

'War in particular offers exceptionally favourable opportunities for surveying foreign racial material': The effects of World Wars on anthropologist Otto Reche's activities

Katja Geisenhainer

Universität Leipzig, kgeis@rz.uni-leipzig.de

ABSTRACT

The subject of this paper is how anthropologist Otto Reche tried to profit from World War I and World War II. During the First World War, social anthropologists, physical anthropologists, linguists and musicologists in Germany and Austria used the opportunity to study and measure people of foreign countries without having to travel long distances. On their expeditions overseas, most of the social and physical anthropologists behaved in a manner as if they were superior to the inhabitants. In the prisoner-of-war camps, the balance of power was clearly defined and without ambiguity. In the Third Reich, scientists in both countries examined not only people in prisoner-of-war camps, but also people in occupied areas or of their own state who were persecuted. Otto Reche, for whom race or racial affiliation was the basis of all his explanations and ethnological theories, also studied prisoners of war during the First World War. Later, he concentrated on Germans and Slavs in particular. When the Second World War began, he offered his services to the Nazi regime as an expert in the racial question in 'settlement and resettlement of the former Polish East'. Furthermore, Reche tried to use the situation for his own research: he instructed students and former students to examine and inspect Jews and other people who were sentenced to die.

KEYWORDS: National Socialism, Reche, prisoners of war, racial science, World War I and II

Introduction

In order to put the work of a German anthropologist Otto Reche¹ in wider perspective it is necessary to describe the activities of German-speaking anthropologists during the Franco-Prussian War and World War I. Firstly, it is important to highlight the difference between anthropology and ethnology in German-speaking countries. Since the end of the Second

World War, scientists of both disciplines have strictly distinguished physical anthropology from cultural or social anthropology. *Anthropology* almost always refers to physical anthropology and the social or cultural variant is identical with *ethnology*. Until 1945, it was often not easy to differentiate between these two disciplines. Both disciplines as well as Prehistory had been fledgling disciplines at the turn of the 20th century. All three were often united in one association, for example in *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory) or the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (German Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory) to study among other things, the comprehensive history of mankind. Many scientists of the time were active in more than one of these disciplines.

Activities of anthropologists during the Franco-Prussian War and World War I

On October 15, 1870 at the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Ethnologie, Anthropologie und Urgeschichte*, the ethnologist and naturalist Robert Hartmann (1832–1893) presented a photo series of African soldiers who were captured during the Franco-Prussian war. Hartman excitedly thanked the French government who gave ‘... us the opportunity for ethnological studies by unleashing these beautiful African troops’. On the same day, the physician Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), cofounder of the *Berliner Anthropologische Gesellschaft* (Berlin Anthropological Association) in 1869 and of the ethnographical museum in Berlin, referred to the soldiers as ‘present material for in depth studies’, but he also regretted that some of these African soldiers had started to ‘Germanize’ themselves, making it difficult to observe their true savagery (in Koller 2001: 51).

During the First World War, ethnologists, physical anthropologists, linguists and musicologists in both Germany and Austria took advantage of a similar situation but on a much larger scale: they used the wartime opportunity to study and measure people of foreign countries without having to travel long distances. On their overseas expeditions before the war, most of the social and physical anthropologists behaved in a manner as if they were superior to the inhabitants. Now, in the prisoner-of-war camps, the balance of power was clearly defined and without ambiguity. They had the same concept of ideal types of race and they used the same measuring instruments, such as tables of hair and skin colours

For instance, Margit Berner from Vienna reported in 2003 that in June 1915 the President of the *Anthropologische Gesellschaft in Wien* (Anthropological Society in Vienna) had demanded that the Association to take advantage of the extraordinary research opportunity as prisoners-of-war from both the European and Asian regions of Russia were present. Rudolf Pöch (1870–1921), head of the Viennese Institute of Physical Anthropology and Ethnography, conducted the examinations on prisoners-of-war, which lasted from 1915 until 1918. In these years, Pöch and his scholars analysed and measured

¹ A comprehensive scientific biography of Otto Reche has already been published (cf. Geisenhainer 2002).

about 7,000 individuals in many camps located in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany, and in the occupied Romania. They took 5,000 photos, produced about 300 plaster moulds, took hair samples, and made both film and audio recordings. The prisoners also had to fabricate indigenous handiwork. These studies in the prisoners-of-war-camps were funded by the *Anthropologische Gesellschaft in Wien* and the *Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Imperial Academy of Sciences). The k.u.k. Ministry of National Defence also supported the research. Pöch furthermore encouraged his colleagues to profit from this unique scientific situation of the wartime camps. For instance, the physical anthropologist, ethnologist and linguist Victor Lebzelter (1889–1936) measured Serbs and Roma in a prisoner-of-war camp in Kraków, the archaeologist, geologist and speleologist Georg Kyrle (1887–1937) anthropologically examined both Russian front line soldiers and civil populations in Volhynia, and the folklorist and physical anthropologist Hella Schürer von Waldheim (1893–1976), Pöch's future wife, surveyed individuals from Volhynia who were in a refugee-camp (Bernier 2003; 2007).

In Germany between 1915 and 1918, the *Königlich Preußische Phonographische Kommission* (Royal Prussian Phonographical Commission) was established to record different languages, dialects, songs, fairy tales and stories in more than 70 prisoners of war camps. The ethnologist Felix von Luschan (1854–1924), who was one of 30 members of this commission, examined the prisoners (Mahrenholz 2003; Stoecker 2008: 122–124). In 2006 in his dissertation, Dirk Preuß described how Luschan also briefed his student Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt (1892–1965) to carry out anthropological studies in 16 camps. During this time, Eickstedt managed to examine 1,784 individuals of 66 ethnic groups, including individuals from France (Corsica), Serbia, India and Nepal. His studies of Moslems and Sikhs in the prisoner-of-war camp of Wünsdorf close to Berlin were essential for his academic advancement (Preuss 2006: 12). Later, Eickstedt was the head of the Institute of Physical Anthropology and Ethnology in Breslau and, after the Second World War, he developed the Institute of Physical Anthropology in Mainz. Also, in the same prisoner-of-war camp in Wünsdorf, the ethnologist Leonard Adam (1891–1960) conducted research concerning the tribal laws of the Ghurkas, Nepalese soldiers. Later, Adam as well as Leo Frobenius (1873–1938), undertook ethnological studies in prisoner-of-war camps in Romania (Streck 1995: 2).

As mentioned before, the scientists not only visited prisoner-of-war camps, they also were able to travel to occupied areas for their studies. In 1917–18, Martin Block (1891–1972) and Hans Plischke (1890–1972), of the Institute of Ethnology in Leipzig, performed field studies about Roma in Romania (Sievers 2005). In 2006, Christian Marchetti wrote about the Viennese Balkan Expedition of 1916 which was undertaken by ethnographers and other scientists. These ethnographers were instructed to identify material that would be important for the political and economic conquest of the occupied areas. In 1917, the head of the anthropological-ethnographical department of the Viennese Museum, Franz Heger (1853–1931), travelled to Albania to study the ethnic group of the Mirditen. All these expeditions to occupied areas were supported by the military.²

² As an aside also ethnologists of the counterpart profited of the war e.g. Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973) in East Africa (Streck 1995: 2).

During the Second World War, many scientists remembered earlier opportunities from the previous World War and tried again to take advantage of the situation.³ Some of them attempted to use their research for political means. One of these was Otto Reche (Geisenhainer 2002).

Otto Reche's short biography, his places of activity and basic approach in anthropology

Reche was born in 1879 in K³otzko, a small town in Silesia. In the cities of Breslau and Jena, he initially studied natural sciences and later prehistory. At that time, Georg Thilenius (1868–1937) was a professor of physical anthropology and ethnology at the Faculty of Medicine in Breslau and he introduced Reche to ethnology. After Reche's doctoral thesis in 1904, entitled *About the form and function of the cervical spine of whales*, Reche started to work at the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, where he attended lectures of Felix von Luschan (1854–1924) on physical anthropology, ethnology, and anthropometry, the measurement of human individuals. After one and a half years in Berlin, Reche moved to Hamburg where, in the meantime, Thilenius had become director of the Museum of Ethnology, where Reche became head of the departments of Physical Anthropology and Africa. In 1908–09 he joined the South Seas Expedition funded by the *Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung* (Scientific Foundation of Hamburg) for one year as an ethnologist and physical anthropologist. Reche later published his ideas of the history and culture of the inhabitants of the Bismarck-Archipelago in compliance with the doctrine of *Kulturkreislehre* (Culture Areas). In a 400-page book with many illustrations, he elaborated on the collected artefacts and on the perceived mental cultures of these peoples. However, his main focus was the eye, hair and skin colour of the natives, as well as their physique and the shape of their faces and heads. He believed in the concept of human groups with a specific somatic appearance which distinguishes them from other groups. For him, race was a clearly defined constant. In the South Seas, Reche was surprised that he could not find a consistent human type but that people displayed an enormous morphological range of variation. For Reche these deviations from the respective ideal types were explicit indications of racial mixture. He tried to verify his hypothesis by studying and classifying more than 600 skulls which he collected in the area of South Seas. This classification included not only several physical attributes but also psychological and cultural characteristics. Reche assumed that once existing racial types had been interblended and degraded by generations of crossbreeding and according to him, the function of the anthropologist had to be to identify the 'original' genetic set of characteristics of individuals. In doing so, Reche supposed, it would be possible to reconstruct races that formerly existed and that were somehow pure. Back home Reche subdivided the races, based on his theories.

³ For instance, scientists again recorded songs and speech of Prisoners-of-War. Therefore, Dietrich Westermann (1875–1956), scientist of African Studies, organized research of languages of African Prisoners of War in France (cf. Stoecker 2008: 138-143).

World War I and its influence on Otto Reche

Reche was 35-years old when the First World War began. He suffered injuries as a front-line soldier and was released in autumn of 1917. He resumed his work at the museum in Hamburg and started to conduct anthropological studies of prisoners-of-war 'in consultation with a Berlin Scientific Commission'.⁴ In 1918 Thilenius wrote:

Reche has skilfully selected populations from small nations such as the Bretons, Irish, Estonians and others. The material base is still quite limited in size, but curious results about the continuation of old-European forms into the presence are already expected.⁵

Since Germany lost the war its aftermath influenced Reche's activities, both within and outside of the university. His interest shifted more and more from Non-Europeans to Europeans, and to Germans in particular. After the First World War, numerous German anthropologists and ethnologists pursued similar academic paths, as Germany suffered the loss of colonies and the lack of research opportunities outside of its own country. Reche focused on Germans, their supposed race and their history. Based on his experiences in anthropological and ethnological studies and in teachings, and because Thilenius worried that Reche could be appointed and leave to a different university,⁶ Reche was appointed professor of anthropology and ethnology in Hamburg in 1919. After the war, he quickly became active in conservative, folk nationalistic and revanchist circles. In 1924, he took over the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography in Vienna. It was also in Vienna that Reche cofounded the racist *Gesellschaft für Rassenpflege* (Racial Hygiene Society) in 1925 and in his inaugural address, he tried to promote the new self-confidence of his nation:

Hygiene of race is indefinitely more important than winning or losing wars. Only *the* people and *the* race will survive our epoch – irrespective of winning or losing wars – which depends on the issue of *practiced race hygiene immediately and with greatest energy* (Reche 1925: 7).

Reche was also cofounder of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Blutgruppenforschung* (German Society of Blood Group Research) in 1926. He hoped to discover new non-morphological racial criteria based on blood groups. Furthermore, Anton Rolleder, court council in Vienna, asked Reche to develop a new method of conducting paternity tests in 1925 and he succeeded with the method of the anthropological-hereditary biological ancestry and identity test. In 1926, he began to make the required analyses at the Institute of

⁴ Thilenius in an application concerning the appointment of Otto Reche to professor, 20 April 1918, Staatsarchiv Hamburg (StA HH), E. IV. 2 Heft 6.

⁵ Thilenius to the supervisory school authority (*Oberschulbehörde*), 20 April 1918; StA HH, IV 1435 (PR 21,5). How Reche had 'skillfully selected populations' is not known.

⁶ Thilenius in an application concerning the appointment of Otto Reche to professor, 20 April 1918, StA HH, E. IV. 2 Heft 6.

Anthropology and Ethnography in Vienna for paternity suits. He continued these inquiries at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Leipzig, where Reche became the new head of the former Institute of Ethnology and of the *Staatlich-Sächsisches Forschungsinstitut für Völkerkunde* (State-Saxon Research Institute of Ethnology) in 1927. The Research Institute of Ethnology was founded in 1914 as one of ten research institutes, all of which were independent of the university. With the funds of this research institute, Reche supported several ethnological expeditions to places such as India, Liberia, south-western Africa, the north of Brazil, Portuguese Guinea and China. Although the scientists of some of these expeditions only pursued ethnological studies, Reche refused the separation of ethnology and physical anthropology, as – in his mind – ethnology without racial science could not be conceived. Consequently, he opposed the establishment of the *Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde* (Ethnological Association, today known as German Anthropological Association), which was founded in 1929 by Fritz Krause (1886–1963), head of the Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig. Instead, Reche proposed to build a working group of Ethnologists inside the German Anthropological Society. In Leipzig as in Vienna, Reche set up a Racial Hygiene Society.

The beginning of National Socialism and its effects on Otto Reche and his institute

After renaming the *Institute of Ethnology* into *Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology* in 1927, Reche revised its name to the *Institute of Racial Science and Ethnology* in 1933. He then added race hygiene and prehistory to his previous teachings of racial science and ethnology. In 1937, he became a member of the National Socialist Party but already years before he had joined a number of party institutions and had established a close relationship with the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* (Racial Policy Office).

In 1933, he volunteered his ancestry test as a means to verify Arian origin. Subsequently, he took an active part in Nazi persecution measures by applying the ancestry test. Furthermore, he denounced individuals; for instance, he wrote to the *Reichskommissar* for the reunification of Austria with the German Reich in 1938 that he reimbursed the money from the Jew Marianne Schmidl, which she had received from the research institute (Geisenhainer 2005: 208); he reported the Racial Policy Office on a woman and a young boy with dark skin, whom Reche had seen across the street (Geisenhainer 2002: 294). He also resented the so-called internationalists, liberalists, socialists, Marxists and above all the Slavs. Reche's family came from Silesia and his Silesian provenance played a major role in his self-understanding. The loss of territories in the east as a consequence of the First World War greatly disturbed him and the resurgent Poland close to his home further troubled him and he aimed for the confinement of people from the east.

Based on the concept of race as a pure and constant entity, Reche – like other anthropologists, historians and archaeologists of the time – not only propagated an ideal typical skull for each race, but also generated various theories of migration and displacement in order to explain similar findings in different places (Fetten 1991). Together with others – for instance the prehistorian Kurt Gloger (1943) – he tried to deduce current

conflicts and problems from the past and argued that these conflicts corresponded to the laws of nature. In this way, they envisaged a biological, racial and cultural continuity over thousands of years. Based on this myth of unity, purity and continuity, he and other claimed the revision of the German borders as a natural right.⁷

In Germany at the end of the 1920s, anthropologists had planned an 'extensive investigation of the racial and genetic characteristics of our population'.⁸ Some of the anthropologists framed guidelines for these kinds of investigations which started running soon after (see IEUL, Re XXVI; Fischer 1930; Geisenhainer 2002: 279). Also, the surveys at Reche's institute did not differ in terms of their conduct. They were rather distinct in intention, purpose and in particular groups of probands. Reche carried out anthropological investigations of members of the Nazi Party, of twins and criminals, and proposed to start a register of 'existing bastards with foreign races in Germany'.⁹ He selected small towns, where his staff inspected the population (Geisenhainer 2002: 278).

Reche and almost his entire staff mainly focused on anthropological surveys of Slavic, Sorbian and Silesian individuals. Reche himself was an advisory board member of the *Nord- und ostdeutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – NODFG* (North- and East German Research Community) as an expert for racial science. Burleigh reports that the *NODFG* was founded in December 1933 as a 'combative association' to coordinate the efforts of those working on the north-east (1988: 71). The *Publikationsstelle (PuSte)* in Berlin, founded in 1929, established a connection between authorities, which were relevant for the *Ostpolitik*, and scientists of different disciplines. The *NODFG* and the *PuSte* were funded by the Third Reich's Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Office, and the *PuSte* further by the German Research Foundation. The *PuSte* repeatedly entrusted Reche with expertises.

Reche's activities during World War II

Reche was among a group of ethnologists who had little interest in the recovery of former German colonies and he shared Hitler's orientation towards the conquest of East Europe. He celebrated his 60th birthday in May 1939. For this occasion, a memorial publication entitled *Race and Culture* was released (Hesch and Spannaus 1939). Meanwhile, the applications of the ancestry test conducted at the Leipzig institute became unmanageable as many staff members had been drafted into the army. In the first weeks of war, Reche himself expected to be relieved from his work as an official reviewer of ancestry. He also thought that his colleagues would be released from war, if they could take part in the practical work of the settlement and re-settlement of the previous Polish East as experts for racial questions (Geisenhainer 2002: 347). On 19 September 1939 – 18 days after Germany had invaded Poland

⁷ German and also Polish anthropologists, like Jan Czekanowski or Kazimierz Stolyhwo, conducted similar research of racial material following these ideas. In both countries, anthropologists skeptically monitored any research beyond the border (Geisenhainer and Mischek 2002). On the topic 'ideology of Germanic peoples' see for instance Emmerich 1991, Lund 1995, See 1994.

⁸ The anthropologist Eugen Fischer to the Notgemeinschaft der Deutschen Wissenschaft, 2 February 1928; Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK), R73/169.

⁹ Reche to the superintendent, Leipzig, 8 March 1934; IEUL, Re XXXI.

without declaration of war – Reche wrote a letter to Albert Brackmann (1871–1952), the head of the *NODFG*. In the letter Reche complimented himself on thirty years of experience in racial and demographic-political questions: he as an East German knew the *Ostkampf* (Fight in the East) very well – not only from the trenches during WWI:

... we need space (*Raum*) but no Polish lice in our fur. I am absolutely sure that the racial-scientific matter determines the solution of all of these questions, since in the future we do not want to build a Germany in the East that would only be linguistically German but a racial mishmash, with strong Asiatic elements and Polish in character. That would be no German nation, nor a corner stone for a German future!... Since I also know the anthropological situation in Poland and know what is racially and hereditarily useful in this nation and what on any account is to be expelled of the German Settlement area, I believe I have gathered, in the course of many years, several ideas that should now be used for the general good and for our future.¹⁰

Three days later, Brackmann answered, asking Reche to put his ideas down on paper and Brackmann would then send this paper to the Reich's Ministry of the Interior. Brackmann wrote:

Both, the official and myself agreed completely with your fundamental view that 'we need space but no Polish lice in the fur', but there are people who think otherwise and so it is the best if we are all on the spot.¹¹

In following up on this request, Reche composed a memorandum with almost six pages, entitled *Basic Principles on the Demographic and Political Securing of the German East*. A few extracts suffice to give an impression of the whole text:

... as 'war reparations' and as atonement and compensation for the sacrifices of blood by the German Army and for the mishandling, murder and economic harm of ethnic Germans in Poland, a further area in proximity to the former frontiers, of about 150,000 sq km is to be incorporated into the Greater German Reich, in so far as Germany needs it for strategic, settlement, or economic reasons... The present inhabitants of the newly ceded areas are racially (and therefore in character, talents and capabilities too) for the most part totally useless. Above all the approximate two million Jews and Jewish hybrids must be removed as soon as possible... Anyone who knows the Polish rural population, knows how primitive, crude and often almost simple-minded the facial expressions of the people are, and how crude their thoughts and behaviour are... The emigrant Poles can

¹⁰ BArch. R 153/288 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 166).

¹¹ 22.9.1939; BArch. R 153/288 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 167).

take their moveable goods – in so far as this does not contradict the interests of the German state – with them; one may proceed less charitably with the Jews.¹²

In 1995, Bernhard Streck published an article about ethnology and war stating that contemporary ethnologists who offered war research (for instance at the congress of ethnologists in November 1940) did not necessarily support the war in the first place. They rather feared to die as plain soldiers (1995: 4) but this statement does not apply to Reche, as he was too old to be a soldier.

When Brackmann sent Reche's memorandum to the Reich's Ministry of the Interior, he remarked: '... although one must put a question mark next to many points, by and large it still seems to me valuable to hear one of our leading racial researchers on these matters'.¹³

Many scientists tried to distinguish themselves from their activities in the organizations concerning the East and for the reason of this contention they had to be very quick. Reche too rushed to receive an official order to participate on the practical side:

I do not like the role of a home-front soldier especially since I am a WW1 veteran. I am over 60 and they will not have me with the soldiers, naturally with reason, since on account of a war wound I am no longer up to real exertion and cannot do much... But I still feel that I have great energies within me, despite my sixty years.¹⁴

A few days before Reche had been proactive: on 2 October 1939, he had written to Günther Pancke (1899–1973), the head of the *SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt – RuSHA* (SS Race and Settlement Office). The *RuSHA* was responsible for the so-called racial check of SS-members. In his letter to Pancke, Reche introduced himself as the 'only specialist with knowledge about racial relations in the East... It is a matter of the tremendously important question of Eastern Jews'. Further, Reche re-emphasized that it would be essential to 'gain as much pure German settlement territory without being bothered by 'Polish lice' whose presence also constitutes considerable racial threat'.¹⁵

Pancke confirmed that the Reich's Ministry assigned Reche with treatment and realization of racial questions concerning the settlement and resettlement of *Ostgebiete*.¹⁶ On 13 November 1939, Pancke and Reche held a meeting where Reche proposed the formation of a general commission, called *Wissenschaftliche Kommission für Rassenfragen der Ostsiedlungen* (Scientific Commission for Racial Questions in Eastern Settlements) as

¹² Otto Reche: *Leitsätze zur bevölkerungspolitischen Sicherung des deutschen Ostens*, 24 September 1939; BArch. R 153/288 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 167)

¹³ Brackmann to Werner Essen (1901–1989), 28 September 1939; BArch. R 153/288 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 171).

¹⁴ Reche to Brackmann, 11 October 1939; BArch. R 153/288 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 172).

¹⁵ Reche to Pancke, 2 October 1939; BArch-PK 1140/0082/72 (translated into English by Burleigh 1988: 174)

¹⁶ Pancke to Reche, 8 November 1939; BArch-PK 1140/0082/72.

a court of appeal in cases of questionable racial ancestry. He himself would be the head of this commission; and his assistants, who should be released from the armed forces, would act as members. Consequently, he and his assistants would carry out the racial categorization of individuals moving through ‘human sluice gates’. At their meeting, Pancke and Reche also talked about technical questions like the necessity of taking fingerprints from the left thumb and index finger to avoid forgeries ‘by Jews and other types of criminals’. Furthermore, Reche offered to provide knowledge about the laws that Poland had applied to annex German property after WWI.¹⁷ Pancke assured Reche that he would forward his ideas to *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. Reche’s proposals were certainly heard in the highest quarters – often respectfully, but frequently also with surprise. For instance, the historians Hermann Aubin (1885–1969), Otto Brunner (1898–1982), the archivist Wolfgang Kothe (1907–?) and the historian and archivist Johannes Papritz (1898–1992)¹⁸ edited the Brackmann memorial publication in 1942 entitled *Deutsche Ostforschung. Ergebnisse und Aufgaben seit dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (German Research of the East. Results and tasks since the First World War). Reche was one of the authors. When he composed his article entitled *Stärke und Herkunft des Anteiles Nordischer Rasse bei den West-Slawen* (Magnitude and origin of the Nordic race contingent among the West-Slavs) in 1940–41, the editors compiled about four pages of proposals for changes concerning Reche’s article before publication. Among other things they reproached him with ‘pure fantasy’, ‘useless failure’ and exaggerated activism.¹⁹

Reche tried to exert influence on the realisation of the Nazi racial policy. Time and again he was annoyed about opportunists or medical scientists, who talked about racial science without having an adequate training and who were authorised to make essential decisions by the Nazi Party. However, his intransigence in regard to his theories of races would have been a disruptive factor, for instance to the *Einwandererzentrale – EWZ* (Immigration Centre), where the *Eignungsprüfer* (racial suitability examiners) had to decide who of the examined persons were *eindeutschungsfähig* (that is who were capable of assuming German character in the occupied areas) and who should be displaced. Also in the *EWZ*, a coherent theory did not exist. As political conditions were constantly changing, a consistent long term theory on how to select resettlers was not valued. Apart from Reche’s peculiarities, the Nazis favoured younger party members, i.e. low-profile junior staff members over an old scientist, who was adamant on his theories. In general, the German Nazis neither pursued a unanimous and consistent policy nor a homogeneous ideology. Higher party officials and institutions often competed with each other. They preferred flexible individuals who were able to conform to the current political situation. For instance, Hans Frank (1900–1946) founded the *Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in*

¹⁷ Reche to Pancke, 14 November 1939; BArch-PK 1140/0082/72.

¹⁸ Aubin, Kothe and Papritz were active in the *NODFG* and/or in the *PuSte* in managerial capacities; Brunner was second chairman of the *Südostdeutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (*Southeast German Research Community*).

¹⁹ Hermann Aubin to Johannes Papritz, 12 February 1941; BArch R153/1049.

Krakau (Institut for German Eastern Work in Krakow) in April 1940. There were eleven sections; the section *Rassen- und Volkstumsforschung* had three departments: ethnology, physical anthropology and research on the Jews. Most of the staff who had collected ethno-political data were academic entrants (Michel 2000: 156).

However, Reche did not abandon hope, and sent his proposals repeatedly to Pancke, as well as to Adolf Hitler's deputy Rudolf Heß (1894–1987), to Walter Gross (1904–1945), head of *Racial Policy Office* and to *National Farmers' Leader* Walther Darré (1895–1953). In May 1940, for example, Reche recommended the creation of a *Kriegeradel* (loosely translated as warrior-nobility, in the original biological sense of the word *noble*) through the settlement of soldiers, who excelled at command or at extraordinary bravery.²⁰ Perhaps it was a small success for Reche that his loyal alumnus Michael Hesch (1893–1979), an SS-member, was entrusted with the interpretation of racial examination results concerning the Ethnic Germans from Volynia and Galicia in the beginning of 1940. He was further drafted by the *SS Race and Settlement Office* to train the *Eignungsprüfer* (Geisenhainer 2002: 367–371). Hesch informed Reche, that he was also engaged in the investigation of Jews. Reche hoped he could enter an unexplored field and instructed Hesch to photograph as many ears of Jews as possible, because Reche was about to write an article on ears of Jews. He urged Hesch not to keep it a secret but there is no evidence that Reche later accomplished his plan.

In December, 1944, Reche wrote to the senior prosecutor in Dresden:

War in particular offers exceptionally favourable opportunities for surveying foreign racial material, because we now have considerable numbers of foreign races easily within reach in our country. To explore them in times of peace, long and costly travels are necessary. Even back in World War I – and it is similar at present – the highest army command greatly supported the research of foreign racial prisoners of war.²¹

Reche commissioned a student to write a dissertation about 'morphological racial disparity of skin'. To this end, Reche advised his student, a woman, to take a skin sample from Germans and from foreigners (*Fremdvölkischen*) shortly before their execution. Reche expected 'material' from the locations of execution in Dresden, Bautzen and Halle/Saale. The authorities permitted this survey, with the exception of Reche's request to photograph the doomed men and to take their fingerprints. This permit is dated on the 12 February 1945. The location in Dresden where the executions took place was destroyed almost at the same time. There is neither an indication that the doctoral candidate really took samples of skin nor that the dissertation on morphological racial disparity of skin was ever realised in Leipzig (Geisenhainer 2002: 373). Finally, in May 1945, the biggest and deadliest conflict of human history was finished.

²⁰ Reche to Heß, 15 May 1940; BArch-PK 1140/0082/72.

²¹ Reche to the General State Prosecutor, 18 December 1944; IEUL, Re XVIII.

Closing Remarks

Both World Wars gave new research opportunities to scientists. Like other scientists, ethnologists and anthropologists made use of these situations. Sometimes, it was simply the desire to conduct research, but they also tried to distinguish themselves in political matters. In order to obtain state support and sometimes subsidy in Nazi Germany, scientists could refer to their activities during WWI. Even though the racial evaluation of an individual did not play a role in government legislation, the activities of ethnologists and anthropologists of the Franco-Prussian war and of WWI could be assessed as a kind of precursor for the WWII activities. The history of ethnology and anthropology was far from free of racism, but we know that one more wrong step was possible. During the Nazi period ethnologists were appointed, for instance in the *Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in Krakau*. Other ethnologists like Hermann Baumann (1902–1972), Richard Thurnwald (1869–1954) or Hans Plischke (1890–1972) engaged in German colonies in Africa, whereas Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann (1904–1988) hoped for new territories in East Europe as Reche did.²² Certainly, Otto Reche did not have the connections and could not exert influence as, for instance, a member of staff of the *Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics) in Berlin (Schmuhl and Rürup 2002) but he was involved in classifications of individuals like most of the German anthropologists and these racial classifications could in the end lead to death. Furthermore, Reche strived towards more influence and new fields of activity in terms of racial policy, even though not always with success. However, he did not feel himself adequately valued.

He was interned from July 1945 until November 1946. At the end of the denazification process in 1948 he was categorized as *unbelastet* (exonerated). Reche continued to work as an expert in paternity lawsuits in Hamburg. After six years, at the age of 70 he started publishing anthropological articles again. His approach did not change fundamentally after 1945 except for a use of other words. In 1954, he published the last volume of the serial *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908–1909* (Achievements of the Southern Seas Expedition 1908–1909) as the last survivor of this expedition. In 1958, he became an honorary member of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Anthropologie* (German Society of Anthropology) and in the following year of the *Anthropologische Gesellschaft* (Anthropological Society) in Vienna. On the late 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Reche appeared in public again as an expert in court case about the identity of Anne Anderson. She claimed to be the daughter Anastasia of the Russian Emperor Nikolaus II.²³ A newspaper wrote that Reche

²² Since Hans Fischer's book was published in 1990, more and more studies on the topic 'Ethnology and National Socialism' have been written (see for instance Braun 1995, Fischer 1990, Geisenhainer, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, Gingrich 2005, Kulick-Aldag 2000, Linimayr 1994, Mischek 2002, Michel 1995, Mosen 1991 and the articles in Hauschild (ed.) 1995, Streck (ed.) 2000; in general to the current status of research on this topic: Geisenhainer 2002: 15-18, Hildebrandt 2003: 144–255 and electronic document <http://www.ethno-im-ns.uni-hamburg.de/literatur.htm> (Retrieved February 2, 2009).

²³ Reche affirmed that Anne Anderson has been Anastasia (Reche 1965). In 1995, three different groups of researchers found independently of each other that Anne Anderson was not the daughter of the Russian emperor. (see Bh1995, Geisenhainer 2002: 400–402).

was an accepted expert of his field (Wagner 1961). In 1965, he was awarded the *Österreichische Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst erster Klasse* (Austrian Honorary Cross for Science and Art of the First Class) but died a few months later on the 23 March, 1966 at the age of 87 in his apartment in Hamburg-Schmalenbeck.

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POVZETEK

Namen prispevka je pokazati kako je antropolog Otto Reche izkoriščal prvo in drugo svetovno vojno v lastne namene. Med prvo svetovno vojno so nemški in avstrijski socialni in fizični antropologi ter lingvisti in muzikologi izkoristili priložnost preučevanja in merjenja ljudi iz tujih dežel, ne da bi jim bilo za to treba prepotovati velike razdalje. Na vseh prekomorskih ekspedicijah je večina socialnih in fizičnih antropologov delovala, kot da so nadrejeni prebivalcem, katere so proučevali, v ujetniških taboriščih pa je bilo ravnotežje moči jasno in nedvoumno definirano. V tretjem Rajhu so znanstveniki obeh držav preučevali ne le vojne ujetnike, ampak tudi ljudi na okupiranih območjih in lastne državljane, ki jih je oblast preganjala. Otto Reche, ki je raso in rasno pripadnost uporablja kot temelj vseh razlag in etnoloških teorij, je ravno tako preučeval ujetnike med prvo svetovno vojno. Kasneje se je še posebej osredotočil na Nemce in Slovine, ko pa se je začela druga svetovna vojna, je svoje usluge ponudil nacističnemu režimu kot specialist za rasno vprašanje pri 'naseljevanju in preseljevanju nekdanjega poljskega vzhoda'. Reche je skušal izkoristiti priložnost za svoje raziskovanje in je svoje tedanje in bivše študente spodbujal k preučevanju in preverjanju Judov in drugih ljudi, ki so bili obsojeni na smrt.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: nacionalsocializem, Reche, vojni ujetniki, rasna znanost, prva in druga svetovna vojna

CORRESPONDENCE: KATJA GEISENHAINER, Universität Leipzig, Institut für Ethnologie, Schillerstraße 6, 04109 Leipzig, Germany. E-mail: kgeis@rz.uni-leipzig.de.