews ..."63 The editors' use of the quotation not only implied the solution to the problem in the form of the JR's respectable, heroic, and national Jew. It also construed an overlap with Nazi discourses to secure the legitimacy of the Zionists' new Jew.

Yet, the citation of Nazi language also continued to assume the form of discursive contestations. "The Volk spins some yarn here," Franz Leppmann concluded after citing from the "Concise Dictionary of German superstitions" entry "Jew, Jewess," "the German farmer (der deutsche bäuerliche Mensch) fabricates, whispers, and comes up with his thoughts on a foreign people who live right among him ..."64 By constituting Jews as a foreign people in Germany, the philologist Leppmann used a Nazi term. His citation, however, supported national Jewishness, while it undermined the Nazi category of the Volk by associating it with negative stereotypes. The image of backward-looking and ignorant villagers did not match the Nazi depictions of mentally and physically strong racial comrades.

In constituting a new Jewishness, the practices of both CV-Z and JR editors also showed greater similarities by avoiding the phrase "German Jew" in favor of "Jews in Germany," "Jews of Germany," or "Jews from Germany."65 At the same time, telling differences between the CV-Z's and JR's reconstruction of Jewishness remained. The CV-Z's coverage of the aforementioned Zionist conference stayed within the boundaries set by Nazi guidelines, since it dealt with a "Jewish topic." Yet, in the discursive space created by the VB's use of the term "German Jews," the CV-Z editor employed "German representatives" to refer to the delegates of the Zionist Organization for Germany. By contrast, her colleague at the JR called these representatives the "delegation from Germany," expressing the increasing chasm between Jewishness and Germanness.66

Dissimilarities between the CV-Z's and JR's remaking of Jewishness also remained on the level of the category's national, religious, and racial connotations. In September 1935, the CV-Z continued to constitute "Jew" as a religious and ethnic and not as a racial and national category. CV-Z contributors such as the liberal rabbi Manfred Swarsenski of Berlin strengthened the ethnic and religious characteristics of the new Jew by combining the notions of Jewish

descent and belief in his call for a return to Judaism. Alfred Hirschberg's editorial added the CV's construct of the "unity of Jews in Germany formed by fate" (Schicksalsgemeinheit). With these constructions, the CV-Z turned both against the Zionist concept of a Jewish nation and the racialized Nazi categories without violating the Hinkel Office's guidelines which, at the time, did not enforce a racial Jewishness.

The JR, by contrast, continued to disperse categories of a predominantly secular new Jewishness. The paper multiplied its use of the subject "national Jew," whereby the term "nation" once again carried notions of blood and race. Jewishness emerged as an "inheritance in blood." The implicit "theoretical compatibility," to use the fitting concept of David and Jonathan Boyarin, between the race and blood imagery of Zionist and Nazi discourses still had its limits. Turning against the Nazi anti-Jewish defamation, a JR editor pointed out that "... racial separation does not mean to regard foreign races as inferior..." Unlike Nazi categories, the JR's proceeded to operate outside a racial hierarchy.

As in 1933, the JR editors' practices made explicit use of the Nazi discourse to support the völkisch notions of the paper's construct of the new Jew. "The international Zionist Congress just met in Switzerland," the JR restated the German News Bureau's commentary on the Nuremberg Laws which formed the core of the Propaganda Ministry's directives to the mainstream German press, "a congress at which the talk about Jewishness as a mere religion was also plainly put to an end. The speakers... established that the Jews are a Volk of their own..." Unlike in 1933, however, the journalists were less successful in their attempts to disrupt segments of the Nazi discourses in the face of increased Nazi violence and control. Instead, the practices of the JR editors were increasingly locked in an ultimately painful reiteration of the dominant Nazi discourse on the "Jewish Question." Until the end of the German-Jewish press in 1938, they were unable to solve this dilemma.

November 1938: The Terror of the Pogroms and Nazi Discursive Violence

In the eyes of almost all German Jews, German Gentiles, and even Nazi Party activists, the 1938 November pogroms represented a qualitative change in Nazi

70. Ibid., 1.
anti-Jewish policies. They were mainly instigated by Goebbels. They left hundreds of synagogues and thousands of Jewish stores destroyed. At least ninety-one German Jews died at the hands of Nazi perpetrators, hundreds committed suicide, and more than 26,000 German-Jewish men were deported to concentration camps. An increased discursive violence against the German Jews reinforced these Nazi brutalities in the streets and homes.

Goebbels prompted a new wave of press directives to guide the nation’s press in its enforced coverage of the Jewish Question until it was “finally solved.” They contained discursive guidelines that clearly separated Jewishness from Germanness and offered arguments that were common in late nineteenth-century völkisch language. A press directive of November 24, for instance, urged the papers to “enlighten [their readers] about everything that the Jews had done to Germany and the German Völk.” By the time these directives reached the journalists at the Berlin press conference, Goebbels’s ministry had tightened its grip on the newspapers’ content. In late 1938, Alfred-Ingmar Berndt, a committed Nazi and SS-Standartenführer in the SD Main Office, headed the press department. Representatives of the bourgeois press no longer held influential posts. These developments contributed to the ongoing racialization of Jewishness in the press.

In contrast to religious connotations in 1933 and in continuity with the diminished religious reverberations in 1935, the term “Jew” was now almost fully devoid of religious content in the Völkischer Beobachter’s November 1938 editions. If the VB’s discourse of the Jewish Question equated “Jew” with the term “comrade in faith,” as in a blunt anti-Semitic attack on the Jews after the pogroms, it set the category against “racial comrade” as the privileged concept. Throughout the month, the VB circulated categories such as “racial comrade” (Rassengenosse) or “Jewish racial comrade” (jüdischer Rassengenosse) with great frequency. The paper, for instance, quoted Goebbels in an interview with an English journalist as stressing “...that the foreign Jews who are momentarily unleashing a gigantic campaign against Germany do their racial

71. See, for example, Walter Tausk, Breslauer Täglicher 1933-1940 (Berlin, 2000), 180-206.
73. Frei and Schmitz, Journalismus, 31.
comrades in the Reich the worst possible service.” Race and not religion operated as a uniting element among Jews across national borders, which in turn intensified their separation from Germanness. 1938 Nazi discourses circulated the category “Jew” most strongly as a racial subject. “Race,” as a Nazi journalist noted, became the “magic word” in making sense of all things Jewish. Still, Nazi legal concepts of Jewishness, as discussed in the VB, continued to resort to religion in determining a person’s “racial status.”

The VB’s racialized concept “Jew” corresponded with the terminology immanent in the press department’s guidelines. The wide usage of phrases such as “Jews in Germany” expressed the guidelines’ divide between Jewishness and Germanness. As a process that informed the Nazis’ anti-Jewish policies of cultural, economic, and legal segregation, a “stringent separation between Germans and Jews” on the discursive level had seemingly fully taken hold by the late 1930s.

Yet, the VB’s remaking did not take the form of a “stringent separation” announced in Nazi policies and guidelines. Most noteworthy, the November 1938 editions continued to use the term “German Jews” with all its complex semantic baggage. “German Jew” occurred even more often in 1938 than in 1935. Yet, VB editors did not lack awareness of the term’s ambiguity as expressed in circulated constructs such as “so-called ‘German’ . . . Jews.” According to Victor Klempeter, the LTIs use of “ironic inverted commas” “declare[d] that the reported remark [was] not true.” Jews — the VB’s construct implied — might claim Germanness, but could not be Germans. The phrase “German Jews,” nonetheless, repeatedly emerged in articles that paraphrased speeches by Nazi leaders. While these speeches contained many categories, stressing the separation, the attribution of “German Jew” even to Goebbels seemingly offered ways to contest unstable Nazi concepts. The term’s occurrence


serves as a reminder that changes in discourses do not have to be linear and complete. Even in the Nazi dictatorship, competing concepts continued to coexist, even if to varying degrees. The impact of dominant Nazi terms did not depend on their exclusive dissemination and the absence of alternatives. As the pogroms showed, discursive violence could devastatingly interact with the physical brutalities inflicted by Nazi perpetrators.

Unlike in the earlier years, editors of both the CV-Zeitung and Jüdische Rundschau were barely able to exploit contradictions in Nazi discourses in the fall of 1938. Many journalists, however, did not stop to turn against the Nazi onslaught and to contest its discursive imposition of racialized Jewish subjects as Jacob Boas has inadequately implied by pointing out that “the will to resist [was] dead.” The editors’ actions unfolded in a dramatically changed context. Even prior to the violence of the 1938 pogroms that was unprecedented in modern German history, waves of brutal anti-Semitic attacks had taken place during the crisis over the Sudetenland. The “Aryanization” of property, boycotts, and job restrictions were rapidly intensifying the impoverishment of the German-Jewish communities. With their economic and “social death” almost complete, German Jews increasingly tried to emigrate.82

Simultaneously, the “Hinkel men” tightened their control of the German-Jewish papers which had been able, as Robert Welsch put it, to operate “with a certain freedom” as political newspapers for a “Jewish” audience until 1937–38.83 Hinkel’s office reaffirmed its role as key supervisory body of German-Jewish newspapers in a July 1937 circular to anyone involved in the “Jewish press.” In the Spring of 1938, Goebbels agreed to reorganize the office and turn it into Department IIa with expanded authority to deal with all aspects of the Jewish Question as they pertained to the ministry’s tasks. To secure his position, Hinkel, nominally a SS-Oberführer on Heinrich Himmler’s personal staff, enforced his office’s collaboration with the SD and SS which had become increasingly powerful in the shaping of anti-Jewish policies.84 A more rigorous harassment of journalists that did not stop short of arrests instilled a justified sense of fear. The office also increased its immediate press directives. It prohibited the citing of “German” papers. After forbidding the use of terms such as “German countryside” or anything vaguely related to Germanness, Hinkel also restricted the papers’ coverage to exclusively “Jewish matters” like emigration

84. Cf. Reviews of Newspapers on the Jewish Question 1934–1936, USHMM, RG-11.001M, 01, Roll 119, page 177. See also the internal SD reports on meetings with Hinkel in BArch, R58/984. I would like to thank Alan E. Steinweis for directing my attention to this file.
issues. The measures culminated in the Gestapo’s prohibition of the German-Jewish press following the pogroms.

Faced with the intensified physical and discursive anti-Jewish violence, CV-Z and JR editors alike had little alternative but to abstain from direct contestations of Nazi constitutions of Jewishness, as they had practiced in the earlier years. In particular, the constitution of a new Jewishness in the CV-Zeitung reached the most pronounced resemblance with its counterpart in the Jüdische Rundschau. Forcibly by the need to find adequate responses to a brutal anti-Semitic regime, the CV’s and ZVF’s often heated conflicts over the nature of Jewishness that had persisted for the more than forty years of the organization’s existence, had almost ceased. Terms such as “Jews from Germany” and “Jews in Germany” had fully replaced the once-dominant “German Jews” in the CV-Z. Even the legal scholar Kurt Schwerin’s coverage of the community in Breslau, the fourth largest German-Jewish Gemeinde and once the place of work for acculturated liberal leaders such as Abraham Geiger, did not print any categories that could question the separation between “Jews” and “Germans.” It only displayed phrases such as “Jews in Breslau.” Likewise, the JR editors exclusively used terms such as “Jews from Germany” that placed Jewishness against Germans.

In contrast to their colleagues at the JR, CV-Z editors contested — even if indirectly and only rarely — Nazi constructs by alluding to notions of the once-embraced German-Jewish synthesis. One author, for instance, inserted the question “Are you a German?” in an article on his recent experiences in Chicago. The question had been posed to him by an American woman whom he met at a café. The usage was indirect, since the journalist did not claim his Germanness outright. He also did not quote an answer, but his intervention gave a dissenting signal, while the following columns of the article displayed phrases such as “Jews from Germany” in accordance with Nazi guidelines.

By reiterating and not questioning the category “Jews by faith,” the CV Zeitung also indicated the ongoing centrality of religion as a key element of the


paper's new Jew. As in its earlier constructions, the 1938 CV-Z’s new Jewishness did not encompass notions of a Jewish nation or race. Likewise, the CV-Z proceeded to give more room to an understanding of Jews as a Volk which came closer to similar notions in the JR, while avoiding racial connotations. In a contribution by Rabbi Wiener, “Judaism,” for example, emerged more strongly as a “volkshafte and personal religion.”

The editors of the JR continued to remake their version of Jewishness around the key categories of “nation,” “race,” and “Volk.” Responding to the guidelines, they ceased to cite Nazi discourse in support of their concepts as in earlier years. While JR editors circulated terms that proved to be somewhat compatible with the Nazi discourses such as the existence of racial and völkisch difference, they did not stop to point out dissimilarities. “The belief in the unity of the human race [Menschengeschlecht], inherent in religion,” a comment on the British Palestine policies read, “supports the edifice of the English world of political thought as a strong pillar. This apparently somewhat hinders the historical understanding for the developed differences between the Völker.” On the one hand, the JR author participated in the Nazi attack on “English” constructs of human unity by construing this concept as a roadblock to a proper comprehension of the world in the 1930s. On the other, his intervention stopped short of embracing any racial hierarchies which characterized Nazi terminology. Faced with the rising physical and discursive Nazi violence, JR and CV-Z journalists unavoidably had to adjust their practices. Many, nonetheless, continued to contest Nazi concepts of Jewishness in their writings until the last edition left the printers in November 1938.

Conclusion

In the course of the 1930s, Nazi anti-Jewish policies aimed at a cultural, economic, and legal segregation between people construed as either Jews or Germans. These policies were supported and accompanied by a linguistic remaking of Jewishness that had begun in the 1870s with the rise of anti-Semitic movements and the constitution of a Protestant-German identity for the newly unified country. Along with figures of “the socialist” or “Prussian Pole,” the “Jew” gained a prominent role in völkisch discourses on the national question. In the projects of political organizations and administrations to create a dominant national identity and a lasting nation-state, Jewishness assumed the

position of a “constitutive outside” on whose exclusion the constitution of the inherently unstable German subject came to depend. Only in the 1930s, however, did a national government elevate racial anti-Semitism to a legitimate doctrine that informed its policies and embarked on a project to separate acculturated citizens from a normalized German nation on the basis of racial imagery. These racialized terms found a prominent expression in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Like other papers, the *VB* promoted a sense of an imagined *völkisch* community of readers who simultaneously absorbed and engaged these constructs all over the country.92

The Nazi concepts of Jews, however, remained riddled with inconsistencies that for a time created a space for contestations and the persistence of alternative constructions of Jewish identities. German-Jewish journalists had an important share in these struggles against Nazi categories which — similar to older *völkisch* discourses — attached them to a racialized sense of self. As crucial voices for the rapidly isolated German-Jewish communities, these editors engaged Nazi discourses to enforce their versions of a “new Jew.” Their actions were neither purely pragmatic nor entirely novel, but unfolded along the lines of a multifaceted rethinking of Jewishness that intensified in creative responses to the anti-Semitic attacks since the 1890s. German-Zionist editors regarded the onset of the Nazi rule as a chance to demonstrate the superiority of a national Jewishness over competing assimilationist categories. They used the overlapping national vocabulary to advance Jewish nationalism parallel to the Nazis’ “new nationalism.” Liberal-cultural *CV-Z* editors instead continued to claim Germanness as part of a synthetic German-Jewish identity. However, confronted with the mounting Nazi onslaught, they increasingly had to resort to a constitution of Jewishness that was divorced from Germanness and embraced notions of a common Jewish descent and fate.

Neither Zionists nor liberal *CV* activists could break with their papers’ ultimately — in Nazi eyes — illegitimate location of speaking and writing in the Hitler state. Their attempts to disrupt dominant discourses by subversively repeating and indicating contradictions in Nazi concepts faced the danger of reifying the Nazis’ depiction of Jewishness these men and women sought to contest. Their attempts to strengthen their communities and aid their survival, meanwhile, faced the growing discursive violence of the Nazi regime, which joined and facilitated the physical terror in the streets that put the life of German-Jewish editors and readers in jeopardy.

Studying these political and cultural struggles over Jewishness in the language of discourse analysis makes it possible to move beyond a writing of history in which “Jews” and “Germans” are treated as pregiven and fixed subjects. To conceptualize them as discursively produced opens up a crucial arena of politico-cultural struggles to historical analysis. This conceptual move makes it possible to grasp the plurality, contested nature, and inconsistencies of these categories and their corresponding identities. Placed in the debates over German-Jewish resistance, this approach helps to unsettle conventional taxonomies of anti-Nazi resistance. These taxonomies do not give adequate conceptual weight to the journalists’ activities by categorizing them as “spiritual resistance” vaguely understood as educational, religious, and artistic activities that expressed opposition to Nazism. In continuing Arnold Paucker’s assessment of the journalists’ practices as “contribution to resistance,” this essay’s approach begins to break down the strict binary between “political” and “cultural” or “spiritual resistance.” Without watering down the concept of political resistance as practices that were intended to overthrow the Nazi regime at the risk of one’s life, it is important to show that the seemingly distinct phenomena strongly intersected. Discursive contestation preceded, accompanied, and facilitated — if not enabled — organized political resistance. The concept of discursive contestation is not only a way to think through acts that avoided the forced submission to Nazi categories, it also remains sensitive to the ambiguities and paradoxical effects of actions taken by German Jews in their struggles for survival.93

While the reception of the constructs of Jewishness lies outside the scope of this study, the ways in which newspaper readers engaged in discursive practices and renegotiated their sense of self merits further study. To suggest that the reading public accepted the Nazi subjectivities imposed on them or simply added new categories with conflicting meanings to their daily vocabulary would be misleading. Victor Klemperer’s insightful work, for instance, tends to overstate the manipulative power of Nazi language. His flat contention that nobody could escape committing “the same sin” of speaking and being corrupted by the LTI may be attributed to the author’s schematic philological and idealist position. His approach does not leave enough room for agency and cannot adequately account for the complexity of everyday language use. Nazi constructs did not “writ[e] and thin[k] for” German Jews, Jewish converts to Christianity, and people whom the Nazi defined as “Mischlinge.”94 To argue against an all powerful LTI, however, does not conceptually lead to voluntarism.

94. Klemperer, LTI, 192, 61.
Instead, rooted in their own complex languages and counterdiscourses, newspaper readers had to confront the Nazi linguistic onslaught. Their diaries and petitions to party and state institutions reveal discursive engagements on a continuum from contributions to resist to conformity with the regime. They resorted to German-Jewish papers among others in search for information on new laws, alternative ways to think of one's individual and collective identity, and help in times of crisis.

Long before the Nazis began to deport the German Jews to the ghettos and death camps in Eastern Europe, their mostly acculturated middle-class victims had lost the struggle over their Germanness waged with and within the limits of language and discourses. While competing "new" Jewish identities advocated on the pages of the CI-Z and JR became a feasible alternative for many, a minority, including Victor Klemperer, defended shifting notions of their Germanness until after the war. By then, they faced different discursive obstacles in a postgenocidal world within the borders of the country of their ancestors.