

'The apocalyptic battle'

Conspiracist antisemitism in Norway during the German occupation

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ABSTRACT • Conspiracist antisemitism was an integral part of national-socialist propaganda in Norway between 1940 and 1945. An imaginary entity called 'International Jewry' was represented as the sinister force behind phenomena such as Communism, liberalism, capitalism and cultural decadence. This article analyses the argumentation and functions of conspiracist antisemitism as it was disseminated by three journals in Nazi-occupied Norway: the Norwegian edition of the German antisemitic journal *Welt-Dienst* (*Verdens-Tjenesten*), the weekly *Hirdmannen* and the antisemitic periodical *Nationalt Tidsskrift*. While these publications represented history and politics as an apocalyptic battle between the so-called Nordic-Germanic peoples and an alleged 'Jewish conspiracy', their argumentation differed in several aspects. Whereas *Verdens-tjenesten* was first and foremost an anti-Jewish news agency, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and *Hirdmannen* were more focused on attacking the Norwegian Jews directly. However, according to all three journals, the national-socialist revolution was an act of redemption, from Jews as well as from 'Jewish ideas'.

In late July 1942, the Norwegian national socialist journal *Hirdmannen* published an article addressing the relationship between good and evil. The destructive forces in the world, the writer stated, could be traced to one single source: the Jew. To 'secure the victory of the good forces', it was therefore nothing less than

humanity's duty to battle against Jewry – the evil principle – in all spheres of life. [...] Thus, the question is: who will be victorious in the final battle between Jewry – the incarnation of the principle of evil – and the European peoples?¹

1 'Kampen mellom godt og ondt', *Hirdmannen*, 25 July 1942. The language of the source material is in Norwegian, and partly in German

Thus, the article summed up some of the core elements of the antisemitic propaganda that were disseminated both by the German occupiers and Vidkun Quisling's Norwegian collaboration party National Unity (Nasjonal Samling, NS) between 1940 and 1945. Here, history and politics were represented as an apocalyptic battle, where the Nordic-Germanic world struggled for existence against a sinister, global conspiracy named 'World Jewry' or 'International Jewry'. Hence, the ongoing world war and 'The War against the Jews', as the historian Lucy Dawidowicz titled her classical work on the Holocaust, were seen as two sides of the same coin (Dawidowicz 1975).

when we refer to the pre-1940 German editions of *Welt-Dienst*. All translations are by the authors of this article.

While these general ideological patterns are well known, the anti-Jewish propaganda in Norway – in all its variations – still needs to be studied in greater depth. In this article, we analyse three different publications known for disseminating extreme anti-Jewish propaganda during the German occupation: the Norwegian editions of the journal *Welt-Dienst*, published from 1937 by the Rosenberg Office; the weekly magazine *Hirdmannen*, one of several party newspapers of National Unity that belonged to its paramilitary wing *Hirden*; and the antisemitic periodical *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, published from 1916 to 1945 by the notorious antisemite Mikal Sylten.

While *Hirdmannen* was an activist publication, representing a political movement that was practically involved in the anti-Jewish politics in Nazi-occupied Norway, *Welt-Dienst* functioned as a kind of international news agency, reporting on ‘the struggle against the Jews’ from all parts of the world. *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and its editor Mikal Sylten had, for their part, promoted conspiracist antisemitism since the First World War and throughout the whole inter-war period. The German invasion created new political possibilities for an actor like him, who had been a political outsider before 1940. Most likely, none of these publications were widely disseminated among the broader population; however, they were distributed and read by radical antisemites, some of which became involved in the persecution of the Norwegian Jews. For instance, units affiliated to *Hirden* participated in the mass arrests of Jews on 26 November 1942 (e.g., Bruland 2017: 158–62, 314). With the end of the war in 1945, all three journals ceased.

Based on these three journals, we will look into the argumentation, style and functions of antisemitic conspiracy narratives during the Nazi occupation of Norway and map their sources of inspiration. Did the antisemitic propaganda articulated in the three journals

follow the same patterns? And to what extent and how did they comment on the anti-Jewish policy in Norway, which culminated in mass arrests and deportations in autumn 1942?

In short, our article contributes to an expanded knowledge about the ideological framework within which the Holocaust in Norway took place and puts these cases in a broader historical perspective. Although conspiracist antisemitism alone is not a sufficient explanation for the radicalisation of the anti-Jewish policy, it was a necessary ideological precondition for the arrests, deportations and mass murder of the Norwegian Jews.

Antisemitic stereotypes and extermination

The Jewish community in Norway, one of the smallest in Europe, was particularly hard hit by the Holocaust. About 40 per cent of the approximately 2,100 Jews who lived in Norway in 1940 – the year of the German occupation – were murdered, most of them in Auschwitz-Birkenau (see, e.g., Bruland 2017).

Compared to other European countries, *politically organised* antisemitism in Norway in the first four decades of the twentieth century was, however, a rather marginal phenomenon. Pogroms like those in Eastern Europe never took place, and anti-Jewish laws with the purpose of segregating Jewish citizens from the rest of the population were not passed (Lorenz 2011: 36). Overall, antisemitism was mainly expressed through cultural production. In the press, in satirical journals, and in popular literature such as crime novels, anti-Jewish stereotypes appeared regularly (e.g., Emberland 2005: 401–20; Lien 2015; Johansen 1984: 42–9).

At the same time, antisemitism was closely linked to politically polarised debates that characterised the first half of the inter-war period, where the phrase ‘Jewish’ served as a tool for discrediting political opponents (Lien 2015: 374–6). ‘The Jew’ as such was used as an

elastic symbol for all aspects of modernity that – according to the voices of conservative nationalism and cultural pessimism – threatened Norwegian society. Like everywhere else in Europe, capitalism and Bolshevism marked the maximising of what was perceived as ‘Jewish’ (Simonsen 2020: 22).

The most aggressive political debate during the 1920s was linked to Jewish kosher slaughter. The debate had already started in the 1890s and went on for several rounds until it finally resulted in a law, passed by the Norwegian parliament in 1929, which prohibited the practice (Snildal 2014). As research on the debate has shown, it was both characterised by concrete accusations against the Jewish minority in Norway and linked to antisemitic conspiracy narratives, which had found their way into the mainstream (Snildal 2014: 311; Simonsen 2012: 18–23).

Antisemitism as a pervasive and coherent race ideology, as it had been developed on the European continent since the end of the nineteenth century, remained rather marginal in Norway until the Second World War. However, such tendencies became more common in the 1920s and 1930s, also – but not only – due to the anti-Jewish policy of the NS regime in Germany. Several antisemitic propagandists – both outside and inside national socialist organisations such as Norway’s National Socialist Labour Party (Norges Nasjonalsosialistiske Arbeiderparti, NNSAP) and National Unity – adopted antisemitism as a total world-view, based on the perception of history and politics as a ‘racial struggle’ (Simonsen 2020: 26–31; Emberland 2005: 412–15).

Besides, the conservative press’s widespread goodwill regarding German National Socialist politics underpinned the acceptance of ‘classical’ conspiracy themes, such as the allegation of a ‘Jewish dominance’ in the financial and banking sector, which sought to justify Germany’s antisemitic response (Emberland 2005: 417–19; Karcher 2014: 65–7). As these examples

demonstrate, antisemitism in Norway was much less marginalised than former research has assumed; even so, it never took on a violent shape before 1940 (Simonsen 2020: 22).

The situation changed dramatically with the Nazi occupation of Norway on 9 April 1940 and the establishment of a collaboration regime in the autumn of the same year. With National Unity, a local Norwegian party came into power that fully supported the Nazi policy of persecution and in several cases took the initiative for a more radicalised practice (e.g., Bruland 2017; Simonsen 2023a).

However, since anti-Jewish measures appeared to be less systematic and less aggressive than had been the case in Germany and in the occupied East, this created the misunderstanding that the politics of segregation and persecution would not be performed at full scale. Already by 1940, all radios belonging to Jewish citizens had been confiscated, and individual Jews were being arrested by the German security police (Bruland 2017: 76–178; Corell 2021: 36–137).

The anti-Jewish policy was intensified in the summer of 1941 with the arrest of most Jewish men in northern Norway, only a few days before Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of 1942, all Jews were required to have their passports stamped with a ‘J’. As part of this measure, they also had to fill in a form with personal information such as name, date of birth and address. This information became crucial when the mass arrests started in autumn 1942. By early October, all male Jews in the county of Trøndelag in mid-Norway had been arrested, which was a prelude to the arrest of all male Jews across Norway on 25 to 26 October 1942. A month later, on 26 November, the first and largest deportation of Jews from Norway to Auschwitz was carried out. Only 38 of 773 survived the death camp (e.g., Bruland 2017: 206–391).

Considering the deportation of the Jews, previous measures directed at the Jewish minority can be understood as part of an overarching intention to undermine Jewish life in Norway (Corell 2021: 481–2). Conspiracist antisemitism, as it was promoted by *Welt-Dienst*, *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, both encouraged the persecution of the Jews in advance and contributed to the ideological rationalisation of these crimes afterwards.

Conspiracist antisemitic publications during the Nazi occupation

After the German occupation of Norway, several German propaganda newspapers and journals flooded the Norwegian media landscape. Partly translated into Norwegian or with Norwegian editorial boards, they were aimed at winning the Norwegian reader for the national socialist cause.

Welt-Dienst, however, had a distinctive position. Published between 1940 and 1944 in Norwegian as *Verdens-Tjenesten* (the direct translation of the German title, which we will use when referring to the Norwegian editions), the journal focused exclusively on conspiracist antisemitism, regardless of the concrete Norwegian local conditions or the terms of the occupation regime. Its first Norwegian editor was Audun Rusten, a radical national socialist and leading member of the organisation Norwegian National Socialists in Germany (Norske Nasjonalsosialister i Tyskland, NNST) (Karcher 2022), which operated from Berlin. Since he fell out with National Unity in 1941, it is unlikely he continued his work at *Verdens-Tjenesten* (Karcher 2022: 60–3). However, it is still unclear who in that case took over his tasks.

Originally founded in 1933 in Erfurt by the self-proclaimed expert on the ‘Jewish question’ and proponent of the so-called Madagascar solution, Ulrich Fleischhauer, *Welt-Dienst* was originally not a publication affiliated with the National Socialist authorities but

part of a wider international antisemitic milieu (Brechtken 1998: 44–8).

Blaming ‘World Jewry’ for all mischiefs, Fleischhauer started his career as an antisemitic conspiracist with the establishment of the U. Bodung publishing house in 1924/25. Besides publishing a number of antisemitic books and writings (Schörle 2009: 57–9), he was particularly engaged in establishing an international network of antisemites, which was intended to be truly supra-national and only committed to the antisemitic cause: the complete exclusion of all Jews from all states (Brechtken 1998: 51–2). The spiritual father of this so-called pan-Aryan idea was George de Pottere. A former diplomatic counsel in Moscow by order of Hungary, Pottere was not only a very active ideologist of ‘Full-Zionism’ [*Voll-Zionismus*] but also a widely interconnected facilitator of antisemitic networks across Europe. When Fleischhauer founded *Welt-Dienst*, Pottere became his closest co-worker and most likely the mastermind behind their widespread activities (Brechtken 1998: 38–44, 51–3).

The biweekly *Welt-Dienst* was meant to be a major tool of a worldwide struggle against Jewry. It consisted of an international conspiracist network of co-workers, who were supposed to provide antisemites across the world with information about the Jews. Originally published in German, English and French, in view of its agenda it came to be edited in a number of languages in the following years – including Norwegian, Swedish (*Världs-service*, from 1940 to 1944) and Danish (*Verdens-service*, from 1940 to 1945) editions (Karcher 2022: 60). By the end of the war, it was translated into 21 languages (Schörle 2009: 59–60; Bondy 1948: 73).

Besides the journal itself, *Welt-Dienst* activities were closely connected to the international antisemitic congresses, which had taken place since the 1920s, and which from the mid-1930s were completely organised by *Welt-Dienst*. The main source of inspiration was the ‘grand old man’

of antisemitism, Theodor Fritsch, founder of the antisemitic movement Reichshammerbund as well as the Hammer publishing house with its flagship publication *Hammer*. Fritsch was also the author of numerous anti-Jewish writings, among them the standard work of antisemitism, *Handbuch der Judenfrage*. Fleischhauer saw himself in this tradition and aimed to inherit Fritsch's antisemitic agenda, which demonstrates the level of his ambitions (Schörle 2009: 60; Brechtken 1998: 36–8, 49–51; Bondy 1948: 68–9). The supposed propinquity to Fritsch also served as a self-defence towards the NS state to maintain *Welt-Dienst's* independence (Brechtken 1998: 50).

This matter became an urgent issue from the mid-1930s. While the regime in the first couple of years had partly supported *Welt-Dienst* and the international antisemitic congresses, Fleischhauer's independent line caused growing tension and eventually led to a falling-out with the NS authorities. In 1939, as a result of the process of *Gleichschaltung*, Fleischhauer completely lost his influence over the journal. *Welt-Dienst* was moved to Frankfurt and integrated into Alfred Rosenberg's recently established Institute for Research on the Jewish Question (Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage) under the title Office for Jewish and Freemasonic Questions (Amt für Juden- und Freimaurerfragen). As an official propaganda journal of the NS regime, it was produced in vast numbers during the war, first with August Schirmer (1939–43) then with Kurt Richter (1943–5) as editor (Schörle 1997: 68–70; Bollmus 1970: 68; Brechtken 1998: 53–61; Plass 2013: 509). The latter assumed in 1944 that *Welt-Dienst* would reach 400,000 copies (Plass 2013: 512). In view of its reach and circulation, it can be considered as one of the leading antisemitic conspiracist journals of the NS regime, both inside and outside Germany.

However, the number of Norwegian distributions and their dissemination from 1940

onwards remain unclear and need further research. Since there did not exist a notable antisemitic milieu outside National Unity and few radical aggressive circles – and, in addition, *Welt-Dienst* is hardly referred to in Norwegian newspapers outside the national socialist hemisphere – we assume that it only had a very limited number of readers who were not already convinced antisemites.² Thus, the main purpose of *Welt-Dienst* was – as in Germany and all the other countries where it was distributed – to serve as a platform of ideological self-assurance and to close ranks.

Antisemitism was promoted not only by German publishers and publications stemming from Germany but also by Norwegian actors, with and without formal links to National Unity. Prominent examples here were *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift*. As with *Welt-Dienst*, we assume that most of their readers were either affiliated with National Unity or had been radical antisemites already before the occupation. An important target group for *Hirdmannen* were Norwegian SS-volunteers, who were radicalised during the war. Reliable numbers regarding their distribution and dissemination do not seem to exist; at least, research on this is still lacking. Sylten estimated *Nationalt Tidsskrift's* circulation as between 600 and 700 copies during the years of occupation, reduced to 350 towards the end of the war (Brattelid 2004: 40).

Hirdmannen was established during the German occupation as a journal of the paramilitary unit of National Unity, Hirden. Founded in the 1930s, Hirden was organised

2 A search in the digital database of Norway's National Library (Nationalbiblioteket) gave only seven results on *Verdens-Tjenesten*, all from 1941. These were in *Hirdmannen*, *Fritt Folk* and the nazified newspapers *Nordland* and *Vestfold presse* (one result each in the last two). In addition, there was one reference in *Fritt Folk* in 1944.

within National Unity with the intention of building a party cadre organisation. During the German occupation, it described itself as a unit of political soldiers and the backbone of National Unity. In general, *Hirden* functioned as a radicalising and activist force within the collaboration regime. It is particularly important to note that the organisation became practically involved in anti-Jewish politics. In the first phase of the occupation, for example, *Hirden* activists committed physical abuse of individual Jews, and, as already pointed out, members of the organisation participated in the mass arrests of Jews on 26 November 1942 (e.g., Bruland 2017: 158–62, 314; Bjærum 2023).

Published for the first time on 16 November 1940, *Hirdmannen* was until April 1942 a weekly supplement of the daily national socialist newspaper *Fritt Folk*, the party newspaper of National Unity. Until 1945, however, it came out as a separate publication (Erikstein 2017: 34). Concrete numbers regarding its circulation are still lacking.

Between 24 May 1941 and 1942, *Hirdmannen* additionally served as a mouthpiece for Norway's SS (Norges SS), founded on 21 May 1941, for developing a Norwegian counterpart to the German Allgemeine SS. At this point, the journal and its editor Orvar Sæther became a promoter of a pan-Germanic version of national socialism, based on the vision of a political fellowship between all who shared so-called Germanic blood (Sørensen 1989: 115–21). When Norway's SS was replaced by the Germanic SS Norway (Germanske SS Norge) in July 1942, a new publication named *Germaneren* was established, while *Hirdmannen* continued as a press organ only associated with *Hirden*. Nevertheless, throughout its existence, the journal was characterised by a 'militant, national socialist style' (Erikstein 2017: 36).

As stressed earlier, *Hirdmannen* disseminated an aggressive form of antisemitism. After the German occupation, Harry Koritzinsky,

the leader of the largest Jewish community in Norway, characterised the journal as 'the Norwegian copy of "Der Stürmer"'.³ More recently, the historian Ingebjørg Aasta Erikstein has concluded that the Jews functioned as an ideological cornerstone in the journal's ideological agenda (Erikstein 2017: 118). *Hirdmannen* not only demanded more radical anti-Jewish measures in Norway, but also defended the deportations of the Norwegian Jews after they had taken place in autumn 1942.⁴

In contrast to *Hirdmannen*, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* was an anti-Jewish publication of a much older origin, as it had been published by the typographer Mikal Sylten since 1916. The notorious antisemite Sylten was to a large degree a political outsider, highly inspired by continental antisemitic milieus such as the *völkisch* movement in Germany. As in the case of Fleischhauer, his most important point of reference was without doubt the German publication *Hammer*, founded by the German antisemite Theodor Fritsch in 1902 (Bönisch 1996: 350).⁵

Although Sylten belonged ideologically to the far right for most of his political life, he avoided party politics. At times he even criticised groups on the Norwegian far-right scene for not paying sufficient attention to the

3 Testimony from Harry Koritzinsky, July 1946, Riksarkivet Oslo (RA), L-sak, dnr. 2749, Wilhelm Wagner.

4 'Vi svikter ikke våre kjempende kamerater!', *Hirdmannen*, 1 August 1942. See also 'Brev til redaktøren', signed by 'Hirdmann fra Skiensfjorden', *Hirdmannen*, 10 October 1942; 'Brev til redaktøren', signed by 'Birger P', *Hirdmannen*, 17 October 1942.

5 *Nationalt Tidsskrift* not only published material written by Fritsch from early on but both periodicals also described themselves as politically independent publications. See, e.g., F. Roderick Stoltheim (Theodor Fritsch), 'Jødernes indflydelse paa kvinderne', *Sandheten*, 5/6, 1916.

so-called Jewish question.⁶ In 1942, within the frame of the German occupation, he joined the ranks of Quisling's party (Brattelid 2004: 77–81, 118–20).

Nationalt Tidsskrift came out monthly between 1916 and 1945 and from start to finish promoted a conspiracist form of antisemitism. In general, Sylten described all the 'perils of modernity', such as capitalism, large-scale industrialism, Bolshevism, Communism, democracy and the liberation of women, as caused by 'Jewish influence' or the equivalent of Jewry (Brattelid 2004: 76). Within this ideological scheme, conspiracism played a decisive role. In the winter of 1920, several months before it was translated into Norwegian, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* started to promote *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁷

Besides the journal, Sylten also published four editions of a pamphlet called *Who is Who in the Jewish World* (*Hvem er Hvem i jødeverden*). Here, he listed the names of Jewish individuals – as well as individuals he *considered* to be Jews – both within and outside Norway (Brattelid 2004: 94–106).

When antisemitism gained state power during the German occupation, new possibilities opened for Sylten, who assisted the German Security Police in getting an overview of Jews residing in Norway. Thus, Sylten became involved in the crimes against the Jewish minority and the Holocaust in Norway.

Voices of demonisation

Ideological patterns

Ideologically, none of the publications we discuss were original or innovative but reproduced and circulated an already well-established total anti-Jewish worldview. Among the ideological

fundamentals the three journals shared were ideas of a Jewish world conspiracy and racial degeneration resulting from miscegenation, as well as an ongoing life and death struggle between Jews and the Germanic peoples. In addition, they represented the Jews as a state within the state – a fifth column – seeking to undermine national loyalties and as the major force behind the capitalist world economy. Altogether, each of the three journals produced a flow of anti-Jewish hate speech and, as we will see in the cases of *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, also concrete suggestions for anti-Jewish measures in Norway.

In sum, the form of antisemitism they promoted can be categorised as redemptive antisemitism, as defined by the historian Saul Friedländer in his groundbreaking work on the Holocaust (Friedländer 1997: 73–112). As pointed out in this special issue's introduction, redemptive antisemitism interprets history and politics as an existential, Manichean struggle between the forces of good and (Jewish) evil, claiming historical processes as being staged intentionally. Consequently, it 'is based on a vision of national and racial rebirth as part of the struggle against the "Jewish enemy"' (see, in more detail, Karcher & Simonsen 2023: 5–6).

Regarding *Welt-Dienst*, its international network of correspondents sought to give the impression that most nations were facing the same Jewish threat and that the Germanic race indeed was under constant pressure in almost every corner of the world. The historian Hanno Plass has identified three pillars of *Welt-Dienst's* worldview, summarised by the journal itself as the 'Jewish-Bolshevik-Free Mason world conspiracy' (Plass 2013: 506). However, eventually all these three pillars had the same origin: the alleged Jewish request for world domination. According to this worldview, the few articles that addressed Scandinavian issues were all within the same range of topics, claiming, for instance, that Jews would sabotage Swedish

6 See, e.g., 'Fædrelandslaget Bukkesprang', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, May 1934.

7 'De vise fra Zion', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, March 1920.

and Danish financial life and politics.⁸

From the beginning of the Second World War, *Welt-Dienst* used conspiracy thinking as a prism to interpret the ongoing war and canalised its propaganda accordingly. All the major opponents of National Socialism – the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA, as well as the resistance movements in the occupied countries – were considered to be led by Jews. The war itself was said to be being staged by the Jews to destroy Germany and to exterminate the Nordic (also read Germanic or Aryan) race. In March 1942, the Norwegian edition of *Welt-Dienst – Verdens-Tjenesten* – wrote:

Year after year, day in and day out, Judaism has incited the democratically governed nations to war against anti-Jewish National Socialist Germany. No means was too simple for the Jews to achieve the goal they had set themselves, namely, to bring about the war against Germany. [...] World Jewry has reached its goal. The nations and their governments, which for a number of years have been incited by Jewry, have allowed themselves, under English leadership, to take up arms against Germany in favour of Jewry.⁹

At the same time, it was argued that the military defeats of the Allies had been an eye-opener for the Jews, namely that dictatorial measures, as used by Bolshevism, would be necessary to make these nations intensify their warfare against Germany:

In other words: the Allies, who are supposedly fighting for the freedom of all nations, today, at the behest of Judaism, have

8 *Verdens-Tjenesten*, 12 April 1940, 1/15 August 1941, and 1 October 1942.

9 'Verdensjødedommen har skylden i utbruddet av krigen selv om den i dag bedyrer sin uskyldighet', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, III/5, 1 March 1942.

already come so far that, by introducing the Bolshevik dictatorship, they want to completely enslave their own people [...].¹⁰

The leitmotiv of a planned extermination of the German people was particularly used when the Allies were winning military ground to argue that the Jews were already making plans for how to treat the Germans in the event of their defeat. One example was the book *Germany Must Perish* published by the American-Jewish businessman and writer Theodore N. Kaufman in 1941. His ideas about sterilising Germans were widely used by Nazi propaganda and also found their way into *Welt-Dienst* and its Norwegian edition to prove that there indeed existed plans by the 'World Jewry' to exterminate the German people (Herf 2006: 111; Benz 1981: 615–30; Simonsen 2023b: 162–3).¹¹

Hirdmannen and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* interpreted the unfolding world war according to the same ideological scheme. The core element was the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy, combined with the perception of history and politics as an ongoing racial struggle between the Jews and the Germanic-Nordic peoples.

As the other contributions in this special issue underscore, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a key text in antisemitic circles, both in the decades before and during the Second World War. Between 3 October 1942 and March 1943, *Hirdmannen* republished the forgery in its entirety as a serial. The journal's narrative of

10 'Verdensjødedommens siste tilflukt er bolsjevismen', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, III/11 and 12, 1/15 June 1942.

11 'Hvordan jødene vil tilintetgjøre det tyske folk', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, V/17, 1944; Theodore N. Kaufman. 1941. *Germany Must Perish* (Newark, NJ: Argyle Press). See also 'Jødedommen vil bolsjevisere Europa og gjøre dets nasjoner til arbeidsslaver etter sovjetrusisk forbillede', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, III/14, 15 July 1942; 'Europa er i fare', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, IV/5, 1 March 1943.

a Jewish world conspiracy was linked closely to the progressions of the war. It is therefore particularly interesting to note how conspiracy narratives were adjusted in accordance with developments on the battlefield. Before the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, *Hirdmannen* focused on 'Jewish plutocracy' in Britain, associating British society and politics with 'Jewish' liberalism, capitalism and materialism (Erikstein 2017: 55–68). 'It is the alliance between England as a state and the Jews as the rulers of capitalism', the journal proclaimed in January 1941, 'that gave capitalism its power in Europe.'¹² This argument was neither original nor new. As demonstrated by Graham Macklin in his article 'Jewry ueber Alles' in this special issue, the motive of a 'Jewish conquest of England' had been present in British far-right circles by the early 1920s.

From the summer and autumn of 1941, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the propaganda was re-oriented against 'Jewish Bolshevism'. The warfare in the East was described as a life-and-death battle between the Germanic peoples and 'International Jewry' (Simonsen 2023a: 74–5). This marked a return to old enemy images of the inter-war period. As Paavo Ahonen shows in his article 'The first steps in a Judaeo-Bolshevik conspiracy', the interpretation of the Bolshevik Revolution as a 'Jewish plot' was introduced in Finland shortly after 1917. The same patterns can be identified in the Norwegian context (Lien 2015). However, this does not mean that the anti-Jewish accusations against the other enemies of the Axis came to a halt. A frontpage article titled 'Europe's Struggle for Liberation' claimed that both Bolshevism and capitalism were controlled by Jews and that Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt all served the same masters.¹³

12 'Gull eller blod', *Hirdmannen*, 25 January 1941.

13 'Europas frihetskamp', *Hirdmannen*, 12 July 1941.

As was the case in German Nazi propaganda in general and in *Welt-Dienst* in particular, *Hirdmannen* based its arguments on a *projection* of the relationship between perpetrator and victim, imposing its own discriminatory, aggressive and murderous intentions on the Jews. The journal described the struggle against the Jews both as an existential battle and a war of liberation. Orvar Sæther, Hirden's chief of staff and a radical proponent of the idea of the Nordic race (Karcher 2018: 90–1, 94–103), claimed in a speech published in *Hirdmannen* in November 1941 that Europe was involved in a 'struggle for liberation against Jews, friends of England [*jössinger*], and Bolsheviks'.¹⁴ Moreover, the discrimination and persecution of the Jews was justified as a necessary self-defence against a 'Jewish' attempt to exterminate the Nordic-Germanic peoples.

An editorial in July 1943 stated that by dominating capitalism, world-wide Freemasonry and the international workers' movement, the Jews had gained the means to 'exterminate the Nordic blood, which through the millennia has offered the fiercest resistance against Jewry'.¹⁵ Thus, antisemitic actions were typically described as necessary measures of protection against the 'Jewish threat'.¹⁶ As we will see, this was also the case when Norwegian Jews were arrested and deported.

In contrast to *Hirdmannen*, which was established during the first year of the German occupation, and *Welt-Dienst*, which was not translated into Norwegian until 1940, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* had promoted radical antisemitism for several decades. The journal described history as a battle between the 'Germanic peoples' and 'Jewry' and defined 'Jewishness'

14 'Hirdmønstringen i Oslo', *Hirdmannen*, 6 November 1941.

15 Editorial, *Hirdmannen*, 31 July 1943.

16 See, e.g., 'Har vi rett til å forsvare vår rase?', *Hirdmannen*, 18 July 1942.

in both racist and cultural terms. The myth of 'the Jewish world conspiracy' was at the very epicentre of this worldview. As the historian Kristin Brattelid has noted, the journal associated 'Jewry' 'with modern entities, such as large-scale capitalism, large scale industry, Bolshevism, Communism, democracy, and women's liberation' (Brattelid 2004: 76; see also Karcher & Simonsen 2023: 10).

During the German occupation, the journal continued its battle against both 'international Jewry' and 'Jewish influence' in Norway. Thus, its main ideological framework remained untouched. At the same time, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* also used the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy to explain the unfolding war developments. After the German attack on the Soviet Union, the journal argued that the 'Jewish front' had been uncovered. Capitalism and Bolshevism were considered as two sides of the same coin, and all the enemies of National Socialism were dictated by Jewish wirepullers:

The lords Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin are only marionettes in this drama. Behind them are the Jews pulling the strings; not only the capitalist Jews, but also intellectuals, not to mention the proletariat.¹⁷

In sum, the three journals all described the world war and the struggle against the Jews as the very same battle. As was the case with the war propaganda of Nazi Germany, they promoted a variation of redemptive antisemitism based on the belief that 'the Jews were a cohesive, politically active subject – that is, a group united on a global scale by racial bonds that transcended any allegiance to nation-states' (Herf 2006: 7). This dualistic and conspiracist worldview served as a justification for radical anti-Jewish measures. It even made the attack on the small Jewish minority in Norway necessary.

17 'Jødefronten avsløres', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, July 1941.

Still, within this general framework, there were also differences. While the journals *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and *Hirdmannen* both considered themselves as 'operative publications', aiming at giving instructions on how to fight 'Jewry' daily, the Norwegian *Welt-Dienst* editions remained a database of conspiracist antisemitism.

Rhetoric and exchanges of topics

Since the redemptive antisemitism promoted by *Verdens-Tjenesten*, *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* was unoriginal in content, the journals unsurprisingly borrowed their arguments from an international *pot pourri* of antisemitic publications. In a number of cases, however, none of the three journals listed or mentioned their sources. In this regard, it is difficult to decide precisely what the different editors and writers read and used at a particular time.

From its establishment in 1916, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and its editor Mikal Sylten were deeply inspired by the German *völkisch* movement, particularly the antisemitic publication *Hammer* and its nestor Theodor Fritsch (Bönisch 1996: 350).¹⁸ Another German source that was frequently mentioned was the journal *Rasse*. This publication was firstly affiliated with the *völkisch*-Nordic organisation Nordic Ring (Nordischer Ring), with the race-researcher Hans F. K. Günther as its most important mentor. After the *Gleichschaltung* of the ring, *Rasse* continued as a publication of the Nordic Society (Nordische Gesellschaft), an organisation which from 1933 had come under the control of Alfred Rosenberg and the NSDAP Foreign Office (Karcher 2009: 12–35; Karcher 2012: 85–97).¹⁹

18 See, e.g., 'Theodor Fritsch's syv teser', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, January 1943; 'Det store bedrag', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, March 1943.

19 See, e.g., 'Nietzsche og raseproblemet',

At the same time, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* republished material from antisemitic publications in Norway and other Scandinavian countries, such as the Swedish journal *Nationen*, which between 1925 and 1941 figured as one of the most outspoken antisemitic journals in Sweden (Berggren 2014: 105–28).²⁰ The Norwegian *Verdens-Tjenesten* was referred to several times, as in a piece from February 1941 on Jewish emigration to Sweden, stemming from an article in *Verdens-Tjenesten* from August 1940.²¹ As late as in March 1945, it used material from *Verdens-Tjenesten* regarding the so-called subversive activities of Jews in Finnish history, which had also been a major topic in the Finnish antisemitic journal *Tapparamies* since its first issue in 1931 (see Oula Silvennoinen's article 'For freedom and justice' in this special issue).²²

Hirdmannen, for its part, espoused an aggressive and agitative rhetorical style and did not follow formal journalistic criteria at all. Thus, in most cases, the journal only referred to its own monological worldview. In general, it based its arguments to a very large extent on German National Socialist sources. Occasionally, the journal also cited other Nordic anti-Jewish journals, such as Per Engdahl's *Vägen framåt*,²³ and published

Nationalt Tidsskrift, June/July 1940; 'Månedsskriftet Rasse', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, November/December 1942; 'Månedsskriftet Rasse', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, March 1943.

20 See 'Stockholm – Centrum for Jødisk Løgnpropaganda', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, June 1940; 'En ny tid', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, January 1941.

21 'Jødernes historie i Sverige', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, February 1941. See also 'Jødiske emigranter oversvømmer Sverige', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, I/II and 12, 15 July/1 August 1940.

22 'Finlands forhold til jødene', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, March 1945.

23 See, e.g., 'De amerikanske flygere i Sverige er fanatiske antisemitter', *Hirdmannen*, 29 July 1944.

antisemitic classics such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In addition, *Verdens-Tjenesten* and the pre-war German editions were at times mentioned explicitly. In August 1941, for instance, *Hirdmannen* quoted an article from *Welt-Dienst* of 1938, praising it as prophetic in addressing 'Jewish war-mongering'.²⁴ In September and October the same year, a long article from *Verdens-Tjenesten* on 'Jewish Bolshevism' was republished.²⁵

While there are several references in both *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* where the Norwegian *Verdens-Tjenesten* editions are used as a database for 'information on the Jews', we find very few examples where the same has been the case *vice versa*. None of the articles in *Verdens-Tjenesten* that concerned Scandinavian topics mentioned *Nationalt Tidsskrift* as a source, and only one referred to *Hirdmannen* (the same article also referred to *Fritt Folk*). However, this article did not consider the 'Jewish question' but was a more general comment on the 'nature' of Freemasonry.²⁶

Other references to national socialist, antisemitic and racist newspapers or journals in Scandinavia used by *Verdens-Tjenesten* did not stem from Norway but from Sweden and Denmark. Examples are *Sverige Fritt*, *Hammaren* and *Den Svenske Folksocialisten* (see Lars M. Andersson's article 'Until the domination of the Jews is crushed, Sweden is not the

24 'Ungdom av nordisk blod skal føre ætten videre', *Hirdmannen*, 9 August 1941.

25 'Europas sluttkamp mot bolsjevismen (part one)', *Hirdmannen*, 25 September 1941; 'Europas sluttkamp mot bolsjevismen (part two)', *Hirdmannen*, 4 October 1941. See also 'Hvorledes den Sydafrikanske ministerpresident Smuts forrædte sitt land ved hjelp av jødene', *Hirdmannen*, 18 January 1941.

26 'Frimureriets vesen', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, V/3–4, 1/2 January 1944. The original article in *Hirdmannen* was published in December 1943.

land of the Swedes' in this special issue).²⁷ In an article called 'Jewish emigrants flood Sweden' from August 1940, *Verdens-Tjenesten* quoted *Den Svenske Folksocialisten*, the party newspaper of Sven Olof Lindholm's national socialist party Swedish Socialist Unity (Svensk socialistisk samling, SSS) (e.g., Lööw 2016: 12–46). The article was a concrete warning against Jewish immigration – especially from Eastern Europe – mainly for three reasons, all reflecting the same anti-Jewish worldview: the Jews would present a mortal danger to the Swedish people because of the degeneration of race, they would undermine Swedish economic life, and they would threaten the political independence of Sweden because of their activities as a fifth column of both international Jewish interests and England.²⁸

Sweden in general was considered a Jewish stronghold whence the Jews could threaten and undermine the other Nordic countries. One example was the supposed espionage activities of Schmulje Moisevitsch Liebermann, who from his headquarters in Stockholm might conduct a network of spies in Sweden and Finland, providing information for the Soviet Union. Through these activities, he had even been able to interfere in the Finnish Winter War until his arrest in 1942.²⁹ Supposed interferences of Swedish Jews in Finnish matters were also addressed in an article about the Swedish publishing dynasty Bonnier. In an article entitled 'Bonnierpressens jødisk-bolsjevistiske innflytelse i

Sverige',³⁰ the Swedish press was described as dominated by Jews, which had also turned Swedish public opinion against Finland the moment the country became an ally of the German Reich in the struggle against 'Jewish Bolshevism' (see also Silvennoinen's article in this special issue).

The influence of the so-called Jewish press was similarly used in the Danish local context. Referring to an article in the Danish antisemitic journal *Racetjenesten* of 1943, it was claimed that the main base of the European Jews had been moved to Sweden, from where it would sabotage and resist 'Europe's fight for liberty'. As part of this argument, the Jewish escape from Denmark to Sweden (Bak 2013: 18–39) was defamed: 'Now, the Swedish government benevolently opens its country's borders to a gang of escaped criminals and Jews who have Denmark's tragic fate on their conscience.'³¹

The 'deleterious influence' of Danish Jews was also described in *Verdens-Tjenesten* in August 1941 by republishing a list of Danish companies owned by Jews, to underscore how Jewish capital stock dominated the economy in Denmark.³² The information originated from *Kamptegnet*, the party newspaper of Aage H. Andersen's Danish National Socialist Workers Party (Nationalsocialistisk Arbejderparti, NSAP). As Sofie Lene Bak explains in her article 'Denmark contra Jvdæos' in this special issue, this was an extreme antisemitic publication, which served as a 'Danish counterpart to Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*'.

By far the longest article about Scandinavia between 1940 and 1944 concerned the history

27 E.g., 'Bonnierpressens jødisk-bolsjevistiske innflytelse i Sverige', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, V/23–4, 1944.

28 'Jødiske emigranter oversvømmer Sverige', I/11 and 12, 15 July/1 August 1940. The article in *Den Svenske Folksocialisten* dated back to 29 June 1940.

29 'Jødiske spionasjesentraler i Sovjetsamveldets og Englands tjeneste utryddet i Sverige', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, III/19, 1 October 1942.

30 'Bonnierpressens jødisk-bolsjevistiske innflytelse i Sverige', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, V/23–4, 1944.

31 'Den svenske jødepresse agiterer mot Danmark', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, V/23–4, 1944.

32 'Forjødelsen av det økonomiske liv i Danmark', II/15 and 16, 1/15 August 1941, with reference to *Kamptegnet*, 12 June 1941.

of Jews in Sweden. Among the sources used in *Verdens-Tjenesten* to describe the supposed destructive influence the Jews had in Sweden was the notorious Norwegian antisemite Eivind Saxlund and his pamphlet *Jøder og Gojim* of 1910, one of the first comprehensive antisemitic publications in Norway (Karcher & Simonsen 2023: 8–10; Christensen 1998; Ringdal 2018: 58–65). Saxlund, it was argued, tried to prove that Jean Baptiste Bernadotte – later the Swedish king Karl Johan XIV from 1818 onwards – was originally Jewish, which would explain his pro-Jewish politics as part of which several influential Jews during his reign were given the same rights as Swedes. Referring to the first volume of Fleischhauer’s *Sigilla Veri*, an antisemitic encyclopaedia about the Jews (Hufenreuter 2013: 641–3), heavily inspired by the *völkisch* author Philipp Stauff’s *Semi-Kürschner* (Hufenreuter 2011), it had been Jewish bankers who orchestrated Bernadotte’s career in Sweden.³³ In the same article, older anti-Jewish publications and authors were mentioned, such as the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century German writer Friedrich Buchholz, who represented anti-Jewish sentiments often directed against Jewish emancipation (Harket & D’Aprile 2016: 67–101).

Transfer to Norwegian local realities

From the establishment of the Norwegian collaboration regime and the systematic persecution of the Norwegian Jews, with its culmination in autumn 1942, one would expect *Verdens-Tjenesten* to refer to the Norwegian local conditions and the ‘successes’ of the Norwegian persecutors. However, while *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and *Hirdmannen* adjusted their antisemitic worldview to the particular

33 ‘Oversikt over jødernes historie i Sverige frem til deres emansipasjon’, *Verdens-Tjenesten*, II/1 and 2, 1/15 January 1941.

developments in Norway and sought to contribute to the radicalisation of the politics of persecution, *Verdens-Tjenesten*’s comments on the ‘Jewish question’ in Norway and the other Nordic countries remained very limited.

From March 1940 until 1944, the Norwegian editions of *Welt-Dienst* were published biweekly, or at times as a double issue. Through the whole period, only fifteen articles were about or touched upon Scandinavian issues, and only four articles addressed Norway directly (while ten concerned Sweden and only one concerned Denmark).³⁴ Neither the arrest of all male Jews from age 14 on 26 October 1942 nor the deportation of 529 Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz on 26 November 1942 – by far the largest deportation from Norway – were given any attention.

In light of *Verdens-Tjenesten*’s self-image as a distributor of information about the activities of ‘World Jewry’ and the NS regime’s constant struggle against it, it is surprising that the dimension of deportations from Norway did not draw interest. Scandinavia and, as part of it, Norway, gained little focus. Accordingly, the editors of the Norwegian *Welt-Dienst* editions had little room to manoeuvre and/or interest regarding the introduction of Norwegian topics.

In contrast, *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, as local Norwegian journals that considered themselves as torch-bearers of antisemitism in Norway, constantly referred to anti-Jewish measures and loudly applauded the regime’s recent ‘big breaks’ regarding the ‘Jewish question’. In *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, the new context arising from the German occupation generated a renewed optimism. ‘It goes without saying’, the journal wrote in October 1940,

that the Jewish question will soon be solved [*avviklet*] within this country, and as we

34 *Verdens-Tjenesten*, overview over Scandinavian topics from 1940 to 1944.

have often suggested, the Jews – who are not Europeans – will hopefully soon be a phenomenon of the past in Europe.³⁵

Nationalt Tidsskrift also closely monitored the different anti-Jewish measures, anticipating the arrests and deportations in October and November 1942. When Norwegian Jews were ordered to have their identification papers stamped with a red 'J' in January 1942, the journal described this as an important first step towards the dissimilation of the Jewish population (on the registration of the Jews, see Bruland 2017: 179–205).³⁶ The reintroduction in March 1942 of the 1814 clause that banned Jews from entering Norway by the Quisling government (e.g., Bruland 2016: 171–88) – which was also among the four topics *Verdens-Tjensten* addressed regarding Norway³⁷ – was praised in particular by *Nationalt Tidsskrift*. Moreover, the journal demanded that the prohibition of Jewish immigration had to be followed up by a 'cleansing of the Jews that are already present in this country as soon as the international situation allows it'.³⁸

Prior to the arrests and deportations, *Hirdmannen* was a particularly extreme voice within National Unity, demanding a faster and more uncompromising anti-Jewish policy. The militant and aggressive rhetoric against the Jews was present in all editions of the journal. However, according to Erikstein, the second half of 1942 was a watershed. Before this, its

propaganda mainly focused on 'Jewish power' in countries such as Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the USA. During the summer and autumn of 1942, however, the Jews were to a larger extent than before represented as a threat *within* Norwegian society. Simultaneously, demands for restrictions were expressed louder than before (Erikstein 2017: 86–113). A frontpage article from August 1942 complained that while fellow national socialists struggled 'night and day to liberate the world from Jewish Bolshevism', the Jews in Norway were still 'walking insolently around, engaging in subversive activities'.³⁹

Accordingly, when the Norwegian Jews were arrested and deported in a comprehensive operation, the reactions of both journals were triumphant. In early December 1942, *Hirdmannen* stressed in one of its editorials that 'humanism is a misinterpreted word'. Each time when a national socialist state had implemented 'preventive measures for the protection of the race and the people', the journal concluded, 'international Jewry and its mouthpieces have cried out and demanded humanism'.⁴⁰ One week later, the journal published a speech held by the party leader Quisling in the city of Trondheim, rationalising the deportations as an act of self-defence against the alleged Jewish world conspiracy. The editorial in the very same issue claimed accordingly that most people had been

blind to the real objective of the Jews, an objective that they have worked towards for countless generations with exceptional firmness and patience: Jewish world power.

35 'Røsten i ørkenen og de nye signaler', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, October 1940.

36 'Viktig Skritt Fremover', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, February 1942.

37 'Ministerpresident Quisling har satt den gamle norske grunnlovs § 2 som forbød jødene å ta opphold i landet, i kraft igjen i sin opprinnelige form', *Verdens-Tjenesten*, III/17 and 18, 1/15 September 1942.

38 'Norge for nordmenn!', *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, April 1942.

39 'Vi svikter ikke våre kjempende kamerater!', *Hirdmannen*, 1 August 1942. See also 'Brev til redaktøren', signed by 'Hirdmann fra Skiensfjorden', *Hirdmannen*, 10 Oktober 1942; 'Brev til redaktøren', signed by 'Birger P.', *Hirdmannen*, 17 Oktober 1942.

40 Editorial, *Hirdmannen*, 5 December 1942.

[...] while most of our people perhaps have not had their eyes opened in this matter, the national-socialist movement [...] needs to implement the necessary protective measures to safeguard our people against the Jewish menace.⁴¹

In the November–December issue of 1942, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* published a small piece named ‘Those who dig graves for others’, claiming that all historical revolutions had been orchestrated by the Jews as an integrated part of their struggle to achieve world domination. Under the new political order, however, the Jews had been defeated by their own weapons. ‘For our readers’, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* wrote,

it is no longer fundamental to delve into the harmful effects of the Jews on our society. At this moment, society is settling its accounts with them. Emotional individuals will perhaps perceive the medicine as harsh; but like other nations, Norway has to protect its interests in a wolf-time like ours.⁴²

Despite the deportation of the Norwegian Jews, neither *Hirdmannen* nor *Nationalt Tidsskrift* perceived the struggle against the Jews in any sense to be fulfilled. On a general ideological level, they continued to represent the ongoing world war as a struggle against ‘World Jewry’. On 7 April 1945, *Hirdmannen* published an article describing Bolshevism as ‘the bulwark of World Jewry to achieve world power’.⁴³

Concerning the specific Norwegian context, both publications argued that the struggle against ‘the Jewish spirit’ needed to be continued, regardless of the fact that the ‘biological’ Jews were gone.⁴⁴ As was common in

anti-Jewish circles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the journals constantly referred to the so-called Jewish spirit. On 28 November 1942, two days after the mass deportation of Jews from Norway, the antisemitic ideologist and highly recognised party member Halldis Nergård Østbye wrote an article in *Hirdmannen* titled ‘The Jewish spirit has to be fought everywhere’. According to her, ‘the Jewish problem’ could not be solved solely through racial laws and other similar measures; the most difficult task was to eliminate ‘the Jewish spirit that has gained a foothold in our own people, learning it to think and act according to Nordic principles of honour, righteousness and morals’.⁴⁵ As a countermeasure, the population had to be re-educated about the values of national socialism – a process which would take several years.

In *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, one can already find traces of early Holocaust denial during the last phases of the occupation. In September 1944, the journal commented on the situation in Hungary, whence more than 400,000 Jews had been deported between May and July, almost exclusively to Auschwitz. Only about 10 per cent of them were deemed to be fit to work, while the rest were murdered on arrival (Longerich 2010: 405–10). According to *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, the cleansing of the Jews from the political and economic spheres had created a ‘massive spectacle’ in the neutral countries, who orchestrated an ‘unrestrained propaganda under the slogan “persecution of the Jews in Hungary”’.⁴⁶

In line with this, the journal published a note in March 1945 hinting that the reports of German cruelties against the Jews were

41 Editorial, *Hirdmannen*, 12 December 1942.

42 *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, November/December 1942.

43 ‘En frafallen’, *Hirdmannen*, 7 April 1945.

44 See, e.g., ‘Kampen mot jødedommen’,

Nationalt Tidsskrift [blurb], October 1944.

45 ‘Jødeånden må bekjempes over alt!’, *Hirdmannen*, 28 November 1942.

46 ‘Kan jødene unngå Nemesis’, *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, September 1944.

false.⁴⁷ This argumentation points forward to post-war far-right antisemitism, where Holocaust denial became instrumental (e.g., Lipstadt 1994; Simonsen 2023b: 143–74; see also Toni Morant’s article in this special issue).

Conspiracist antisemitism - a total worldview

In his study of Nazi Germany’s propaganda, the American historian Jeffrey Herf has explored the relationship between the National Socialist imagination of the Second World War and the extermination of the European Jews.

Herf’s main thesis is that the National Socialists considered the connection between the Second World War and the Jews to be ‘both causal and necessary’. Hitler and his propagandists, he writes, described the extermination of the Jews as a

justified response to a war launched against Germany by ‘international Jewry’. A blend of hatred, self-righteous indignation and paranoia was at the core of the Nazi justification of genocide. (Herf 2006: 1)

According to National Socialist propagandists, a Jewish world conspiracy has striven to exterminate Germany and the Germans. Thus, the extremism of National Socialist antisemitism did ‘not lie only in the familiar and disgusting racist caricatures of the Jews’; rather, it was the ‘conspiratorial aspects of modern antisemitism that were most important in fostering its radical genocidal implications’ (Herf 2006: 1–16, quote 10).

Herf’s observations are clearly transferable to the cases analysed in this article. *Verdens-Tjenesten*, *Nationalt Tidsskrift* and *Hirdmannen* represented history and politics as a battlefield between the forces of light and darkness,

47 ‘Skuffede forventninger’, *Nationalt Tidsskrift*, March 1945.

claiming all social, economic and political problems and dislocations in the world as orchestrated by a Jewish conspiracy. Hence, their antisemitism was a clear example of the phenomenon that the social scientist Richard Hofstadter has defined as ‘the paranoid style of politics’: a dualist, total, intentionalist and monological worldview where a vast conspiracy is perceived as ‘the *motive force* in historical events’ (Hofstadter 1965: 29). This antisemitism contained a clear vision of redemption: the conviction that a national or racial rebirth could only be achieved through a consistent cleansing of ‘Jewish influence’.

In the context of the German occupation of Norway, this model of interpretation was particularly used to explain the developments on the battlefield. The war was seen as an apocalyptic struggle between ‘World Jewry’ or ‘International Jewry’ and the forces of national socialism, with the persecution of the Jews as a necessary self-defence.

While *Verdens-Tjenesten*, *Hirdmannen*, and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* shared a conspiracist antisemitic worldview, their content and style of argumentation differed in several ways.

Within the broad spectrum of antisemitic publications during the German occupation, *Verdens-Tjenesten* served first and foremost as a ‘bank of information’, collecting news about the Jews – and the struggle against Jewry – from different parts of the world. *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* both reproduced and cited material from *Verdens-Tjenesten* on several occasions. Still, how much the journal was actually used as a source is hard to determine, because these publications for the most part did not mention where their ‘information’ came from.

As a close reading of *Verdens-Tjenesten* shows, the content of the Norwegian editions was not at all adjusted to the local political and social circumstances but was a replication of the blueprint of the German translation. Norway and the other Nordic countries

were only mentioned sporadically. In contrast, *Hirdmannen* and *Nationalt Tidsskrift* commented extensively on the situation in Norway, claiming Norwegian society was infected by ‘the Jewish spirit’. Thus, the national socialist revolution in Norway was interpreted as a process of redemption, cleansing the country of both Jews and ‘Jewish ideas’. Before the arrests and deportations of the Norwegian Jews, *Hirdmannen* in particular served as a radical voice within National Unity, demanding a more intensive and uncompromising anti-Jewish policy.

During the years after the deportations, antisemitism continued as an ‘antisemitism without Jews’. All the three journals used the narrative of a Jewish world conspiracy as a framework of interpretation until the very end of the war, even when millions of Jews had actually been murdered. ■

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