

THE POLITICS OF UNENLIGHTENMENT

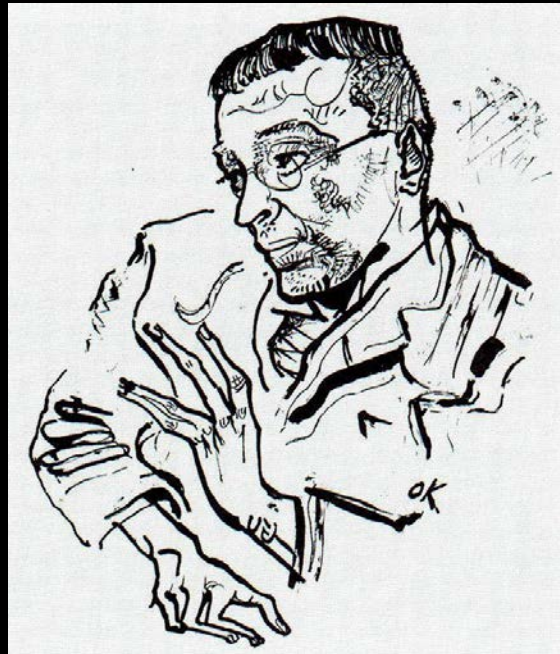
Karl Kraus · Hanns Eisler · Nazi Propaganda **Austrian Cultural Forum NY | April 10, 2013**



Shortly after Hitler was appointed as German chancellor in January 1933, the Austrian writer **Karl Kraus** began his work on a documentary essay about the Nazi regime. Simon Ganahl, an Erwin Schrödinger Fellow of the Austrian Science Fund, has analyzed the media references of this text called *Third Walpurgis Night*, and discovered insights that anticipate Marshall McLuhan's well known claim: the medium is the message! Barry Salmon from The New School frames the multi-media lecture with a live performance of **songs** by the Austrian composer **Hanns Eisler**, arranged for string quartet and featuring the singer Theo Bleckmann. A **conversation with questions and answers** concludes the evening's program.

William Shakespeare
Timon of Athens

Act IV
Scene 3



Adaption by
Karl Kraus (Timon)

Berlin Radio Station
November 13, 1930

TIMON

Ha! a drum?

ALCIBIADES

What art thou there? speak.

TIMON

A beast, as thou art.
The canker gnaw thy heart,
For showing me again the eyes of man!

ALCIBIADES

What is thy name?
Is man so hateful to thee,
That art thyself a man?

TIMON

I am misanthropos, and hate mankind.
For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dog,
That I might love thee something.

ALCIBIADES

I know thee well;
But in thy fortunes am unlearn'd
and strange.

TIMON

I know thee too;
and more than that I know thee,
I not desire to know. Follow thy drum;
With man's blood paint the ground,
gules, gules:

Religious canons, civil laws are cruel;
Then what should war be?
This fell whore of thine
Hath in her more destruction than thy sword,
For all her cherubim look.

PHRYNIA

Thy lips rot off!

TIMON

I will not kiss thee; then the rot returns
To thine own lips again.

ALCIBIADES

How came the noble Timon to this change?

TIMON

As the moon does, by wanting light to give:
But then renew I could not, like the moon;
There were no suns to borrow of.

ALCIBIADES

Noble Timon,
What friendship may I do thee?

TIMON

None, but to
Maintain my opinion.

ALCIBIADES

What is it, Timon?

TIMON

Promise me friendship, but perform none!





Lorenz | Weltspiegel | 1928

To the Little Radio (1942)

Text: **Bertolt Brecht**

Music: **Hanns Eisler**

Oh little box I carried in my flight
So carefully your lamps and tubes protecting
From house to boat from boat to train held tight
So that my enemies could still address me.

Beside my bed and much to my dismay
Last thing each night and first thing every day
About their victories, defeats for me
Oh please do not fall silent suddenly.



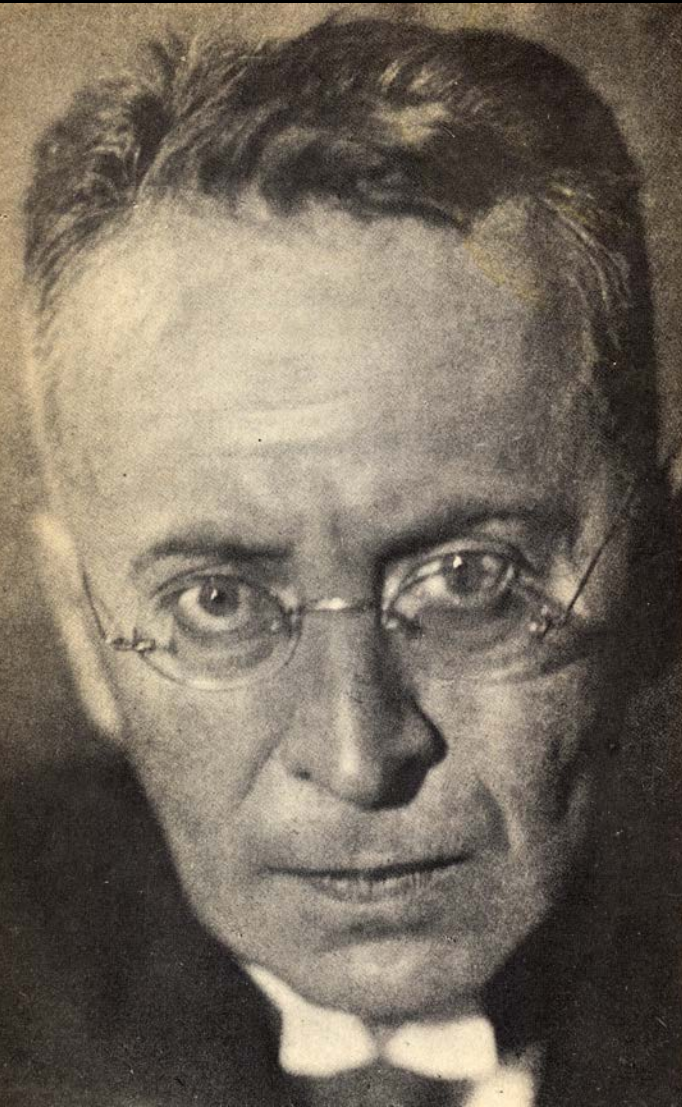


Report on Oranienburg Concentration Camp | German Radio | September 30, 1933



This is the German broadcasting service, this is all German broadcasters and the German shortwave broadcasting service! Radio listeners of Germany and beyond the borders! **The young National Socialist Germany is defending itself against lies and propaganda spread by elements of the foreign press. Veracity is the direction for decent working people. Untruth and deceit annihilate the individual and annihilate the fate of any nation that leads a phony existence of lies and deception. National Socialist Germany is constructing the state and educating the people in unlimited sincerity. The opponents of this Germany, however, bluster with lies and shameless propaganda. They disseminate reports with no basis whatsoever in truth. Thus, we present today a truthful extract from the Greater Berlin concentration camp. We have traveled out to Oranienburg with a microphone and we now hope to give you and the world a hearing of the truth, a mirror image of life, all proceedings in the concentration camp of those members of the German nation who have been taken into protective custody, gone astray, had their minds poisoned and fallen guilty. In this concentration camp in Oranienburg there are prominent leaders of the SPD and KPD functionaries, there are people who have made themselves guilty of robbery of the Germany's national assets, who have offended against mores and morals, state and people, against the worldview of the German individual.**





- 1874** **Karl Kraus** is born in Jičín (now Czechia).
- 1899** Foundation of the journal *Die Fackel* in Vienna, which he edited and wrote as a periodical in the sense of 18th century enlightenment.
- 1918** The antiwar drama *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* is published in *Die Fackel* (Hanns Eisler set the epilogue to music).
- 1933** Work on the essay *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, which remained a 300-page fragment. In *Die Fackel*, a poem is printed, ending with the line: »The Word expired on this world's awaking.«
- 1934** Issue »Why *The Torch* does not appear«
- 1936** Karl Kraus dies in Vienna on June 12, after the last number of *Die Fackel* (all in all, more than 20,000 pages) came out in February and his 700th public reading was given in April.

- 01-30-1933** President Paul von Hindenburg appoints **Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany**, who leads a coalition of Nazis and Conservatives, including Alfred Hugenberg as Minister of Economics and Agriculture.
- 02-27-1933** **Reichstag fire**, officially blamed on Communists, is used to suspend civil liberties in Germany: Law for the Protection of People and State.
- 03-04-1933** The Austrian parliament is paralyzed by procedural disputes—chancellor **Engelbert Dollfuß installs an authoritarian government**.
- 03-13-1933** Joseph Goebbels as **Minister of Public Enlightenment** and Propaganda.
- 03-22-1933** **Dachau concentration camp** opens: within half a year, the Nazis imprison thousands of political opponents all over Germany.
- 03-23-1933** **Enabling Act** hands legislative powers over to Hitler's cabinet.
- 04-01-1933** **Boycott of Jewish shops**, physicians, lawyers, etc. in Germany.
- 05-10-1933** **Burning of »degenerate« literature** in German university cities.
- 05-14-1933** **Celebration of deliverance from the Turks** in Vienna.
- 07-14-1933** Law against the foundation of political parties: **Germany is a Nazi state**.

Certainly it must be a **misunderstanding**, and perhaps it might be cleared up by the **realization** that an entity is making announcements here with unbridled openness, an entity that is not bad by nature, but merely carries out and takes responsibility for its deeds **with specific tools of the senses**. The fact that the comrade of the nation does not believe **the things he might hear** of once may yet be explained by the cordon that has proved necessary in the turnabout of living conditions. However, that he also does not believe **the things he sees**, and not even those he does; that he knows not what he does and therefore instantly forgives himself, that testifies to a disposition with no wrong, which those unlike him ought to avoid but not distrust. As he has been blessed with the gift of being unable to lie, and because it would also be impossible to lie as much as the state of affairs would require, only **a mediating faculty** can be at play here, which helps to rid such an entity of **the things created by illusion by translating them with illusion**.

Karl Kraus: Third Walpurgis Night (1933)

The hangman [in the concentration camp] leans on the doorjamb and sings, »**Dawn**, dawn, lighting my way to early death.«

[...] and the mene tekel upharsin, which announces that last end, is a film by **metufa**.

Karl Kraus: Third Walpurgis Night (1933)

Morgenrot (1933)

- Feature film by the Universum Film AG (Ufa)
- Hitler saw the movie in Berlin on February 2, 1933
- Directed by Gustav Ucicky
- Rudolf Forster as Lieutenant Commander



Mir fällt zu Hitler **nichts** ein.

Hitler brings **nothing** to my mind.

Karl Kraus: Third Walpurgis Night (1933)

For National Socialism has not annihilated the press; it was the press that created National Socialism. Apparently merely as a reaction, in truth also as a continuation. **Beyond all question of what humbug they feed to the masses—they are journalists.** They are editorialists who write in blood. Yes indeed, feuilletonists of deeds. **They have occupied the cave as which the forebears' printed word bequeathed the human imagination,** and the fact that they relinquish embellishment or botch all attempts at it is their cultural advantage.

Karl Kraus: Third Walpurgis Night (1933)

In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, **the medium is the message**. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any **extension of ourselves**—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.

Marshall McLuhan: Understanding Media (1964)

N. S. Sound Picture Report No. 2 (1933)

That's why they [the National Socialists] defend themselves [against Austria] with the outcry:

And here world's conscience remains silent?

With the sound film:

Shocking pictures on the misery of a nation in need!

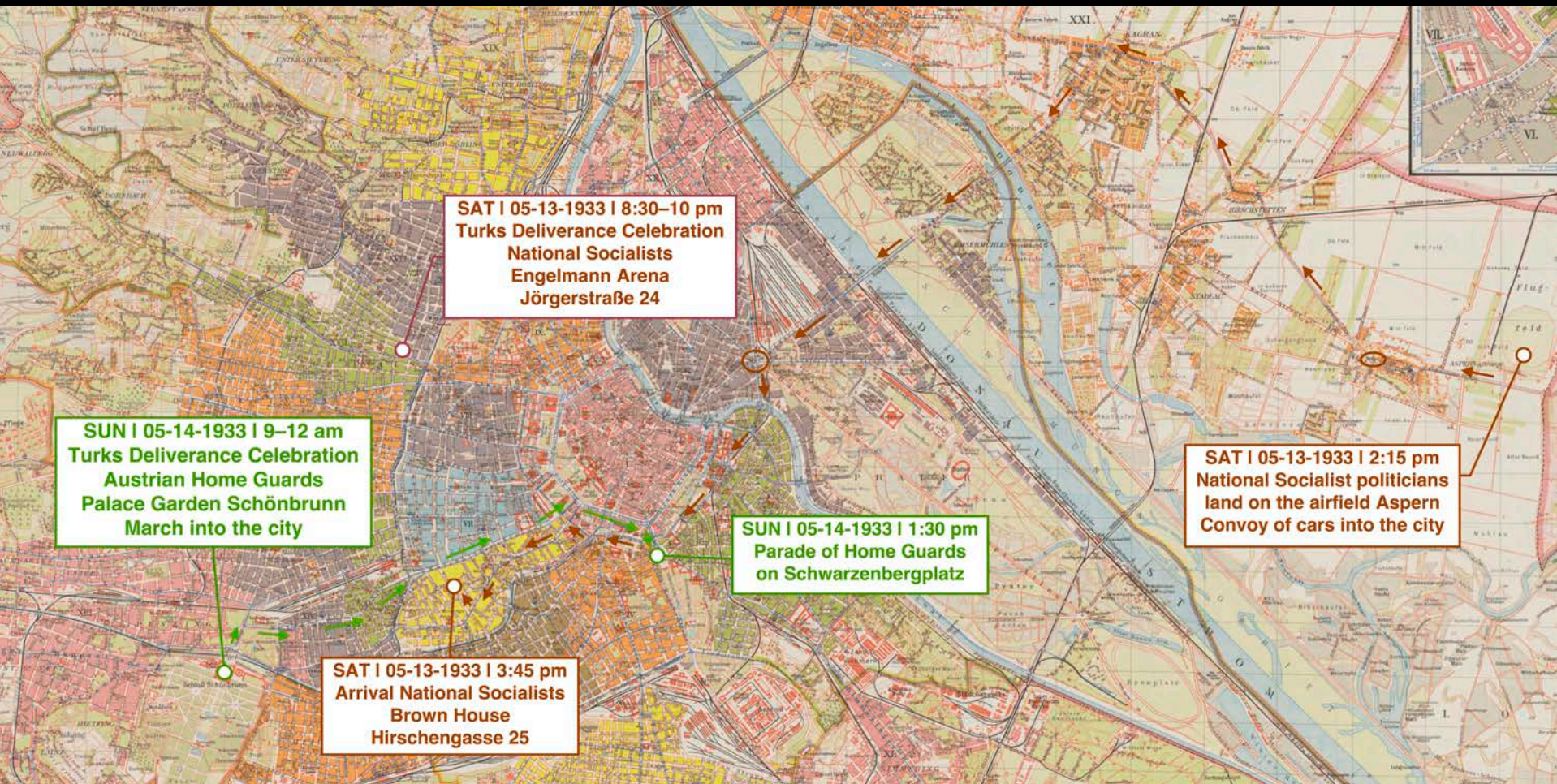
Karl Kraus: Third Walpurgis Night (1933)

Deutsches Miserere (1943)

Once upon a time our leaders gave us orders...

Text: Bertolt Brecht | Music: Hanns Eisler

Celebrations of deliverance from the Turks | Vienna | May 13 and 14, 1933



01-30-88
11:17:40

BA

Oesterreich!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

With **Barry Salmon** (The New School),
Simon Ganahl (Austrian Science Fund),
the vocalist **Theo Bleckmann**,
and, in particular, **the audience!**

MANY THANKS TO

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Barry Salmon (The New School);

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