

Were Ordinary Germans Hitler's 'Willing Executioners'?

Or Were They Victims of Humiliating Seduction and Abandonment? The Case of Germany and Somalia

Evelin Gerda Lindner, M.D.

Dr. psychol., Dr. med. Evelin Gerda Lindner, University of Oslo, Institute of Psychology, P.O.Box 1094 Blindern, N-0317 Oslo, Norway, e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no ; <http://folk.uio.no/~evelin/> ; <http://www.humiliationstudies.org>

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Abstract

This article presents findings from fieldwork in Africa (1998, 1999) and Germany (1994-2000). It includes a detailed discussion of Hitler's views about propaganda and his use of this instrument to seduce the masses. It concludes that present-day Germans suffer feelings of humiliation and anger not only at having lost World War II (and in some cases at being labelled accomplices in genocide) but also at having been 'taken in' by Hitler, and by their own desire to participate in the strong and positive feelings he created among the people at large. A similar chain of events unfolded in the case of the Somalian population in relation to the late dictator Siad Barre. It is argued that the feelings of humiliation and resentment experienced by many Germans and Somalis are similar in important respects to the feelings many women and some men experience when they have been 'taken in' by a suitor who seduces and then cruelly disappoints them.

Introduction

Germany is currently undergoing a period of 'working through' the 'Nazizeit' [Nazi period]. Documentaries fill German TV screens, and 'Zeitzeugen' [witnesses of history] are being interviewed before their voices disappear. Everywhere, in private homes as in TV chat shows, people are starting to talk, people who have been almost completely silent for over 50 years. This suggests that the 'Unfähigkeit zu trauern' [the inability to mourn], described by Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, 1982, may have had its origins in an inability to talk. It is only more than 50 years after the 'Zusammenbruch' [collapse] of Hitler's Germany that ordinary people are beginning to express themselves out loud - not any longer just those few 'Unverbesserliche' [those who cannot be reformed] on the far right of politics who have continued to broadcast Nazi ideals ever since World War II, or those few critical intellectuals with historical interests who have written books.

During recent fieldwork in Germany (1994-2000) I immersed myself in this discourse.[1] I heard people talk about World War II who had avoided this subject before, and they said things that shocked, surprised and moved me. The façade of silence had misled many into believing that those times were forgotten. But, clearly, memories had only been lingering under a thin cover for decades, waiting for the right time to come out. And astonishingly enough, even small details are still remembered now, both in the conversations I had and in the television documentaries or talks I monitored, details in all their multi-facetedness, memories so alive that it is as if the war had ended only yesterday, and the torment is still fresh and vivid.

The aim of my fieldwork was to collect impressions that could illuminate questions stimulated by competing interpretations of German behaviour. How did Hitler manage to incite a whole population to follow him? As Alan Jacobs puts it: 'Why do people join political, religious, professional, or social

movements, of whatever size, and surrender so completely, giving up, in the extreme, everything; their fortunes, their, critical thinking, their political freedom, their friends, families, even their own lives? What causes people to create a system or perhaps merely follow a system that creates Auschwitz, the Lubianka, the killing fields of Cambodia...?' (Jacobs, 1995, 1).

Several rival views may be contrasted. The first is represented by Goldhagen's view of the Germans as thoroughly complicitous. According to Goldhagen, because of their antipathy and cruel indifference to the victims of Nazism, the Germans were willing, even eager, to 'do their part' (Goldhagen, 1996). Another analysis is offered by Norbert Elias, who argues that Hitler used his skills as a propagandist to build up the resentment of ordinary Germans and then directed the aggressive energy fermented by humiliation against Germany's neighbours and against the Jews (Elias, 1996). Theodor Adorno focuses on the authoritarian personality whose principal characteristic is obedience and blindly following orders, irrespective of their moral contents (Adorno, 1950). Alice Miller highlights yet another facet in her writings on child rearing practices that create personalities who become disposed to develop into perpetrators (Miller, 1987). Another notion claims that Germans were 'ignorant dupes, guilty mainly of shutting their eyes to unpleasant realities that they could readily have discerned if they had been willing to look.' [2] Finally, Ervin Staub, in his book *The Roots of Evil: The origins of genocide and other group violence* (Staub, 1989), concentrates more on group dynamics and highlights the important role of bystanders.

In this article a further view is offered, in which social identity theory with its emphasis on the group [3] is linked with a more individual based analysis. It suggests that ordinary Germans were ideal targets for seduction by Hitler. They went along with him, enthusiastically, although in many cases with ambivalence, because of his flattering message about themselves and Germany's future. They were also caught up in the social dynamics he created. It was attractive to share the passions of the group, to be swept up in its enthusiasm. At the same time, it was disagreeable, and increasingly dangerous, to remain isolated from that enthusiasm and group feeling (to say nothing of the dangers of active opposition). This approach sees the masses not as willing executioners but as *willing disciples* or *willing partners in seduction*. After the seduction, they had the experience of being betrayed and abandoned to a terrible fate by a once-beloved parent or lover.

Germany is not the only country in the world where atrocities have happened, although the Holocaust stands out for its unfathomable cruelty. The research from which this article stems examines Rwanda and Somalia and compares their cases with Hitler Germany. The project is being carried out at the University of Oslo (1997-2001) [4] and is entitled *The Feeling of Being Humiliated: A Central Theme in Armed Conflicts. A Study of the Role of Humiliation in Somalia, and Rwanda/Burundi, Between the Warring Parties, and in Relation to Third Intervening Parties.* [5] 216 qualitative interviews were carried out, from 1998 to 1999 in Africa (in Hargeisa, capital of 'Somaliland,' in Kigali and other places in Rwanda, in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi, in Nairobi in Kenya, and in Cairo in Egypt), and from 1997 to 2000 in Europe (in Oslo in Norway, in Germany, in Geneva, and in Brussels). [6]

The research builds on the long-standing assumption that the Versailles Accords after World War I inflicted humiliation on Germany to such an extent that it led to World War II. In view of this commonly-held view, it is astonishing that social psychology has not researched the issue of humiliation on a larger scale. What could be more relevant than an emotion and a social process that have the capacity to trigger world wars. [7]

This paper is organised in three parts. The first part addresses the process of seduction, that is how Hitler seduced his people, and how Siad Barre's began his 'love affair' with the Somali population. The second part examines the 'ending of the love affair' between dictator and population, namely abandonment. It illustrates how this may later cause feelings of humiliation in the victims. The third part introduces a case of seduction and abandonment from within family therapy, and thus attempts to link the macro level with the micro level.

This paper contributes to a larger research programme being carried out in cooperation with Dennis Smith which integrates skills and insights from psychology, sociology, history, political studies and international relations to build a theory that encompasses the experience and consequences of humiliation at multiple levels, from the individual and personal to the collective experience of a group or nation. [8]

How a dictator seduces his people and begins a 'love affair' with them

The case of Germany

Hitler was obviously very competent at putting into practice what he calls the 'correct psychology' of seduction at the beginning of his career as 'Führer.' He writes on page 165 of his book *Mein Kampf* (Hitler, 1999, italics added): 'The art of propaganda lies in understanding the emotional ideas of the great masses and finding, through a psychologically correct form, the way to the attention and hence to the heart of the broad masses.' Two pages later, he continues: 'The broad mass of a nation does not consist of diplomats, or even professors of political law, or even individuals capable of forming a rational opinion; ... The people in their overwhelming majority are so *feminine* by nature and attitude that sober reasoning determines their thoughts and actions far less than emotion and feeling. And this sentiment is not complicated, but very simple and all of a piece. It does not have multiple shadings; it has a positive and a negative; love or hate, right or wrong, truth or lie, never half this way and half that way, never partially, or that kind of thing.'

According to Lee Ross, 'The use of the term feminine suggests that Hitler's own view of the propaganda process was explicitly linked to the process of seduction, or at least of winning love and personal devotion. Again, however, I think he was presenting himself as much as the ideal father as the ideal lover, although the connection between the two is itself intimate, at least in the eyes of psychoanalytic theory.'^[9] Not surprisingly, women in particular were drawn in by Hitler's charisma. 'Women were glued to the radio whenever Hitler spoke,' this I was told innumerable times during my investigations in Germany. Owings, too, documents this in her recent book about German women (Owings, 1995).^[10]

Hitler continues his lesson in successful propaganda on page 168: '... the most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflagging attention. It must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over. Here, as so often in this world, persistence is the first and most important requirement for success.'

Simplicity and persistence, this was the recipe Hitler advocates to get the masses moving, and it is chilling to see how well Hitler put this into action as soon as he became 'Führer': 'The purpose of propaganda is not to provide interesting distraction for blasé young gentlemen, but to convince, and what I mean is to convince the masses. But the masses are slow-moving, and they always require a certain time before they are ready even to notice a thing, and only after the simplest ideas are repeated thousands of times will the masses finally remember them.'

When there is a change, it must not alter the content of what the propaganda is driving at, but in the end must always say the same thing. For instance, a slogan must be presented from different angles, but the end of all remarks must always and immutably be the slogan itself. Only in this way can the propaganda have a unified and complete effect' (169).

Hitler did more than just write about how to seduce masses. He thoroughly succeeded in doing it, arousing deep passions in the 'broad masses.'^[11] Hitler was a master in displaying emotions, his repertoire ranged from heroic pathos to passionate tears. At his mass gatherings he employed means that later became the trademark of pop-stars. He was not just a distant authority exercising patrician self-control; in his intense emotionality he was 'one of the Volk.' By being like them and yet at the same time at the top, he lifted them up with him. Men and women who were used to occupying a humiliatingly lowly place in German society suddenly found themselves at the summit of history alongside him. Hitler did not burden them with complicated programmes ('... the art of all truly great national leaders at all times consists ... in not dividing the attention of a people, but in concentrating it upon a single foe,' *Mein Kampf*, 108); he glorified 'the Volk's' supposed ability to sacrifice for the 'Endsieg' (final victory).

Elias writes on page 387: 'One of Hitler's greatest talents – and one of the main factors in his success – was his intuitive, emotional understanding of the needs which a leader of the Germans and his crew had to satisfy in a critical situation. His own emotional needs corresponded to those of his followers. He reacted, without much reflection, to their emotional signals, verbal or non-verbal, with the emotional signals which they demanded and expected of a leader if they were to trust that he would be able to save them from an apparently hopeless situation of danger and despair' (Elias, 1996). Also Janka wrote about the collective dream, which Hitler amalgamated in his personality (Janka, 1997).^[12]

'The Volk' was so 'thankful' for being included and raised up by their 'Führer' that they were ready to 'reciprocate' by dedicating themselves to what they thought he wanted, namely the 'Endsieg.' '...Hitler,

and Hitler alone, seemed in the end to stand in the eyes of many Germans between them and total annihilation' (Elias, 1996, 387).

Everybody who ever heard recordings of Hitler's speeches has an inkling of the emotional power with which he conveyed his message, and the emotional response he received. An elderly man illustrated that fact in an interview (1999, on German television): 'I was a boy in my teens when I heard that Hitler would visit our little town. Already many hours in advance I went to the square where he was to arrive. I tried to stand on my toes, to put my head up, in order to get a glimpse of Hitler behind the masses of people who stood in front of me. A man told me that I should not worry; first I would see yellow banners, and motorcycles. Twice I thought I saw yellow banners, but each time it was false alarm. Then, finally, Hitler came, but I saw nothing, because I fainted.'

This account illuminates the refrain I encountered during my research in 2000: 'You could not say anything against 'die Bewegung' ['the movement,' meaning Hitler's movement], there was this enthusiasm! My elder brothers and sisters experienced 'den Aufschwung' [literally the 'upswing,' i.e. the first period of Hitler's reign when the economy improved]. You could not say a word! They were taken over by it! I was the younger one, I did not dare to talk, and at the end of the war I had to take the shit! By then my brothers were dead! Killed as soldiers before they were 20! What could I have done? I am just disgusted, I can hardly see all these television programmes about the 'Hitlerzeit' [Hitler's times] now! I get sick! It is so humiliating how we were duped' (interview with a former farmer now in his seventies, April 2000).

This voice merits emphasis, since the common view has been that the 'seduction process' depended upon the susceptibility of each individual German to Hitler's rhetoric and mesmerizing style, rather than being driven by strong social pressures, by the desire to merge oneself in a mass movement that was thrilling and empowering – or, perhaps, the desire to avoid standing completely aloof when all around other people are feeling such passion, power, enthusiasm. The desire to immerse oneself in something large, heroic and exciting, to feel not only a sense of purpose but a sense of belonging, was undoubtedly a critical part of the power of Hitler's 'movement.' It was these positive sources of gratification, I would argue, that made people willing to submerge their doubts, their scruples and, ultimately, their humanity. Following Hitler's policies was the price to be paid for those feelings, a price that some paid eagerly because they enthusiastically agreed while others acquiesced rather than be 'left out' and/or exposed to the risks of being a deviate.[13]

The case of Somalia

Turning to our second case, ethnic Somalis are united by language, culture, devotion to Islam, and a common ancestor, the Samaal.[14] Seventy five percent of the Somali population are traditionally pastoral nomadic clans (Dir, Daarood, Issaq, and Hawiye).[15] During colonial times the North of Somalia was the 'British Protectorate of Somaliland,' while a large part of the rest of the country was 'Italian Trust Territory of Somalia.' [16] After independence in 1960, Somalia established a political democracy, which ended in 1969 in a feeling that democracy generates chaos rather than order and fairness.

A 'strong hand' was yearned for who could 'put order into things.' [17] President Mohammed Siad Barre from the Southern Marehan sub-clan established a strictly centralised political order. He gave people new hope by lifting up the economy. Subsequently he became the embodiment of his people's national feelings even more when he tried to fulfil Somalia's dream of unification. He attempted to capture the Ogaden from Ethiopia in 1978.[18] He failed, and Somalia's defeat was a considerable humiliation that undermined Barre's political position. He attempted to preserve his power by finding scapegoats. In particular, he put the blame upon the Northerners, first the Majerteen and later the Issaq people. 'You Issaq, you are so arrogant,' a Somali woman (who wants to stay anonymous) reported to me during my fieldwork (1998). She met the dictator when she pleaded for her imprisoned family members.

The dictator unleashed the military against the Issaq population with quasi-genocidal results. Issaqs were potential suspects everywhere, in the South they lost their jobs, they were detained, some executed, and subsequently their main cities fell pray to bloody destruction. Hargeisa, capital of the North, was bombed and destroyed in 1988. (These atrocities are being labelled 'quasi-genocide,' since Issaq were not systematically exterminated. This is different to Rwanda, where even 'half-blood' were potential targets for extermination. Until the end there were Issaq ministers, something that would not have been thinkable in Rwanda.[19])

When the Barre regime collapsed in 1991, Somalia became stateless, and still is. The Somali clans reclaimed their traditional independence and fragmented what was once the Somali state. The Issaq in the North managed to pacify their region, and proclaimed their own state, 'Somaliland.' 'Somaliland' is not

recognised by the international community or by other Somali leaders. In the rest of Somalia faction fighting between the clans during the 1990s resulted in a great deal of bloodshed with many atrocities being carried out on all sides.

Dr. Gaboose, personal physician of late Somali dictator Siad Barre and member of his cabinet fled the country when he felt that he could no longer support the regime. In several long interviews in November 1998 he reflected on the dictator's personality and why he succeeded to stay on so long (1969-1991). He recounts, using a form of English that reflects the style of Somali language and shows the oral talent that Somalis are famous for and proud of: 'I think that Siad Barre was different compared to the majority of the people. Probably that difference made him a dictator. He got some unique characteristics in his personality: vigorous, - active, - and charismatic. He got that ability of attracting the people around him, that energy, that atmosphere of making you secure!'

Dr. Gaboose continues: 'Siad Barre, I think, - he was brave, - I think many dictators have got this, - but perhaps it is not braveness, it is madness. These people confront challenges where the normal intelligent man would say, "no, no, don't do that!" But they have got this personality to go beyond normality, beyond the common people. So you think it is brave. But I think that it was not, - it was just beyond the normality of common people. Siad Barre was very intelligent. He had very little education in his life even though he was the general of the nation. When he was participating in a discussion or giving a speech, - without writing, without preparing anything, - the way he was articulating was just beyond imagination! Probably because of those speeches, that were so talented in the way they were articulated, he attracted many people, many Somalis.'

'So, he was intelligent, but more than that, he always tried to get close to the community. He was an expert in the Somali way of seeing things. Many Somalis believe that he did so many good things. Because he built roads, he built universities; he built so many things in the nation. But not only Siad Barre, all dictators in the first years build their nation.'

'So, I think that a dictator becomes a dictator because he thinks that he has got some talents, and in these talents he sees himself above other people, above everyone. So, he believes, at the end, that he is more intelligent than others, that he sees things farther than others, that he is more sincere, that he is more, more, more ...! So, of the word 'more' in every respect regarding humanity, he convinces himself. And the rest of the people become like children listening to him, - not like comrades or colleagues who are discussing, giving and taking ideas from each other!'

What makes a people susceptible to the dictator's seduction?

The case of Germany

I remember an old German woman once saying: 'Wir kleinen Leute haben sowieso nichts zu sagen. Die da oben machen doch was sie wollen!' ['We 'little people' have nothing to say anyhow. Those 'up there' do what they want anyhow!'] With these words the old woman expressed the worldview of many 'little people' in Germany, especially of today's elder generation. Germany was a society in which humiliation was a daily experience for social inferiors. Since at least the eighteenth century, 'Particularly at the smaller and relatively poorer courts of the German empire it was customary to make social inferiors emphatically aware of their subordinate position' (Elias, 1993, 95). The humiliating helplessness of the 'little people' in Germany was 'commonsense,' part of their 'life-world,' or their 'habitus.' [20]

'The experience of humiliation shaped the German national habitus, in Elias's view. Hitler had the political skills as a propagandist and speech-maker to build up the resentment of ordinary Germans during inter-war years. He had two sources of resentment to work on. One was the fact that German men and women had suffered constant humiliation at the hands of the militaristic aristocracy that had been the dominant class in the Kaiser's empire. The other was the fact that Germany had been very severely treated by the Allies after World War I. They made Germany a pariah nation and heaped suffering upon its people. Elias traces the way that as Germany grew stronger in the 1930s and early 1940s the energy brewed by humiliation was released against Germany's neighbours and against the Jews. (Smith, 2000a).

Feelings of humiliation were not the only burden Germans had to carry, As is well known, the economic crisis that hit the whole world in the 1920s made life difficult also in Germany. The crisis affected Germany especially hard because it added to the already heavy load of the war reparations Germany had to pay after World War I. The crisis created joblessness and general hopelessness, making the population even

more susceptible to promises by a 'saviour.' Ervin Staub describes this mechanism in *The Roots of Evil* (Staub, 1989).

Hitler offered the 'little people,' who never before in history had been taken seriously, an elite identity and a clear sense of direction. Hitler even arranged for symphony orchestra music to be played in factories, thus giving the 'little people' a sense of greatness.[21] Hitler ennobled the 'little people' by including them in the elite Germanic Aryan race with an important national mission. The 'broad masses' may have paid little attention on their account to details of the national humiliations inflicted by the Versailles Treaty after World War I, - being far too with daily survival, - but Hitler 'explained' the situation to them and gave them a leading role to play.

The case of Somalia

In *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (Lewis, 1961) Ioan M. Lewis describes how decisions are made in an egalitarian society of nomadic clans. During my fieldwork in Somalia (1998) I was given the account: 'Elders preside over meetings without leading or dominating them, let alone deciding anything. They wisely summarise what has been said after every participant [men] has spoken. Decisions are made by consensus.' [22]

In Somalia, contrary to Western democracies, to be defeated in a vote is humiliating for the loser, potentially to such an extent that the effects, - resentment, anger and revenge - may disrupt the whole system. People in the West who have been living within democratic structures for generations may not be able to grasp such reactions because they are used to the idea that in democracy defeat must be accepted and not be defined as humiliation. Democracy in the West takes the humiliation out of defeat, thus defining defeat in more tolerable terms.

Egalitarian nomads, however, who are accustomed to decision-making by consensus cannot take such a sanguine view of defeat. The speaker of the parliament in Hargeisa, capital of 'Somaliland,' explains in November 1998 in an interview: 'When people are voted down in parliament, I will go to them afterwards and calm them down. I will make it clear to them that their ideas are good and that they will be heard another time.' He explains that it is in this way he removes the aspect of humiliation from defeat by majority vote. He adds: 'In the traditional clan meeting decisions are made by consensus, everybody has to be convinced. If not, war will start.'

In other words, when Somalia became independent and 'tried' democracy, it created new mechanisms for creating suffering through humiliations that were not there before. Worse, democracy was increasingly perceived as chaotic in almost every respect: 'before elections the number of parties multiplied, every clan a party, just to join the party in power after elections; also corruption was rife... people were increasingly disillusioned and many were very relieved when a 'strong hand' seized power (interview in Hargeisa, 1998).

'I think then, why a dictator comes, why this man comes forward and arrives at such a powerful stage? Probably it is the atmosphere that helps the dictator to be created. Why? Because at a certain stage of a nation, people are fed up of things: wars, poverty, so many mistakes ... and then ... that light comes!!! You see the light and hope in the personality of that person. And then the whole nation is lost into identifying with the personality of that person' (Dr. Gaboose, November 1998).

How a dictator abandons his people and causes feelings of humiliation

The case of Germany

I began preparing the project discussed here in 1994 and started my research on the concept of Humiliation at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo in 1997. It seems that since then the whole German nation has started talking about humiliation, in a multitude of contexts.

As has been argued, Hitler lifted up the broad masses. Under his leadership they felt important, after centuries of being routinely humiliated. Today, many feel humiliated by their own belief in Hitler. 'You cannot believe how humiliating it is to remember that I believed, for example such things as that we should get our Sold [pay] after the Endsieg [final victory]! We were told that our Sold would help Germany win the Endsieg, and that we would get it afterwards! I believed that! This is so humiliating! You cannot imagine!' (interview in April 2000 with a man who as an adolescent was forced to become a soldier at the end of World War II).

‘The most disgusting and humiliating thing is the trace of belief and enthusiasm that was once also in me! But I was young, what could I have done? Of course everybody wanted to be part of it! Nobody wanted to be an outsider! When I had to become a soldier the war was hell. It made me sick. Ever since then all this makes me sick!’ (interview with a former farmer now in his seventies, April 2000).

The same person continues: ‘Göring boasted of German Lufthoheit [control of airspace] over France! But we were in France as German soldiers and we could not go out!!! We were not protected, but shot at!!! How humiliating! How we felt betrayed! At that time there were ‘Auflösungserscheinungen’ [signs of dissolution] in the German army!’

Interestingly enough, Hitler knew about the devastating effect of telling lies to the ‘broad masses’ in circumstances where they were in a position to test those lies against reality for themselves. He learned this during World War I. He writes about the devastating effect of the failure of the ‘psychology’ contained in German propaganda and contrasts this with the British success: ‘And so German war propaganda offered an unparalleled example of an “enlightenment” service working in reverse, since correct psychology was totally lacking. There was no end to what could be learned from the enemy by a man who kept his eyes open, refused to let his perceptions be ossified, and for four and a half years privately turned the storm □ flood of enemy propaganda over in his brain’ (166).

On page 165 Hitler analyses the German mistakes in more detail: ‘For instance, it was absolutely wrong to make the enemy ridiculous, as the Austrian and German comic papers did. It was absolutely wrong because actual contact with an enemy soldier was bound to arouse an entirely different conviction, and the results were devastating; for now the German soldier, under the direct impression of the enemy’s resistance, felt himself swindled by his propaganda service. His desire to fight, or even to stand firm, was not strengthened, but the opposite occurred. His courage flagged. By contrast, the war propaganda of the English and Americans was psychologically sound. By representing the Germans to their own people as barbarians and Huns, they prepared the individual soldier for the terrors of war, and thus helped to preserve him from disappointments. After this, the most terrible weapon that was used against him seemed only to confirm what his propagandists had told him; it likewise reinforced his faith in the truth of his government’s assertions, while on the other hand it increased his rage and hatred against the vile enemy.’

Hitler describes how the German soldier in the end ‘rejected everything coming from this source [German propaganda] as “swindles” and “bunk”’ (166), and thus lost faith in the national cause. Hitler did not foresee that this was exactly what would happen to ‘his’ Germany after World War II. ‘Again to me the betrayal in this case seems more like betrayal by a parent: “He promised that if we obeyed and trusted, our future would be bright and that a future glory and prosperity would come to us that would more than justify our immediate sacrifices... But he turned out to be a liar and a swindler, who played with us and used us, and abandoned us to our fate when his schemes began to unravel.”’[23]

It was not only the Germans felt betrayed. At the end of his life, Hitler turned his back to the German population and felt let down by them. Before he died at his own hand he made clear that the German population deserved to be destroyed, since they had obviously not lived up to his expectations. In his view They had not been good enough Aryans after all!

The case of Somalia

Dr. Gaboose reflects on dictators and how they begin their ‘career’ by building ‘the nation.’ He explains: ‘But, they are not building the nation, they are building just roads, they are building just streets, - but not for the people, but for their egos: to see the roads done by me, Siad Barre, or to see that this or that big huge building is done by me, Siad Barre. So, probably dictators are identifying all these achievements with themselves, not to build the nation. Because if they had really helped the people, if they really had built the nation, the end would not have been so drastic.’

He continues: ‘Hitler became so drastic, - Siad Barre became so drastic, - Mussolini also. I don’t want to take only Hitler; the end of every dictator was horrible. Because they never build their nation, with the nation I mean the people. The most important aspect for a nation is to build the people, not the roads, or the universities, - I mean, the buildings, - if the people are built enough then the nation will sustain, will survive. Otherwise it will collapse with the dictator. Because if the nation was the dictator, the nation will disappear with him. So, Somalia doesn’t exist any more, it disappeared with Siad Barre!’

‘I believe, if we take only the first ten years he could be described as a very nice ruler. But all dictators have got two faces. That was the first face and then comes the other face, which is not any more intelligent. Then you see him: Very instable government, instable economy, instable military, and at the same time he

is doing a war here, a war there and a war every place! So you see that he is not any more the kind of man that you had seen before. Sometimes you think that this sort of men has used, has consumed his energy before, and in the later years just sits on his seat because of the energy of the past. But he is not any more the same person. Probably he used in his campaigns all his personality and all his energy. And then what comes... first it is up and then down, down, down. And you cannot stop him, whatever happens, because the energy is less and less to stop. So, I think he was a person that many people will make a dispute in what they will write on him. Because he has got so many faces that everyone can write whatever he wants.'

The Dr. Gaboose then reflects on the feelings of betrayal, both in Siad Barre's followers, but also in Siad Barre himself. First, Dr. Gaboose describes the process of disappointment how it unfolded in him:

'What I found in him [Siad Barre] and the humiliation that I, - not only me but I think many of my colleagues, - found, was that his plan and his intention was a road in his mind and he expected you to just follow, and not to judge, or not to discuss, or not to give any different opinion about that. So, you got just a path drawn before you, by him, and the whole cabinet, the state instrument, should follow that. And even if you saw that the end was dark, you had to tell others that it is not dark, but that there is light, there is paradise we see after that. So, when the line of communication is cut off, when you find a person who is leading the country, and you are so close to him, and the result is always a deaf ear, than you feel that the noble gift of all humans is misused, it is not valued any more, which is to communicate to each other; that through talking we can understand each other, that through talking our ideas and achievements could be larger than "I and I and I." Then when I understood that I could not reach any more that membrane of the ear that became so hard to me, I fled outside. I chose to be a refugee rather than a minister in that government.'

Dictator Siad Barre went into exile about a decade ago. Perhaps this is too short a time span ago for ordinary Somalis to be able to admit to feelings of humiliation stemming from their own loyalty to him. During my fieldwork in Somalia I was strongly reminded of times in Germany when it seemingly was not yet 'possible' for people to admit to such feelings. Being in Somalia made me see clearer earlier reactions in Germany, for example, the obvious need to accuse others of having been taken in by Hitler, 'pretending' of having been against him from the very beginning. In Somalia I elicited a very expressive pause, a silent, but clearly painful glance into a far away past, when I asked people whether they had been taken in by Siad Barre themselves and how this felt today.

Dr. Gaboose finally describes how not only the Somalis, but also Siad Barre felt betrayed, just like Hitler, how he felt that he had sacrificed everything for his people, '...later, he sees that his people were not grateful for what he did for them in the past. Because he sees himself as the one who was always right, he always gave them the best of his life and at the end there is sadness and sorrow, - not from any foreigners, but from his own people. Because from them he expected the greatest appreciation. But he does not see that they have given him the highest appreciation for years: there were years that his name was like religion, that his personality arrived near to God and they did what ever he wanted and was always right. But at the end, when the things get to the end of the track, the blame was to the same people of the nation. He was right even at the end of his life. He helped the Somalis, he helped the Germans, he helped the Italians, but the Italian were not good, the German were not good, and the Somalis were not good.'

Humiliating seduction and abandonment: a clinical case

Robert lived and worked in Indonesia, and Alice moved to Indonesia to join him. He was separated from his wife who lived back in Europe, and told Alice that he considered her his wife now, but that he could not get a divorce because of the laws back home in his country. She accepted. She preferred a happy relationship to a painful marriage. When she arrived in Indonesia she was full of plans, wanted to do research, get another degree, and have a family.

Alice continues: 'Nothing of that happened. Now I am 10 years older and I have nothing. I have wasted all these years on this man. And the worst, I did not even recognise that I wasted my time while I did it! Every time we wanted to realise one of my goals, there was an existential crisis in his life. He had problems with his job, problems with his family; we always lived in emergencies. I hardly ever relaxed. I was all the time busy helping him with his problems, hoping that we would start 'our' life 'then,' and that thus also 'my' life would start one day. It never started.'

Alice cries out: 'How on earth could I have been so stupid as to accept all that?' Then she continues, exhausted from a life of emergencies and sacrifices: 'Stupid me, I tried terribly hard to be optimistic! Whenever I felt that I was not optimistic enough, I felt guilty of not loving him enough. I told myself:

”How can I be weak in supporting this wonderful man who has so many troubles!” ”How blind, how stupid,” I say today! How could I ever be proud of being intelligent while being so stupid? And proud of being a ‘good woman’? But now I realise that Robert used all these emergencies to hide behind them, to avoid real commitment to me. He was not really interested in my needs, my dreams, and my happiness. He needed my presence, he enjoyed me being near him, this was what he wanted.’

‘Today my loyalty to him, as well as my intelligence, which made me proud once, make me feel disgusted of myself. I am not only ashamed of myself, I feel that I humiliated myself in front of the Alice who once thought highly of herself. I feel exploited by Robert; he manipulated me into helping him and sacrificing my life for him. And at the end he leaves me with the feeling that it was alone my fault, that I exploited myself, and - he is even right! I feel that he raped me, in a slow process, a slow humiliating rape, which I allowed. I could kill Robert. He destroyed me and my inner core of dignity. What he did to me is worse than overt rape. A brute rapist does at least not lie. Robert raped me and made me believe it was love. The resentment, pain and suffering which this brought into my life cannot be measured.’

It seems that the sorest humiliations stem from one’s own beliefs. Can the case of Alice be placed within the same theoretical framework as many of the German accounts concerning the ‘Hitlerzeit’? Could one conclude that many of Germany’s ‘kleine Leute,’ the ‘little people,’ were, so to speak, ‘raped’ by Hitler? Not only seduced, but raped and humiliated?

Conclusion

This paper explored the process of seduction and abandonment that lead to feelings of humiliation. It examines the cases of Germany and Somalia, where feelings of humiliation were felt by ordinary citizens because of their credulousness and loyalty to their leader, and it takes up the case of humiliation felt by a woman who has been seduced and abandoned by a lover or continually exploited by a manipulative spouse. Several important parallels between these cases have been shown. In other words, the article claimsthat feelings of humiliation and resentment are in fact familiar to most people, not only Germans or Somalis, and are akin in some important respects to the humiliation and resentment many women and some men feel when they have been ‘taken in’ by a suitor who seduces and then cruelly disappoints them. In such circumstances, the expectations of the weaker party have some resemblances to the expectations that a child has of a parent.

Ü

the lover/child is thoroughly dedicated and accepts the suitor’s/parent’s leadership, in other words the lover/child accepts, gladly, a position of humility, interpreting as patronage what might also be labelled as domination and oppression;

Ü

in this phase an abusive suitor/parent can persuade the lover/child to participate in atrocities (it is especially during this phase that group dynamics may shape individual feelings in a way that creates and secures ‘space’ for atrocities);

Ü

the suitor’s/parent’s promises become increasingly empty and insubstantial;

Ü

the suitor/parent accuses the lover/child of betrayal as soon as things go wrong, love turns bitter;

Ü

the suitor/parent falls (he is defeated, or it becomes clear that his promises were empty, and that the atrocities he demanded were in fact not helping to fulfil them)

Ü

some lovers/children will always continue loving their former idol, while others will feel deeply humiliated by having been ‘taken in’ and having wasted valuable lifetime on false hopes;

Ü

for his part, the suitor/parent is also deeply disappointed also at having been betrayed by his lover/child.

This chain of events seems to replicate itself in many contexts. Ex-DDR citizens, for example, struggle with feelings of humiliation; they feel humiliated by the loyalty and enthusiasm which they once felt for the old regime. Anyone who has stopped acting on their own behalf and transferred agency to another person or institution, will have been vulnerable to this kind of humiliation. This is so hurtful that only those who are strong enough to step outside of the deception upon which their life is based will ever confront such feelings. Others will prefer to close their eyes and live in a state of illusion rather than admit that they have wasted their life on a false hope.

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Notes

[1] My father tried to 'sabotage' Hitler's ideology as a young man and was punished heartlessly for that. Although I was born long after the war, my father's struggle has given direction to my interests. Since I was a child, born into a 'Flüchtlings'-Familie (more correct 'Vertriebenen'-Familie, meaning displaced family) in West Germany, I have tried to grasp the meaning of the trauma that was and still is so palpable under the surface of 'normality.' In other words, my fieldwork in Germany has, in fact, already started in 1954, although it has gained focus since I spend most of the time outside of Germany and can see it from 'outside.'

[2] Lee D. Ross, Stanford University, in a personal message 6th May 2000.

[3] Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory proposes that the social part of our identity derives from the groups to which we belong. He suggests that we, by favouring attributes of our own groups over those of outgroups, acquire a positive sense of who we are and an understanding of how we should act toward ingroup and outgroup members. See Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel, Fraser, and Jaspars, 1984; Tajfel and Turner, in Worchel and Austin, 1986.

[4] See project description on www.uio.no/~evelinl. The project is supported by the Norwegian Research Council and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am grateful for their support, and would also like to thank the Institute of Psychology at the University of Oslo for hosting it. I extend my warmest thanks to all my informants in and from Africa, many of whom survive under the most difficult life circumstances. I hope that at some point in the future I will be able to give back at least a fraction of all the support I received from them! I thank Reidar Ommundsen at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Oslo for his continuous support, together with Jan Smedslund, Hilde Nafstad, Malvern Lumsden (Lumsden, 1997), Carl-Erik Grenness, Jon Martin Sundet, Finn Tschudi, Kjell Flekkøy, and Astrid Bastiansen. Michael Harris Bond, Chinese University of Hong Kong, helped with constant feedback and support (see Bond, 1996; Bond, 1998; Bond, 2000; Bond, Chiu, and Wan, 1984; Bond and Venus, 1991; Smith and Bond, 1999). The project would not have been possible without the help of Dennis Smith, professor of sociology at Loughborough University (UK). Without Lee D. Ross's encouragement my research would not have been possible; Lee Ross is a principal investigator and co-founder of the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation (SCCN). I also thank Pierre Dasen, Professeur en approches interculturelles de l'éducation, Université en Genève, Département de Psychologie, for his most valuable support. The project is interdisciplinary and has benefited from the help of many colleagues at the University of Oslo and elsewhere. I would especially like to thank Jan Øberg, William Ury, Director, Project on Preventing War, Harvard University (Ury, 1999; Fisher, Ury, and Patton, 1991), Heidi von Weltzien Hoivik and Andreas Føllesdal (Weltzien Hoivik and Føllesdal, 1995), Dagfinn Føllesdal (Føllesdal, in Robert Sokolowski, 1988), Thomas Pogge, Helge Høybråten, Thorleif Lund, Thomas Hylland Eriksen (Eriksen, 1993), Unni Wikan (Wikan, 1984), Asbjørn Eide and Bernt Hagtvet (Eide and Hagtvet, 1996), Leif Ahnstrøm, and Jan Brøgger (Brøgger, 1986).

[5] For article written so long, see Lindner, 1999; Lindner, 2000b; Lindner, 2000c; Lindner, 2000d; Lindner, 2000e; Lindner, 2000f; Lindner, 2000g; Lindner, 2000h; Lindner 1999; Lindner, 2000a; Lindner, 2000i.

[6] The title of the project indicates that three groups had to be interviewed, namely both conflict parties in Somalia and Rwanda/Burundi, and representatives of third intervening parties. These three groups stand in a relationship that in its minimum version is triangular. In case of more than two opponents, as is the case in most conflicts, it acquires more than three corners.

Both in Somalia and Rwanda/Burundi representatives of the 'opponents' and the 'third party' were interviewed. The following categories of people were included:

- Survivors of genocide were included, i.e. people belonging to the group that was targeted for genocide. In Somalia this was the Issaq tribe, in Rwanda the Tutsi, in Burundi also the Hutu. The group of survivors consists of two parts, namely those who survived because they were not in the country when the genocide happened - some of them returned after the genocide - and those who survived the ongoing onslaught inside the country.
- Freedom fighters (only men) were interviewed. In Somalia these were the SNM (Somali National Movement) fighters who fought the troops sent by the central government in Mogadishu; in Rwanda these were the former Tutsi refugees who formed an army, the RFP (Rwandese Patriotic Front), and attacked Rwanda from the north in order to oust the Hutu government which carried out the genocide in Rwanda in 1994; in Burundi these were also Hutu rebels.
- Many Somali warlords have their retreat in Kenya, and some were interviewed there.
- Politicians were included, among them people who were in power already before the genocide and whom survivors secretly suspected of having been collaborators or at least silent supporters of perpetrators.
- Somali and Rwandan/Burundian academicians were interviewed, who study the situation of their countries.

- Representatives of national non-governmental organisations who work locally with development, peace and reconciliation were included.
- Third parties were interviewed, namely representatives of United Nations organisations and international non-governmental organisations who work with emergency relief, long-term development, peace, and reconciliation.
- Egyptian diplomats in the foreign ministry who deal with Somalia were included; Egypt is a heavy weight in the OAU.
- African psychiatrists in Kenya who deal with trauma, and forensic psychiatry were included. In Kenya many nationals from Somalia and also Rwanda/Burundi have sought refuge, both in refugee camps, but also on the basis of private arrangements.
- Those who have not yet been interviewed are masterminds of genocide in Rwanda, those who have planned the genocide. Many of them are said to be in hiding in Kenya, and other parts of Africa, or in Brussels and other parts of Europe, or in the States and Canada. Some are in the prisons in Rwanda and in Arusha, Tanzania.

The topic has been discussed with about 400 researchers working in related fields. The current-state-of-the-art has been mapped, showing that little has been done in this field.

[7] Thomas Scheff, along with Suzanne Retzinger, has studied the part played by ‘humiliated fury’ (Scheff 1997, 11) in escalating conflict between individuals and nations (Scheff and Retzinger 1991; Scheff 1994; Scheff 1997). Retzinger and Scheff show that the suffering caused by humiliation is highly significant and that the bitterest divisions have their roots in shame and humiliation. Important work has also been done by Gilligan, 1996, Rapoport, 1995, Volkan, 1997, and Staub, 1988, as well as Margalit, 1996.

[8] Dennis Smith is professor of sociology at Loughborough University (UK), see his publications: Smith, 2000b; Smith, 2000c; Smith, 2000a; Smith, 1999; Smith, 1997a; Smith, 1997b; Smith, 1991; Smith, 1984a; Smith, 1984b; Smith, 1983; Smith, 1981.

[9] Lee D. Ross, in a personal message 6th May 2000.

[10] I owe this reference to Jorunn Sem Fure.

[11] See Lepsius’ text about charismatic leadership (Lepsius, 1993). I owe this reference to Odd-Bjørn Fure.

[12] I owe this reference to Jorunn Sem Fure.

[13] These reflections were developed in dialogue with Lee D. Ross, social-psychologist, Stanford University.

[14] See for example Ioan M. Lewis 1957, 1961, 1965, and 1994.

[15] The agricultural Digil and Rahanwayn constitute only about 20 percent of the population. A minority exists which is not included in the six clan-families, among them occupationally specialised caste-like groups (whose daughters are not considered as being eligible for marriage by the six clan-families).

[16] This overview over the case of Somalia is based on the author’s fieldwork in Somalia (1998, 50 interviews) and Kenya (1999, 62 interviews), and available statistics and literature, such as on Ameen Jan’s briefing (1996) *Peacebuilding in Somalia*, <http://www.ipacademy.inter.net/somalia2.htm>, which was initiated by the International Peace Academy in New York. This briefing was based on a field visit to Nairobi and Mogadishu from 11 to 25 March 1996, an IPA Policy Forum entitled ‘Peacebuilding Efforts in Somalia: Legacies of the International Intervention’ held in New York on 23 April 1996, and on over 60 interviews conducted in the U.S., Kenya and Somalia between November 1995 and April 1996.

[17] Interview in November 1998 in Hargeisa, ‘Somaliland.’

[18] The colonial powers split the Somali people five ways. There was during the colonial period a British Somaliland, an Italian Somaliland and a French Somaliland. A section of the Somali people was also absorbed separately into Kenya under British colonial rule. The fifth component became the Ogaden, a section of Ethiopia. The dream of independence for the Somali was in part a dream of reunification. Two of

the components were indeed reunited at independence - former Italian Somaliland and former British Somaliland coalesced into the new Republic of Somalia. But neither Kenya nor Ethiopia were prepared to relinquish those areas of their colonial boundaries which were inhabited by ethnic Somali. As for French Somaliland, this became the separate independent Republic of Djibouti. 'Most other African countries are colonially created states in search of a sense of nationhood. The Somali, by contrast, are a pre-colonial nation in search of a unified post-colonial state. Most other African countries are diverse peoples in search of a shared national identity. The Somali are already a people with a national identity in search of territorial unification' (Mazrui, 1986, 69-71).

[19] Report by a United Nations employee who does not wish to be named, December 1998, Hargeisa.

[20] 'In every society there is an "attitude of everyday life," a life world, which most of its members assume, indeed, take for granted, most of the time. This world goes without saying to the point that it is invisible under most conditions. Elias and Bourdieu referred to it when they spoke of the *habitus*, our second nature, the mass of conventions, beliefs and attitudes which each member of a society shares with every other member. The habitus is not the whole culture, but that part which is so taken for granted as to be virtually invisible to its members. As Geertz suggested, ..., for the members of a society, the habitus is just "commonsense"' (Scheff, 1997, p. 219).

[21] I owe this detail to Odd-Bjørn Fure and Jorunn Sem Fure.

[22] This account was independently confirmed by everyone I spoke to.

[23] Lee D. Ross, in a personal message 6th May 2000.
