Machine-readable Nazi Life Histories collected by Theodore Abel and Meta-Information dataset.

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1. Introduction

In 1934, Theodore Abel distributed the following announcement to all local headquarters of the National Socialist party (NSDAP): "400 Marks in Prizes for the Best Personal Life History of an Adherent of the Hitler Movement. Any person, regardless of sex or age, who was a member of the National Socialist party before January 1, 1933, or who was in sympathy with the movement, may participate in this contest. Contestants are to give accurate and detailed descriptions of their personal lives, particularly after the World War. Special attention should be given to accounts of family life, education, economic conditions, membership in associations, participation in the Hitler movement, and important experiences, thoughts, and feelings about events and ideas of the post-war period. (…) The contestants whose contributions are published in part or in full will receive an additional honorarium of two marks per printed page. Manuscripts will not be returned, and must be submitted on or before September 1934" (Abel 1986:3).

In total, Abel received 683 life histories (biogram), forwarded to him by the Reichspropagandaministerium in Berlin. 584 of the 683 are digitally archived by the Hoover Institute. From those 584, we converted 579 to machine-readable format. The discrepancy in the number of biograms is due to archiving errors (i.e., the items "Frau ?" and "Agnes Mosler-Sturm" are one biogram but archived as two separate entries). According to Giebel (2018), Abels 683 manuscripts were just the first batch of a much larger stock. However, the Reichspropagandaministerium never came around to forward the remaining biograms.

2. Content

This data package has two components:

First, it provides .rtf files for 579 Nazi biograms collected by Theodore Abel in 1930s.

348 (~ 60 percent) of the biograms were type-written; the remaining biograms were hand-written. The type-written biograms were automatically converted to .rtf using the ABBYY FineReader 14 software. Every file was then corrected manually for unreadable portions, hand-written insertions, text deletions by the author or other conversion issues. The hand-written biograms were all converted manually by reading every letter and retyping it in an .rtf file.

Second, a dataset collecting "meta information" on the biograms. We followed much of what was provided by Abel in terms of "demographic" characteristics of the biogram's authors. In addition, we include information on whether the original letter was hand-written and how many words are missing and/or unreadable. Finally, the last column in the dataset includes a unique letter ID corresponding to

the letters ID on the Hoover Institute website. Users will need this ID to match individual letters to this dataset. In total, the dataset contains the following information: Last name, first name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, place of residence, number of location changes, educational attainment, occupation by training, current occupation, occupation father, parental political attitudes, number of siblings, current employment status, every unemployed after 1929, ever changed occupation, ever changed place of work, marital status, denomination, NSDAP member number, year of becoming member, party/association membership before joining the NSDAP, first contact with the NSDAP, employment status at the time of joining the party, WW1 veteran, WW1 casualty, participated in military activity after the WW1, hand-written letter, number of missing words, unique letter ID.

3. User notes

File names: The files containing the machine-readable letters are all structured the same way: *First name* + space + *last name* + *letter ID* + .rtf which facilitate matching the letters to the dataset. Moreover, it makes looking up the original letter on the Hoover Institute website straightforward using information on first and last name.

Letter authors: Many of the author names for the hand-written letters are incorrect. In order to facilitate looking up the original letter, we did not correct this in the file names. Instead, users will be able to match files and the dataset using the unique letter IDs. The dataset contains the corrected names.

Missing information: Across all biograms, we used the following rules to deal with missing or unreadable information. The placeholder "XXX" is used to denote the rare occasions where none of the readers where able to identify a specific word. Additional placeholders use [ ] as delimiter (e.g. [PARTS MISSING]) to denote miscellaneous issues. In case users are able to identify missing words form the original letters, do not hesitate to contact us so we can update the letters as well as the dataset with the corrected information.

4. Acknowledgment

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Moreover, we are grateful to the Hoover Institute of Stanford University for providing us with a license to ABBYY FineReader 14 as well as bringing us into contact with individuals interested in using this treasure trove of text data for teaching or research purposes.

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The original material is made available by the Hoover Institute of Stanford University (https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/advancedsearch/Objects/archiveType%3AItem%3BcollectionId%3A58225).

6. Literature

Abel, Theodore (1986 [1938]). *Why Hitler came into Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Giebel, Wieland (2018). *Warum ich Nazi wurde: Biogramme früherer Nationalsozialisten*. Berlin: Berlin Story Verlag.