

'Lingua Quarti Imperii'

The euphemistic tradition of the extreme right

**Speaking with forked tongues:
The rhetoric of right-wing extremism today
Northampton
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The association of Nazism with euphemisms for crimes against humanity

- In November 1941 Rödl, the Commandant of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp (a euphemism borrowed from the British), enquired of the inspectorate of the concentration camps what he should state by way of justification on a list of names of SS members whom he wished to put forward to receive the war service cross because of their participation in executions: in the column headed "Justification and comments of intermediate superior", should he insert the words "execution" (Exekution) or "special action" (Sonderaktion)? The concentration camps inspectorate replied that "carrying out of special tasks (Sonderaufgaben) important for the war effort" be given as the reason. The inspectorate added: "The word "execution" may not be used in any case".
- This letter documents the deliberate use of 'Tarnwoerter' to conceal crimes against humanity carried out as part of a deliberate and meticulously planned programme of mass extermination and genocide: symptomatic of this duplicity was the term 'umsiedeln' (also 'abschieben', 'evakuieren'), to 'resettle'.

THREE EXAMPLES OF DELIBERATE NAZI EUPHEMISM: 'RESETTLE'

- The local military command of Bakhchisarai, a Wehrmacht headquarters in the occupied Soviet Union, reported on the killing of local Jews in its activity report of 14.12.41 as follows: "The Jews who lived here were not rich and led a relatively modest life. The S.D. completed the shooting of the Jews on 13.12.41".[5] In the report, the word "shooting" (Erschießung) has been deleted and has been replaced by the handwritten word "resettlement" (Aussiedlung).
- An activity report of the local military command of Jewpatoria, dated 21.12.41, was similarly amended. The original report stated that the "residences of the Jews executed by the SS were taken over by the local military command", while the superior department, the superior field Command 533, replaced the word "executed" (exekutierten) with resettled "(umgesiedelten).
- A report of the Lodz Gestapo dated 9 June 1942 reads: "In the course of setting up the district ghetto, it initially proved necessary to make space for the Jews to be settled here. For this purpose, a considerable number of Jews unfit for work were evacuated from the ghetto and transported to the special command".[13] The "special command" here referred to is the command which operated the gas truck station in Chelmno in which the Jews from the Waiki legion were murdered.

When the mask slips:

- The Gestapo report goes on:

May I use this occasion to send you as an attachment a copy of a letter from me to the Reichsführer of January 15, 1942 to which I have yet to receive an answer. I am not complaining because as I know, such things take time and I don't feel it is right for me to press the Reichsführer for the settlement of an affair. I know that you take an interest in such matters and the reason I now draw your attention to it is only because this question is now more than critical. Already some months ago, I **shot dead** all the Jews I could get my hands on in this area, concentrated all the Jewish women and children in a camp and with the help of the SD got my hands on a "**delousing van**" that in about 14 days to 4 weeks will have brought about the **definitive clearing** of the camp, which in any event since the arrival of Meyssner and the turning over of this camp to him, was continued by him. Then the time is come in which the Jewish officers to be found in prisoner of war camps under the Geneva Convention **find out against our will about their kinfolk who no longer exist** and that could easily lead to complications.

Extracts from the glossary of persecution/extermination

- Einsatzkommandos
- Sonderaktion (Aktion)
- Sonderbehandlung
- Schutzhaft
- Juedischer Wohnbezirk
- Der Osten/Judisches Siedlungsgebiet
- Arbeitslager/KZ / Vorzugslager
- Badeanstalt
- Spezialeinrichtung
- Frei ('Arbeit macht frei')
- Stueck (Gefangene)
- Aufnorden
- Asozial
- gemeinschaftsunfaehig
- lebensunwertes Leben
- Euthanasie
- Endloesung

Such semantic perversions are to be seen as part of a much wider phenomenon central to understanding the history of the Third Reich

Victor Klemperer's *LTI Notizbuch eines Philologen* (the title is laden with irony!)

- What was the most powerful Hitlerian propaganda tool? ... The most powerful influence was exerted neither by individual speeches nor by articles or flyers, posters or flags; it was not achieved by things which one had to absorb by conscious thought or conscious emotions. Instead Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms, and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously... Language does not simply write and think for me, it also increasingly dictates my feelings and governs my entire spiritual being the more unquestioningly and unconsciously I abandon myself to it. ... **Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.** If someone replaces the word 'heroic' and 'virtuous' with 'fanatical' for long enough, he will come to believe that a fanatic really is a virtuous hero, and that no-one can be a hero without fanaticism. ...

Burying contaminated words as an act of purification

- Klemperer continues “The task of making people aware of the poisonous nature of LTI (Lingua Tertii Imperi) and warning them of its dangers is, I believe, not just schoolmasterish. If a piece of cutlery belonging to orthodox Jews has become ritually unclean they purify it by burying it in the earth. Many words in common usage during the Nazi period should be committed to a mass grave for a very long time, some for ever.”
- What Klemperer is referring to here is thus something much more insidious than ‘euphemism’ or ‘linguistic concealment’: rather a wholesale process of ‘semantic territorialization’ which transforms the way everyday reality is experienced, giving ‘ordinary’ language new connotations. Some examples from LTI:
 - geholt werden (to be fetched/picked up)
 - sich melden (to report to an authority)
 - heldenhaft (heroically)
 - Bewegung (movement)
 - organisch (organic)

The sophistication of Orwell's analysis

- As a socialist writer working for the BBC during the war Orwell was no less keenly aware of the language of oppression, but went far further than Klemperer in conceptualizing its fundamental mechanisms.
- For example in the 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language" he writes:

"Consider for instance some comfortable English professor defending Russian totalitarianism. He cannot say outright, "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so." Probably, therefore, he will say something like this:

While freely conceding that the Soviet regime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigors which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement.

The inflated style itself is a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity."

1984

- The main Orwellian legacy for understanding extremist language are the connected terms of Ingsoc, Newspeak and doublethink. Ingsoc (< English socialism) is the official term for the Newspeak through which the fictitious totalitarian regime in 1984 controls reality verbally, inducing the entire population to operate a permanent state of controlled schizophrenia called 'doublethink':
- “The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them....To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies — all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth.”
- Thus in the case of workers at the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth, doublethink means being able to falsify public records, and then believe in the new history that they, themselves, had just written. As revealed in Goldstein's Book, the Ministry's name is itself an example of doublethink: the Ministry of Truth is really concerned with lies.

2 examples from *LTI* of the impact of Nazi Newspeak on its victims

- 1 The case of a Jewish philologist (eventually sent to Theresienstadt) who retained a segment of her library by emphasising the Jewish authorship of many secondary works on German literature' and brought up her children to be Jews and to 'read Goethe like the Bible': when she said they were to become 'fanatical Germans' since 'only fanatical Germanness can cleanse our Fatherland of this current un-Germanness': she was speaking the language of her mortal enemies.
- *Vom Ghetto nach Europa* (Berlin 1936), written by the Jewish intellectual Victor Erloesser, concludes 'The age of the writer and his friends, the age of liberalism as a *Weltanschauung* and of the German Jew who sets his hopes on it was already buried under the same soil', thereby conceding the truth of the Nazi historical vision and reducing the Jew to a single entity. Erloesser used terms such as *gleichschalten*, *kaempferisch*, *Aufruf des Blutes*, *volkhaft*, *Halbjude*, *Mischling* etc. thereby 'speaking with the enemy'

Decoding Nazi Newspeak

- Klemperer records that a fellow victim of Nazi persecution, Paul K., was ecstatic when he read in December 1931 military reports stating that German troops were fighting ‘heldenhaft’ (valiantly), commenting “‘heldenhaft’ sounds like a phrase from an obituary, you can be sure of that”: from then on Klemperer could trace the unfolding disaster for the Third Reich by the proliferating use of the word
- Note Klemperer’s poignant rehabilitation of the word ‘heroism’: ‘But I know of another kind of heroism that is much more wretched and much less audible, a heroism which was completely deprived of the support of being part of an army or a political group, of the hope of future glory...Aryan wives who resisted every pressure to separate from their Jewish husbands...What a will to live they had to muster when fell ill from all the humiliation and excruciating wretchedness, when the countless suicides around the pointed temptingly to everlasting relief from the Gestapo!.... What stoicism, what a huge outlay of self-discipline was needed to give fresh heart over and over again to their exhausted, broken and desperate husbands....This is *Heroismus* over and above any *Heldentum*

The tradition of 'camouflage words' in postwar right-wing extremism: *Lingua Quarti Imperii*

- The European New Right demonstrates a complex strategy to perpetuate the inter-war fascist critique of liberalism and Marxism while cutting any overt links with Nazism.
- It emerges in 1960s within French neo-fascist circles who deliberately set out to cover their tracks to biological racism and association with the crimes of Third Reich by a) metapoliticizing and 'culturalizing' ultranationalism; b) replacing nation-statism with an 'ethno-regional' vision of a new Europe; c) jettisoning any overt Nazi or Fascist influences and drawing on the German Conservative Revolution and Julius Evola; d) mixing into right-wing discourse anti-capitalist and anti-totalitarian authors/intellectuals.
- The result of such developments is a euphemistic discourse known as 'differentialist' racism since it attacks multiculturalism not on the basis of genetically determined racial inequality but as a threat to the identity and difference between different *ethnies*

New Right Newspeak

- In *Ideas in the Right Place* (1978) Alain de Benoist writes: “*Holiday Inn* and Howard Johnson are the templates for the transformation of the world into a grey uniformity. I have travelled widely, on several continents. The joy which is experienced during a journey derives from seeing differentiated ways of living which are still well rooted, in seeing different people living according to the own rhythm, with a different skin colour, another culture, another mentality - and that they are proud of their *difference*. I believe that this diversity is the wealth of the world, and that egalitarianism is killing it. For this it is important not just to respect others but to keep alive everywhere the most legitimate desire there can be: the desire to affirm a personality which is unlike any other, to defend a heritage, to govern oneself in accordance with what one is. And this implies a head-on clash both with a pseudo-antiracism which denies differences and with a dangerous racism which is nothing less than the rejection of the Other, the rejection of diversity.”

Hi-jacking liberal discourse

- Note that the upholders of New Right differentialism claim to be *anti-racist* because they wish to preserve cultural distinctions from the corrosive effects of the multi-ethnic society. Thus anti-racism is portrayed as the true racism because it encourages the loss of ethnic differences and identities and is based on a hatred of distinctive races in contrast to their *love* of racial difference.
- A feature of ND Newspeak is to hi-jack words associated with the extreme right such as 'racism', 'totalitarian', 'genocide' and turn them against its critics, while giving its own illiberal gloss to 'liberal' *topoi* such as 'rights', 'democracy', 'freedom', 'citizen', 'Third World', and 'ecology'. (Cf Troy Southgate's Rose Noire website: NF > NR)
- Thus the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is described as a form of totalitarianism/Western or liberal imperialism; multi-culturalism is a deliberate process of cultural genocide inflicted on European *ethnie*
- An article (1989) in the neo-Nazi *Nation Europa* claimed:
"Let us sum up: the human rights of 1789 were incomplete. The right to a home and an identity must now be added to them. The human rights of the Enlightenment are abstract, individual rights. If they are to be complete and to be implemented, they must include collective human rights, namely the human rights to home and identity! In other words, the human rights of the individual and those of the community should complement each other harmoniously. *Every people has a right to its own identity. Whoever violates this right is playing with fire.*"

The Newspeak of Holocaust denial

- Holocaust denial and 'revisionism' represent sustained exercises in doublethink in which human beings, some with highly trained minds, go to extraordinary lengths to create speciously documented and formulated arguments to camouflage Nazi war crimes against the Jews. The aim is to create a 'verbal illusion' that makes Nazi genocide disappear through being reduced a debatable historical proposition, to one of James Bond's disappearing BMW in the name of 'the right to free speech' and 'historical truth'
- Cf. Nov 1989 revisionist conference in Munich "Die Wahrheit macht Frei" : outstanding example of doublethink alluding simultaneously to John 8.32 "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free", (in Luther's Bible *So seid ihr wahrhaftig meine Jünger und werdet die Wahrheit erkennen, und die Wahrheit wird euch frei machen*) AND „Arbeit macht frei“ on the gates of Auschwitz.
- Journalist: 'Mr Irving, you describe the gas chambers as a fairy tale, better said propaganda. In that case who invented this fairy tale or this propaganda?' Irving: 'We, the English, invented it. The Political Warfare Executive had already thought up this propaganda lie in 1942.' Journalist: 'In your opinion what was Auschwitz?' Irving: 'A work camp. One needed forced labour for industry.' Journalist: 'Why is Auschwitz called an extermination camp then?' Irving: 'I don't call it that. Only you and the German historians. It is a defamation of the German people if one talks of extermination camps or death camps.'

More Irving Newspeak

- Launching the 'Leuchter Report' in 1989 David Irving told journalists: “Obviously if the gas chamber now turns out to have been phony then we have to try and explain what happened to the figures [people?]. Now, one possible reason is the large number that turned up in the state of Palestine, what's now the state of Israel. The Jews that were in Israel didn't come from nowhere. Another part of them, when Auschwitz was liberated were set out on the roads to be shipped westward where they ended up in cities like Dresden. I don't have to tell you what happened in Dresden three weeks after Auschwitz was evacuated by the Germans. There were one million refugees in the streets of Dresden at the time that we burned Dresden to the ground, killing anything between 100,000 and 250,000 of them. Large numbers of people on the streets in Europe that winter also suffered normal deaths of exposure and starvation epidemic. I'm offering to you alternative solutions to where the people went.”

The neo-populist metamorphosis of the BNP under Nick Griffin

- In *The Eleventh Hour* (1988) John Tyndall wrote 'The political rot, however, is only a part of a much more general rot. Our entire national life is in the grip of degenerative forces, which barely leave one small area of affairs unaffected, as they run amok like maggots invading a diseased carcass, filtering through everywhere as resistance wanes. ' and [...] The present battle for the British Race is the ultimate battle, and the one in which we **must** be the victors. For there will be no second chance'. No Tarnwoerter here
- Seeking to emulate the success of the Front National Nick Griffin has officially adopted differentialist racism and now uses the discourse of neo-populism as a Newspeak to camouflage core fascist beliefs. Thus in the BNP's current Mission Statement we read:

The British National Party exists to secure a future for the indigenous peoples of these islands in the North Atlantic which have been our homeland for millennia....The rich legacy of tradition, legend, myth and very real wealth of landscape and man-made structures is one of our island's richest treasures. The men and women of the British National Party are motivated by love and admiration of the outpouring of culture, art, literature and the pattern of living through the ages that has left its mark on our very landscape. We value the folkways and customs which have been passed down through countless generations. We enthuse with pride at the marvels of architecture and engineering that have been completed on these islands since the construction of the great megaliths 7,000 years ago. (NO MENTION OF IMMIGRATION!)

5 CAVEATS

I Newspeak as old as Politics itself

- LTI-style Newspeak is probably as ancient as political power itself: cf. 'Pax Romana' and the use of religion ('the Gods') by state elites throughout history
- Cf. Socrates *The Republic*: To maintain social order requires a Royal Lie: "Citizens, you shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet *God* has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honor; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen, and craftsmen he has composed of *brass and iron*; and **the species will generally be preserved in the children**. But all are of the same original stock; a golden parent will sometimes have a silver son, or a silver parent a gold son. And **God proclaims as a first principle to the rulers, and above all else, that there is nothing which they should so anxiously guard, or which they are to be such good guardians, as of the purity of the race.**"

CAVEAT II: Newspeak not exclusive to far right: also endemic to state communism

- It was used extensively by Soviet communism to the point where Marxism-Leninism itself became a totalizing Newspeak discourse
- In 1930 and 1931, the Soviet state forcibly exiled almost two million peasants in an operation euphemistically labeled "special resettlement"
- In a letter to Kaganovich of August 11, 1932, Stalin expressed fears that "Ukraine could be lost" and that it should be transformed in the shortest time possible into "a true fortress of the USSR" and "exemplary republic". These Stalinist euphemisms implied the following actions, regardless of the number of victims: (1) squeezing out of Ukraine the maximum amount of grain possible (justified by the need to modernize and feed the city populace); (2) conducting a thorough purge of all social spheres
- A GDR brochure on the Berlin Wall (1962) explains "Through our protective measures of 13 August 1961 we have only safeguarded and strengthened that frontier which was already drawn years ago and made into a dangerous front-line by the people in Bonn and West Berlin."
- *Izvestia* in August 1968 described Russian occupation of Prague as 'a spontaneous, ardently welcomed defence of popular freedom'.

Caveat III: the misleading assumption of Newspeak's underlying nihilism

- NB Orwell: “The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, **perhaps they even believed**, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.”
- Yet this is simplistic. It ignores the utopianism that underlies the totalitarian drive to transform society and bring about an anthropological revolution.

- Newspeak under Hitler and Stalin still retains some of its original revolutionary function (social engineering not just social control)
- Revolutionary thrust of post-war extremist movements (e.g. New Right, Islamism) not to be underestimated (“cherchez le mythe”).
- Thus Holocaust Chronicle website misleading when it writes: “Nazi euphemisms played an important role in the dehumanizing process of the Holocaust. From the beginning, Hitler spoke of the need to “purify” and “cleanse,” to rid the Reich of the Jewish “vermin,” and to “decontaminate” or “disinfect” the Reich of the Jewish “bacillus”.
- These phrases point to sincere dimension of intended Nazi revolution/palingenetic project which was conceived in eugenic terms, no matter how horrific in humanistic terms.

The testimony of *LTI* to the palingenetic core (however ossified) of regime Newspeak

- Thus LTI testifies to core elements of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* when Klemperer writes: '*Bewegung* [movement] was the quintessence, the unique quality of, the very lifeblood of National Socialism, which, after the *Aufbruch* [new beginning] - a sacred LTI word borrowed from Romanticism! – would never be allowed to come to rest.
- Similarly we are dealing with the non-nihilistic 'religious' core of Nazism that drove the regime's Newspeak when Klemperer records a post-war conversation with a former student and minor NSDAP official in which it emerged he had not applied for 'rehabilitation' (or 'de-Nazification': a piece of Allied Newspeak). 'I cannot deny it, I believed in him'. K.: 'But surely you can't believe in him now; you can see what it all led to, and all of the regime's atrocious crimes are now apparent for all to see'. An even longer pause. Then, very quietly. 'I accept all that. The others misunderstood him, betrayed him. But I still believe in HIM, I really do.'

Caveat IV: euphemism as a prophylactic against cognitive dissonance

- One social function of professional or 'official' system/regime-sustaining euphemism is to counteract pain of cognitive dissonance (cf. euphemisms surrounding sex and death).
- Hence its currency in all professions (medicine/ military/ politics/ prison regimes) in which there are inequalities of power, victims and commanders, weak and powerful, insiders and outsiders
- "Human beings cannot bear too much reality" (T. S. Eliot)
- State Newspeak offers series of unquestioned automatisms which allow people to reconcile their societal lives and the demands made on them by their official function with core inner moral values: facilitates denial
- In extreme case a regime's Newspeak (including liberal regimes) allows the coexistence or active collusion of theoretically incompatible, even contradictory, value-systems (Stalinism and Marxist humanism, Nazism and Christianity or even Judaism, liberalism and imperialism/1st world supremacism).

Caveat V: Newspeak not exclusive to extremism

- The 'Free World' generates its own forms of Newspeak: e.g. 'God and Country', Free World, Free Trade, New World Order, 'un-American', 'collateral damage', 'friendly fire', 'structural readjustment', 'regime change', 'special forces', 'special' or 'extraordinary' rendition, MAD, progress, modernization, development, downsize, 'relocation centre'; 'Vietnamese War'; 'shock and awe'.
- Cf. memorandum on torture by the US Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC). As one constitutional scholar notes: "According to the OLC, 'acts must be of an extreme nature to rise to the level of torture... Physical pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.'" He adds that in the view of Jay Bybee, then head of the OLC, "The infliction of anything less intense than such extreme pain would not, technically speaking, be torture at all. It would merely be inhuman and degrading treatment, a subject of little apparent concern to the Bush administration's lawyers".

Some resources for unpacking 'liberal' (neo-con-style) Newspeak

- See the writings of John Pilger *The New Rulers of the World* (2002) and *Freedom Next Time* (2006)
- Noam Chomsky (e.g. *Deterring Democracy* and *The Manufacture of Consensus*)
- Cf. Chomsky's 'Propaganda American Style' <http://www.zpub.com/un/chomsky.html> : "That's the kind of thing that Orwell described in *1984* (not a very good book in my opinion). *1984* is so popular because it's trivial and it attacks our enemies. If Orwell had dealt with a different problem – ourselves -- his book wouldn't have been so popular. In fact, it probably wouldn't have been published."
- NB too the Website Tomdispatch for abundant examples of liberal democratic Newspeak

2 Inferences

- 1 In an ideal world studies of the linguistic dimension of right-wing extremism would be located within a transdisciplinary framework informed by such elements as the history of rhetoric and the discourse (verbal and visual) of state power; cultural anthropology; the study of political and civil religion, of totalitarian movements and regimes, of social psychology with respect to the construction of normality and identity; the complex nature and function of euphemism; the ideological dynamics of revolution, the routinization of charismatic politics once installed as a regime and the corresponding shift from utopia to dystopia that sets in; the drive to create a mythic dimension of transcendence (a sheltering sky) as the basis of an alternative modernity when existing variants of modernity break down.

- 2 Studies of the forked tongues of right-wing extremism should never glibly assume that duplicitous discourse is a monopoly of extremism. The Liberal Democratic mainstream generates its own Newspeaks, especially in times of conflict.
- A good starting point for some serious academic investigation of 'speaking with forked tongues' as a generic phenomenon not confined to right-wing extremism might be to unpack the multilayered significance of the scene in Baron Cohen's *Borat* when a sizeable portion of a US rodeo audience loudly cheers these words: "My name-a Borat. I come from Kazakhstan. Can I say first, we support your war of terror! May we show our support to our boys in Iraq! May US and A kill every single terrorist! May your George Bush drink the blood of every single man, woman and child of Iraq! May you destroy their country so that for the next thousand years, not even a single lizard will survive in their desert!"

Cf Matthew 7:5 "You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye"