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A complex case: Ewald Harndt (1901–1996) and his relationship to National Socialism

Introduction: Ewald Harndt (1901–1996) has shaped modern German dentistry like hardly any other scientist: The leading national professional society (DGZMK) elected him its president (1957–1965), the Free University of Berlin appointed him its rector (1967–1969), and the German Dental Association (BZÄK) awarded him the Fritz-Linnert Badge of Honour (1991). He received similar awards and honours throughout the world.

Discussion: While Harndt's professional and academic achievements are undisputed, there is still a lack of clarity regarding his role in the Third Reich: On the one hand, he was dismissed in 1945 due to his membership in the Nazi Party (NSDAP), on the other hand, more recent articles point out that Harndt was considered a political suspect in the Nazi state and thus place him close to an opponent or even victim of the Nazi regime. Against this background, the present paper aims to illuminate Harndt's relationship to National Socialism. The methodological basis is a comprehensive analysis of the available archival sources and contemporary printed material and a systematic re-evaluation of the secondary literature on Ewald Harndt.

Results: It can be shown that Harndt made a number of inconsistent, false or euphemistic statements, particularly in the denazification process. The source analysis leads to the conclusion that Harndt cannot be classified as a victim but as a political follower. He was undoubtedly not a "fervent" National Socialist, but he served the regime as a member of various Nazi organizations and networks, as well as by endorsing Nazi "health policy" and using Nazi terms – notably in the fields of eugenics ("vererbt geistig minderwertige Kinder", "Unfruchtbarmachung", "Blutsverwandtschaft") and religion ("deutschreligiös").

Keywords: Third Reich; History of Dentistry; Eugenics

Introduction

The scientific and professional importance of Ewald Harndt is beyond doubt: There is hardly any important position within the university hierarchy and hardly any honour in the field of dentistry that he did not archive or receive. Even after his death he remained in the collective memory of the profession, as shown by the “Ewald Harndt Medal” last awarded in 2018.

However, Harndt’s role in the Third Reich is much less contoured: On the one hand, it is known that he belonged to the Nazi Party (NSDAP), and on the other hand, more recent essays claim that Harndt had been classified as a political suspect in the National Socialist state and had suffered repression.

But what are the historical facts? What really distinguished his personality, what was his role in the Third Reich and how did his career develop – before 1945, but also in the post-war period? Was Harndt a perpetrator or a victim, or does he evade such dichotomous categorization? These are the core questions of this paper. The first step is to trace the life and work of Ewald Harndt. In the following, the focus will be on the years 1933 to 1945 to examine Harndt’s relationship to National Socialism. Subsequently, it will be clarified how Harndt’s role in the Third Reich was perceived and evaluated after 1945 – starting with the denazification proceedings, through the laudations and obituaries up to other more recent publications that deal with his biography. In the end, concise conclusions are drawn.

Material and Methods

The study is based on several archival source collections from the Federal Archives in Berlin and the Berlin State Archives, some of which have been evaluated for the first time. Among them is also the denazification file of Ewald Harndt.

In addition, Harndt’s publications and reviews from 1933 to 1945, various directories of dentists and the “Reichsarztregister” (German medical register) were analyzed. Moreover, a systematic re-analysis of the relevant international research literature on

the life and work of Ewald Harndt and his professional environment was carried out – with a specific focus on the issues outlined above.

Results

Ewald Harndt – a brief outline of his life and work

Ewald Albert Heinrich Harndt was born on January 22, 1901 in Berlin (Fig. 1, [49]). His curriculum vitae is very well documented [2, 16, 17, 20, 53, 62–64, 66, 68, 71, 74, 75]. He was the son of the Berlin merchant Adolf Harndt and his wife Emma, née Peege [2]. Harndt grew up in Berlin, where he attended elementary school (1907–11), secondary school (1911–16) and subsequently the “Königstädter Oberrealschule”. There he passed his Abitur in 1920 [60]. In the same year he began studying medicine and dentistry in Berlin. In 1924 he passed the dental examination – also in Berlin – and obtained his license to practice dentistry. There he received his doctorate (Dr. med. dent.) in 1925 with a “histological-bacteriological study on periodontitis chronica granulomatosa”. In 1926 he passed the medical examination and obtained his license as physician.

A year earlier, in 1925, he had already founded a dental practice in a working-class district of Berlin, which, however, “had only little popularity” [64], so that he looked for alternatives. In 1926 he became a volunteer at the Surgical Clinic of the Friedrich Wilhelms University Berlin with August Bier and at the Medical Clinic with Friedrich Kraus. In 1927 he moved to the Dental Institute of the University of Berlin as an assistant, where he worked with the renowned professors Wilhelm Dieck, Fritz Williger and Hermann Schroeder. There he gained a foothold: In 1929, he obtained his second doctorate (Dr. med.) on the “Amalgam-Mercury Question”. In the year preceding the doctorate he had married Frieda Gertrud Koepnik in Berlin who bore him 2 sons – Raimund (1930–2010) and Thomas (*1932) [2]. In 1935 he became senior assistant and closest collaborator of Dieck’s successor Eugen Wannemacher. In June 1936, Harndt’s ha-

bilitation on the subject of “Rho-danide in Saliva” was completed, and in April 1938 he was appointed as a “Privatdozent” (private lecturer, comparable to associate professor) – also in Berlin. One year later, he became a “Dozent neuer Ordnung” (lecturer of the new order) – which was a better financial position –, and in 1944 he became a “außerplanmäßiger Professor” (titular professor).

After the end of the Second World War, Harndt was released from university service by registered mail from the occupying authorities (Fig. 2, [60]). In 1946, however, things went uphill again: He then became (initially provisional) head of the Department of Dental Conservation at the Dental Institute of the University of Berlin. In 1948, he was promoted to the position of regular extraordinary professor and director of the Department for tooth conservation at the Dental Institute of the former Friedrich Wilhelm University in Eastern Berlin (since 1949: “Humboldt University of Berlin”). In May 1950 he became full professor (“Ordinarius”) and director of the Dental Institute. Then Harndt decided to take a momentous step: In November 1950 he gave up his professorship in the East and moved to West Berlin, where he initially worked as a dentist in a private practice. But already in 1951 he was offered a position at the newly founded Free University (Freie Universität, FU) in West Berlin. Here he started as a lecturer, became an honorary professor in 1954 and then full professor (“Ordinarius”) for dentistry, oral and maxillofacial surgery and head of the (newly established) polyclinic of the same name in 1956. He held these positions until his retirement in 1970. Several years of work in his own dental practice followed.

Ewald Harndt died on October 11, 1996 in Bad Pyrmont – at the blessed age of almost 96 years.

At the end of his life Harndt could look back on a brilliant career with many awards and outstanding offices, which can only be addressed here in extracts: In early 1937 Harndt received the Miller Prize of the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde” (German Association for Dental, Oral and Maxillofa-



Figure 1 Ewald Harndt (1901–1996)

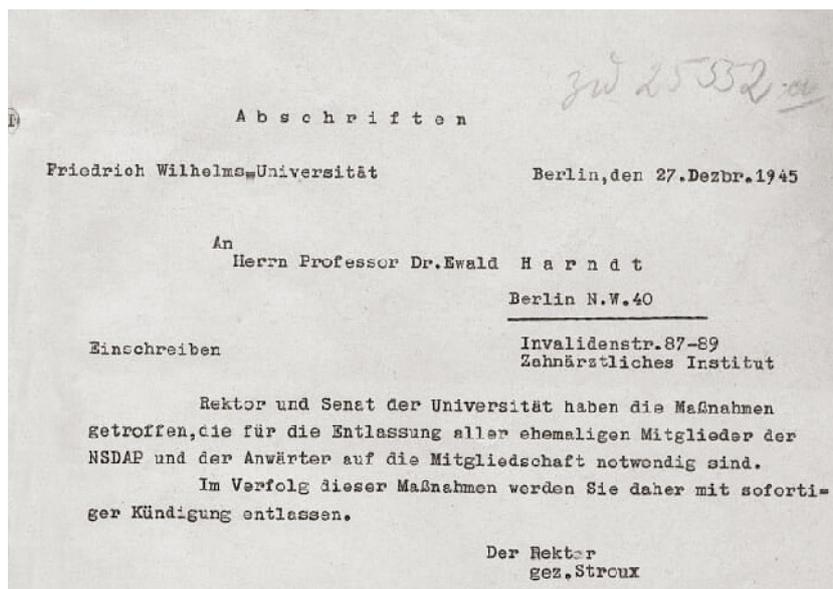


Figure 2 Dismissal of Harndt from university (1945)

cial Medicine, DGZMK) – then as now the most important scientific prize in German dentistry. From 1947 to 1968 he was an elected board member of the German “ARPA” (today: German Society for Periodontology, DGParo) and from 1949 to 1969 a board member of the DGZMK, including 8 years (1957 to 1965) as president. Harndt also was a successful editor in the post-war period: as early as 1947 he was active in this function for the DZZ (German Dental Journal – for the Berlin section, until 1964). In the same year he also became editor-in-chief of the “Forum Parodontologicum”, and from 1955 to 1976 he published the popular “Deutscher Zahnärzte-Kalender” (German Dentist Calendar).

In 1954 he received the “Jahresbestpreis” (Annual Best Price) of the DGZMK for his scientific work, in 1957 the medal of the Association Générale des Dentistes de Belgique and in 1959 the honorary membership of both the Italian Stomatological Society and the Fédération Nationale Française. Honorary memberships in the Association of Austrian Dentists (1961), ARPA Internationale (1963), American College of Dentists (1964) and DGZMK (1967) followed.

He also rose to the highest university positions: In 1961 he was elected Dean of the Medical Faculty

of the FU Berlin and in 1968 he became Rector of the university – this step undoubtedly marked the height of his career. After Oskar Römer (1928), Johannes Reinmöller (1933) and Heinrich Hammer (1958), Harndt was only the fourth German professor of dentistry to be elected rector.

This was followed in 1968 by the “Elmer S. Best Memorial Award” of the Pierre Fauchard Academy, in 1969 by the honorary membership of the German ARPA and in 1972 by that of the Association of University Lecturers in Dentistry, Oral and Maxillofacial Medicine. In 1974 Harndt received the “Goldene Ehrennadel” (Gold Badge of Honor) of the DGZMK, in 1985 the “Goldene Ehrennadel” of the “Deutsche Zahnärzteschaft” (German Dental Association), in 1987 a further honorary membership of the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahnerhaltung” (German Society for Tooth Preservation, DGZ).

While a jubilee publication had been published for Harndt’s 80th birthday [53], a ceremony was held at the Charité in 1991 in honour of his 90th birthday. Now, Harndt was awarded the “Fritz-Linnert-Ehrenzeichen” (Fritz-Linnert Medal of Honor) of the German Dental Association. Finally, in 2001 a festive symposium followed in memory of

Harndt, who would have turned 100 this very year. On this occasion, the “Zahnärztekammer Berlin” (Berlin Dental Council) established the “Ewald Harndt Medal” [16, 63].

Harndt’s main areas of work and research were tooth preservation and endodontics, in particular pulpitis diagnostics and systematics as well as the principles of gangrene treatment. In the German-speaking world he became the eponym of the “Harndts Pulpitis Schema” (Harndt’s Pulpitis Scheme) [14]. In addition, he established a system of gangrene treatment, whereby he considered the latter – contrary to the common opinion of his time – also promising for molars. Besides, he dealt with cast fillings, the questionable toxicity of silver and copper amalgams, the (protective) role of saliva in cariology, gingival and periodontal diseases and oral histobacteriology and pathophysiology. Harndt was also very much in favour of retaining high-quality amalgams in dentistry. Furthermore, his animal experiments were widely recognized: Harndt fed beagles with sugar in order to investigate possible tooth damage caused by sugar intake (“sugar dogs”). His habilitation study on “salivary rhodanide” also attracted a great deal of attention – it was precisely this work that earned him the Miller Prize mentioned above [53].

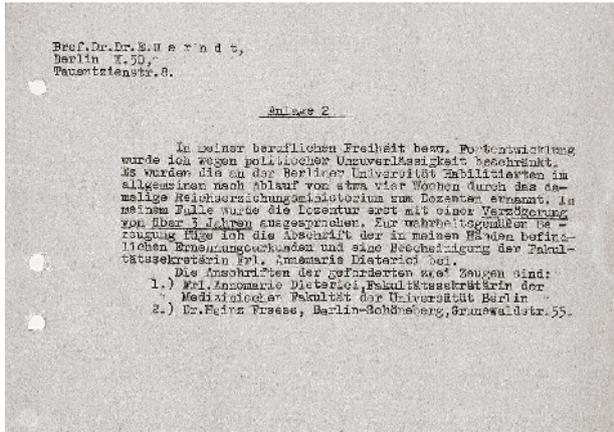


Figure 3 Allegation of disadvantages due to political unreliability

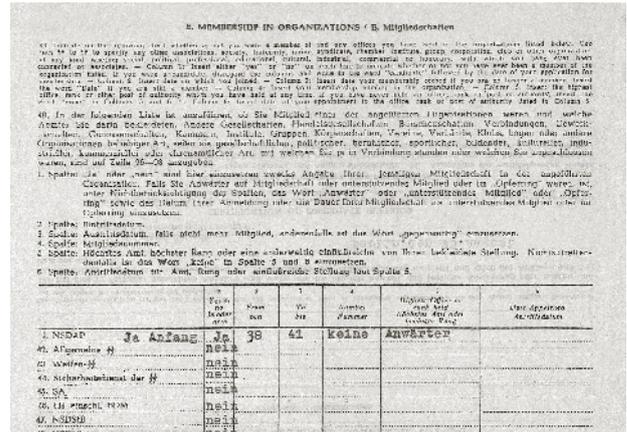


Figure 4 Harndt's statement concerning NSDAP-membership

Harndt was regarded as an extremely powerful and influential personality and thus occasionally received criticism. In his autobiography, Carl-Heinz Fischer stressed that Harndt, as chairman of the DGZMK, “could not part with his presidency” [17] and that Harndt had managed to be made the successor to the emeritus Carl Ulrich Fehr in Berlin in the mid-1950s – against the explicit wish of the latter [17]. In addition, Fischer ambiguously remarked that Harndt’s rectorate had attracted a lot of attention [17]. In fact, his rectorate (1967 to 1969) was in the public eye – especially because it coincided exactly with the time of the (West Berlin) student unrest. Harndt was subjected to strong personal criticism from the general student committee, including a polemical leaflet entitled “Studentenreform und Karies” (Student Reform and Caries) [1]. On the other hand, the fact that Harndt, in cooperation with the Technical University of Berlin, initiated the “founding of an interdisciplinary Institute for Caries Research e.V.” (1964) was widely acknowledged [54].

It is also worth mentioning that Harndt was highly appreciated by many of his academic students [53]. Among Harndt’s habilitation candidates were Werner Hielscher (habilitation 1960), Karl Eichner (1961), Gerhard Haim (1962) and Gerhard Frenkel (1963). His son, Raimund Harndt (1930–2010), also habilitated 1965 also in dentistry and became a

well-known university professor and professional politicians. In his private life Ewald Harndt was interested in philosophy, theatre, art and literature.

Harndt was able to develop a remarkable posthumous fame that continues to the present day: As mentioned, the “Ewald-Harndt Medal” was established in 2001. It was awarded over a period of 18 years – up to and including 2018 [21].

Harndt has published more than 130 papers in total. Especially worth mentioning are: his 2 doctoral theses on chronic periodontitis and the amalgam issue [36, 37], his habilitation thesis [38], his monograph “The Cast Filling” (Die Gußfüllung) [41], which has been published several times since 1941, and his contributions to endodontics [42, 43, 45, 48] and periodontology [44, 46, 47].

His most successful publication was, however, *not* related to dentistry: his book “Französisch im Berliner Jargon” (French in Berlin Slang), published in 1977, became a bestseller and is still available in bookshops today [50].

Ewald Harndt's relationship to National Socialism (1933–1945)

When Hitler came to political power in 1933, Harndt was just 32 years old and thus belonged to the group of young dental scientists. The consequences of the change of power were dramatic for Jewish and politically oppositional colleagues: They

were immediately dismissed from their career prospects and – in many cases – forced into emigration [34, 58, 70].

Harndt, however, who was striving for an academic career and was able to provide the necessary proof of “Aryan” descent, found favourable conditions in Berlin: On the one hand, the Berlin Dental Institute was the most prestigious of its kind in the German Reich, and on the other hand, Harndt’s superior and mentor Eugen Wannenmacher was considered to be loyal to the line and politically influential. Born in 1897, Wannenmacher had studied medicine and dentistry, completed a double doctorate and qualified as a professor of dentistry at the University of Tübingen in 1925. In 1929 he was appointed extraordinary professor at the Dental Institute in Tübingen, and in 1934 he accepted a position as extraordinary professor at the much larger and more prestigious Dental Institute of the University of Berlin. In April 1933 – just before the party ban on further membership was imposed – he had joined the NSDAP and initially became the training leader of the Nazi local group in Tübingen [9, 13, 35]. He also joined the “NS-Dozentenbund” (NS Lecturers’ Association), the “NS-Ärztebund” (NS Medical Association), the “NS-Volkswohlfahrt” (NS People’s Welfare Association), the “Reichsbund der Deutschen Beamten Reich” (Association of German Civil Servants), the “NS-

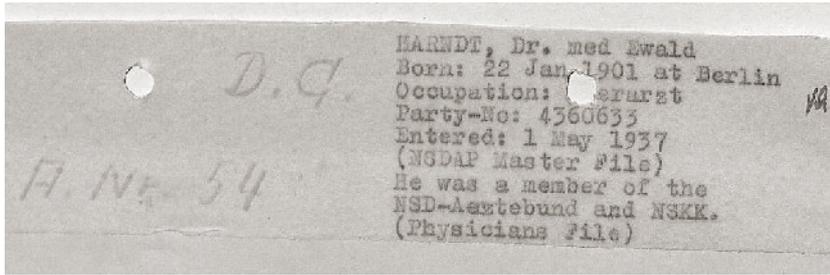


Figure 5 Proof and date of NSDAP membership including party number

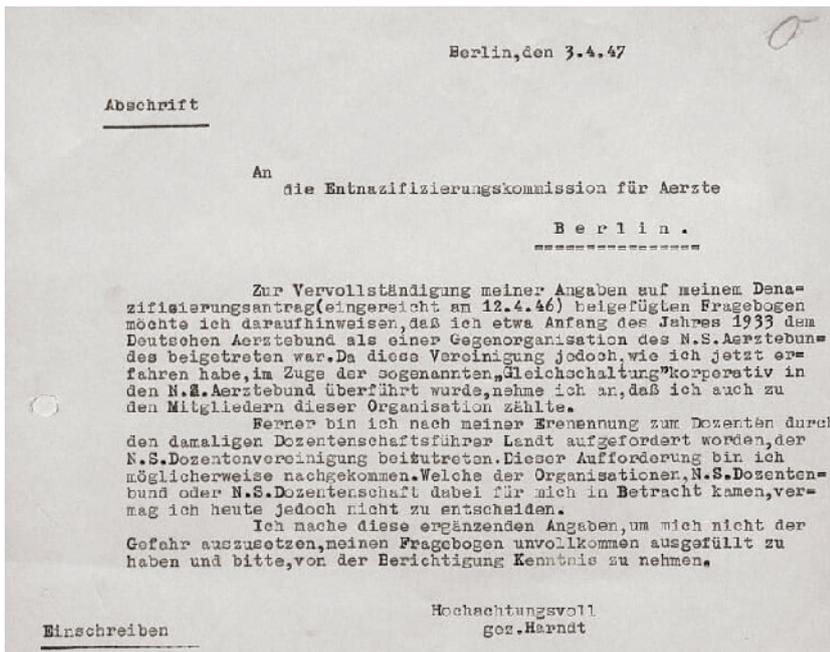


Figure 6 Revised statement regarding NS memberships

Lehrerbund" (NS Teachers' Association) and the "Reichsluftschutzbund" (Reich Air Defence Association) [4, 10]. Moreover, he became a member of the SS (Schutzstaffel, No. 460.838), where he rose to "SS Sturmabführer" (storm ban leader) in mid-September 1943. Wannemacher also held an important position within the politically centralized dental profession: In 1933 he was appointed press officer of the DGZMK, which had also been centralized. As such, he was also editor of the specialist journals "Deutsche Zahn- Mund- und Kieferheilkunde" (German Dental, Oral and Maxillofacial Medicine) and "Deutsche Zahnärztliche Wochenschrift" (German Dental Weekly). In addition, he was a lecturer at the Leader School (Führer Schule) of the German medical profession in Alt Rhese, which

had been founded as an ideological "training castle" of the NS Medical Association and opened on June 1, 1935 [9, 11].

How much Wannemacher shifted to the Nazi ideology is also shown by the fact that he left the Catholic Church in 1936 and confessed to being "gottgläubig" (believer in god) [9] – his wife did the same [10]. "Gottgläubig" was a self-designation of National Socialists who were not atheists, but who had turned away from the church for political reasons. The term was considered a sign of a special ideological closeness to National Socialism. In 1944, Wannemacher was appointed to the "Beirat des Bevollmächtigten für das Gesundheitswesen Karl Brandt" (Advisory Board of Karl Brandt, Plenipotentiary for Health Care) – Karl Brandt was the most

senior Nazi physician in the Third Reich and the appointment also represented a political vote of confidence. In his much-cited encyclopaedia of persons in the Third Reich ("Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich"), Ernst Klee counted Wannemacher among the "leading dentists of the Nazi era", probably against the background of his various Nazi-specific functions and offices [56].

Wannemacher acted as Harndt's mentor in Berlin and accompanied his habilitation project, which was extremely successful: Harndt was admitted to the habilitation in 1936 and was able to complete the procedure without difficulty. Shortly thereafter he was awarded the prestigious Miller Prize by the DGZMK – explicitly for his habilitation study.

Both successes are also particularly noteworthy because after 1945 Harndt stated in the archival documented denazification proceedings that he had suffered disadvantages in the Third Reich "because of political unreliability" [60]. As central evidence of this, he stated in a document entitled "Annex 2" that he was not appointed as a lecturer until 1939 (Fig. 3, [60]). He also claimed in a "Berufungsregistrierungsformular" (appointment registration form) that his entry into the NSDAP had been forced ("unter Zwang") [60]. On the official "Fragebogen" (Questionnaire) of the military government, he further noticed (1) that he had only been a party candidate ("Anwärter"), not a member, (2) that he applied for admission to the party in 1938, (3) that he had left the NSDAP in 1941 and (4) that no party number had been assigned to him (Fig. 4, [60]).

To start with the information provided in the questionnaire: none of the four allegations was really correct; according to the sources consulted, he was not merely a candidate but a member of the party (Fig. 5, [12, 60]). Nor had he applied for membership in 1938, but had already joined the party in 1937. Besides, it would not have been possible earlier: It was not until early summer 1937 that the membership ban imposed in May 1933 to prevent political opportunists from joining the party was relaxed. Harndt actually submitted the

application on July 27, 1937 and was admitted retroactively as of May 1, 1937 – the earliest possible date [12]. This chronological sequence – namely the prompt backdating carried out by the party – also shows that his admission to the party apparently took place without reservations. However, precisely this would have been to be expected from a politically unreliable applicant. The sources also repeatedly document that Harndt – contrary to his assertion – indeed was given a party number: It was 4,360,633 (Fig. 5). The statement that he had resigned from the party in 1941 was also incorrect. Harndt tried to “save” it by means of a later explanation which stated that he had not paid membership fees since 1941 (“In 1941 I stopped paying my membership fees”) – which, if true, was quite different from declaring one’s withdrawal from the party. In the NSDAP membership file there is indeed no mention of a party resignation – neither for the year 1941 nor for a later date [12]. In other words: By means of four incorrect statements Harndt tried to reinterpret an 8-year party membership (1937–1945) into a 3-year candidacy (1938–1941).

It is true that Harndt’s appointment as a Privatdozent was made with a noticeable delay. However, here too, he came up with half-truths: In fact, it was not a period of “more than 3 years” as Harndt claimed in the denazification proceedings (Fig. 3, [60]), but less than two years: The habilitation was awarded on June 10, 1936 with the conferral of the Dr. med. habil., the appointment as Privatdozent on April 19, 1938 – Harndt himself provided this information about his person *before* 1945 in writing in a file card [2].

Moreover, the reasons for the delayed appointment were far less serious and far less fundamental than Harndt later insinuated: Harndt was by no means *per se* considered politically unreliable or suspect. The Nazi system had a polycratic structure, i.e. it was characterized by a multitude of responsible, often competitive persons and centres of power. This polycracy was also evident in the Harndt case: As usual, various statements were obtained before appointment as

a Privatdozent. Some very positive assessments of Harndt were joined by criticism from the student and lecturer leadership, according to which Harndt (1) showed a “certain flippancy” “towards students and patients”, which would not correspond to the (supposedly high) demands made on a university teacher in the Third Reich, and (2) that he had a “well-functioning private practice”, which would or should not be allowed to assistants and why he should not be appointed as Privatdozent [3]. However, these 2 arguments were contradicted in several other statements – among others by Eugen Wannemacher himself, who emphasised that Harndt had “proven himself perfectly”. Earlier, Professor Hermann Schröder had already pointed out that Harndt was “politically absolutely reliable”. It was also stressed that the admissibility of a private practice in question was irrelevant to the assessment of Harndt’s personal suitability [3].

Such disparate statements in matters of promotion or appointment were the order of the day in the Nazi polycracy – as well as internal party power struggles and personal profiling attempts at the expense of others. Prominent cases from the field of dentistry include professors such as Guido Fischer [25] or Friedrich Proell [18] or the dentist Friedrich Krohn [67], all of whom were convinced National Socialists, but became involved in internal party disputes and were discredited – nevertheless, they were no political opponents, but representatives of Nazi ideology. In most cases, such differences of opinion ultimately had no consequences – as in the case of Harndt: from 1936 onwards, he passed through a whole series of career stages that would not have been possible for politically suspicious persons. Not only was he admitted to the habilitation procedure, as mentioned above, and chosen as a Miller Prize winner by the politically centralized professional society (1936 respectively 1937), but he was also accepted as a member of the NSDAP (1937) and subsequently – albeit belatedly – appointed as a Privatdozent (1938). In the following year, he was

promoted to (better paid) “Dozent der neuen Ordnung” and in 1944 to titular professor. A short time later, due to an illness of Wannemacher, he was appointed provisional head of the department [66].

Remarkably, a curriculum vitae written by Harndt himself around 1944 is documented, in which no mention is made of the later claimed “political unpopularity” or discrimination. Rather, it states succinctly: “In May 1936, the medical faculty of the Berlin University pronounced my habilitation. In 1937 I attended the Lecturers’ Academy in Kiel-Kietzeberg for 3 weeks, whereupon I was appointed lecturer in dentistry on 19.4.1938” [3]. He thus documented with his own hand that there were not more than 3 but less than 2 years between the habilitation and the appointment as Privatdozent.

On an undated questionnaire from around 1938, Harndt was asked about a possible “political activity”. He did not negate the question, but noted the following activities: “Sturmarzt i. NSKK, Arzt i. Hauptamt f. Volksgesundheit, NSDAP” (Storm doctor at NSKK, doctor at the General Office of Public Health, NSDAP) [3].

Harndt did not take too much care with other statements in the denazification proceedings either: While he stated in 1946 that he had only entered into a NSDAP candidacy and an NSKK supporting membership, he revised this statement one year later in an addendum that he submitted to the “Denazification Commission” on April 3, 1947 (Fig. 6, [60]): He now declared that he might also have “got into” the membership lists of the NS Medical Association (NS-Ärztebund) and the NS Lecturers’ Association (NS-Dozentenbund). In the first case, he argued that there might have been an automatic inclusion in the course of the political centralization, in the second case, he conceded that he “possibly responded to a request” [to become a member]. In both cases, however, he stated that he was not quite sure [12, 60].

These “gaps in memory” are not plausible for the simple reason that Harndt himself filled out a university teachers’ card in the Third Reich, in

Frenzel, A. (Berlin): Die Kariesbereitschaft beim kindlichen Schwachsinn. Dtsch. Zahn-Mund-Kieferhkl. 3, H. 7, 493 (1936).

Um festzustellen, welchen Anteil die sogenannten Hilfsschüler, also die geistig-seelisch minderwertigen Kinder an der prophylaktischen Fürsorge durch die Schulzahnpflege nehmen, wird die Kariesbereitschaft beim kindlichen Schwachsinn geprüft. Nachdem zunächst das diagnostische Bild des erbkranken Schulkindes beschrieben ist, bringt die Arbeit sozial-statistische Zahlen über die Kariesanfälligkeit von etwa hundert biologisch minderwertigen Hilfsschülern. Bei annähernd gleichem Zahnbestand wie bei den normalsinnigen Kindern zeigten die schwachsinnigen deutlich eine niedrigere Kariesfrequenz. Verf. untersuchte nun, ob die für die Bezahnung des Hilfsschülers gefundene auffallend verminderte Kariesanfälligkeit sich etwa von einer Immunität gegenüber Fäulnisprozessen in der Mundhöhle ableiten läßt und kommt zu dem Ergebnis, daß der allgemein körperliche Gesundheitszustand, mit dem die vererbt geistig minderwertigen Kinder oftmals ausgestattet sind, auch seinen Ausdruck in einem kraftvoll entwickelten Kauorgan mit lückenlosen Zahnreihen findet. E. Harndt (Berlin)

Figure 7 Harndt's review of the publication by A. Frenzel (1937)

which he gave complete details in the pre-printed column "Membership in national associations". There he listed: "NSDAP, NSKK, N.S. Ärztebund, N.S. Dozentenbund, Hauptamt für Öffentliche Gesundheit, Luftschutzbund" [2].

The half-truths, corrections and dramatizations mentioned above fundamentally undermine the credibility of Harndt's statements in the denazification proceedings. The latter also applies to his notice that his application for admission to the NSDAP had been "forced" [60]. The membership ban imposed from 1933 to 1937 rather points to the opposite: the party wanted to protect itself especially against members who did not join out of inner conviction. In fact, there are several examples of applications for membership that were rejected because the candidates were considered politically suspect, such as the dentist Hans Hermann Rebel, director of the Dental Institute of the University of Göttingen since 1925 [7], or Ferdinand Lehm, who was at times chairman of the Prussian Dental Association and was to become head of the social welfare organization of the "Verband der Deutschen Zahnärztlichen Berufsvertretungen" (Association of German Dental Professional Associations) in 1952 [6]. It is very likely, however, that Harndt was advised to apply for

membership in view of his intended university career or that he himself realized that membership could be helpful. There is no doubt that in many cases, party membership favored careers. It is not without reason that around 60 % of dental lecturers became NSDAP members in the Third Reich – but that also meant that 4 out of 10 university lecturers did *not* join the party [32]. Besides, the latter group also included representatives who were well-esteemed in the Third Reich, such as the professors Otto Loos [28] and Paul Adloff [52] or the up-and-coming lecturers Karl Schuchardt and Richard Trauner. Concerning Trauner, no less than 4 expert opinions by leading professors of the Third Reich are documented, who gave him a positive report around 1943/44 – despite his lack of party membership – and assessed him as suitable for a chair [8].

In addition, there are other facts that were not even mentioned in Harndt's denazification proceedings, but which raise all the more doubts about Harndt's self-staging as a politically unpopular, disadvantaged lecturer: During the Third Reich Harndt repeatedly reviewed publications devoted to Nazi ideology and especially to eugenics and so-called hereditary diseases. In the "Zentralblatt für die gesamte Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde" (Central Gazette for all

Dental, Oral and Maxillofacial Medicine) alone there are 10 reviews by Harndt – "mainly from the category of eugenics" [73]. Why Harndt found himself willing to review such delicate writings at all, and thus to take a political position, is not evident from the files. What is certain, however, is that he did not in the least distance himself from the research approach or content of the reviewed works. It is also conspicuous that he made completely uncritical use of NS terminology. An example is Harndt's review of A. Frenzel's publication on the caries incidence in "infantile idiocy" (Die Kariesbereitschaft beim kindlichen Schwachsinn) [19]. Harndt writes about this literally (Fig. 7, [39]): "After first describing the diagnostic picture of the hereditary sick school child, the work brings social-statistical figures about the caries susceptibility of about one hundred biologically inferior children (*biologisch minderwertigen Hilfsschülern*)." He also uses the Nazi phrases "geistig-seelisch minderwertige Kinder" and "vererbt geistig minderwertige Kinder" [39].

A second example is the review of a contribution by H. Eckhardt on the possible forced sterilization of patients with cleft lip and palate ([15]. Harndt wrote his review in 1940, by which time leading professors such as Georg Axhausen, Wolfgang Rosenthal and Franz Ernst had long since

Eckhardt, H. (Berlin): Die Beurteilung der Lippen-Kiefer-Gaumenspalten im Hinblick auf das Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses. Dtsch. Zahn-Mund-Kieferhkl. 5, H. 4, 260 (1938).

Es wird untersucht, ob die Lippen-Kiefer-Gaumenspalten als „schwere erbliche körperliche Mißbildungen“ im Sinne der Ziffer 8 des § 1 des Gesetzes zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses angesehen werden können. Obwohl die Spaltbildungen Hemmungsmißbildungen aus dem zweiten Fötalmonat und damit als „körperliche Mißbildungen“ anzusehen sind, so sind doch nur die Gaumenspalten und der Wolfsrachen als „schwere“ Mißbildungen zu betrachten. Diese Spaltbildungen können aber heute durch operative und prothetische Methoden in leichte Mißbildungen umgewandelt werden. Die Unfruchtbarmachung bei diesen Erkrankungen wird daher abhängen von dem jeweiligen Nachweis der Erbllichkeit, das heißt dem wiederholten Vorkommen der Mißbildung in schwerer, leichter oder leichtester Form innerhalb der Blutsverwandtschaft.

E. Harndt (Berlin)

(Fig. 1–8: D. Groß)

Figure 8 Harndt's review of the publication by H. Eckhardt (1940)

revealed a protective attitude towards their “cleft patients” and criticized forced sterilization as the wrong approach, while Martin Waßmund and Reinhold Ritter, for example, took opposing positions [24, 26, 30, 33, 72]. Harndt could therefore have simply referred to the arguments of Axhausen et al. In Harndt's review, however, there is nothing to be found of that criticism or of the entire professional dispute about forced sterilization. He refers to the content of the publication without questioning the approach. Finally, he sums up uncritically (Fig. 8, [40]): “Sterilization (*Unfruchtbarmachung*) for these diseases will therefore depend on the respective proof of heredity, i.e. the repeated occurrence of malformation (*Mißbildung*) in severe, mild or mildest form within the consanguinity (*Blutsverwandtschaft*)” [40].

Harndt's recourse to typical NS terms (“*vererbt geistig minderwertige Kinder*”, “*Unfruchtbarmachung*”, “*Mißbildung*”, “*Blutsverwandtschaft*”) is not only found in his reviews. On an undated questionnaire from around 1938, for example, Harndt described himself as “*deutschreligiös*” – this is, similar to the word “*gottgläubig*”, a typical Nazi term to express the distance to the churches and the proximity to the (church-critical) Nazi ideology [2].

Even for the last years of the Third Reich, the available sources do not reveal any evidence that Harndt was in a political outsider role. On the contrary: In the years 1943/44,

Harndt was evaluated by 3 dental university lecturers with regard to his ordinability – his suitability for appointment to a chair: Erwin Reichenbach, Otto Hofer and Eugen Wannenmacher, all of them loyal NSDAP members, unanimously classified him as suitable [5]. Obviously Harndt continued to have the support of influential dental professors. This explains why, as mentioned above, he was appointed a titular professor in 1944 and shortly afterwards as the provisional head of the department.

After 1945: Public perception and reception of Harndt's role in the Third Reich

As mentioned, after 1945 Harndt tried to emphasize his distance to the Nazi system, his political unreliability and his political discrimination. As was customary in denazification proceedings, he provided several character references that outlined him as anti-national socialist and as pro-Jewish and confirmed that he was considered politically suspect and therefore had been disadvantaged. Affidavits of that kind can be found in countless denazification proceedings. Such “*Persil Certificates*” ultimately had the effect that the overwhelming majority of the defendants were able to conclude their proceedings more or less unscathed [55]. This course of events was particularly pronounced in Bavaria. This was also due to the person of George S. Patton, who was the first American military governor after the end of the war and was con-

sidered anti-Semitic and politically permissive [65]. At this point, it should not go unmentioned that the “*denazification procedures*” were handled very differently in the 4 occupation zones. Overall, the hardest action was in the “*Soviet-occupied zone*” (SBZ), the later GDR including West Berlin: Here thousands were imprisoned (partly in former concentration camps) or sent to labour camps. However, the procedure in the SBZ was also the most inconsistent and least transparent: Often it was not only the entanglement in the Nazi era that decided the verdicts, but also factors such as “*class affiliation*” or the potential benefit of the person under review for the planned “*construction of socialism*”. In fact, denazification ended mostly as a “*farce*” in the West and as “*self-congratulation*” in the East [23, 65].

Harndt's Hamburg colleague Heinrich Fabian – an extraordinary Professor and a fervent National Socialist – provides an impressive case for such developments: At that time Hamburg was located in the British occupation zone, where politically inactive party members were sometimes exempted from punishment at an early stage. In 1949, the first Impunity Act also brought an amnesty for most of those previously sentenced by the denazification authorities. Fabian also profited from this development: After the war, the responsible denazification committee of the Hamburg University had initially assessed him as “*no longer acceptable*”

as a doctor, which meant he was banned from his profession. One year later, the responsible authorities at least allowed him to work in a medical practice, while he was still banned from teaching. However, Fabian was not yet satisfied and reacted with requests for revision (appeals), which aimed at further rehabilitation. His persistence brought the desired success: while one appeal in May 1948 still failed, another one was accepted in May 1949. The new examination now suddenly revealed that Fabian had “put up strong resistance” to the Nazi regime. It was therefore decided in the end to “classify him in category V with the lifting of all professional restrictions”. Thus Fabian was considered to be completely “exonerated” and was able to continue his work as a professor [29].

Thanks to the system of “Persil Certificates”, even ardent National Socialists overcame the supposed hurdles of denazification, and the ruling chambers became true “follower factories” (Mitläuferfabriken) [65] at the latest in the appeal proceedings. Even blatant Nazi perpetrators such as Hugo Blaschke, SS General and Hitler’s personal dentist, or Karl Pieper, “Reichsdozentenführer” (Leader of the Reich Lecturers) of the dental profession and holder of the Blood Order, were denazified as mere “followers”. The same applies to Paul Reutter, who, as “leading dentist”, was responsible for all dental matters in the concentration camps until 1943 [23]. In the end, only about 1.4 % of those affected in the denazification proceedings were classified as (significantly) burdened [65].

Harndt, too, took this hurdle unscathed: Although his denazification dragged on until January 1948, it ended with the discontinuation of the proceedings [60]. Harndt’s dictum in the denazification proceedings that he had been politically suspect to those in power in the Third Reich and had therefore suffered repression, proved to be extremely persistent. For example, Erwin Reichenbach – also a former party and SA member [69] – noted in a laudation on the occasion of Harndt’s 60th birthday (1961) that the latter had to wait longer than usual for his lecture-

ship: “‘Political unreliability’ had caused this delay” [66].

This assertion was hardly questioned, on the contrary. How powerful this dictum was became apparent in 1991 – i.e. another 30 years later – on the occasion of Harndt’s 90th birthday. Here it was said with regard to Harndt’s party membership: “We know [...] that making compromises with the politically powerful is a question of existence” [64]. In the same context, Harndt was described as a political suspect and thus brought close to being a Nazi victim. There it was said in abbreviation of the real facts: “Clear expressions of mistrust also affected the then senior assistant Harndt [...] a teacher who was not welcome in the NS state” [64]. A similar comment can be found for 1993 [62].

In contrast, Künzel offered a more realistic commentary: In 2018 he criticized the attempts of the aforementioned authors to ascribe a political “victim role” to Harndt. Künzel calls the aforementioned “expressions of mistrust”, which Harndt had experienced in 1936 after his habilitation, merely “a temporary mishap which he was able to clear up shortly afterwards by joining the NSDAP” [59] – an overall assessment that is much better in line with the sources.

Conclusions

Harndt was certainly not a “fervent”, ideologically convinced National Socialist. Unlike his mentor Wannemacher, he did not seek political offices and functions. But he did not distance himself from the Nazi regime, he was by no means – apart from individual voices – perceived as politically unreliable or suspect. Therefore, it does not seem justified to place him in the vicinity of Nazi victims. Such a reading would do injustice to those who actually became victims: by being dismissed from university service, prevented from completing their habilitation, excluded from professional networks, driven into emigration or fearing for their lives. Such professors and lecturers also existed in dentistry at many universities – Alfred Kantorowicz [27] and Hans Moral [22] are certainly the most prominent examples. But they

were also to be found in Harndt’s immediate professional environment: Konrad Cohn, Konrad Lipschütz [57] and Hans-Jacques Mamlok [61] were Berlin colleagues – they *did* fell out of favour with the National Socialists and lost their professional and ultimately their life perspective.

Harndt is neither a Nazi perpetrator nor a victim. Rather, he shows the characteristics of a classic follower: He made use of the professional networks – which, in addition to Wannemacher, also included experts such as Hofer and Reichenbach – and he served the Nazi system by joining Nazi organizations, by agreeing to write uncritical reviews of morally questionable writings propagating Nazi eugenics, and by using Nazi terminology in various contexts. Nevertheless, after 1945, he succeeded in embellishing his role in the Third Reich – not least by stating numerous half-truths and by deliberate omissions. He thus achieved a far-reaching political “cleansing”, which in turn sustainably facilitated his impressive post-war career.

However, not only Harndt, but also his former mentor Eugen Wannemacher found his way back to success in post-war Germany. Like Harndt, he was first dismissed from service by the Allies in 1945 – at that time in the position of an extraordinary professor. Wannemacher initially had to set up his own practice. However, the time factor was also helpful here: In 1955 the University of Münster appointed him full professor of dental, oral and maxillofacial surgery and director of the university clinic of the same name – which meant that Wannemacher ultimately succeeded in further developing his career compared to the Nazi era. [51]. In 1971 he even became an honorary member of the DGZMK – exactly 4 years after his former protégé Ewald Harndt [31].

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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