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# Professionally impressive, politically surprising: life and work of DGZMK President Werner Ketterl

**Introduction:** Werner Ketterl is one of the most successful university teachers of the recent past. Since the 1960s, he has had a lasting influence on the development of university dentistry as a scientist and professional politician. In addition, he was one of the few protagonists of the discipline who dealt with National Socialism in autobiographical memoirs. Against this background, this article focusses on the life and work of the Mainz professor in the Third Reich and the Federal Republic of Germany.

**Material and methods:** The central basis of the study are, among others, primary sources from the Federal Archives Berlin and the State Archives Munich as well as Ketterl's autobiography from 2000. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of professional publications by and about Ketterl was carried out.

**Results:** Werner Ketterl was probably the most influential specialist representative in the field of Restorative Dentistry, especially in the 1970s and 1980s – alongside Adolf Kröncke and Rudolf Naujoks. However, he was more clinically oriented in research than the aforementioned colleagues and he also developed a stronger focus on periodontology. In the Third Reich he showed himself to be loyal to the regime. He applied for membership in the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) in the month of his 18th birthday and was accepted three months later.

**Discussion and conclusion:** Ketterl understood dentistry as a unity of science and professional policy. With this symbiotic approach, he shaped the development and the public perception of dentistry like hardly any other university lecturer of his time – both at the University of Mainz and on a national scale. However, his commitment to the NSDAP is beyond the expected – especially in view of the fact that he concealed his party membership in his memoirs and, moreover, frankly discredited the supporters of National Socialism.

**Keywords:** tooth preservation; periodontology; Mainz; NSDAP; National Socialism

## Introduction

Anyone who deals with German university dentistry from the 1960s to the 1980s will come across the name Werner Ketterl: The latter shaped the scientific development of restorative dentistry and periodontology, steered the fortunes of the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde” (German Society for Dental and Oral Medicine, DGZMK) as president and exerted influence on structures in the university and professional-political field. He is also one of the few representatives of the profession to have written an autobiography. In these memoirs, Ketterl not only deals with his professional stations and activities, but also with the political and social conditions of his time – and especially with the Third Reich and National Socialism.

Against this background, it seems worthwhile to elaborate on Ketterl’s multi-layered life and work as documented in archival sources and to compare the historical facts with the statements in the aforementioned autobiography.

## Material and methods

The central basis of the study are primary sources from the Federal Archives in Berlin and Ketterl’s “Spruchkammer files” (denazification files) kept in the Munich State Archives. These are compared with the “Lebenserinnerungen eines Hochschullehrers” (Memoirs of a University Teacher) written by Ketterl and published as book at the turn of the millennium.

In addition, a comprehensive analysis of Ketterl’s specialist publications and secondary literature on his person, his academic environment and his specialist contributions was carried out. Moreover, laudations, necrologies and lexical contributions on Ketterl were evaluated.

## Results and discussion

### 1. Werner Ketterl – a biographical outline

Werner Ketterl (Fig. 1 [67]) was born in Munich on January 14, 1925. His father was the Munich “Dentist” Alois Lorenz Ketterl (\*1898). At that time, there were two professions

licensed to treat teeth in Germany: the academic “Zahnärzte” and the artisan-trained “Dentisten”. All that is known of his mother is that she bore the birth name Halder before marriage. Alois Ketterl had a practice in Munich since the 1920s. In 1953, in the course of the abolition of the professional group of “Dentisten”, he was admitted to the newly established “unified profession” and was henceforth allowed to call himself a “Zahnarzt” [1, 9, 18, 78].

Werner Ketterl’s life stages are well documented on the basis of autobiographical information and other primary and secondary sources [5, 11, 30, 54, 60, 62–67, 71, 72]: He grew up in the Schwanthaler Höhe near Munich’s Theresienwiese. After attending primary school, he transferred to the Wittelsbacher Gymnasium in the Munich district of Maxvorstadt in the mid-1930s. The humanistic grammar school, which still exists today, had been founded in 1907. Since Ketterl was called up for military service, he finished school early in 1943 with the “Notabitur”. The latter was a facilitated university entrance qualification in which the written maturity examinations were omitted; instead, the last class tests in the main subjects were assessed [60].

Ketterl stated that as a child he wanted to become a locomotive driver, as a teenager a teacher and then as a young adult a geographer and geopolitician [60]. This changed again during wartime, which he experienced from 1943 onwards as a gunner in the artillery, as a lieutenant in the reserves (with training in Landsberg am Lech, Lenggries, Traunstein, and Dresden) and as an officer in Italy and on the Eastern Front. At the end of the war, he spent several weeks in American captivity in Nauen and Salzgitter. He escaped from there and returned to Munich. At that time, according to his own account, he still had a “bullet in his chest, which could later be removed without complications” [60].

In the meantime, he had decided to study dentistry and gave pragmatic considerations for this: “With the end of the thousand-year Reich, my former career aspirations also perished. Reason prevailed” [60]. After



University Archives Mainz, courtesy of the photographer Reiner Wierick [67]

Figure 1 Werner Ketterl

successfully completing a “remedial course”, he was able to enrol in dentistry at the University of Munich in autumn 1945. His academic teachers in this subject were Maria Schug-Kösters (1900–1975) [24] and – from 1947 – Peter-Paul Kranz (1884–1957) [31]. Kranz – like his fellow professors Karl Pieper (1886–1951) [20] and Karl Falck (1884–1955) [77] – had been discharged by the military authorities in 1945 for political reasons, but was able to return to the Munich Dental Clinic as director after completing his denazification process in the fall of 1947. Until then, Schug-Kösters – the first female dentist in Germany with a habilitation (1931) and the only professor at the clinic without NSDAP membership – had held the directorship on a provisional basis; she fell back to the position of head of the “Department of Restorative Dentistry” when Kranz returned.

In February 1949, Werner Ketterl passed the dental examination after seven semesters of standard study time. He was able to complete his doctorate (Dr. med. dent.) three weeks before the exam: he had already looked for a doctoral topic after the “Physikum” (intermediate examination) and had found it in physiology. Here, during the clinical semesters, he had written a dissertation on the nucleic bases “Thymin und Uracil” (Thymine and Uracil), which was already completed half a year before the state

Term of office	Name	NSDAP Membership	Life data
1906–1926	Otto Walkhoff	+	1860–1934
1926–1928	Wilhelm Herrenknecht	+	1865–1941
1928–45, 1949–54	Hermann Euler	+	1878–1961
1954–1957	Hermann Wolf	+	1889–1978
1957–1965	Ewald Harndt	+	1901–1996
1965–1969	Gerhard Steinhardt	+	1904–1995
1969–1971	Eugen Fröhlich	+	1910–1971
1972–1977	Rudolf Naujoks	–	1919–2004
<b>1977–1981</b>	<b>Werner Ketterl</b>	+	<b>1925–2010</b>

**Table 1** The presidents of the CVDZ (from 1933: DGZMK) who experienced the Third Reich as adults and their party-political orientation

examination [36, 60]. As early as March 1949, he took up a position as assistant dentist in the Department of Restorative Dentistry at Schug-Kösters, where he ultimately remained for ten years as a lecture assistant.

In 1953, Ketterl married Susanne Vogel. The couple became parents of two children [78]. In the same year, Ketterl enrolled for a second degree in medicine – also in Munich. This resulted from the fact that in Bavaria the habilitation in dentistry required an additional degree in medicine – and it was precisely this habilitation that he was striving for. He explained: “Since I wanted to become a university teacher, I had to study medicine, which I never regretted” [60].

In February 1956 he passed the medical examination and in July 1957 he obtained his doctorate in medicine (Dr. med.). His second dissertation was a work on medical history and dealt with the “History of Paranasal Sinus Surgery” [38].

In 1954, the maxillofacial surgeon Josef Heiß (1908–1973) [73] had succeeded the emeritus clinic director Kranz in Munich and was thus the formally responsible specialist supervisor for the habilitation Ketterl was seeking. In terms of content, however, Ketterl’s topic was in restorative

dentistry and thus fell under the responsibility of Schug-Kösters, in whose department he continued to work. In order to understand the explosive nature of this personnel constellation, one must know that Schug-Kösters was continuously defamed by Heiß in Munich. Heiß’s “public insults” and “false statements” [3] against Schug-Kösters were aimed at discrediting her on a professional and personal level. These accusations soon became known outside Munich [13] and Ketterl was also drawn into the disputes. He wrote in his memoirs: “The director of the clinic called me in to tell me that he was dismissing me and that he had already discussed this with his lawyer [...]. When I reported this to Schug-Kösters, she laughed and said he should dare. The dismissal was reversed. Those were really exciting moments [...].” [60].

Despite the circumstances, Ketterl was finally able to habilitate with Josef Heiß in Munich in April 1960 – at the age of 35 – and was then out of the firing line. Schug-Kösters, on the other hand, remained the focus of Heiß’s attention and tried to defend herself in 1964 by filing a criminal complaint with the Munich public prosecutor’s office because she saw

“the protection of the teaching activities of a university lecturer violated by public insults” [3].

Ketterl’s habilitation thesis was entitled “Studie über das Dentin der permanenten Zähne des Menschen” (Study of the Dentin of Permanent Human Teeth) and was one of his rather few histological works; it was also published as a journal article in 1961 [40]. After his appointment as Privatdozent (privat lecturer, 1960), he was responsible for the phantom course in dental conservation with the corresponding three-hour lecture as well as the course “Pathohistology of Teeth” [60].

Ketterl remained in Munich for a total of 16 years – the first years as an assistant and then as senior assistant [60]. In 1963, a career change was on the cards for the first time: In that year, he was offered a professorship in Graz. But after negotiations with the clinic director Richard Trauner (1900–1980) [35] he turned it down – among other things because of sub-optimal financial conditions [60]. In 1964, he received another call from Heidelberg – without having to “audition”, as he wrote himself [60]. There, the second chair next to Reinhold Ritter (1903–1987) [21, 29] was to be filled.

Almost at the same time, he was invited to Mainz for a trial lecture, which was also followed by a call. The Mainz University Dental Clinic was only founded after the war with the appointment of Martin Herrmann (1895–1976) [33] in April 1948. In contrast, the dental clinic in Heidelberg had already existed since 1895 and could refer to a number of prominent university teachers, including Gottlieb Port (1867–1918), Georg Blessing (1882–1941) [24], Hermann Euler (1878–1961) [17, 22, 28] and the aforementioned Ritter [21, 29]. In the end, Ketterl rejected the call to Heidelberg “with a bad conscience” because of the framework and working conditions there. He noted: “If a patient or assistant had to go to the toilet in Heidelberg, the way led through the treatment room of the head of department [...] A new building was out of the question in Heidelberg at that time” [60].

Although the existing conditions in Mainz were also very difficult, the construction of a new clinic had already begun. So Ketterl accepted the position: “In the end, the decisive factor was the shell of a new clinic, which was already nearing completion, and the conception of this institution” [60]. According to Beck, Ketterl’s academic teacher and mentor Maria Schug-Kösters had played a decisive role in the appointment to Mainz: “Schug-Kösters endeavoured to propose him in Mainz, which was crowned with success” [3].

In Mainz, Ketterl was temporarily classified as “functional clinic director”, but soon advanced to associate professor and then in 1966 to full professor and director of the Clinic for Dental Conservation. Ketterl remained in Mainz throughout his professional life, worked for many years as managing director of the clinic and became emeritus professor there in 1993 – after reaching the age of 68 and a total of 29 years on site. His students honoured him with a torchlight procession on the occasion of his retirement [60].

Werner Ketterl remained a resident of Mainz and died there on December 23, 2010 shortly before reaching the age of 86 [30, 67, 76].

## 2. Ketterl’s scientific and professional-political significance

Since the beginning of the 1960s at the latest, Ketterl was regarded as one of the hopefuls in German university dentistry – especially in the field of restorative dentistry. As mentioned, he received three professorship appointments in 1963 and 1964, choosing the chair in Mainz. There Ketterl succeeded Josef Kluczka (1897–1966) [14], a Silesian dentist and periodontist.

Kluczka was a general dentist: Martin Herrmann, the founder of the Mainz clinic, had got to know and appreciate him during the Second World War as a member of staff in a military hospital for patients with facial and jaw injuries. In the course of establishing the dental clinic in Mainz (1948), Herrmann offered a position to Kluczka, who had been expelled from Silesia after 1945. Despite his lack of

previous university experience, he made Kluczka head of the new department of restorative dentistry, which had yet to be founded. Kluczka was able to habilitate at the advanced age of 52 and start a late scientific career. He made a name for himself as a periodontist and periodontology assessor and with the establishment of an “aseptic root treatment room”. This idea was much discussed among his contemporaries, but was ultimately unsuccessful [32, 60].

Ketterl spoke very highly of his predecessor (“[...] a renowned representative of our discipline known throughout Germany” [60]). In any case, it is noticeable that Ketterl sketches the persons mentioned by name in his memoirs largely positively. This clearly distinguishes him from his (similarly influential) colleague Carl-Heinz Fischer (1909–1997), who made so many critical comments about colleagues in his memoirs that a court prohibited their distribution [13, 28]. In contrast, Ketterl paid tribute to many of his companions – such as his two predecessors in the office of DGZMK president, Eugen Fröhlich (1910–1979) [25, 60] and Rudolf Naujoks (1919–2004) [26, 60], his deputy on the DGZMK board Karl Palmen (1916–2013) [10, 60] or the aforementioned Martin Herrmann (1895–1976) from Mainz [33, 60].

Ketterl was particularly appreciative of his Munich mentor Maria Schug-Kösters. He honoured the latter with a laudation [41] on the occasion of her 60th birthday and with an obituary [52] after her death. He pointed out that she was “usually years ahead of her time”: “In 1950 she taught the ‘Efficiency principle’ – today it is impossible to imagine our work without the resulting ergonomic ideas in the dental field. The introduction of aseptic restraints in endodontics, direct and indirect capping, vital amputation and vital extirpation were taught by her to the students 10 years before the introduction of the new Bema [fee schedule] and practised in the course. As early as 1955, under her leadership, the special training of students in periodontology began [...] a level that has not yet been reached today at all

German universities in our field” [52]. He only briefly sketched the former head of the Munich clinic, Josef Heiß, who had already died in 1973, as a disputatious superior who had focused primarily on “maintaining power” [60].

Ketterl’s move to Mainz marked the beginning of his rapid rise as a scientist and expert politician. Both careers – that of the researcher and that of the professional politician – require closer examination:

As far as research achievements are concerned, a look at Ketterl’s scientific oeuvre provides concrete insights: According to this, he was unquestionably one of the authors with the most contributions. He published well over 300 papers, the majority of which they were not oriented to basic research but concerned clinical issues. This is what distinguished him from the two other prominent “dental researchers” of his time, Rudolf Naujoks [26] and Adolf Kröncke (1922–2009) [69], who were primarily basic researchers and also had a stronger transdisciplinary orientation. Ketterl’s research and writings focused on the fields of tooth preservation – especially endodontics – and periodontology. He dealt especially with the pulp and pulpitis therapy [2, 37, 68] and with root canal treatment [42, 45, 47, 49, 57, 61]. From the mid-1960s onwards, Ketterl’s focus shifted more towards periodontology [8, 12, 44, 46, 48, 53, 55, 56, 58]. Further work concerned tooth sealing [7, 70], the field of filling materials and filling therapy [38, 39, 50, 51, 74] as well as the specific treatment of the child and elderly patient [43, 45, 49, 59]. In addition, Ketterl served as editor of the “Deutscher Zahnärzte-Kalender” (German Dentists’ Calendar) from 1977 to 1995 and as one of four editors of the highly successful specialist book series “Praxis der Zahnheilkunde” (Dentistry Practice). In that series, a double-digit number of volumes appeared in a total of three editions in the last third of the century; it was not until the fourth edition – at the turn of the millennium – that a new editorial team was appointed [60].

But Werner Ketterl also had a clear influence on the university lo-

cation of Mainz and its surroundings. This can be seen firstly when looking at dentistry in Mainz: he succeeded in developing the dental clinic in Mainz into a university centre in the 1970s and 1980s. He established by-laws for the department of dental medicine, which stipulated that the managing clinic director was “elected for 2–3 years” and rotated [60]. In addition, he was able to considerably expand the staff of dental conservation and periodontology during his term of office – from one senior dentist and 5 assistants at the time he took up his post to 5 senior dentists and 12 assistants at the time of his retirement [60]. In addition, he succeeded in bringing an endowed professorship for experimental dentistry with further personnel and material resources to Mainz via the Blendax company [60].

Ketterl’s influence in Mainz was by no means limited to dentistry. This can be seen from the fact that he took over the office of dean several times. Having already served as Vice Dean in 1970, he acted as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine for the first time in 1971/72. After a restructuring and the establishment of an independent “Fachbereich Zahnmedizin” (Faculty area of Dentistry), he also presided over this as Dean in 1974 (until 1977). In 1982, he was appointed dean for the third time in Mainz, now representing the “Fachbereich Medizin” (Faculty area of Medicine); this time he held this office until 1984 [60]. In addition, from 1972 to 1996 he was a member of the Mainz “Institut für medizinische und pharmazeutische Prüfungsfragen” (Institute for Medical and Pharmaceutical Examination Questions, IMPP), which was influential in medical training [60]. In 1978/79 he was also chairman of the “Concilium Medicinale”, founded in Mainz in 1973. He held prominent positions outside the university as well: he acted as university advisor to the “Landeszahnärztekammer Rheinland-Pfalz” (Rhineland-Palatinate Dental Association) and was thus an advisory participant in all board meetings and also a member of the Assembly of Representatives there [60]. In addition, he was for a time chairman of

Figure 2 Extract from Ketterl’s Spruchkammer files (State Archives Munich, 1946–1948, [75]).

the administrative board of the “Zentralinstitut für Zahnärztliche Ergonomie” (Central Institute for Dental Ergonomics) of the Rhineland-Palatinate Dental Association, which was established in 1971. Finally, he was a member of the identification commission of the “Bundeskriminalamt” (Federal Criminal Police Office) in the neighbouring city of Wiesbaden for several years [60].

Ketterl’s status also grew visibly on a national scale: in 1967, for example, he succeeded the late Josef Kluczka on the board of the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Parodontoseforschung” (Working Group for Parodontosis Research, ARPA – since 1971: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Parodontologie, DGP; today: DG PARO) [5]. Over the years, he became a sought-after lecturer and surgeon in this field. For example, he offered live courses in periodontal surgery at the “Karlsruher Fortbildungsinstitut”

(Karlsruhe Advanced Training Institute) from the early 1970s. In 1974 he was elected president of the DGP, a post he held until 1978 [5, 30, 60]. A year earlier – in 1977 – Ketterl had also succeeded Rudolf Naujoks as president of the DGZMK, the largest national professional society [15, 27]. At that time, he had already been a member of the society’s executive board for 4 years and thus accompanied the foundation of the “Akademie Praxis und Wissenschaft” (Academy Practice and Science, APW) (1974) which was initiated under the aegis of Naujoks. The same applied for numerous working groups and study groups under the umbrella of the professional society. Ketterl also launched the long-established “Stellungnahmen der DGZMK” (DGZMK’s statements) on current issues in dentistry during his term of office [60]. However, he left a much smaller mark on the structure of the society

than his predecessors Fröhlich and Naujoks. Thanks to Fröhlich and Naujoks, the DGZMK was considered largely consolidated and well equipped for future tasks when Ketterl took office. Ketterl retained the office of DGZMK president until 1981 [15, 27].

Ketterl also attained an important position in the “Bundesverband der Deutschen Zahnärzte” (German Dental Association, BDZ; today: BZÄK): He succeeded Carl-Heinz Fischer as BDZ continuing education officer [13, 60]. In this capacity he organised, among other things, for more than 10 years the popular “Fortbildungswoche in Meran” (Advanced Training Week in Merano) – an international conference at which he was able to gather up to 100 university lecturers in Merano which enabled him to expand his professional network [60].

In addition, he gained influence within the “Kassenzahnärztliche Bundesvereinigung” (National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Dentists, KZBV): there he was responsible for the appointment and professional supervision of periodontology assessors and reviewers [60].

Against the background of these diverse researches, offices and functions, it seems no exaggeration to attribute to Ketterl a leading and formative role in contemporary dentistry. He owed this status not only to his professional and professional-political qualities, but also to his appearance: He had a great presence, to which above all his strong and sonorous voice contributed (“This voice of his will still be remembered by many, a Bavarian bass who could often enough do without microphones” [30]). In addition, he was considered strong in opinion and decision-making. Against this background, his academic student Detlef Heidemann called him a “man who could get to the heart of a matter, who could also force decisions, always well prepared” [30].

Ketterl’s standing in science and professional politics is also reflected in the honours he has received, especially since the 1980s: in 1980 he was awarded the Gold Badge of Honour of the German Dental Association and in 1982 the Badge of Hon-

our of the DGZMK. In 1987 he received the Otto Loos Medal of the “Zahnärztlicher Verein zu Frankfurt am Main” (Frankfurt Dental Association). In 1990, the DGP appointed him an honorary member, in 1993 the DGZMK and in 1996 the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahnerhaltung” (German Society for Tooth Preservation, DGZ) awarded him the same distinction. In 1992, he was awarded the “Bundesverdienstkreuz I. Klasse” (Federal Cross of Merit I. Class) being followed by an honorary membership of the Humboldt University of Berlin (1993). International awards included honorary membership in the “Società Italiana di Odontostomatologia” (1976), membership in the “Pierre Fauchard Academy” awarded in 1977, honorary membership in the “Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde” (Austrian Society for Dental and Oral Medicine, ÖGZMK) (1982), the medal of the “Tokyo Dental College” (1983) and the Fellowship of the “Academy of Dentistry International” (1985) [60].

Last but not least, Ketterl was exceptionally successful as a teacher and mentor: his academic students included the later full professors Friedrich Lampert (\*1945), Detlef Heidemann (\*1948), Claus-Walter Löst (\*1948) and Werner Geurtsen (\*1952). Ansgar Fesseler (\*1933), Leo Kremers (1938–2018), the periodontist Lavinia Flores de Jacobi (\*1944), the implantologist Karl-Ludwig Ackermann (1952–2020) and the endodontist Michael A. Baumann (\*1962) were also among his assistants [60].

### 3. Werner Ketterl and his relationship to National Socialism

Ketterl had already joined the “Deutsches Jungvolk” (German Young People, DJ) at the age of 12, in March 1937 – an organisation within the Hitler Youth (HJ) that served the purpose of introducing young people to National Socialist ideology. Ketterl advanced there to the rank of “Fähnleinführer”, which belonged to the “higher” ranks, recognised by the fact that they wore the rank insignia on their epaulettes. When Ketterl

joined, involvement in the DJ was still optional; however, since young people’s interest in this organisation had noticeably waned since the mid-1930s, compulsory membership in the DJ was established on March 25, 1939 [75].

More revealing than the involvement in the HJ is the fact that Ketterl applied for membership in the NSDAP in the month of his 18th birthday. He was admitted barely 3 months later (application January 22, 1943; admission April 20, 1943; party no. 9,531,925) [6]. Party admission was bound to the explicit application of the person concerned – even if after 1945 some former members made the protective claim in the denazification proceedings that they had been “automatically” transferred to the party [4], e.g. Eugen Fröhlich [25]. De facto, admission to the party without any action on one’s part was ruled out in order to ensure that only ideologically convinced persons were admitted. This corresponds with the fact that the party repeatedly imposed admission bans to keep political opportunists out of the NSDAP – for example from May 1933 to May 1937 [4].

Due to his NSDAP membership, Ketterl had to undergo denazification proceedings after the end of the Third Reich. In these proceedings, it was common practice for those affected to present character references – soon popularly called “Persilscheine” (after the detergent “Persil”) – in order to clear themselves of the accusation of a political burden [16]. In Ketterl’s case, the references were intended to refute the accusation that he had been a full-time HJ leader and to document that his involvement in a Nazi youth organisation was mainly sporting and not politically motivated. He also tried to emphasise that the party membership was “purely nominal”. Accordingly, the certificates stated that Ketterl’s involvement “could by no means be counted as full-time HJ leadership activity” and that he had primarily sought physical challenges in the activities [75]. However, one of the written attestations also revealed that Ketterl had made a habit of appearing in Jungvolk uniform: “De-

spite wearing the Jungvolk uniform, he was never a Hail[sic] Hitler greeter or shouter". However, it was not claimed that Ketterl had become a party member involuntarily or "automatically"; this assertion would have been particularly implausible with an entry age of 18 [75].

Ketterl also had to assess himself in the proceedings: In his questionnaire on April 24, 1946, he remarkably did not classify himself as unencumbered, but as a political "follower" [Fig. 4, 75]. However, he ultimately fell under the "Youth Amnesty" enacted by the Bavarian special minister Anton Pfeiffer (CSU, 1888–1957) in the summer of 1946: it decreed a blanket exemption from punishment for those "who were born after January 1, 1919" and had not committed Nazi crimes [34]. The denazification procedures became more and more of a farce: In the American occupation zone in particular, a number of exemptions from punishment were decided upon, as the denazification procedures took far longer than originally thought: therefore, the next step was a "Christmas amnesty" at the end of 1946, which spared people with physical disabilities and financially weak persons further proceedings. Then, in mid-1947, amnesties were also issued for assumed "followers" with low incomes and, in the spring of 1948, an amnesty for (late) returnees from the war. Despite the "Youth Amnesty", the proceedings against Ketterl were not officially concluded until January 27, 1948 [75].

When assessing NSDAP membership, it is necessary to evaluate the – individually different – backgrounds [16, 18, 23]. In the case of Ketterl, 2 aspects are important: firstly, he was very young when he applied for membership. In this respect, it is reasonable to assume in his favour that he may not yet have been able to fully grasp the implications of such a party-political commitment. Secondly, the respective life situation must be taken into account: While many university professors after 1945 claimed that they had only joined the party in order to preserve their own chances of habilitation or appointment or to avoid falling behind their politically loyal competitors [19, 79],

this argument did not apply to Ketterl, who was only born in 1925: as a high school graduate, he was by no means in a phase of life in which party membership would have been relevant to his career strategy. In other words, in his case there were no external constraints for joining the party.

One should not overestimate the early party-political commitment to National Socialism of the high school graduate Ketterl. However, the way in which the now 75-year-old university lecturer dealt with this biographical fact in his memoirs in 2000 is surprising:

Ketterl gave National Socialism and the Third Reich a lot of space in his autobiography – without needing to – but left his own party-political past completely unmentioned. Instead, with great pathos and moralising words, he placed himself above the many supporters of Nazi ideology: "Not even the 'Reichskristallnacht', which was experienced quite consciously, showed the people at home, but also abroad, whose brainchild the new government was, and no one can claim that they knew nothing about it. [...] The National Socialist press spoke openly of the extermination of the Jews. Concentration camps came into being [...]" [60].

He also expressed incomprehension that the German population showed no real counter-reaction to the announcement of total war: "That almost has something to do with hypnosis. And that too at a time when actually every thinking person knew that the war was lost" [60]. He described himself in the memoirs – in deliberate contrast to the National Socialists he sketched – as a convinced "pacifist": "War, that means for me the legalisation of the killing of other people [...] So I am a pacifist. War [-] is a crime" [60].

Said statements – the indignation over the "Reich Pogrom Night" (commonly: "Reichskristallnacht" or "Night of broken glass"), the self-description as a pacifist and opponent of war, and the sharp condemnation of the increasingly escalating war rhetoric of the Nazi press – must also be surprising because Ketterl joined the party just in the spring of 1943: i.e. at a time when the consequences

of the Reich Pogrom Night and the subsequent persecution of Jews had long been visible, the war had already cost millions of lives and, moreover, had been declared a "war of extermination" or "total war" by the Nazis.

It remains unclear why Ketterl, as a former NSDAP member, decided to make a moral assessment of the Third Reich in his memoirs at all. Hermann Euler (1878–1961), for example, had largely left the subject out of his autobiography [28]. Another possibility would have been to speak in the first person ("We, the people in the Reich") instead of the third person ("the people in the Reich") in order to assert less distance from the population. In any case, it can be ruled out that Ketterl had no memory of his own political past: After all, he was involved with National Socialism in one way or another for more than 10 years of his life – beginning with his entry into the DJ or HJ (1937–1942), through the years of party membership (1943–1945) to the conclusion of his trial before the Spruchkammer (1948). Another argument against memory gaps is that Ketterl describes his life in great detail in the memoirs and often gives impressively precise chronological details. Against this background, it can be assumed that Ketterl consciously used the autobiography to construct a different self-image for the Nazi period.

## Conclusions

The available sources provide evidence in various respects of Werner Ketterl's special position in contemporary German dentistry. It should also be emphasised that Ketterl presents his own scientific and professional-political achievements in his autobiography in a factually correct manner. In this respect, the picture that the primary and secondary sources paint of the university lecturer and professional politician Werner Ketterl is congruent with the self-image in his memoirs.

It should also be noted that Ketterl understood dentistry as a unity of science and professional politics. With this symbiotic approach, he sought and found far-reaching opportunities for shaping and influencing – both in scientific professional

organisations and in professional-political committees and functions. Thus, he not only had an impact within the scientific community, but also shaped the public perception of dentistry like hardly any other university teacher of his time.

The situation is different with Ketterl's role in the Third Reich: there, Ketterl's autobiographical statements and the documented facts cannot be reconciled: In his memoirs, Ketterl not only conceals his own membership in the Nazi party, but also elevates himself morally above the supporters of National Socialism and the (in his eyes largely ignorant) German population with his statements. His autobiography thus offers an impressive example of how the construction of the autobiographical self and historical reality can diverge, especially when describing delicate life situations. This also shows the limited epistemic significance of autobiographical texts [28].

Against this background, the message Ketterl addressed to the readers of his autobiography takes on a second meaning. He stated: "Perhaps one can learn something for one's own life from my life, from my mistakes and successes, from my experience. That is the only justification for publishing memoirs [...]" [60].

### Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest within the meaning of the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.

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