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Willi Münzenberg's 'Last Empire':
Die Zukunft and the 'Franco-German
Union', Paris, 1938–1940.
New Visions of Anti-Fascism and the
Transnational Networks
of the Anti-Hitler Resistance¹

ABSTRACT

The weekly *Die Zukunft* is among the most ambitious Franco-German media projects and collective organisers with European repercussions during the final crisis of the inter-war period from the Munich Agreement in September 1938 until May 1940 and the German occupation of France during the Second World War. The reading of the political-cultural journal as a unique, last 'anti-fascist intermediate empire' before the outbreak of the war and the efforts made by its editor, Willi Münzenberg, to unite the transnational anti-Hitler oppositionist networks contributes to an innovative perspective on the history of the German-speaking political emigration and German-French relations. New insights require major adjustments in the history of European strategies and the anti-Stalinist shift expressed by *Die Zukunft* after the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact contributes to a deeper understanding of the crisis of the political exile and the first stages of World War

- 1 This article is grounded in research conducted at the Institute for Social Movements Bochum, with support for two years from the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung. Within the scope of this project, which aims at a monograph about the *Zukunft*, different areas of research will be linked trans-disciplinarily, including historical media research and exile and resistance research, research on transnational political network building, on social movements, political ideas and cultural transfer. For more details refer to the presentation on the institute's website at <http://isb.rub.de/forschung/drittmittel/zukunft.html.de>. My gratitude goes to Dr. Vivian Strotmann of the University Library in Bochum for editing linguistically and proofreading the manuscript and as well to Dr. Dieter Nelles of Ruhr-Universität for his important hints. Nelles is co-author of the planned monograph.

Two. According to Münzenberg's concept of the future, democracy and socialism were to be rethought as a European task, against the division and the dismemberment of Germany and Europe after Hitler, against the reconstruction under conditions of capitalism and against the international and domestic political arrangements of the Stalinist Soviet Union. Henceforth "peace and freedom" had to be (...) "defended against Hitler and Stalin"² and further neo-imperialist arrangements. Nevertheless, the *Zukunft* could not prevent the definite failure of exile and resistance, which was rooted in the catastrophic defeat of the German Labour Movement in 1933, the sectarian refusal of a popular resistance of all social strata and the ties with Western democracies and their political apparatuses.

Keywords: *Die Zukunft*, Willi Münzenberg, French-German/German-French relations, Communism/Socialism; Stalinism/anti-Stalinism; anti-Hitler resistance/anti-fascism intellectual History, exile/exile press/German-speaking emigration, allied strategies; appeasement, Stalin-Hitler-Pact, World War Two

In the impressionist essay "Ostend 1936", which became a bestseller in 2016, the Feuilleton editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, describes the summer meeting of a group of emigrants on the shores of the Belgian canal.³ What this account of the meeting omits is the fact that most of its participants, like Willi Münzenberg, Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, Hermann Kesten, Egon Erwin Kisch, Ernst Toller, Arthur Koestler and others – with the exception of the fellow traveller Kisch—belonged to a circle of literati and mostly ex-communist intellectual dissidents, who in the coming years were to raise their voices in a last minute attempt to prevent the outbreak of Hitler's war. They also publicly challenged the official Communist tyranny exercised by the Stalin regime. To this end, they used the weekly *Die Zukunft* (the future) founded two years later. The last comprehensive unity movement of the anti-Hitler opposition culminated in this weekly newspaper which was supported not only by writers, dramatists, and essayists like Stefan Zweig and Joseph Roth, but also by Alfred Döblin, Walter Mehring, René Schickele, Jean Giraudoux, Fritz von Unruh, Manès Sperber, Ignazio Silone, Valeriu Marcu, Ludwig Marcuse and others.

With the subtitle "Ein neues Deutschland: Ein Neues Europa" ("A New Germany: A New Europe"), the interdisciplinary and transcultural weekly came out in October 1938 and continued to be published until the very moment when the German *Wehrmacht* was approaching Paris in May 1940. Under the responsibility of main editor Münzenberg and his wife Babette Gross as its manager, the editors in chief of the 81 issues published in a large-format were the communist dissident Arthur Koestler, the left Socialist German journalist Hans Siemsen (for a short period) and for most of the time the left Catholic

2 See note 42 below.

3 Volker Weidemann: *Ostende 1936: Sommer der Freundschaft*, Köln 2014.

Austrian and German Werner Thormann. Among the authors and supporters were prominent anti-fascist European politicians and activists, philosophers like Siegfried Marck, Emmanuel Mounier and Paul-Ludwig Landsberg who belonged to the left Catholic 'Groupe Esprit', psychologists, reform doctors, social scientists and political analysts like Manès Sperber, Fritz Fraenkel, Max Hodann and Raymond Aron. It was the first time that most of the political and cultural currents of the anti-Hitler opposition came together in one journal, mainly due to Münzenberg's and Babette Gross's organisational efforts after his break with the Stalinised KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, German Communist Party).⁴

The following account does not attempt to describe the last 'Münzenberg empire' that was smaller than many of his prior undertakings, peripheral and solidarity organizations, anti-colonial networks and so on⁵ as one of the many print media of the German-speaking political emigration—for example in comparison to the *Neue Weltbühne*, the *Neue Tagebuch* or the *Pariser Tageszeitung*. It aims instead to present the *Zukunft* as a transnational network, a political agent, and as the last unified movement of the anti-Hitler opposition. The main common goal was to stimulate these currents and to create a democratic popular movement in order to prevent war, dreaming the "dream of Hitler's fall" (Dieter Schiller).⁶ Especially highlighted are those efforts that aim at overcoming ideological old-style KPD anti-fascism, and also the mediating function exercised by the transnational networks built around the journal. As a critique of important parts of the historiography, the importance of *Die Zukunft* will be emphasised within the collective traumatic stress curve of the 1930s in the paper at hand. This reorientation and transformation process is a missing link to exile and resistance research that ranges from the disastrous failure of 1933 to the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939. In the last two chapters of this article, the role of the journal as an actor in anti-Hitler opposition will be examined in greater detail. For the history of social movements and its periodisation in the 1930s, this proves to be central insofar as it makes visible hitherto less apparent developments like the anti-Stalinist transformation of the German-speaking emigration, which is sometimes neglected, or even denied, in historical, political and cultural writing.

- 4 See: Ursula Langkau-Alex: Die Frau im Hintergrund: Babette Gross und die anderen in Münzenbergs Netzwerken der 1930er Jahre, forthcoming in the anthology of the First International Willi-Münzenberg congress, edited by Bernhard H. Bayerlein, Kasper Braskén and Uwe Sonnenberg.
- 5 See: Hélène Roussel: Zu Willi Münzenbergs verlegerischer Tätigkeit im Kontext seines Umgangs mit den Medien in der Weimarer Republik und im französischen Exil, in: Hélène Roussel/Lutz Winckler (eds.): Deutsche Exilpresse und Frankreich 1933–1940, Bern et al. 1992, pp. 157–198; Dieter Schiller: Der Traum von Hitlers Sturz: Studien zur deutschen Exilliteratur 1933–1945, Frankfurt am Main 2010.
- 6 Dieter Schiller: Der Traum von Hitlers Sturz: Studien zur deutschen Exilliteratur 1933–1945.

Willi Münzenberg as Charismatic Publisher, Network Builder and Propagandist of the 20th Century

Born in Erfurt in 1898 and found dead in southern France in 1940, Willi Münzenberg was the single most outstanding left-wing organiser, propagandist and media activist of the Weimar Republic. Until his death, he was a central actor of the German-speaking emigration and at the same time the transnational opposition movements to Hitler.⁷ In the 1920s, the Central Committee member of the KPD was among the best-known speakers and editors of his time. Between the two world wars he was one of Adolf Hitler's and the National Socialists' most prominent opponents. The global non-governmental cultural and political organizations founded under his aegis since the First World War included pacifist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, cultural networks, as well as humanitarian and workers' solidarity organizations. It began with the Socialist and Communist Youth Internationals during and immediately after the First World War (as the largest mass organisation opposed to the war) and continued through initiatives such as the 'Künstlerhilfe' (aid to artists) and the International Famine Relief for Russia in the early 1920s. A highlight was achieved with the establishment of the Workers' International Relief (WIR/Internationale Arbeiterhilfe, IAH) as the largest mass and solidarity organisation granting assistance to workers in the Weimar Republic (and also on a global scale). This intermediate empire, in some ways a radical successor of the 'Cultural Socialism' of the Second International, the "Comintern's Solar System", as the Finnish Comintern secretary Otto Kuusinen called it,⁸ became the most important transnational and transcultural, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist network of the first half of the 20th century. As an anticipation of a cultural international that never materialised, it nevertheless served as a focal point for common impetus and incentives for liberation from capitalism (Walter Benjamin).⁹

7 Surprisingly, his wife Babette Gross's work, in which she strongly restrains herself, has remained the only German-language biography of Münzenberg since the 1960s. See: Babette Gross: Willi Münzenberg: Eine politische Biographie, Stuttgart 1967 (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte 14/15).

8 Bericht der Kommission für die Arbeit unter den Massen (Genosse Kuusinen), in: Inprekorr 6 (1926), No. 45, pp. 623–625, here p. 623. English edition: (Otto W. Kuusinen): Report of the Commission for Work among Masses, in: Inprecorr 6:28 (1926), cit. in: Fredrik Petersson: Anti-Imperialism and Nostalgia: A Re-assessment of the History and Historiography of the League Against Imperialism, in: Holger Weiss (ed.): International Communism and Transnational Solidarity: Radical Networks, Mass Movements and Global Politics, 1919–1939, Dordrecht 2016 (Studies in Global Social History 26), pp. 191–255, here p. 204.

9 Cf. Vanessa R. Schwartz: Walter Benjamin for Historians, in: The American Historical Review 106:5 (2001), pp. 1721–1743, p. 1728. Concerning Münzenberg's networks, concepts and mass campaigning, see: Bernhard H. Bayerlein/Kasper Braskén/Holger Weiss: Introduction:

The transnational networks founded by Münzenberg together with his circle of helpers embraced a wide range of innovative multi-media means—from the illustrated magazine to the movie, from the community of readers to the publishing house, from the Agitprop-theatre to mass demonstrations, from the workers' photography movement to (mostly Soviet and German) film distribution and production and spectacular publications like the *Braunbuch*, the “Brown book about the Reichstag fire and Hitler's terror” published in 1933.¹⁰ Many intellectuals from Weimar and beyond, as well as culture-workers rallied to him for a public and active engagement. Anyone who is interested in the anti-war movement since the First World War, or doing research on cultural policy or transnational solidarity movements, the relationship between artists and writers, humanists and pacifists, anti-fascism, anti-racism and national liberation movements, or international socialism and communism, cannot do so without concerning themselves with Willi Münzenberg.

The “tunnel vision” dominant in East and West after 1945, in the Federal Republic just as in the German Democratic Republic (Stefan Berger¹¹) ensured that he was marginalised in, or even erased from, the official construction of history.¹² Until today, his reception remains diffuse, sometimes even contradictory. While for example some French historians have distinguished Münzenberg as an “artist of the revolution”,¹³ he is portrayed as a devilish tool of totalitarianism, especially in some US publications.¹⁴ More often, there is talk of him as an agent, indeed, a double or triple agent, of the Western powers and the

Transnational and Global Perspectives on International Communist Solidarity Organisations, in: Holger Weiss (ed.): International Communism and Transnational Solidarity, pp. 1–27; and also idem.: The “Cultural International” as the Comintern's Intermediate Empire: International Mass and Sympathizing Organisations Beyond Parties, in: Holger Weiss (ed.): International Communism and Transnational Solidarity, pp. 28–81.

- 10 The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag, prepared by the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, New York 1933. Concerning the different currents of activity see: Kasper Braskén: The International Workers' Relief, Communism, and Transnational Solidarity: Willi Münzenberg in Weimar Germany, Houndmills 2015; Rolf Surmann: Die Münzenberg-Legende: Zur Publizistik der revolutionären deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1921–1933, Köln 1983.
- 11 Stefan Berger in his contribution to the First International Willi-Münzenberg Congress, Berlin 2015. The Conference volume will be published in summer 2017.
- 12 For a few years, the ‘Willi-Münzenberg-Forum Berlin’ has been engaged in caring for Münzenberg's heritage. In addition to organizing the Willi Münzenberg Congress and numerous other events, it has published a detailed chronology of his life and activities on its website. See: <https://www.muenzenbergforum.de> (accessed 30 June 2017).
- 13 After all, French and American historians have recognised their importance and, in contrast to their German colleagues, have presented comprehensive biographies. See for France: Alain Dugrand/Frédéric Laurent: Willi Münzenberg: Artiste en révolution. 1889–1940, Paris 2008.
- 14 Sean McMeekin: The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, New Haven and London 2005. Less categorical is Stephan Koch: Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals, London 1995.

Soviet Union. He is also sometimes depicted as some kind of stage operator and slogans caster for Stalin in the thirties, who endeavoured to hide and dissimulate the dictator's real intentions from the world.¹⁵ Certainly, his relative independence as a transnational actor in his relationship with the KPD, the Comintern and the Russian leadership was one of the early roots of Münzenberg's later opposition to Stalinism. It is undisputable, however, that—as a member of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party—for a prolonged period of time, he put his 'empire' of peripheral and solidarity organizations, as well as anti-fascist, anti-colonial and anti-racist networks, media and publishing houses at the service of the Soviet Union, and its Stalinist leadership, of which he became a propagandist. Even if he did so in defence of anti-fascism and international socialism, this meant that by means of his transnational networks and his propagandistic talent, he legitimised political monstrosities. He even succeeded—as a decisive factor for the history of international communism in the inter-war period and its charismatic remembrance until present times—in transforming the bitterest defeats into moral victories, without being critically scrutinised.¹⁶ He was perhaps not a Stalinist but, by doing so, he pinned the role of global anti-fascist leader on Stalin before the Second World War, which he was not.¹⁷ Only later, as a consequence of the catastrophe of 1933 and the tragedy of German Communism, and definitely after the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939, did he strongly criticise the KPD leadership for having renounced a systematic counter-propaganda against National Socialism.

An Innovative Unified Movement against Hitler and his War Plans

An important trend in historical and cultural research trivialised the catastrophic historic "defeat without struggle" against Hitler in 1933¹⁸ and the failure of the German left in the fight against fascism, underestimating the Moscow-induced KPD discourses, continuing

- 15 See for example: Jacques Baynac: Jean Moulin, 17 Juin 1940–21 juin 1943: Esquisse d'une nouvelle histoire de la Résistance, Paris 2009, p. 70 *passim*.
- 16 Pierre Broué: Histoire de l'Internationale Communiste, Paris 1997, p. 668.
- 17 This refers to the Soviet Union's attitude towards anti-fascism and the politics of so-called 'collective security' in the thirties. See amongst others: Natal'ja Lebedeva/Michail Narinskij (eds.): Komintern i Vtoraja Mirovaja Vojna, I: Do 22 Ijunja 1941 g., II: Posle 22 Ijunja 1941 g., Moskva 1994/1998.
- 18 For the classic analysis as a defeat without even fighting see for the SPD: Erich Matthias: Der Untergang der alten Sozialdemokratie 1933, in: Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte 4:3 (1956), pp. 250–286, p. 263; and for the KPD respectively: Siegfried Bahne: Die KPD und das Ende von Weimar: Das Scheitern einer Politik 1932–1935, Frankfurt am Main/New York 1976, p. 45 *passim*.

to demonstrate a lack of interest in the multiple scandals of the so-called 'German Popular Front'.¹⁹ Looking at *Die Zukunft*, however, offers an alternative reading of this crucial period in the second half of the thirties and immediately preceding the Second World War.

Until recently, the historic relevance of the journal was denied by scholars and contemporary witnesses such as editor-in-chief Arthur Koestler and the feuilleton redactor Ludwig Marcuse in their respective memoirs followed by Hans-Albert Walter in his monumental opus about the German-speaking exile literature and press.²⁰ As is obvious from new archival evidence, the journal transcends the traditional horizon of research on anti-fascism, exile and resistance. Against the negative trend, the journal should be labelled an outstanding pluralist "community effort", as the German Otto Klepper, one of the organisers of the liberal-bourgeois anti-Hitler movement, who cooperated with Münzenberg and *Die Zukunft*, rightly put it.²¹ And more recent research done by the French and German Germanists and Historians H  l  ne Roussel, Dieter Schiller, Tania Schlie, Ursula Langkau-Alex, and especially the comparatist Thomas Keller, as well as the historian and political scientist Hans-Manfred Bock, confirmed that this weekly actually succeeded in what the so-called 'German Popular Front' failed to achieve, i. e. in mobilising in a pluralistic way most of the existing political and cultural currents

- 19 The tendency to trivialise the editor's putesches and other scandals in the political emigration, which were induced by KPD or the Comintern, is expressed in many (German and French) contributions of exile research, especially in the publications on the history of the Paris daily newspaper *Pariser Tageszeitung*. For more substantiated references see: Bernhard H. Bayerlein/Maria Matschuk: Vom Liberalismus zum Stalinismus? Georg Bernhard, Willi M  nzenberg, Heinrich Mann und Walter Ulbricht in der chronique scandaleuse des Pariser Tageblatts und der Pariser Tageszeitung, in: *Francia* 27:3 (2000), pp. 89–118. See also: Ursula Langkau-Alex: "... von entscheidender Bedeutung ist, ob M  nzenberg die Zeitung hat oder wir": Neues zur Instrumentalisierung der "Pariser Tageszeitung" in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen dem Sekretariat des ZK der KPD in Paris und Willi M  nzenberg, in: *Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (IWK)* 1 (2001), pp. 77–91. On this aspect also: Walter F. Peterson: Das Scheitern des militanten Liberalismus, in: Michel Grunewald/Frithjof Trapp (eds.): *Autour du "Front Populaire Allemand": Einheitsfront—Volksfront* (Contacts: Etudes et documents 9), Bern/Frankfurt am Main/New York 1990, pp. 133–148.
- 20 Arthur Koestler: Koestler   ber M  nzenberg, in: *Die Zukunft: Organ der Deutsch-Franz  sischen Union*, Reprint, Vaduz 1978, pp. V-XI; Ludwig Marcuse: *Mein zwanzigstes Jahrhundert: Auf dem Weg zu einer Autobiographie*, M  nchen 1963; Hans-Albert Walter: *Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1950*, Vol. IV: *Exilpresse*, Stuttgart 1978, pp. 128–184; see also Vol. III: *Internierung, Flucht und Lebensbedingungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 5ff., 93ff. a. O. Original texts in German, all quotes from the *Zukunft* translated by the author.
- 21 Astrid von Pufendorf: *Otto Klepper: Deutscher Patriot und Weltb  rger, 1888–1957*, M  nchen 1997 (Studien zur Zeitgeschichte), especially p. 218ff.

in the German-speaking political exile community.²² Recently available documents, among them the editorial archives of the journal in the Paris Archives Nationales²³, the Thormann Papers and others in the Frankfurt Exile Archives of the German National Library²⁴, the KPD and NS-surveillance documents in the SAPMO/Bundesarchiv in Berlin²⁵, parts of the ‘trophy archives’ of the German political exile in Moscow’s Military Archives²⁶, together with holdings in Germany, France, the US and Russia are gradually confirming that the *Zukunft* and its networks fulfilled an important role as a mediator of a comprehensive Franco-German and Pan-European political and cultural transfer.²⁷

They reveal a dimension almost lost in the respective national historiographies and the official memory of the inter-war period. Thereby they shed light on a hitherto little-known turning point for the anti-Hitler resistance in the context of a (partly spectacular) last minute engagement of Franco-German and European personalities and solidarity movements. This engagement occurred under most difficult conditions and with the participation of actors like Münzenberg, Thormann, Jean Giraudoux, Salomon Grumbach, Edmond Vermeil, Pierre Viénot, Guy Menant, Paul Ludwig Landsberg,

- 22 Hélène Roussel: Zu Willi Münzenbergs verlegerischer Tätigkeit im Kontext seines Umgangs mit den Medien in der Weimarer Republik und im französischen Exil; Thomas Keller: Deutsch-französische Dritte-Weg-Diskurse. Personalistische Intellektuellendebatten der Zwischenkriegszeit, München 2001 (Übergänge: Texte und Studien zu Handlung, Sprache und Lebenswelt 39); Ursula Langkau-Alex: “Die Zukunft” der Vergangenheit oder “Die Zukunft” der Zukunft? Zur Bündniskonzeption der Zeitschrift zwischen Oktober 1938 und August 1939, in: Hélène Roussel/Lutz Winckler (eds.): Deutsche Exilpresse und Frankreich 1933–1940, Bern et al. 1992, pp. 123–156; Tania Schlie: Alles für die Einheit: Zur politischen Biographie Willi Münzenbergs, 1935–1940, M.A.-Thesis, University of Hamburg 1990; Hans-Manfred Bock: Versöhnung oder Subversion? Deutsch-französische Verständigungs-Organisationen und -Netzwerke der Zwischenkriegszeit, Tübingen 2014 (especially chapter XI about the ‘German-French Union’).
- 23 For example, in the Archives Nationales Paris/Pierrefitte, F7/15129. The editorial archive contains basic documents, manifestos, member lists of the ‘Franco-French Union’ and the ‘Friends of Socialist Unity’ which have so far hardly been evaluated.
- 24 A. o. the German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek Frankfurt am Main) and its ‘Exile Collection’ (*Exilsammlung*), containing a. o. Werner Thormann’s and Margarete Buber-Neumann’s papers.
- 25 Investigations in Moscow showed that there was also a smaller collection about the *Zukunft* in the ‘special archive’ or military archive of the Russian Federation. It was part of the archives of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, part of which was handed over in 1961 to the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of the SED in East Berlin and is now kept in the SAPMO/Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- 26 The Military Archives in Moscow (‘Special Archives’) contain a large number of papers concerning German emigrants in France and Western Europe.
- 27 Michel Espagne: La notion de transfert culturel, in: *Revue Sciences/Lettres* 1 (2013), pp. 1–9, at: <http://rsl.revues.org/219> (accessed 30 June 2017); Matthias Middell: Kulturtransfer und Historische Komparatistik: Thesen zu ihrem Verhältnis, in: *Comparativ* 10:1 (2000), pp. 7–41.

Emmanuel Mounier and others. This participation implies that there were stronger ties also with the French governing bodies during the final crisis of the Third Republic. Thus, the journal had initially been subsidised—as we know with greater certainty now—by the French Minister of Finances and later Prime Minister Paul Reynaud, as well as Gaston Palewski as his chief of cabinet and also, later during the war, by the French Ministry of Information under the responsibility of its German Section, headed by Pierre Viénot. This evidence leads some authors to qualify Münzenberg as an agent of the “Deuxième Bureau”, which might be an exaggeration.²⁸

The last-minute attempt of the *Zukunft*, as the comparatist from Aix-en-Provence, Thomas Keller, rightly puts it, resulted from a combined effort of two main political currents: First, ex-Communist intellectuals and dissidents like Münzenberg, Koestler, Sperber, Silone and others. Secondly, a certain number of German and French Left Catholics and Liberals like Thormann or Otto Klepper. Through these dynamics emerged an anti-Hitler opposition formed by representatives of almost all political currents (except Party Communism). As such, it represented both an elitist and popular movement against Hitler. For the last time in German history of the last century this was a move in the proper sense of the term towards fostering a social resistance movement relying not only on leftist but also Catholic, respective Christian, Liberal and even Conservative networks and channels, like the ‘Deutsche Freiheitspartei’. In comparison to the workers’ resistance, these approaches were more successful, since the former relied on concepts of the workers’ resistance, that were too narrow to match reality, especially the KPD’s vision of factory cells.

The *Zukunft*’s endeavour disintegrated as a consequence of the war,²⁹ its historical heritage was either forgotten or suppressed for reasons of opportunity in remembrance politics and tradition building after 1945. However, the actual political parties (in some cases as successors of the elder organizations) of the Republics of Germany and France should be aware of this “past future” (Reinhard Koselleck) as a common past and imaginary of a common fight³⁰ against fascism, revanchism and chauvinism, not least in order to track their own roots. The major problem here is the lack of common remembrance politics of the workers’ movement as a consequence of the multiple loss of unity.

When examining more closely the different political strata involved, one encounters in the *Zukunft* the joint commitment of left Christians like Werner Thormann with his relations to the Catholic circles around Eugen Kogon and Friedrich Muckermann, Social-Democrats like Herbert Weichmann, Jakob Altmaier, Max Cohen-Reuss and

28 For some evidence on the financial support for the journal see: Deutsches Exilarchiv NL 114 Werner Thormann EB 97/145, 54/1–54/3.

29 See passim for some of the reasons.

30 Reinhart Koselleck: *Vergangene Zukünfte: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main 1989.

Ludwig Ullmann, left Socialists like Fritz Sternberg, Günter Dallmann and Julius Deutsch, pacifists like Fritz von Unruh, trade unionists like Walter Oettinghaus and Edo Fimmen, the general secretary of the International Federation of Transport Workers (ITF). At that time, the latter represented the world's largest global transnational anti-fascist network, especially through seamen and harbour workers. With liberal-bourgeois and conservative actors and *Zukunft* authors like Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein, Otto Klepper and Hermann Rauschnig, Münzenberg was imbricated in the last (and ultimately thwarted) attempt at establishing a German National Council of the political emigration, which was meant to be an initial impulse for a German exile government.³¹ A certain number of anarchists and pacifists joined the *Zukunft* as well; the Zurich social doctor Max Brupbacher was not only a friend but also a father figure for Münzenberg.

In their Stalinist mood, these activities aroused KPD leaders' anger, among them Walter Ulbricht and Franz Dahlem, who tried to discredit the paper. Thus, the tradition of German party communism, which hushed up or demonised Münzenberg (together with the other dissidents such as Louis Gibarti (i. e. László Dobos) or historian Kurt Kersten), is clearly negative. As if this were not sufficient, the name of Münzenberg's political group founded in 1939—'Friends of the Socialist Unity of Germany' (Freunde der sozialistischen Einheit Deutschlands), was simply appropriated or even usurped after 1945 by Walter Ulbricht and others when the GDR's ruling party was named 'Socialist Unity Party of Germany' (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) – Münzenberg as original name giver for the East German ruling Party!

Significantly, as a result of the ongoing German-French political and cultural transfer, the *Zukunft* networks comprised French politicians and intellectuals, liberals, left Democrats, free masons and Socialists like Yvon Delbos, Edouard Herriot or the already mentioned Palewski, Grumbach or Giraudoux. A special group of internationalist workers were also represented by the non-conformist military volunteers of the lost Spanish Civil War detained in the French internment camps. Among them, Eduard Koch and Arthur Giesswein were held in the camp of Gurs. For intellectual history, moreover, an important finding is, as the Germanist Thomas Keller puts it, that the *Zukunft* turned out to be the last melting pot of the "Franco-German avant-garde",³² with the 'Dômiers' (who met in the Paris 'Café du Dôme'), who were linked to art and mostly originated from the opposition movement against the First World War. Among them were the famous art dealer Wilhelm Uhde, the painter and graphic artist Eugen Spiro, the stage and theatre director Alwin Kronacher and the last editor of the legendary cartoon journal *Simplicissimus*, Franz Schoenberner. Supporters included a number of human scientists and well known academics, among them French 'Germanists' or German 'Romanists'

31 Beatrix Bouvier: Die Deutsche Freiheitspartei (DFP): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Opposition gegen den Nationalsozialismus, Dissertation, Frankfurt am Main 1972.

32 This expression is used by Thomas Keller.

like Edmond Vermeil, Pierre Bertaux, Robert Minder, Paul Vignaux, Georges Duhamel, Wilhelm Friedmann, and from the German side a number of renowned left intellectuals like the pedagogue Anna Siemsen, the mathematician Emil Gumbel, the military theorist Alexander Schiffrin or the just mentioned economist Fritz Sternberg, and a greater number of journalists and critics like Max Beer, the social democrat Alexander Stein (Ps. of Alexander N. Rubinštejn), the liberal Balder Olden, the pacifist Ferdinand Hardekopf and the Austrian left socialist Otto Leichter. It is important to stress, furthermore, that humanitarian and human rights concerns and organizations were supported, just as the relief committees for refugees in various countries—and this was done without sectarian bias.

Efforts to Overcome Old-Style Ideological KPD-Induced Anti-Fascism

A closer look at this weekly newspaper shows its unifying potential for multiple anti-fascist networks and clarifies important research issues such as the changing balance of power in the German political exile, as well as the problematic and difficult relationship between exile and resistance in the German *Reich*. The latter issues include problems of political and cultural hegemony in public opinion, the subsequent processes of differentiation within the anti-Hitler front and the surprisingly broad, joint commitment of Germans and French to the cause of the anti-Hitler opposition.

Concerning the conceptions for the future, new standards were set with the *Zukunft's* visions and scenarios of a Franco-German Union, a united Europe and an undivided, liberated democratic-socialist Germany after Hitler, which was envisioned as growing out of a completely renewed and restructured German workers' movement.³³ For the Socialists among the supporters, its mission was last but not least that of a precursor of a new united party of the labour movement after the fall of the Third Reich. In helping to create room for all opposition forces as a base for a popular anti-Hitler movement in the German Reich, Münzenberg remained faithful to his guiding dual concept of articulation and organisation. During his lifelong engagement, he moved along two normative axes in order to construct a large unified movement against Hitler: the popular front type³⁴

33 Werner Thormann: Eine europäische Aufgabe. Demokratie und Sozialismus müssen neugedacht werden, in: *Die Zukunft*, 3.5.1940; idem.: Die demokratisch-sozialistische Sammlung im Aufbau, in: *Die Zukunft*, 29.3.1940.

34 See: Ursula Langkau-Alex: *Deutsche Volksfront 1932–1939: Zwischen Berlin, Paris, Prag und Moskau*, 3 volumes, I: Vorgeschichte und Gründung des Ausschusses zur Vorbereitung einer deutschen Volksfront; II: Geschichte des Ausschusses zur Vorbereitung einer deutschen Volksfront; III: Dokumente, Chronik, Berlin 2004.

was on the one hand. On the other, he sought to engage the workers' movement to create a new "united front type" movement.³⁵ This twofold strategical line rectifies traditional views depicting him only as a champion of the narrow and instrumental 'Popular Front' tactics which definitely failed in 1936/1937. New evidence from his correspondence with Dimitrov and Stalin shows that he considered the traditional, KPD-induced ideological 'popular front' type of anti-fascism neither as a valid solution, nor as sufficient.³⁶ This might confirm that perhaps there existed a strategic, and not only tactical reason why, in 1936/1937, he had been ousted from the German Popular Front Commission ('*Volksfrontausschuss*') by a plot of his German rival Walter Ulbricht, who engaged the KPD in the new—more flexible and less anti-fascist—tactics for 'Popular Democracy'.

In his youth, Münzenberg was an international socialist, sympathetic to anarchism, and later a follower of Stalin, though not always loyal to the 'general party line'. Even if he defended Stalin in a certain way, Zimmerwaldist and Leninist Münzenberg continued to be eager to implement, spatially and conceptually, anti-fascist and anti-war aims on a global and transcultural scale.³⁷ Despite of this, there existed a dark period. Especially in 1933, he acted as a main propagandist for the 'Social-Fascism' course, which led to disaster and subsequently encouraged barbarian Nazi repression. He even denounced any common defence tactics against fascism by the left parties, particularly Trotsky's claim to a united front, as a "fascist proposal of a bloc of the Communist Party with the SPD" and as the "worst, most dangerous and most criminal theory" that this "which Trotsky postulated during the last years of his counterrevolutionary propaganda" (sic).³⁸ Nevertheless, it has now become clear that in the same year, the same Münzenberg, in his

- 35 For a critical juxtaposition of the two concepts see: Bernhard H. Bayerlein: Einheits- und Volksfrontmythos als Ursprungslegenden des Antifaschismus, in: Claudia Keller (ed.): Die Nacht hat zwölf Stunden, dann kommt schon der Tag: Antifaschismus, Geschichte und Neubewertung, Berlin 1996, pp. 103–122.
- 36 For some of these spectacular letters (freely accessible on the Internet) see: Hermann Weber et al. (eds.): Deutschland, Russland, Komintern, Vol. I: Überblicke, Analysen, Diskussionen: Neue Perspektiven auf die Geschichte der KPD und die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen (1918–1943), Berlin and Boston 2014, pp. 240ff., pp. 270ff., passim. Open access: <http://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/186108> (accessed 30 June 2017); Hermann Weber et al. (eds.): Deutschland, Russland, Komintern, Vol. II: Dokumente (1918–1943): Nach der Archivrevolution: Neuerschlossene Quellen zur Geschichte der KPD und den deutsch-russischen Beziehungen, Berlin and Boston 2015 (Archive des Kommunismus: Pfade des XX. Jahrhunderts 5–6), pp. 1024ff., p. 1381ff. Open access: <http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/212875> (accessed 30 June 2017).
- 37 See: Bernhard H. Bayerlein/Kasper Braskén/Holger Weiss: Transnational and Global Perspectives on International Communist Solidarity Organisations; Bernhard H. Bayerlein: The "Cultural International" as the Comintern's Intermediate Empire.
- 38 Willi Münzenberg: Troztkis faschistischer Vorschlag einer Blockbildung der KPD mit der SPD, in: Der Rote Aufbau: Halbmonatsschrift für Politik, Literatur, Wirtschaft, Sozialpolitik und Arbeiterbewegung 5:4 (1932), pp. 147–160, here p. 154 (translated by the author).

internal letters to Stalin, released a fundamental critique of the KPD's passivity concerning the fight against Nazism, and in the coming years, he began to doubt Stalin's anti-fascism, at the latest at the dawn of the 'great terror'. Already a few years before his violent death (probably at the hands of the Soviet dictator's bloodhounds and/or members of the KPD apparatus), he broke with Stalinism and official German Communism. Moreover, since the mid-1930s a roll-back of the anti-imperialist, anti-racist and antifascist initiatives had been commissioned by the Comintern against the anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-fascist initiatives and committees. As another nationalistic rearrangement of Soviet and Comintern politics, Münzenberg's "solar system"³⁹ was dismantled at a transnational level and even largely destroyed, including the Workers' International Relief.⁴⁰

Founding the *Zukunft*, Münzenberg's strategic line was in fact to prevent Germany from being delivered to the mercy of the reactionary imperialist forces of the West and their free play in wartime and in the aftermath. In 1938, within the framework of an 'East-West bloc', he still hoped to continue with the support of the Soviet Union as a peace force, and at the same time, he wanted to revive the sclerotized anti-fascism on a European level, forming a new unified movement by rebuilding an independent socialist and democratic workers' movement after the collapse of the old one. Historically, this project, which had succeeded in bringing together a large part of the German-speaking anti-Hitler opposition, was already objectively failing through the continuous appeasement policy of the Western democracies at Munich in 1938 and at the latest through the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler pact in August 1939. It is remarkable in this respect that the last and definite transformation occurred in 1939, as it can be traced in the *Zukunft*. In fact, since the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in August 1939, the "devil's pact" (Julián Gorkin⁴¹), the journal became a symbiosis of anti-Stalinism and anti-fascism: "Peace and freedom" had hitherto "to be defended against Hitler and Stalin".⁴² The workers of Europe were warned against the Pact's disastrous consequences that made possible the outbreak of the war and it rightly claimed that they should be protected against the consequences of Stalinism.⁴³ In this sense, the new narrative mirrored that of George Orwell. The

39 This flowery term was used by Otto Kuusinen as Comintern secretary (see above).

40 Reinhard Müller: Bericht des Komintern-Emissärs Bohumir Smeral über seinen Pariser Aufenthalt 1937, in: Exilforschung: Ein internationales Jahrbuch 9 (1991), pp. 236–261.

41 See: Julián Gorkin: *Caníbales políticos: Hitler y Stalin en España*, Mexico City 1941.

42 "Nach den Erfahrungen in Polen, Estland, Lettland, Litauen und Finnland wissen wir, dass ein neues, freies, demokratisches Deutschland nur im schärfsten Kampf gegen Hitler und Stalin erobert und verteidigt werden kann und verteidigt werden muss." Solidarität: Die Deutsche Opposition für Finnland, in: *Die Zukunft*, 23.2.1940 ["After the experience in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland, we know that a new, free, democratic Germany can only be conquered and defended in the strongest fight against Hitler and Stalin"].

43 See: Bernhard H. Bayerlein: "Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!": Vom Ende der internationalen Solidarität: Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg, 1939–1941, Berlin 2008 (Archive des Kommunismus—Pfade des XX. Jahrhunderts 4).

best-known quote of the *Zukunft* is probably Münzenberg's outcry "The traitor, Stalin, is you!" as concluding sentence in his article "The Russian Stab in the Back" (Der russische Dolchstoß).⁴⁴

Mediating Function and Transnational Network Agency

Doubtlessly, the birth of the *Zukunft* one month after the surrender of the European democracies to Hitler at Munich represented a new stage in the formation of a transnational anti-Hitler alliance of a variety of political currents and in public opinion. In fact, under the weekly's umbrella, a series of transnational initiatives and networks were clustered, such as the 'Friends of the *Zukunft*' (Die Freunde der *Zukunft*), the above-mentioned 'Franco-German Union' (Union Franco-Allemande), the Committee 'People in Need' (Komitee Menschen in Not/Comité hommes en détresse), and the publishing House Sebastian Brant in Strasbourg (later Paris), editor of the *German Freedom Calendar* (*Deutscher Freiheitskalender*). To the 'Friends of the Socialist Unity of Germany' (Freunde der sozialistischen Einheit Deutschlands) the German Freedom Broadcasting Service (Deutscher Freiheitssender) maintained by the liberal Deutsche Freiheitspartei (DFP) has to be added for the later period, a radio station run under the auspices of the French Propaganda Council of General Information directed by playwright Jean Giraudoux.⁴⁵ *Zukunft* bureaus and representations—although in some cases just local booksellers or press distributors—were established in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Switzerland, Hungary, and Rumania. Sources of supply existed in South Africa, the United States, Columbia, and China, correspondence was published coming from most of these countries.

As the most open platform for mutual understanding, the *Zukunft* became a forum for very diverse opinions and a collective instrument of a European and German-French political and cultural transfer, thereby valorising the German anti-Nazi opposition. By virtue of its conception, expressed in the subtitle "A New Germany!—A New Europe!" ("Ein Neues Deutschland!—Ein Neues Europa!"), as well as through its progressive and fashionable design, the paper was more than an 'exile' organ. It even refused to be designated as such. As already mentioned, one of the hallmarks was that it acted as a hub for various overt and covert networks of resistance and amplified the expression of political opposition through different means, thereby creating links between individuals

44 Willi Münzenberg: Der russische Dolchstoß, in: Die Zukunft, 22.9.1939.

45 These networks were the topic of a special panel with contributions by Thomas Keller, Dieter Nelles, Dieter Schiller, Ursula Langkau-Alex ... to the 1st International Willi Münzenberg Congress, which took place in Berlin in September 2015. For the forthcoming publication see: <https://www.muenzenbergforum.de> (accessed 30 June 2017).

and groups that transcended borders. As a journal, it was probably less important than as an umbrella organisation for a wide range of these political and cultural transnational networks, which sometimes acted covertly. Amongst the overt ones are the 'Franco-German Union', the 'Friends of the Socialist Unity of Germany' and humanitarian initiatives like the 'Committee of People in Need'. In fact, the 'Friends of Socialist Unity' were the last current of the German Left, created in the inter-war period, also called 'The Münzenberg Group' or 'Münzenberg Circle'. 'People in Need' supported those who otherwise were not helped, mainly dissident Spanish fighters and members of the International Brigades, who were collectively arrested and detained in the internment camps in southern France. In his romance and report "The Scum of the Earth", Arthur Koestler, the first redactor in chief of the journal, later provided a vivid image of these "Internationals"—many of them totally disillusioned with Communist party politics during the Spanish Civil War—who nevertheless fought fascism with arms in their hands. After the exodus from Spain in 1938/1939, no one assisted them in their basic needs, especially not the Communist "capos" in the camps, who even denied them the so-called 'gifts of love' (*Liebesgaben*), the parcels sent to the prisoners.⁴⁶

Scrutinizing the *Zukunft* and using network analysis helps generate a more holistic image of anti-fascism, which transcends former *Exilforschung* insofar as it draws attention to alternatives of social democratic and communist party politics. The latter's bureaucratic, purely instrumental and ideological approaches actually reflected the obedience to the constantly changing Soviet foreign policy. This also meant governance through a continuous process of compartmentalisation of the different social and political clusters which led to fragmentation and the loss of a holistic perspective. Instructed by the Comintern, the governing bodies of the Communist Parties had to observe strict segregation of anti-fascism, anti-war, anti-racist patterns and other types and segments of activities, an approach which in fact led the fundamental and holistic political understanding and conception of transnational and transcultural solidarity *ad absurdum*.

In addition to the Franco-German link, the *Zukunft's* networks transnationally provided circles of friendship and other forms of contact in order to establish ties with a great and diverse number of political currents in Europe, while creating new geographies of the anti-Hitler opposition. Thus, by founding 'Federal Fellowships', the paper also radiated to the UK. Here, it would form the nucleus of a future 'English-German Union' and "not only serve the meeting of the idea of peace and European cooperation of people

46 To portray political discussions and everyday life experiences in the French internment camps, reports, private notes and letters have been used by Dieter Nelles (Dieter Nelles: Die Unabhängige Antifaschistische Gruppe, 9. Kompanie im Lager Gurs: Zur gruppenspezifischen Interaktion nach dem spanischen Bürgerkrieg, in: Helga Grebing/Christel Wickert (eds.): Das "andere Deutschland" im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus: Beiträge zur politischen Überwindung der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur im Exil und im Dritten Reich, Essen 1994, pp. 56–85).

convinced [of it], but also [foster] practical work in the field of joint artistic and scientific activity and [...] promote the social cohesion of its members.”⁴⁷ Among leading board members of these fellowships were (until July 1939) the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Norman Angell, the secretary of the Fabian Society John Parker, the Labour politician Earl of Listowel, the writer and human rights activist H. G. Wells, and the author and chairman of the British P.E.N. Center, Margaret Storm Jameson. The initiative was also supported by outstanding English journalist and publicist Henry Noel Brailsford. Even if we know only little about the concrete activities of the Fellowships, the list of British supporters included prominent appeasement opponents, ‘Humanitarians’, literary figures and actors coming from the three major British parties (Labor, Liberals and Conservatives), including Churchill’s Focus Group (‘Focus in Defense of Freedom and Peace’), the New Commonwealth Institute and the Fabian Research Bureau in London.⁴⁸ Important writers from London were Katharine Stewart-Murray, the ‘Red’ Duchess of Atholl (a friend of Arthur Koestler, who was able to flee to England after his brief period as chief editor in France), and the Secretary of the National League, Philip Noel-Baker. The German social democrat Wilhelm Wolfgang Schütz, who 30 years later was considered the constructor of Willi Brandt’s ‘*Ostpolitik*’, served as editor of the journal in London, which also was present in the Nordic countries Denmark, Norway, Finland and especially in Sweden. In Stockholm, the socialist writer and translator Günter Dallmann acted as editor in a relatively successful manner.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, such decisive breakthroughs as in France no longer occurred in Britain or in the Nordic countries.

The Catastrophe of 1933, the Scandal Chronicle of the German Exile and the Stalin-Hitler Pact as Driving Moments

One path leading to the foundation of the journal, the key element of the dissident *Zukunft* and its “third way” concept (Thomas Keller⁵⁰), was the tragic German defeat without fight allowing Hitler’s pacific accession to power in January 1933, together with

47 Eine Englisch-Deutsche Union, in: *Die Zukunft*, 28.7.1939.

48 Susan Pennybacker: *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain*, Princeton 2009, p. 206, p. 226.

49 See forthcoming: Bernhard H. Bayerlein: The Last “Münzenberg Empire”: The Transnational Political and Cultural Networks of “Die Zukunft” in the Nordic Countries (1938–1940), in: Kasper Braskén/Johan Lundin/Nigel Copley (eds.): *Antifascism in the Nordic Countries: New Perspectives, Comparisons and Transnational Connections*, London 2018.

50 Thomas Keller: Das rheinisch-revolutionäre Europa. Die Exilzeitschrift “Die Zukunft” (1938–1940), in: Michel Grunewald (ed.): *Le discours européen dans les revues allemandes*

the impact of fickle Soviet policy and its changing reception by the mostly German, Austrian and French anti-fascist actors. The German catastrophe was condensed in the defeat of the most important and even partially armed labour movement on the planet. The traumatic arc spun by virtue of the workers' movement's defeat in 1933 ended in 1939 and simultaneously, with the outbreak of the Second World War, which had been ordered only after his pact with Stalin, opened another one: The main reasons were "the mistakes and omissions and also the methods of justification of the German workers' parties [the SPD and the KPD], by means of which the German Republic has raised their own executioners".⁵¹ These words, uttered without any malicious joy, were not written—as one might assume—by the outcast and diabolised prophet Lev Trotsky but by Werner Thormann, the Catholic editor-in-chief of the *Zukunft*, in a secret 1935 memorandum to the French government.⁵² The defeat *sans combat* of the biggest, best organised and even partially armed workers' movement—as Thormann further wrote—arose precisely from "the bureaucracy of the anti-fascist parties and organizations"; decisively the "dictatorship of the apparatus applied in their inside" prevented "unity of action against the desire of the masses" and was therefore "the final and decisive cause of the defeat".⁵³

The full knowledge and understanding of the impact of Soviet Politics and Soviet-German relations on these events is currently surfacing as a consequence of the 'archival revolution'. New scholarly research confirms that Stalin's attitude towards the Nazi regime was much more conciliatory than previously assumed. The problem was that until the mid-1930s Willi Münzenberg, his brother-in-law, Heinz Neumann, or his close comrades in the German Communist Party like Hans Kippenberger or Hermann Remmele—all three later victims of the Stalinist terror—represented a left current of German communism which at least initially, fuddled by Soviet and homemade propaganda, fell into the trap of Stalinism. They had confidence in Stalin's imagined "antifascist principles", and, due to complete secrecy, the hidden contacts with the Hitler government from 1933 on and the strategic intentions of the chief of Kremlin could not be easily grasped. At the time, only a few thinkers and critics of the Stalinist regime, like the Russian ex-intelligence officer active in Western Europe, Walter G. Krivitsky, the outcast prophet Trotsky or the

(1933–1939)/Der Europadiskurs in den deutschen Zeitschriften (1933–1939), Bern et al. 1999, pp. 63–93.

51 "Wir wollen hier nicht des langen und breiten von den Fehlern und Unterlassungen der deutschen Arbeiterparteien und von den Methoden sprechen, mit denen sich die Deutsche Republik ihre Henker selbst großgezogen hat." Werner Thormann: Denkschrift an französische Stellen, Deutsche Nationalbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, Exilsammlung, Werner Thormann Papers, EB 97/145, 101.0029, Bl. 6. Translated by the author.

52 Ibid.

53 "Es genügt der Hinweis, daß es der Bürokratismus der antifaschistischen Parteien und Organisationen, daß es die in ihnen ausgeübte Apparatdiktatur gewesen ist, die entgegen der Sehnsucht der Massen die Einheit der Aktion verhinderten und damit die letzte und entscheidende Ursache der Niederlage wurden" (ibid.). Translated by the author.

German cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin, argued that a new strategic orientation of the Soviet Union towards a solid alliance with Hitler was on the way, before it was officially initiated in 1939. In fact, current research is mapping initiatives by Stalin to reach a longer-term agreement with Hitler already since 1934/1935.⁵⁴ From 1933 on, undoubtedly, Stalin and his *Politbüro*, through their passivity and even secret consent, assisted Hitler and the Secret State Police *Gestapo* in slaughtering German Communism.

In his letters to Stalin, Münzenberg sharply denounced the inertia of the German Communist Party in abstaining from an active anti-Nazi propaganda without criticising Soviet politics at this stage. Nevertheless, since 1935, another driving force for the *Zukunft* was emerging,⁵⁵ as Soviet mass terror was implemented, with its disastrous transnational consequences and its effects on the German exile community. During the period of terror, about 80 per cent of the German communist emigrants in the Soviet Union died. Mostly, they were murdered. Simultaneously, on Moscow's instructions, the peripheral and solidarity organizations, as well as the remaining parts of anti-fascist, anti-colonial and anti-racist networks—many of them moulded into the 'Münzenberg Imperium'—were disbanded and erased. A number of organizations, committees, editorial houses were simply closed down by decision of Comintern general secretary Georgi Dimitrov sometimes executed *in loco* (mainly in France) by the Czech instructor Bohumir Smeral. Not least for fear of contracting the 'Münzenberg virus', this model for a future global Cultural International was finally sacrificed to Great Russian Nationalism and its designers were instead mercilessly persecuted. As revealed in the Dimitrov diaries, in November 1937, Stalin ordered apprehending Münzenberg and luring him to Moscow to detain him.⁵⁶

Transformation in the German-Speaking Exile: The Anti-Stalinist Turn

The common denominator during the *Zukunft's* first phase, up to the summer of 1939, was the opposition to the appeasement policy of the Western powers regarding the aggressive Nazi politics, which was laid down in the Munich Agreement. This opposition was still associated with the hope of an all-European peace policy, including the Soviet Union. The editorial archives reveal that the initial course, focussed on European democracies and international diplomacy, caused protest and resistance among some of the *Zukunft's*

54 See particularly Russian authors like Sergej Sluc and Lev Besimenskii.

55 See: Hermann Weber et al.: *Deutschland, Russland, Komintern*, Vol. I, pp. 240ff., 270ff.; and Vol. II, pp. 1024ff., pp. 1381ff.

56 Georgi Dimitroff: *Tagebücher 1933–1943*, edited by Bernhard H. Bayerlein, translated from Russian by Wladislaw Hedeler und Birgit Schliwenz, Vol. I, Berlin 2000, pp. 163–165.

editors, who demanded a stronger Socialist orientation. Particularly controversial was the foreign policy editor Max Beer, who actually, after the Second World War, became a leading figure of the United Nations journalists.⁵⁷ From the summer of 1939 on, the character of the journal changed. Concepts of defence of the workers' movement were now more strongly emphasised, not least by Münzenberg himself and by the left-socialist authors. This, in turn, called forth Werner Thormann's opposition, but the Catholic chief editor nevertheless remained loyal to the journal, despite his disagreement with this shift. Therefore, until its closing at the German occupation of France, a political-personal balance prevailed in the content treated by the journal. This included supporting the western allies, close links with the French State information services and, especially in the last period, a stronger leftist narrative.

On a transnational, especially European, level, the prospects of success turned out not to be too little. From the standpoint of the social movement in Europe, as a response to the traumatic defeat of the German anti-Hitler opposition, a global anti-fascist reflex was manifest. It materialised in the radicalisation of the socialist and social-democratic parties and youth organisations. Until the Republicans' defeat in the Spanish Civil War (predictable by 1937/1938), the European situation could still generally be characterised as contingent and not yet unilaterally heading in the direction of fascism.⁵⁸ The prospect of sinking into the barbarism of war was definitely not set in stone until the defeat in Spain and the shift of the French Republic to an authoritarian regime in 1938/1939.

Concerning Soviet politics, the *Zukunft* was an eye opener for the anti-Stalinist reorientation and transformation in the German and European anti-Hitler opposition during the final stages of the inter-war period. This anti-Stalinist shift, frequently overlooked and underestimated in research, was accomplished when the *Zukunft* published Münzenberg's outcry "The traitor, Stalin, is you!" in September 1939.⁵⁹ From this point on, at the latest, the general orientation of the political exile had shifted to the new paradigm that "peace and freedom must be (...) defended against Hitler and Stalin" and the neo-imperialist rearrangements under way under the leadership of fascist Germany.⁶⁰ While the heuristic value of the Stalinisation thesis of the Communist Parties

57 The foreign politics editor of the journal Max Beer (Wien 1886—New York City 1965) should not be confused with the socialist editor and historian of the workers' movement Max Beer (Tarnobrzeg 1864—London 1963).

58 See: Gerd-Rainer Horn: *European Socialists Respond to Fascism: Ideology, Activism and Contingency in the 1930s*, New York et al., 1996.

59 Bernhard H. Bayerlein: "Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!": Vom Ende der internationalen Solidarität: Komintern und kommunistische Parteien im Zweiten Weltkrieg, 1939–1941.

60 See my forthcoming article: *Der antifaschistische Paradigmenwechsel im Exil: Die deutschsprachige Emigration gegen Hitler und Stalin*, to be published 2017 in the anthology of the First Willi-Münzenberg Congress.

has been largely accepted, especially after Hermann Weber's works,⁶¹ the anti-Stalinist transformation process (epitomised in the 'late' dissidents Müntzenberg, Koestler, Sperber, Silone and others) has largely been underestimated in historiography, requiring a re-evaluation and a new critical foundation of the history of anti-fascism, especially of the German political exile, based on empirical reconstruction.⁶² This shift indeed connects the catastrophe of 1933 and the outbreak of the Second World War, both of which would not have occurred, or at least not in this form, without the role played by Stalinism. On the other hand, the tightly knit Soviet-dominated Comintern networks and the large-scale manipulation practice of historical actors, social and political movements (including independent intellectuals and cultural organizations and media as shown by George Orwell⁶³) need to be further revealed and reappraised.

In this regard, some of the most spectacular KPD or Moscow-induced scandals in the German-speaking emigration have meanwhile been publicised, among them the 1936 putsch of the editorial staff against Vladimir Poljakov, the owner of the *Pariser Tageblatt*, or the 1937 decision of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to buy the *Pariser Tageszeitung*, the only German-speaking daily in exile. It seems also conceivable that some more journals were likewise targeted. The aim was clearly to control these media and to curb Müntzenberg's influence in order to protect Moscow-friendly organisations and networks.⁶⁴ Another scandal largely overlooked was linked to Hermann Budzislawski's position of editor-in-chief of *Die Neue Weltbühne* (originally *Weltbühne*). The former journal of independent left intellectuals of the Weimar Republic also fell under KPD influence. To name just one example: Budzislawski went so far as to censor Kurt Tucholsky's letter from 15 December 1935 to Arnold Zweig in the journal which may be classified as his "political testament" shortly before his suicide.⁶⁵ Tucholsky, as

61 See: Norman LaPorte/Kevin Morgan/Matthew Worley (eds.): *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53*, Basingstoke 2008.

62 See my forthcoming article *Der antifaschistische Paradigmenwechsel im Exil: Die deutschsprachige Emigration gegen Hitler und Stalin*, to be published 2017 in the anthology of the First Willi-Müntzenberg Congress.

63 See amongst his political writings: George Orwell: *Notes on Nationalism*, in: *Polemic: Magazine of Philosophy, Psychology, and Aesthetics*, London 1945, http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/English/e_nat (accessed 30 June 2017).

64 See: Bernhard H. Bayerlein/Maria Matschuk: *Vom Liberalismus zum Stalinismus? Georg Bernhard, Willi Müntzenberg, Heinrich Mann und Walter Ulbricht in der chronique scandaleuse des Pariser Tageblatts und der Pariser Tageszeitung*; Ursula Langkau-Alex: "... von entscheidender Bedeutung ist, ob Müntzenberg die Zeitung hat oder wir": *Neues zur Instrumentalisierung der "Pariser Tageszeitung" in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen dem Sekretariat des ZK der KPD in Paris und Willi Müntzenberg*.

65 Letter by Kurt Tucholsky to Arnold Zweig, 15.12.1935, published under the title "Juden und Deutsche" in: *Die Neue Weltbühne*, pp. 160–165. The original terminology may be read in Richard von Soldenhoff (ed.): *Kurt Tucholsky 1890–1935: Ein Lebensbild*, Frankfurt/Olten/Wien 1987, p. 251.

the most outstanding symbol of Germany's independent intellectualism of the Weimar Republic (he committed suicide in 1935), was censured because in a letter to Arnold Zweig, he had sharply criticised the two largest political parties of the left for their failure to oppose the Nazis. On the one hand the social democracy was portrayed as cowardly and devoted to artificial progress and on the other hand, Stalin's acts of betrayal of his own comrades (the Comintern and the anti-Hitler resistance in general) were ironically described as "almost as nice as the pope does".⁶⁶ In the *Neue Weltbühne* these paragraphs were simply omitted or disfigured.

Sharp debates arose in this diffuse atmosphere of the political exile, especially regarding the KPD's credibility and the transformation of the Soviet Union, which incited massive withdrawals from "line communism"⁶⁷, in Babette Gross's wording. A series of disputes within the exile organizations followed. New currents emerged against the influence of the Communist Party, which was still strong at that time. Defenders of human rights and liberty of expression organised a split in the 'Association for the Assistance to German Writers' (Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller) and the 'Union of Exiled Journalists' (Verband deutscher Journalisten im Exil) and created a new, independent association called the 'Bund Freie Presse und Literatur' (Union for Free Press and Literature) in 1937. Journals like *Die Zukunft* and Leopold Schwarzschild's journal *Neues Tagebuch* (New Diary) marked a decisive shift of opinion leadership away from the KPD and Stalinist discourse in the anti-Hitler opposition. These splits also re-enhanced new dynamics among the German and Austrian Socialists in exile. At the same time, for example, the former anti-war *avant-garde* of Expressionism, which had been in opposition to the First World War, was experiencing a revival. It is no coincidence that former Expressionist writer Alfred Döblin was the leading literary figure of the *Zukunft*, while Heinrich Mann broke with editor Münzenberg, turned away from the journal and continued as a follower of the Moscow course.⁶⁸ Even shortly before the conclusion of Stalin's pact with Hitler, as confirmed in Wilhelm Pieck's correspondence, he wanted to immigrate to Moscow.⁶⁹

66 At first, Joseph Weber, in the 1950's, drew attention to Budzislawskis censorship. See Wilhelm Lünen (i. e. Joseph Weber): Kurt Tucholskys Testament, in: Joseph Weber: "Dinge der Zeit". Kritische Beiträge zu Kultur und Politik. Mit einem Vorwort von Michael Schneider (Edition Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaften 31), Hamburg/Berlin 1995, pp. 47–56.

67 This terminology has been used by Babette Gross. See: Babette Gross: Willi Münzenberg: Eine politische Biographie.

68 On Heinrich Mann's stubborn relation with Moscow see: Manfred Flügge: Heinrich Mann: Eine Biographie, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2006, p. 384 passim.

69 Wilhelm Pieck: Letter to Aleksandr Fadeev, April 11, 1939, in: Hermann Weber et al. (eds.): Deutschland, Russland, Komintern, Vol. II, pp. 1493–1494.

Nonetheless, the *Zukunft* was not, and did not pretend to be, a literary journal. Its *feuilleton* section did not develop well after some promising beginnings under Ludwig Marcuse as editor. As mentioned, Döblin, the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, convinced that Socialism could no longer be revived by means of bureaucratic organisations, became the *Zukunft's* most prominent literary exponent.

The editorials by Thormann, Landsberg, Sperber and Münzenberg himself dealing with the Stalin-Hitler Pact and its consequences boosted this paradigm of reorientation. Regarding many aspects the substantial contributions on despotism, totalitarianism and modern tyranny published in the journal anticipated the writings of George Orwell and Hannah Arendt. In defence against the attacks on the principles of left unity, solidarity, internationalism and the intertwined existential link of democracy and socialism, a new overlapping anti-Stalinist tone became the new compass of the German-speaking emigration in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the war. This transformation represented an irreversible process even in the period after Hitler's war against the Soviet Union, when Stalin sided with the Western allies.

Die Zukunft as an Agent of the Anti-Hitler Opposition

With the exception of Edo Fimmen, the general secretary of the ITF (the most vital transnational anti-fascist workers' organization after the decline and the terrorist entanglement of the Communist International), a large number of the legal and illegal clandestine organisers of the anti-Hitler opposition and German-French resistance who gathered around the *Zukunft* are less known until today. Among them were the Russian socialist military theorist, Menshevik Alexander Schifrin, the Austrian left Socialist Julius Deutsch, who had been a General in the Spanish Civil War, the former secretary of the 'International Workers' Aid' (IAH) Hans Schulz, the head of the German Trade Union Committee in exile, Walter Oettinghaus, the journalist Alexander Maas and the publisher Peter Maslowski, both former Communist Party members and the Belgium-based left Socialist Karl Emonts who, living on the Belgian border with Germany, organised propaganda missions and illegal commandos to be sent into the *Reich*. Basic socialist, anti-Stalinist and democratic ideas were expressed by authors like Kurt Kersten for the socialist left and the 'personalists' Landsberg and Mounier for the Catholic left. In their articles, the Liberal Otto Klepper and the dissident former Nazi President of Danzig, Hermann Rauschning (for the liberal-conservative opposition), refuted the frequently expressed "collective guilt" (*Kollektivschuld*) of the German people for Hitler's crimes.⁷⁰ In this respect Münzenberg, in his last articles, insisted on national self-determination as a

70 As one example: Paul Ludwig Landsberg: Der gerechte Krieg, in: *Die Zukunft*, 20.10.1939.

guiding factor for the Left and constantly warned against a dismemberment of Germany and Europe in the wake of the war, hereby especially anticipating and condemning Stalin's intentions of national separation.

Another aspect still largely unknown is the role of *Die Zukunft* as an umbrella organisation for the collective organisation of the militant German (and partly also the Austrian) resistance. These intermediate forms of contact between very different currents, actors and personalities ought to be examined more closely. One striking example was that shortly after the beginning of the war in September 1939, Münzenberg prepared an assassination plot against Hitler, which he confided to members of the French government and especially Charles de Gaulle's later chief of cabinet, Gaston Palewski.⁷¹ The plot was intended to be carried out by a group of men who were "determined to do anything"⁷² (Münzenberg). It is still unknown whether this attempt had been implemented and/or secretly supported by the French side. Nevertheless, this interlude could potentially reshape the perception of the historiography of the German *Widerstand* with its inherent tendency to artificially segment its different conservative, military or leftist components and hereby oust the concept of one consistent and overarching resistance of the German people.

It is also less known that the *Zukunft* was involved in military resistance activities. Half a year after the planning of the plot against Hitler, shortly before as well as after the beginning of Hitler's *Westfeldzug* against France on 10 May 1940, that brought the end of the journal, all Germans abroad were invoked to support the fight for an "International Front for the overthrow of the fascist enemy".⁷³ Despite all restrictions, the members of the political exile were exhorted to join "the battle formations that were available to them", especially the French Army.⁷⁴ This was meant as a proposal for those who "voluntarily rushed to the front" and "offered their service in the Legions or Working Companies".⁷⁵ Remarkably, editor-in-chief Thormann defended and supported also those internees—mostly voluntary combatants of the Spanish Civil War—who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. In sharp contrast to the Soviet Union and the Communist parties,

71 This almost completely forgotten plot will be examined in the monograph under preparation. For the first researcher calling attention for this, refer to: Rita Thalmann: *L'émigration allemande et l'opinion française de 1936 à 1939: Le Statut des Réfugiés allemands en France en 1936* (Beihefte der Francia, Institut historique allemand de Paris 10), Paris 1981, pp. 47–70, p. 69.

72 Willi Münzenberg to Gaston Palewski, without date. Subsequently inserted: 21 September 1939. In: Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte, F7 15124.

73 In der Freiheitsfront für die Einheitspartei, in: *Die Zukunft*, 28.8.1939.

74 Willi Münzenberg: An alle Deutschen im Ausland, in: *Die Zukunft*, 12.4.1940.

75 Ibid.

which until Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union in June 1941 strictly rejected any type of active resistance to Hitler's Germany, this shows the *Zukunft's* support of the war objectives of the allied military front.

Some other remarkable efforts and patterns for anti-fascist media coverage and campaigns were the support for the refugees, the connections with anti-fascists in many countries, the solidarity campaign for Finland against the Soviet military attack in 1939, the campaign against the *Wehrmacht's* invasion of Norway in 1940, and the secondment of volunteers for the Norwegian military resistance. On the grassroots level, this kind of campaigning was also intended to permit the detained anti-fascists, especially the Spanish volunteers, to leave the French camps before the arrival of the German troops. Many of the militarily trained returnees of the International Brigades in Spain had followed the Münzenberg group, breaking with the Communist Party organisation. It was feasible that the latter could have assumed not only political, but also military leadership in the ranks of the German emigration and all-European resistance. Nevertheless, for most of them, the hope of an active military engagement in fighting formations of the French or other armies was not fulfilled, and finally crushed by the authoritarian turnover of the French Republic and the German occupation of France.

Be that as it may, until its termination in May 1940, the paper kept pursuing the line of "anti-fascist war", remaining optimistic and strangely uncritical towards the official war aims, especially of the United Kingdom. The foreign policy editor Max Beer, in particular, did not tire of positively emphasizing the "will of the two allied democracies," which—as he wrote—"pursued their goal" of "destroying the national-socialist world tyranny."⁷⁶ In the internal correspondence, the paper's editor in Stockholm, Dallmann, sharply criticised Beer and the "cooperation of this purely bourgeois person" as a scandal.⁷⁷ Actually, the international context and the "fluctuations of the Soviet policy and that of the western countries played a negative role, especially the host countries which hamper and sometimes even paralyse the joining of the forces and the action of the emigrants."⁷⁸ The European democracies held the exile 'in reserve' as long as a compromise with Hitler seemed possible. Then, at the beginning of the war, its significance increased. Looking for potential political leaders, the exile played a greater role in the war strategy of the West, which is confirmed by the *Zukunft's* connections to the anti-Appeasement 'Focus-Group' and Winston Churchill in Great Britain, or French president of council of ministers Paul Reynaud and Secretary of State Gaston Palevski in De Gaulle's vicinity.⁷⁹

76 Max Beer: Des Dritten Reiches tiefste Schmach. Sturm über Nordland, in: Die Zukunft, 12.4.1940.

77 Archives Nationales, Paris, F7/15123.

78 Rita Thalmann: L'émigration allemande et l'opinion française de 1936 à 1939: Le Statut des Réfugiés allemands en France en 1936, p. 70.

79 With the Americans' arrival and the certainty (since 1942/1943) that the Soviet Union would survive the German attack, there was a further loss of significance in the eyes of the Allies.

In Münzenberg's appeal published on 5 April 1940, the call to "all Germans abroad"⁸⁰ came to confirm the seriousness of the situation and to draw the corresponding consequences. For the negative balance of the exile, three main reasons were invoked: Firstly, the "illegal fighters" belonging to the resistance in the German *Reich* were not sufficiently taught the required principles and "a program for the new, liberal Germany"; secondly, the "unification efforts" of the exile were not fulfilled in order to "lead the way for the illegal".⁸¹ Thirdly, Münzenberg recalled that there was only little success in "finding allies in all democratic countries." The war had only, as he wrote, "deepened the divisions" and "engendered new divisions".⁸²

The *Zukunft* fulfilled a bridging function as a connecting link between the German emigration and the beginning European resistance. But at the same time it was part of the—failed—German-speaking political emigration. After the outbreak of war, the orientation towards the Allied governments, in a certain way legitimised as emerging from the Soviet Union's turn to the friendship with Nazi Germany, the cooperation with the respective propaganda machines and secret services reinforced the self-surrender of the Left as a whole. This was a further setback for the workers' movement, insofar as it concerned the preservation of their independence during and after the war. Moreover, the alliance with the Western democracies—even when the French Foreign Ministry supported the journal financially—did not work out in its favour. The second detention and internment of immigrants (among them supporters of the *Zukunft*) and the former Spanish combatants by the French government since September 1939 was striking in this regard.

As stated before, the weekly *Die Zukunft* might be considered the most ambitious Franco-German media project with European repercussions during the final crisis of the inter-war period from the Munich Agreement in September 1938 until the German occupation of France during the Second World War (from May 1940). Reading the political-cultural journal as the last anti-fascist intermediate empire before the outbreak of the war and the efforts made by its editor, Münzenberg, to unite the transnational anti-Hitler oppositionist networks, opens up an innovative perspective on the history of the German-speaking political exile and the German-French/French-German relations in this crucial period. The overarching paradigmatic anti-Stalinist shift since 1939 as well as the civilian-military strategy of the journal and the transnational networks finally contributes to a deeper understanding of the crisis of the political diaspora and the early stages of the Second World War.⁸³

80 Münzenberg: An alle Deutschen im Ausland, in: *Die Zukunft*, 12.4.1940.

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*

83 Some of the ideas presented here were developed in a paper delivered to the Thirty-Ninth Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Washington DC, 1–4 October 2015.

With anti-Stalinism as a sort of lubricant, the *Zukunft* performed a general return to Europe. In doing so, it collided with the former pro-Soviet course of a huge part of the German-speaking political emigration. In fact, the communist parties remained unwaveringly loyal (*'Nibelungentreue'*) to the Soviet Union, whereas the concept of a democratic and socialist Europe as a mobilising momentum against the threat of war did not matter to them. Münzenberg and his colleagues, meanwhile, used the concept of a united French-German and European Union as an anti-fascist umbrella just as anyone else. While the Comintern and the KPD definitely liquidated old-type anti-fascism in consequence of the pact with Hitler, Münzenberg, the *Zukunft* and the 'Friends of the Socialist Unity of Germany' directed their main efforts towards strengthening the German anti-Hitler resistance within the framework of a widespread movement of resistance that supported democratic freedom, embracing not only workers but also Catholics, Liberals, or Jewish entrepreneurs, alerting public opinion of the pact as a necessary condition for the outbreak of the war.

In fact, the history of the *Zukunft* puts on the research agenda major adjustments or even revisions of the history of the German and European emigration and the history of anti-fascism, anti-Stalinism, French-German relations and European politics at the end of the inter-war period. On the eve of the Second World War, its networks were among the most important clusters of the anti-Hitler opposition in Western Europe. This was largely due to Münzenberg's talent and Babette Gross's managerial skills. Until his assassination in June 1940, he succeeded in escaping the twofold Stalinist and Nazi persecution by placing himself, as long as conditions permitted, under the protection of the global public community. Critical observers had not given him credit for this. Whatever one may think about his changes of perspective: Under the dramatic (and highly traumatic) circumstances of the coming of the war, Münzenberg, the founder of the possibly most potent media empire opposed to Hitler and Goebbels before 1933, towards the end of his life was to become a central figure for the resistance, a leader of the anti-Hitler opposition and a political leader of the Left *tout court*, something sorely needed, especially since the traumatic catastrophe of 1933.

Nevertheless, because of the internments in France and the beginning of the world war, the *Zukunft* could no longer prevent the definite failure of exile and resistance, which was reinforced by its ties with Western democracies and their political apparatuses. While Stalinism became an existential threat to global liberties—see e. g. the Soviet Winter War against Finland in 1939/1949—the dream of a new European democracy of the workers was not to be achieved by the Allies.

Some Concluding Thoughts

In spite of, and precisely due to, its strategic failure, the *Zukunft*, with its transnational networks, can be regarded as opening up new perspectives and giving impulses. Not least so, since it attempted—partly successfully—to use manifold registers of political intervention and cultural transfer. In its role as a connector, it was the only medium in the German-speaking emigration to draw attention, with great empathy, to the newly emerging trans-European resistance of the Peoples against the fascist threat, against the transformation of Europe into “German ghettos” (Joseph Weber⁸⁴) and to the imperative to defend the freedom of the Peoples and their independence. It succeeded in making the new dimension and vision of a transnational peoples’ resistance concrete as a resistance (in which the citizens of the Nordic countries also took part) “of all classes and strata against an overpowering enemy in the form of the conqueror”.⁸⁵ After all, the latter was not primarily concerned with the peace concept of the Allies, which did not necessarily imply all-European peace.

But had not Prague 1938, the assault on Czechoslovakia in the hour the paper was born, proven to be the beginning of Europe’s occupation by National Socialism? Were Hitler and Stalin not aware, from this point in time at the latest, that the Western democracies were not prepared to fight for the preservation of democracy in the face of fascism? From the beginning, the British and the French hoped that Hitler would contend himself with Poland. But Hitler did not and the same was true of Stalin, his subordinate partner. Independent representatives, who did not place themselves at the service of the Allied Forces during this phase, where the exception.

Consequently, a glimpse of the *Zukunft* as Münzenberg’s last, albeit downsized, *Imperium* deserves respect. It opens new avenues of research and brings into focus a hitherto neglected or forgotten political and cultural heritage of resistance against the German narrow-mindedness and provincialism, which overcomes ideologically distorted interpretations, and builds a bridge to the post-war period. Safeguarding some international fundamentals in thought and deed and offering new Unitarian perspectives for the workers’ movement against the destruction of democracy in Europe, it anticipated the path of a continental popular struggle for democracy against Nazism, against any plans for the division of Germany and Europe after Hitler, which arose during the world

84 Joseph Weber: “Dinge der Zeit”: Kritische Beiträge zu Kultur und Politik, p. 19 passim (translated by the author).

85 Ibid.

war. Münzenberg, in 1939, revealed in advance the danger of Stalin's post-war plans and imperiously required a reconceptualization of "democracy and socialism as a European task".⁸⁶

Furthermore, undoubtedly, the initiated world war represented a deep rift. Ties between humans, organisations, concepts and social movements where severed that never mended, "passed futures"—in the sense of Kosellecks "vergangene Zukünfte"—ultimately turned into ruins of history (Walter Benjamin). In this regard, the death of three outstanding political thinkers and leading figures of the 20th century within a few months of each other in 1940—Münzenberg already in June/July of the same year, Trotsky on 21 August, Walter Benjamin on 26 September—were enigmatic. It was definitively "midnight of the century", in the words of Victor Serge.⁸⁷ This ultimate and definite collapse of the traditional "Labour Movement Marxism" (Robert Kurz) coincided with a decisive rift in radical social thought, *avant-garde* critique and solidarity practice.⁸⁸ In fact, alternative global concepts and perspectives were suppressed through the division of Europe and the creation of a so-called 'bipolar world system' created after 1945 in view of a highly traumatised population.

Ultimately, the *Zukunft* networks could neither save European democracy, nor prevent the failure of the German exile and resistance. The latter was largely due to the defeat without a fight of the two biggest workers' parties, the KPD and the SPD. Their Weimar politics and refusal of unity and united resistance was certainly one of the main causes of the disaster of 1933 (especially the Moscow course of 'Social-Fascism') contributing to the surprisingly quick stabilisation of the Nazi regime. This historical experience did not only include disenchantment by the ongoing war which generated a bloody planet but also created a collective traumatic arc spanning across the entire inter-war period. In this sense, through social democracy, Stalinism and last but not least allied strategies, the popular and workers' movement did not find a way out of the 'century's midnight', war and barbarism becoming a reality. The revolutionary attempts outside Russia failed, history had definitely been turned to shambles.

In the autumn of 1939, in his breath-taking political and philosophical testament, entitled the "Theses on the Philosophy of History", cultural philosopher Walter Benjamin, who was a *Zukunft* subscriber in Paris, exhorted the "political world"—meaning his

86 Werner Thormann: Eine europäische Aufgabe. Demokratie und Sozialismus müssen neuge-dacht werden, in: Die Zukunft, 3.5.1940.

87 Victor Serge: Midnight in the Century, translated by Richard Greeman, London 1982. For the original edition see: Victor Serge: S'il est minuit dans le siècle, Paris 1939.

88 The term 'Arbeiterbewegungs-Marxismus' has mainly been conceptualised by the German philosopher and economist Robert Kurz, see: Robert Kurz: Marx lesen: Die wichtigsten Texte von Karl Marx für das 21. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 15ff.

own and the following generation—to strongly distinguish between the struggle against fascism and the official politics pursued in the workers' name. One main part of this legacy was:

At a moment when the politicians in whom the opponents of fascism had placed their hopes are prostrate and confirm their defeat by betraying their own cause, these observations are intended to disentangle the political world-views from the snares in which the traitors have entrapped them. Our consideration proceeds from the insight that the politicians' stubborn faith in progress, their confidence in their "mass basis", and, finally their servile integration in an uncontrollable apparatus have been three aspects of the same thing. It seeks to convey an idea of the high price our accustomed thinking will have to pay for a conception of history that avoids any complicity with the thinking to which these politicians continue to adhere.⁸⁹

Benjamin's appeal particularly applies to the cosmopolitan, democratic and socialist traditions and fundamentals, which, after 1945, were marginalised by both the western and the eastern 'blocs'. They include that democracy and socialism must be rethought against the division, dismemberment and separation of Europe and Germany after Hitler, against reconstruction under capitalist aegis and, last but not least, against the looming shadow of the Stalinist Soviet Union, which had definitely turned away from the concept of the United States of Europe.⁹⁰

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89 Walter Benjamin: Theses on the Philosophy of History, in: idem.: *Illuminations*, edited and with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, New York 1968, pp. 253–264, here p. 258.

90 Werner Thormann: *Eine europäische Aufgabe: Demokratie und Sozialismus müssen neugedacht werden*.