

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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### BQ 349 – No. 13/2015

## What Hitler can teach us: fundamentalists may really do what they say they will do, even if it seems totally insane

### Guest lecture at the University of New York, Tirana, Albania

(Bonn, 31.03.2015) The president of the International Society for Human Rights and Ambassador for Human Rights of the World Evangelical Alliance gave a guest lecture at the University of New York, Tirana, the first private university in the country. In his lecture, “Nazism as a political religion,” Thomas Schirmmacher took the rapid ascent of National Socialism as an example of the problem that many politicians make a serious mistake when they do not take the absurd goals of fundamentalists seriously, regarding them, instead, as mere rhetorical exaggerations. For example, in 1933,

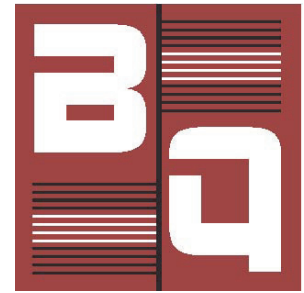


Thomas Schirmmacher during his guest lecture in Tirana

Theodor Heuss (1884-1963), who later became the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany 1949-59, and who had been both a political journalist and a member of parliament prior to the Nazi era, published a courageous book against National Socialism. But even he did not get into important topics such as the extermination of the Jews or “Lebensraum” (the Nazi idea that they should take by force of arms the land they thought they needed for economic well-being and cultural development), because Heuss thought these ideas were so absurd that they were not attainable. But European history shows that Heuss and others should have very seriously considered the most absurd themes in Nazi ideology, since these ideas were implemented by the Nazi regime with disastrous results. This lesson, which we can learn from Hitler, should inform how we evaluate the recent evidence of fundamentalism, that is, the willingness to use force to impose and apply a religion or ideology, now to be found among top leaders of governments.

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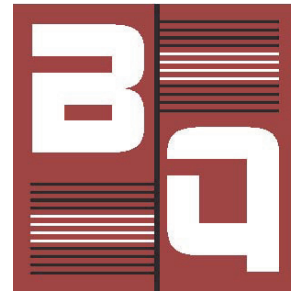
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Almost no one seems to be seriously concerned that the new Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, belongs to a political movement that claims that India belongs only to Hindus, and that all Muslims and Christians in India were compelled to convert from Hinduism and therefore must be converted back to Hinduism. However, the religious minorities in India have noticed that the mood of public opinion has turned against them, and that there has been an increase in the use of violence against them by fundamentalist Hindus. In some remote villages there has been an increase in the celebration of compulsory conversions of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. As with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey, of whom journalists are just now discovering that radical Islam has been motivating his political decisions for decades, which they should have known, so also, in a few years, will the media be asking itself how a Hindu fundamentalist such as Modi could become so powerful without them noticing his fundamentalist agenda. However, the ideology and movement to which Modi belongs, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, is already 90 years old, and the RSS has been using violence on the streets of India for decades. And Modi has been widely accused of complicity in the attacks of Hindus on Muslims in 2002 in which 1,000 to 2,000 Muslims were killed in the Indian state of Gujarat, where he was governor.

The goal of the Islamists, to remove Christianity from the Middle East, was taken seriously by no one until the violent expulsion of Christians from Iraq began, and even then it was first described by experts as a result of the Gulf War. One said it was simply not possible for radical Muslims to expel an entire religious group made up of



Thomas Schirmmacher with the President of Albania

hundreds of thousands, or, indeed, millions of Christians. But then the expulsion of Christians from Iraq occurred, followed by the tragedy in Syria. “And in Egypt, we were close to a mass expulsion or emigration of Coptic Christians, before Mursi was taken out of power by the army”, noted Prof. Schirmmacher. Just as world leaders should have paid careful attention to the most insane themes in Hitler’s

essentially religious ideology, so too, we must now pay attention to the seemingly insane themes in the new fundamentalisms arising in Hinduism and Islam. In this specific sense, there is something to learn from Hitler’s tragic belief system and legacy.

The guest lecture preceded a reception by the president of Albania, a reception by the mayor of Tirana, and a reception by the university leadership. Additionally, Schirmmacher met with the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Archbishop

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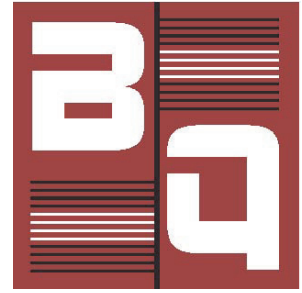
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Anastasios; the Roman Catholic Nuncio, Archbishop Ramiro Moliner Inglés; and the General Secretary of the Albanian Evangelical Alliance, pastor Akil Pano.

Schirmmacher also gave a lecture on the theme “Where do human rights originate?” at the National Historical Museum, the largest museum in the country located on the northwest side of the central Skënderbeg Square which is famous for its mosaic, “The Albanians,” the leading example of Socialist Realism in Albanian art situated above the main entrance. The lecture took place in connection with a members meeting of the Albanian section of the International Society for Human Rights.

### Links:

- Photo report: <http://www.unyt.edu.al/events/artikull/article/unyt-open-lecture-march-06-2015/>
- Invitation: [http://www.unyt.edu.al/events/artikull/article/unyt-guest-lecture-nazism-as-a-political-religion/?tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=2&cHash=2d58d3c3438713fc33f0c8a72af11f5d](http://www.unyt.edu.al/events/artikull/article/unyt-guest-lecture-nazism-as-a-political-religion/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=2&cHash=2d58d3c3438713fc33f0c8a72af11f5d)
- University website: <http://www.unyt.edu.al>
- About the University: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_New\\_York\\_Tirana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_New_York_Tirana)
- About the museum: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historisches\\_Nationalmuseum\\_\(Albanien\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historisches_Nationalmuseum_(Albanien))

### Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#): Thomas Schirmmacher during his guest lecture in Tirana
- [Photo 2](#): Thomas Schirmmacher with the President of Albania

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