

ARTICLES

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RACE IN THE CITY:  
THE REFLECTIONS OF HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN  
AND THEODOR FRITSCH ROOTED IN GERMAN VOLKISM

**Key words:** racism, anti-Semitism, Volkism, Nazism, city, Theodor Fritsch, Houston S. Chamberlain

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the belief in racial inequality was becoming a common belief and was gradually gaining hegemonic status. One of the main planes on which the existence of racial inequalities was manifesting itself was the rivalry of races in urban space, which had been present there for decades or even centuries. Both English- and German-speaking researchers of the past were amateurs and history enthusiasts, often holding scientific titles in other fields, such as medicine or biology. However, their alternative historical narrative (nowadays it could be described as the so-called ‘vernacular culture’) had a strong impact on the society, and often also on the scientific community. The text will present the theses of two researchers: Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) and Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933), who left their mark on the political agenda of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) and its ideology, especially with regard to the reflections on the relationship between race and the city.

VÖLKISCH MOVEMENT – THE FUSION OF THE DISCOURSE  
WITH THE ACADEMIC WORLD

The narrative about the past which became particularly popular in Germany was the one that developed in the *Völkisch* movement. The *Völkisch* movement was a philosophical and social trend that stemmed from German Romanticism, which centred around the idea of the unity of man with nature, and thereby propounded the necessity of rooting man in the right place on earth. *Völkisch* adherents believed that in order for an individual to fully develop as a human being, he or she needs unity, integration with the native landscape, which should then imprint a mark on his or her soul. In the face

of the immensity of nature, man was to stand before the absolute. Individuals were supposed to realize the burden of the centuries and the generations of which they were part. In *Völkisch* assumptions, people who were nomads or city dwellers, practising urban professions that were not related to nature (e.g. merchants and usurers) were deprived of a chance to establish such a relationship. It was assumed that the bright, cold sky of the North, dense forests of Germany and majestic rivers, such as the Rhine and the Danube, were to shape a particularly valuable *Volk* – the Germans. By binary opposition, their unusual features were contrasted with the constantly mobile, nomadic Semitic people, who were shaped by the scorching sun of the Middle East desert<sup>1</sup>.

When the process of industrialization began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the blue of the German sky was covered by black clouds of smoke and fumes, the fear of losing contact with nature by the inhabitants of the modern city appeared among the *Völkisch* adherents. In their opinion, the accelerating industrialization appeared as a threat to the traditional relationship between man and nature<sup>2</sup>.

The views of *Völkisch* ethnonationalism left a strong mark on German politics. The radical slogans of the *Völkisch* adherents influenced not only the thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (the influence of this trend can be seen in the works of Oswald Spengler, Edmund Husserl and his students: Ludwig Class<sup>3</sup> and Martin Heidegger<sup>4</sup>). The elements of the *Völkisch* ideology (such as the agricultural programme, building a new hierarchical society or environmental protection) have been adapted in the programmes of various NSDAP ideologists<sup>5</sup>. The clear influence of mythologising, racist *Völkisch*

<sup>1</sup> Werner BERGMANN, *Völkischer Antisemitismus*, [in:] *Handbuch zur „Völkischen Bewegung“ 1871–1918*, München–New Providence–Paris 1996, pp. 449–463; Uwe PUSCHNER, *Anti-Semitism and German Voelkish Ideology*, [in:] *Anti-Semitismus, Paganismus, Voelkische Religion*, hrsg. v. Hubert CANKI, Uwe PUSCHNER, München 2004, pp. 56–57.

<sup>2</sup> Dieter HASSENPFUG, *Die Dynamik des Naturzustands zur Logik der Ökologischer Transformation der Industriegesellschaft*, [in:] *Industrialismus und Ökoromantik. Geschichte und Perspektiven der Ökologisierung*, Wiesbaden 1991, pp. 130–131.

<sup>3</sup> Andrzej GNIAZDOWSKI, *Antynomie radykalizmu. Fenomenologia polityczna w Niemczech 1914–1933*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 316–323.

<sup>4</sup> The complicated relationship between M. Heidegger and Nazism has been repeatedly studied. In the context of the considerations on the influence of *Völkisch* elements on the philosopher's mind the following papers should be mentioned: Victor FARIAS, Joseph MARGOLIS, Tom ROCKMORE, *Heidegger and Nazism*, Philadelphia 1987, passim, especially pp. 36–37, 223–228, 237; Joseph GRANGE, *Heidegger as Nazi: A Postmodern Scandal*, Philosophy East and West, vol. 41: 1991, no. 4, pp. 515–522, especially pp. 516–517; Tom ROCKMORE, *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford 1992, passim, especially pp. 37–40, 193–197.

<sup>5</sup> Werner E. BRAATZ, *Two Neo-Conservative Myths in Germany 1919–32: The “Third Reich” and the “New State”*, Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 32: 1971, no. 4, pp. 569–573; George

thought on the agricultural policy of the Third Reich was already pointed out before the war<sup>6</sup>.

The vision of the past presented in the *Völkisch* narrative emphasized the persistence and the eternal nature of the *Volk*. Although it stemmed out of the Romantic tradition, with time, scientific elements and racist theories began to appear increasingly often in it<sup>7</sup>. In the eyes of the *Völkisch* adherents, the *Volk* was to be composed of a pure race identified with the German nation. Historical narratives, similar to *Völkisch* movement, which question academic findings, fall within the so-called vernacular cultures. They are usually created by amateurs, deprived of the required skills, and thus unaware of their own limitations, who at the same time want to gain recognition in the eyes of academic scholars<sup>8</sup>. For this reason, the assumptions of *Völkisch* thinkers remained in mutual relation, only to find their way, at least partially, to the academic teaching of history. An element of the *Völkisch* vision of history, which particularly found its way both to the universally accepted notions and findings of academic scholars, was the description of racial relations<sup>9</sup>. It is worth noting, however, that without any scientific and anthropological argumentation, the *Völkisch* racism was only an auxiliary function to nationalistic ideology. The frequent contradictions between scientific racist-anthropological and romantic argumentation, and *Völkisch* nationalist-racist argumentation were pointed out only when both assumptions started to function in the common discourse simultaneously<sup>10</sup>.

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L. MOSSE, *Kryzys ideologii niemieckiej. Rodowód intelektualny Trzeciej Rzeszy*, trans. Tadeusz EVERT, Warszawa 1972, pp. 160–163, 363–371.

<sup>6</sup> Jan SZCZEPAŃSKI, *Rasistowski mit chłopski*, *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, vol. 7: 1939, no. 1–2, pp. 47–48.

<sup>7</sup> Walter JUNG, *Ideologiczne Voraussetzungen, Inhalte und Ziele außenpolitischer Programmatik und Propaganda in der deutschvölkischen Bewegung der Anfangsjahre der Weimarer Republik – Das Beispiel Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund* (doctoral dissertation, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), Göttingen 2000, pp. 81–82; Julian KÖCK, „*Die Geschichte hat immer Recht*“. *Die Völkische Bewegung im Spiegel ihrer Geschichtsbilder*, Frankfurt 2015, p. 85–106.

<sup>8</sup> Marcin NAPIÓRKOWSKI [et al.], *Kultura wernakularna. Antropologia projektów nieudanych*, *Kultura Współczesna*, 2015, no. 3, pp. 20–24.

<sup>9</sup> Henryk OLSZEWSKI, *Nauka historii w upadku. Studium o historiografii i ideologii historycznej w imperialistycznych Niemczech*, Warszawa–Poznań 1982, pp. 44–57; Jerzy KMIECIŃSKI, *Nacjonalizm w germanoznawstwie niemieckim w XIX i początkach XX wieku*, Łódź 1994; Reiner KIPPER, *Der Germanenmythos im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Formen und Funktionen historischer Selbstthematisierung*, Göttingen 2002, passim, especially pp. 150–166; J. KÖCK, op.cit., pp. 387–412.

<sup>10</sup> Ludwig GUMFLOWICZ, *Nieco o „rasologii” niemieckiej*, *Przegląd Historyczny*, vol. 3: 1906, no. 3, pp. 299–301.

The contradiction of both trends of historical thought (academic and amateur) was often put to extremes. For example: Julius Langbehn (1851–1907), in order to emphasize that he was not corrupted by ‘Jewish, academic science’, demanded the possibility of renouncing his doctoral degree. As the Head of the University opposed his decision, he sent him a torn diploma and did not invoke his historical education ever again<sup>11</sup>. Not all researchers who shared the *Völkisch* views in whole or in part were that radical. Because of this, part of the vernacular ideology permeated the academic discourse, increasing the prestige of the *Völkisch* argumentation at the same time.

A turning point in the history of the relationship between academic science and *Völkisch* movement is considered to be the work of Wilhelm Riehl (1823–1897)<sup>12</sup>. Until then, the trend of *Völkisch* thought completely excluded city dwellers from being representatives of the national community for being detached from nature. City dwellers were thought to lose contact with nature, and thus with the ‘divine absolute’, at the same time placing themselves outside the margin of the national community. In a series of works titled *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik* W. Riehl described the functioning of the urban community (vol. 2: *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and the binary opposition of ‘urban’ vs. ‘rural’ (vol. 1: *Land und Leute*).

According to his views, the representatives of the bourgeoisie who practised professions related to trade, banking or usury not only were detached from nature, but also harmed other city-dwellers, disjoining them from the ‘natural order’. The creation of jobs in the industry by traders, industrialists and representatives of the bourgeoisie deprived craftsmen and retailers of their income. According to the philosopher, the reason underlying the harmfulness of capitalist professions was the replacement of the natural talents they used with mass production, which was detached from nature<sup>13</sup>. A permanent identification of harmful professions with the traditional image of the Jew as a vile speculator and usurer is worth highlighting<sup>14</sup>.

The accusation made by W. Riehl against the bourgeoisie as a whole was mitigated by his later claims. He believed that the city’s craftsmen living off the

<sup>11</sup> Fritz R. STERN, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–Oxford 1974, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup> G. L. MOSSE, op.cit., pp. 37–49, 227–230.

<sup>13</sup> Wilhelm H. RIEHL, *Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik*, Bd. 2: *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, Tübingen–Stuttgart 1861, pp. 284–286.

<sup>14</sup> W. BERGMANN, op.cit., pp. 457–458; Heike HOFFMAN, *Völkische Kapitalismus-Kritik. Das Beispiel Warenhaus*, [in:] *Handbuch zur „Völkischen Bewegung“ 1871–1918*, hrsg. v. Uwe PUSCHNER, Walter SCHMITZ, Justus H. ULBRICHT, München–New Providence–Paris 1996, pp. 558–571; Uwe PUSCHNER, *Die Völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich. Sprache, Rasse, Religion*, Bonn 2001, pp. 49–57.

fruit of their own labour, small shopkeepers and members of pioneering merchant families had not yet lost their national character<sup>15</sup>. The distinction between large merchant families from Hanseatic cities and dishonourable speculators was stemmed from W. Riehl's opinion that German merchants who belonged to the *Volk* were concerned about the common good of the whole community and not only about their own profit. For the sake of this concern for the common good, he assumed that integrated small town communities remained genuinely connected with nature<sup>16</sup>. Such claims were then reiterated by *Völkisch* authors who openly referred to racist arguments and later became the basis for them to present an ideal city, free from the harmful influence of the Jews.

#### HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN

Paradoxically, the most widely read author of publications on the relationship between race and national feelings in Germany was a British national – Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927). He was born in Southsea in 1855 to Admiral William Charles Chamberlain. Given that in the 1850s and 1860s his father was stationing in the Mediterranean, then in India and East Asia, and that his mother orphaned Houston and his brothers as early as 1856, the energetic grandmother Margaret Hall had a major influence on all of the children at that time. She provided education for the children at Versailles High School. Then the father sent young Houston to Cheltenham College, a school that educated British infantry and navy officers. However, the prospect of serving in remote parts of the Empire – in India, Africa or Australia – seemed unattractive to the sickly young man.

For health reasons, H. S. Chamberlain travelled through health resorts all over Europe (he visited Switzerland, Italy and Germany, which was still divided into a number of small states) accompanied by his teacher, a native Prussian, Otto Kunze. In 1870, he settled in Stettin (Polish: *Szczecin*), where, having soaked in German culture, Romanticism and philosophy, he tried to reconcile them with his deeply rooted Christian faith, increasingly adopting the *Völkisch* ideals. In 1889 he moved to Austria for some time, but he remained in touch with the culture of northern Protestant Germany.

In 1908 he married Eva von Bülow-Wagner (granddaughter of Franz Liszt and stepdaughter of Richard Wagner) and moved permanently to Bayreuth in Bavaria. In 1916 he took on Bavarian citizenship. During the First World War he became involved in the propaganda activities of the Central Powers,

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<sup>15</sup> W. H. RIEHL, *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, pp. 322–323.

<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm H. RIEHL, *Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik*, Bd. 1: *Land und Leute*, Tübingen–Stuttgart 1854, pp. 93–102.

becoming a renegade for the British. His most important work that brought him fame was *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* from 1899, which was issued in an impressive number of eight editions and 60,000 copies over one decade (in 1906 alone 1,000 copies were sold within 10 days). By 1914, 100,000 copies had been sold, and one million were sold in the interwar period<sup>17</sup>.

In Germany, H. S. Chamberlain was a renowned figure who was particularly respected by the members of nationalist movements. Adolf Hitler was fascinated by him (it was an honour for him to meet the writer)<sup>18</sup>, and so were Alfred Rosenberg, Heinrich Himmler and many others. After the unsuccessful Munich Putsch, H. S. Chamberlain grew fond of the Nazi movement. He died in 1927.

He laid down his views on the role of individual races in the work *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. This work combined scholarly historical considerations (despite the lack of the formal education of the author in this field) with *Völkisch* principles. According to the writer, the greatest contribution to the development of civilization was made by the Indo-Germanic races (by which he meant Indo-Europeans, in accordance with terms used by his German contemporaries), which, as he believed, included the creators of philosophy – the Greeks, the creators of the law – the Romans and the ‘creators of the revival of civilization’ – the Teutons (*Germanen*). The latter included not only Germanic tribes, but also Celtic (*Keltogermanen*)<sup>19</sup> and Slavic (*Slavogermanen*)<sup>20</sup> tribes.

In opposition to the Teutons stood the broadly understood Semites (it is worth noting, however, that according to H. S. Chamberlain they were neither the ancient Israelites nor Galileans)<sup>21</sup>, who embodied all the negative features. The Teutons were brave and heroic, whereas the Semites were cowardly and treacherous. The former were generous; the latter were stingy. The Teutons promoted creative solutions for the entire community; the Semites used all the innovations only for their own purposes. Due to the fact that they were

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey G. FIELD, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain*, New York 1981, p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy W. RYBACK, *Hitler's private library*, New York 2008, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> Houston S. CHAMBERLAIN, *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1–2, München 1903, pp. 467–471.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 473–477; Herman HECKER, *Vom „Slavogermanen“ zum Slaven*, [in:] *Osteuropa in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festschrift für Günther Stöckl zum 60. Geburtstag*, hrsg. v. Hans LEMBERG [et al.], Köln 1977, pp. 186–200; Mateusz MALESZKA, *Houston Stewart Chamberlain's (1855–1927) view on Bosnians*, [in:] *Poljska u Bosni, Bosna u Poljskoj*, ed. Tomasz J. LIS, Mateusz MALESZKA, Kraków–Toruń–Sarajewo 2015, pp. 42–56.

<sup>21</sup> H. S. CHAMBERLAIN, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

so extremely different, both groups were destined to compete with each other. The city was to be one of the main arenas for their rivalry, and the stake, according to H. S. Chamberlain, was the fate of the whole humanity.

The 'German by choice' was extremely faithful to the *Völkisch* ideology. He opposed the peoples who lived in cities to those who lived in villages (for example, he distinguished the opposing nations of Jews and Galileans in the times of Jesus). However, he enriched the *Völkisch* considerations with the assumptions of 'scientific evidence-based' racist thought. He assumed that certain racial features were permanent, inalienable, and also determined the mental and psychological spheres. It was the latter that were to decide about belonging to a particular race. For H. S. Chamberlain, such predispositions as creative abilities, closeness to nature, attachment to the earth, patriotism, sensitivity to beauty or honour were a more important determinant than physical traits (he rejected in large part the physical anthropology which was the product of 'Jewish science').

Chamberlain reiterated Riehl's assumptions about the role of some cities in creating progress, but he also stated that they should remain connected to the national character, otherwise they were to become the nest of racial chaos (*Völkerchaos*). The fate of Rome was symbolic to him – a city that imposed its governance on the world became a nest of decay as a result of an uncontrolled influx of foreign slaves, merchants and vagabonds<sup>22</sup>. This influx first changed the demography and then the consciousness of the city's inhabitants, and thus the creative element of the Romans was irretrievably lost. Another ancient city which was the antithesis of Rome in the Indo-Germanic or Aryan (but not yet Teutonic) heyday was Semitic Carthage. Chamberlain saw the Phoenician colony as a binary opposition of the Indo-Germanic urban settlement upon the Tiber. In his opinion, the Romans were an agricultural and warlike people, living off the fruit of their own labour, whereas the Carthaginians were only greedy merchants. The Romans were in the habit of building solid roads to connect cities and make life easier for their inhabitants, while the Carthaginians only made makeshift paths on trade routes to trade more efficiently<sup>23</sup>.

The most explicit difference between the Greek, Roman and Teutonic cities and the Semitic ones was to be manifested in the attitude of their inhabitants to work. Teutonic cities were inhabited by modest craftsmen and merchants caring for the common good, whereas in Semitic urban centres, despotic rulers had slaves do even the lightest jobs for them. Therefore, Semitic towns were places of oppression for the masses who lived without any hope of improving

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 255–256.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

their fate. The cities of the Phoenicians or other Semitic peoples embodied all the worst features that the *Völkisch* adherents attributed to the urban centres. At the same time, in the Greek and Roman cities, which were unspoilt by foreigners, the patriotic citizens, who were the representatives of the 'good race', were to decide about their own fate<sup>24</sup>.

Because of these obvious differences between the Semitic and European cities (Greek, Roman and Teutonic), the fall of Carthage became a historical necessity. Chamberlain believed that the definitive destruction of the Semitic city and the slaying of its population should not be mourned, as it was a bloody price to pay for the salvation of the European identity. For this reason, he criticized historians, from Polybius to Theodor Mommsen, who, in his opinion, guided by misconstrued humanistic motives, took pity on the fate of Carthage<sup>25</sup>. The Semitic victory in the Punic Wars would have had negative consequences for the whole of humanity. The Jews-Semites would have dominated trade, introduced fiscal oppression and enslaved the European population, which would have had to adapt to a new, alien lifestyle<sup>26</sup>.

The ideal city for H. S. Chamberlain was a medieval one. Those established by the Teutons not only maintained contact with nature (Chamberlain believed in the existence of green complexes in medieval cities), but they also epitomised the truly Teutonic character. This character would manifest itself in the realization of shared goals by the inhabitants. Organisations created in the Middle Ages, such as guilds or leagues of cities, were not intended to multiply the profits of the people and cities associated in them, but to benefit the general public and to satisfy spiritual needs<sup>27</sup>.

H. S. Chamberlain considered medieval cities in northern Italy, inhabited by descendants of the Teutonic tribes: Celts, Goths, Longobards, Franks and Normans, to be the best developed<sup>28</sup>. It was in the northern Italian urban centres that the 'Teutonic genius' was to manifest itself, and it was from the elites of this area that the most eminent artists were to originate<sup>29</sup>. All these cities were characterised by a stiff, hierarchical stratification based on racial traits. The author used Perugia as an example to illustrate this claim, where the medieval elites were completely of Longobard and Gothic origin, whereas the plebeians had a racially inferior pedigree. Unfortunately, the destruction of these elites during the wars of the Renaissance period caused the irreversible collapse

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 539–542.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 822–824.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 693–695.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 712–713.



of the city<sup>30</sup>. For H. S. Chamberlain, the fate of racial elites was tantamount to the fate of the entire city.

It was in medieval cities that one of the most important Teutonic traits was to come into the foreground – the tendency to cooperate. This feature distinguished Teutonic civilization from the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate, which were built upon the oppression of slaves<sup>31</sup>. Thanks to the ability to cooperate and the preservation of the racially based social hierarchy, it was possible to establish cooperation between cities, which was manifested in the establishment of the leagues of cities, such as the Hanseatic League and the Lombard League<sup>32</sup>. Glorifying the activity of leagues of cities and merchant families, H. S. Chamberlain included (like W. Riehl in his earlier work) the townspeople within the authentic *Volk*. According to his assumptions, the groups that retained Teutonic traits not only included noblemen and farmers, but also urban patricians. By classifying the merchant elites as racially privileged (as Arthur de Gobineau had done earlier<sup>33</sup>), H. S. Chamberlain synthesized the assumptions of the *Völkisch* movement with racism that ranked social classes.

In the era of progressive industrialization and modernization of urban life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, medieval corporate values disappeared, and economic immigrants and Jews started to appear in the ever-growing cities. The latter, while performing speculative professions, deprived retailers and craftsmen of the possibility of independent work, starting the process of denationalization of city residents. The ultimate triumph of the Semite people in the urban space, according to the *Völkisch* author, was to lead to the enslavement of city dwellers and to halt progress. Chamberlain sought salvation for civilization in the 'Teutonic genius'. He postulated the restoration of the medieval, hierarchical society, built according to corporate principles. In his opinion, the instigator of the necessary changes was the Teutonic genius Robert Owen, who transformed his factory into a corporation that was the shared property of the working people. The director himself was not to hold the position of an independent master, but rather that of the first of his peers<sup>34</sup>. The transformation of all the factories and plants in the cities would enable the revival of 'Teutonic values' and ensure victory in the competition with Semitism. However, only the most Teutonic of the nations – the Germans – was capable of this. It was their spiritual mission to awaken other, less Teutonic nations of Europe.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 824.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 828.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph A. DE GOBINEAU, *The Inequality of Human Races*, New York 1915, pp. 36–62.

<sup>34</sup> H. S. CHAMBERLAIN, *op.cit.*, pp. 821, 828.

## THEODOR FRITSCH

H. S. Chamberlain's deliberations were mainly focused on the spiritual and mental sphere, but this does not mean that the plans of spiritual transformation of city dwellers were not followed by ideas of urban change, according to racist and *Völkisch* assumptions. The *Völkisch* author, who came up with the most expressive proposal for the shape of the new city, and who exerted an influence on the shape of the programme of the later NSDAP, was Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933).

Th. Fritsch, a native of Saxony, did not receive an academic education like W. Riehl or H. S. Chamberlain. Instead, he received a technical education at the Königliche Gewerbeakademie. As early as during his studies, he was associated with *Völkisch* youth organizations, whose principles he remained faithful to in all his work. In the 1880s he began his publishing career. Initially, he worked as a text editor and he was also the author of anti-Semitic publications. In 1902 he established his own publishing house "Hammer", which published a periodical of the same name. The publishing house released such anti-Semitic best-sellers as Th. Fritsch's *Anti-Semitic Catechism*, Henry Ford's *The International Jew* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, making the "Hammer" and the publishing community associated with it one of the most important anti-Semitic groups in Germany<sup>35</sup>.

Like W. Riehl, who wrote about 'North-Western Europeans' or H. S. Chamberlain, who wrote about 'Teutons', Th. Fritsch did not pay attention to academic racial divisions either. When he devoted himself to journalistic activity, physical anthropologists distinguished at least three racial types within the White Race: Nordic, Mediterranean and Alpine<sup>36</sup>. However, the anthropological typology did not interest Th. Fritsch, instead, he focused in his arguments on showing the binary opposition between a Jew and a German, and on showing a hierarchical organization properly functioning in the spirit of the *Völkisch* nation.

In the context of the reflection on the function of the city, his work *Die Stadt der Zukunft* from 1896, reprinted in 1912 as *Die Stadt der Zukunft (Gartenstadt)*, was of key importance. The change of name was an attempt to include the movement for the creation of garden-cities initiated by Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928) in Europe and the United States in the *Völkisch* thought.

<sup>35</sup> Michael BÖNISCH, *Hammer-Bewegung*, [in:] *Handbuch zur „Völkischen Bewegung“ 1871–1918*, hrsg. v. Uwe PUSCHNER, Walter SCHMITZ, Justus H. ULBRICHT, München–New Providence–Paris 1996, pp. 341–365; U. PUSCHNER, *Die Völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich*, pp. 58–62.

<sup>36</sup> Richard McMAHON, *The Races of Europe: Anthropological Race Classification of Europeans 1839–1939*, Florence 2007, pp. 187–279, especially pp. 188–190.

The work of Th. Fritsch combined the ideological assumptions of other *Völkisch* authors and E. Howard's urban concepts, to create a comprehensive vision of the emergence of an ecological-nationalist urban utopia.

The basic assumption of Th. Fritsch was the necessity of such reconstruction of cities to reflect the racially oriented social hierarchy. The city should be characterized by concentrically organized urban development. According to the writer, to achieve this goal, the city should be divided into seven zones<sup>37</sup>. The first of these – the 'zone of monumental buildings' – was to include cultural institutions, theatres, urban squares, cathedrals, and monuments of eminent personalities. The second zone was to be the seat of offices, courts, police and local authorities. The third zone was to be residential, intended for the 'best residents' (among whom the author, of course, placed himself) – broadly understood intelligentsia, professors, senior officials and artists. The fourth zone was intended for 'less important residents' and was also to include commercial and service outlets. The fifth zone was supposed to accommodate workers and small workshops. The last zone was to be uninhabited and was to house factories and production facilities that could not be hidden from the eyes of the residents. The suburban zone was to be transformed into an area of park and forest complexes designated as a place of rest for the residents.

Only the representatives of *Volk* were allowed to live in the city – the others, especially Jews, were considered undesirable people. However, Fritsch did not rule out the possibility of the presence of hired workers among the inhabitants of the fifth zone, but an indispensable condition for their stay was the acceptance of *Völkisch* and racist assumptions. Also among the inhabitants themselves, the author, following the example of Plato<sup>38</sup>, distinguished classes that were less and more valuable. The qualification to the group of inhabitants of particular zones was to take place not on the basis of their wealth, but through their adherence to *Volk* ideals.

Since the individual city zones were to be of different size (Fritsch listed them in order from the smallest to the largest), their layout could not always coincide with an ideal circle. Thus, the most practical shape would be that of a spiral extending from the first to the last zone<sup>39</sup>. Green belts were to be placed between the individual zones. Garden complexes were also to separate housing estates in each zone. In this way, neither the people living in them nor

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<sup>37</sup> Theodor FRITSCH, *Die Stadt der Zukunft*, Leipzig 1896, pp. 10–12.

<sup>38</sup> The Greek philosopher was a special role model for *Völkisch* adherents and then Nazis. Cf. Karl R. POPPER, *Spółczesność otwarte i jego wrogowie*, vol. 1: *Urok Platona*, trans. Halina KRAHELSKA, ed. Adam CHMIELEWSKI, Warszawa 1993; Simona FORTI, *The Biopolitics of Souls: Racism, Nazism, and Plato*, *Political Theory*, vol. 34: 2006, no. 1, pp. 9–32.

<sup>39</sup> T. FRITSCH, op.cit., p. 13.

the workers returning from work would lose contact with nature as a result of living in the city, and thus their national character would not erode. Green complexes would therefore constitute a protection against the city becoming a cosmopolitan centre<sup>40</sup>.

However, modern cities could not function without industry and transport networks. For this reason, the city of the future should have wide streets running from the centre of the first zone to the last circles of buildings. Wide roads were to connect with smaller streets that crossed the individual zones. Pedestrian and public transport was to be present on the main thoroughfares, whereas freight transport was to be moved to underground routes. This was an attempt to save the problem of public transport congestion and prevent the destruction of the landscape by transporting industrial goods. For the same reason, Th. Fritsch also wanted to move as many warehouses and industrial plants as possible to the underground<sup>41</sup>.

Fritsch's plans for the reconstruction of the urban system, although extremely remote, did not seem impossible. However, he was aware of the need to change both the political and the legal system. The reform of urban life he postulated could only be implemented in political systems imbued with an aristocratic spirit. For this reason, in an egalitarian parliamentary democracy, a city ideal for a *Völkisch* adherent could not be created. The legal system itself also required far-reaching reform. Fritsch postulated that ordinary citizens should give up their property ownership and replace it with some form of perpetual usufruct. The nation embodied by the monarch would possess full ownership rights<sup>42</sup>.

#### REINTERPRETATION OF THE VIEWS OF VÖLKISCH ADHERENTS IN THE THIRD REICH

The reception of H. S. Chamberlain and Th. Fritsch's assumptions is particularly evident in the racial postulates of the NSDAP. The theses put forward by both ideologists served to motivate many of the Nazi regime's later moves, which expressed the need to implement the demands of defending against 'Jewry', which was defined in different ways, or the fraternal character of other racially valuable nations (e.g. the works of H. S. Chamberlain were used to define the racial qualities of Muslim Bosnians<sup>43</sup>, who were later recruited to *Waffen-SS*). These writers' reflections on the organization of urban life were also present in later reflections from the Nazi dictatorship.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–25.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 27–29.

<sup>43</sup> M. MALESZKA, op.cit., pp. 63–73.

The influence of both authors on the formation of the beliefs of young Adolf Hitler has already been the subject of analysis<sup>44</sup>. However, the influence of H. S. Chamberlain and Th. Fritsch was not limited only to shaping the worldview of the Nazi leader. One of the main NSDAP ideologists, Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946) fully shared the views of the two authors. Following the example of the *Völkisch* adherents, he anticipated that large, cosmopolitan cities would be the loss of German civilization. By quoting H. S. Chamberlain<sup>45</sup>, he assumed that in the giant cities of 20 million inhabitants each, true 'Aryan culture' would have to be replaced by Jewish-inspired cosmopolitan Bolshevism or flawed, democratic liberalism. Large urban centres were to become a tool for the implementation of anti-human communism in the minds of workers deprived of access to 'living nature'. Rosenberg saw the salvation for city dwellers in limiting the size of cities to 100,000 inhabitants and minimizing the presence of heavy industry<sup>46</sup>. In the case of already existing urban centres in excess of this number, he called for them to be transformed into regional centres of cultural and scientific life, while at the same time reducing the number of inhabitants to 500,000. The existence of an appropriate number of such centres would, in his opinion, ensure an appropriate level of decentralisation for the future Reich, which would enable free development of 'Aryan culture'<sup>47</sup>. Garden complexes were to exist both in towns and urban centres, and it was also advisable for each German to have his or her own allotment. Ensuring contact with nature was to contribute to the integration of the nation in a single spirit<sup>48</sup>.

All actions by H. S. Chamberlain and Th. Fritsch were aimed at reconciling the need for cities in modern society with the *Völkisch* programme. However, for some ideologists and politicians under their influence these attempts were insufficient and not radical enough. The elements of the *Völkisch* agricultural programme within the NSDAP were implemented by Richard Walter Darré (1895–1953), *Reichsbauernführer* and Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture. As early as in 1924, he was an active member of the agricultural community movement, the so-called *Artamanen-Gesellschaft*. This organization was aiming to build a new German society, based on German peasantry of pure race. Under the influence of the findings of *Völkisch* anthropologists and ideologists, R. W. Darré, by implementing an agricultural policy and being responsible for agricultural settlement in the Third Reich, aimed at increasing

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<sup>44</sup> Ian KERSHAW, *Hitler: A Biography*, London 2008, p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting that even the title of A. Rosenberg's ideological manifesto – *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* was a commentary to *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*.

<sup>46</sup> Alfred ROSENBERG, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, München 1930, pp. 313–315.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 317.

the settlement of 'supreme race' in the 'German countryside'<sup>49</sup>. In his imagination, the country was an optimal place for the proper functioning of the developed Nordic race. He perceived the city as an ominous polyp that sucks the life-giving forces from the nation<sup>50</sup>. However, even he was aware of the indispensability of cities in modern society. He was forced to accept the existence of small urban communities, organized around craftsmen living off the fruit of their own labour<sup>51</sup>. He treated the solutions proposed by Th. Fritsch and H. S. Chamberlain as a kind of a recipe for the greatest ills caused by the very existence of cities. These proposals, however, still seemed to him to be a temporary solution, and cities should become a place from which valuable German blood would be transferred to the countryside<sup>52</sup>, ultimately creating a new elite of the Reich. Therefore, the implementation of the racial utopia implied the elimination of cities in their present form.

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The *Völkisch* ideology, specific to Germany, after being permeated with racist ideology, created its own vision of a utopian urban community, based on both biological racial and spiritual criteria. The city, reorganized in a spirit of hierarchisation, was to satisfy the spiritual needs of the *Volk* as well as to create desired patriotic attitudes by maintaining an unbreakable relationship between man and nature. It was the unique philosophical argumentation for the reorganization of urban life, characteristic of racist *Völkisch* movement, which was later adapted by the Nazi movement, that distinguished *Völkisch* assumptions from other extremely anti-democratic movements that aiming at the reconstruction of existing cities. In totalitarian systems based on materialistic foundations, such as Soviet communism and Italian fascism, there was no room for any discussions about the spiritual influence of the landscape on the souls of the inhabitants. The monumental architecture created in these trends was therefore based on different ideological foundations. German attachment to racial criteria differentiated the late *Völkisch* argumentation (from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) from the system created for example by Benito Mussolini. In Italy, not only was there no consideration for racial criteria until 1938, but German anthropological patterns were even rejected<sup>53</sup>. The only Italian researcher and racist propagandist who believed in the existence of spiritual

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<sup>49</sup> Katja GEISENHAINER, *Otto Reches Rassenkunde als Leitwissenschaft und Basis seines Engagements für den NS-Staat*, [in:] *Völkische Wissenschaften und Politikberatung im 20. Jahrhundert. Expertise und „Neuordnung“ Europa*, hrsg. v. Michael FAHLBUSCH, Ingo HAAR, Paderborn–München–Wien–Zürich 2010, pp. 218–219.

<sup>50</sup> Richard W. DARRÉ, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, München 1930, p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> Idem, *Um Blut und Boden*, München 1941, p. 249.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 571.

<sup>53</sup> Aaron GILLETTE, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, London–New York 2002.

racess was Julius Evola<sup>54</sup>, who was more popular in the Third Reich than in his homeland<sup>55</sup>.

According to the assumptions of the most widely read authors of racist and anti-Semitic publications, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Theodor Fritsch, the cities had to revert to the 'ancient Aryan and Teutonic values'. They had to be reorganized in a hierarchical way, where the successive layers of society were to work together under the enlightened leadership of the racial elite. Theodor Fritsch even assumed that the urban layout of the city would reflect this assumption. The *Völkisch* plans to build utopian cities presented in this text are an example of how racist ideology permeated all spheres of life.


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RACE IN THE CITY:  
THE REFLECTIONS OF HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAIN  
AND THEODOR FRITSCH ROOTED IN GERMAN VOLKISM

Abstract

**Key words:** racism, anti-Semitism, Volkism, Nazism, city, Theodor Fritsch, Houston S. Chamberlain

Racist ideology permeated every element of the Third Reich's society. Art historians have focused on the problem of Nazi urban projects since the 1960s. Issues related to older concepts from the 19<sup>th</sup> century were on the margins of the research. Thus, sources of inspiration for Nazi urban solutions remained unexplored. The article aims to complement the current considerations with an analysis of the oldest accounts that constitute a synthesis of racist and urban thought.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156–173.

<sup>55</sup> Adam WIELOMSKI, *Teoria ras ludzkich Juliusa Evoli*, *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi*, no. 23: 2000, pp. 85–90.

The problem of rebuilding cities in a “a proper way that corresponded the German spirit” was raised in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The ‘heralds’ of national socialism at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – Theodor Fritsch and Houston Stewart Chamberlain synthesized the traditional German thought with scientifically founded racist anti-Semitism. With the help of textual analysis of their works, several assumptions common to both authors can be observed. They both called for the simultaneous reconstruction of cities and the reorganization of social life by introducing racial and class segregation. The urban buildings were to reflect the hierarchical social structure. Factories of heavy industry were to disappear from the cities (they were to be hidden underground or on the outskirts); they also wanted to eliminate environmental pollution and allow residents to contact with nature thanks to extensive garden complexes. At the same time, people with less desirable racial attributes were to work on the outskirts of the city, carrying out subordinate professions and maintaining racist utopias.

The popularity of both authors among the Nazi circles (even before 1933) contributed to the incorporation of their propositions into the ideology of the Nazi Party. The strong influence of slogans proclaimed by anti-Semitic radicals is visible, e.g. in the case of Alfred Rosenberg or Richard W. Darré. They wanted to return to the so-called old Aryan values, which were to include living in harmony with wild nature. The implementation of these postulates would have involved the reconstruction and limitation of the size of most of the then urban complexes, which was to take place according to the assumptions formulated before the First World War.



DIE RASSE IN DER STADT.

IN DER DEUTSCHEN VÖLKISCHEN BEWEGUNG VERWURZELTE ERWÄGUNGEN  
HOUSTON STEWART CHAMBERLAINS UND THEODOR FRITSCHS

Abstract

**Schlüsselwörter:** Rassismus, Antisemitismus, völkische Bewegung, Nazismus, Stadt, Theodor Fritsch, Houston S. Chamberlain

Die rassistische Ideologie durchdrang alle Facetten des gesellschaftlichen Lebens im Dritten Reich. Seit den sechziger Jahren befassen sich Kunsthistoriker mit dem Thema der nationalsozialistischen städteplanerischen Projekte. Die Fragen bezüglich der älteren Konzepte aus dem 19. Jh. wurden im Rahmen dieser Forschungen nur am Rande behandelt. Somit blieben die Inspirationsquellen für städteplanerische Lösungen der Nazis unerforscht. Der Artikel zielt darauf ab, die bisherigen Erörterungen um eine Analyse der ältesten Erwähnungen zu ergänzen, die eine Synthese des rassistischen und städteplanerischen Denkens darstellen.

Das Problem des Umbaus der Städte auf eine dem „deutschen Geist entsprechende Weise“ wurde bereits in der Mitte des 19. Jh. aufgeworfen. Die um die Wende des 19. zum 20. Jh. schaffenden „Herolde“ des Nationalsozialismus – Theodor Fritsch und Houston Stewart Chamberlain – führten eine Synthese des traditionellen deutschen



Denkens mit dem wissenschaftlich begründeten rassistischen Antisemitismus durch. Mithilfe der Textanalyse ihrer Werke lassen sich mehrere für beide Autoren geltende Annahmen feststellen. Sie forderten einen gleichzeitigen Umbau der Städte und eine Neugestaltung des sozialen Lebens durch die Einführung der Rassen- und Klassen-trennung. Die städtische Bebauung sollte die hierarchische Gesellschaftsstruktur widerspiegeln. Die Fabriken der Schwerindustrie sollten aus den Städten verschwinden (sie sollten unter der Erde oder am Stadtrand versteckt werden); ebenso sollte Umweltverschmutzung eliminiert und den Bewohnern mithilfe ausgedehnter Gartenkomplexe der Kontakt mit der Natur ermöglicht werden. Gleichzeitig sollten Menschen mit weniger wünschenswerten Rassenmerkmalen am Stadtrand arbeiten, untergeordnete Berufe ausüben und das Bestehen rassistischer Utopien wahren.

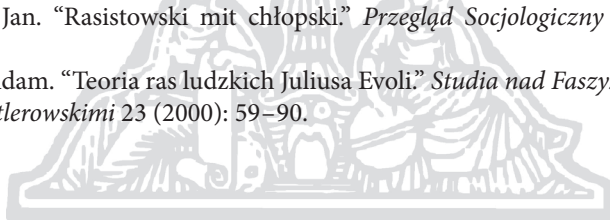
Die Beliebtheit beider Autoren in nationalsozialistischen Kreisen (sogar noch vor 1933) trug dazu bei, dass ihre Thesen in die Ideologie der NSDAP eindrangen. Der starke Einfluss von Parolen, die von antisemitischen Radikalen verkündet wurden, ist u. a. im Falle von Alfred Rosenberg oder Richard W. Darré sichtbar. Sie forderten eine Rückkehr zu den sogenannten alten arischen Werten, die ein Leben in Einheit mit der wilden Natur einschließen sollten. Die Umsetzung dieser Postulate wäre mit dem Umbau und der Begrenzung der Größe der meisten damaligen städtischen Komplexe verbunden gewesen, und zwar nach Maßgabe der noch vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg formulierten Annahmen.

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