



Exceptions: students at New York City's Hunter High School practice their German

Behavior

Uncovering "Mother Sons"

An uproar over "placebo-Colts" and "forest trolls"

The tall blond standing at the bar obligingly gulps down her cup of coffee and disappears. The bartender locks the front door to keep any other female patrons from entering Take 46, a café-bistro in the West German textile-manufacturing city of Krefeld. Then, like members of a secret society, the 25 men sipping beer in the dimly lighted room grow quiet as Volker Elis Pilgrim, 45, settles onto a barstool. He begins to read off the personality traits of major figures, from Adolf Hitler to Joseph Stalin, from Otto von Bismarck to Ronald Reagan. Composer Richard Wagner comes up for mention, and there are even references, amid nervous laughter, to Pope John Paul II. What do these men, spiteful and spiritual, noted and notorious, have in common? According to Pilgrim, they are classic examples of powerful men with strong emotional ties to their mothers, or "mother sons"—which is the title of his best-selling study on the origins of human violence.

Pilgrim, a social psychologist and author, is much in demand these days for public readings of his 372-page tome. So controversial and emotional are they at times that Pilgrim prefers to schedule separate events for men and women to encourage frank discussion. A grown man may sheepishly admit to feeling like a child every time he visits his parents, or a worried mother may ask what she should do about a son who has started mimicking the hand gestures of a woman elementary-school teacher. Pilgrim says fully 90% of the letters he receives come from wives and lovers who have suffered in relationships with "mother sons."

The author first came to the attention of West German readers in 1973 with his first book, *The Downfall of the Male*, which launched the male feminist movement—of men sympathetic to feminist aspirations—in the country. Using what he describes as a "nose for taboos," Pilgrim has since tackled such topics as masturbation and breaking ties with parents. The subject of his latest work, which has gone into its fourth printing since its publication last fall, is guaranteed to upset nearly everyone, whether radical feminist, right-winger or leftist intellectual. As a book reviewer in the conservative weekly *Rheinischer Merkur* remarked, "Pilgrim deliberately provokes his reader with each new 'case.'"

In search of answers to the roots of human violence, Pilgrim studied the lives of 105 military figures. He discovered that

Education

"Modern Latin"

A campaign to restore Deutsch

American Author Mark Twain once observed that German was so difficult that it "ought to be gently and reverently set aside among the dead languages, for only the dead have time to learn it." Much to the dismay of the West German government and some of the country's scholars, Twain's sentiment still abounds, apparently shared by a growing number of people the world over.

Despite increasing interest in the language in such countries as China and Turkey, the number of foreign students learning German has plummeted by 2 million since 1979, to about 14 million. This has prompted Bonn to mount a campaign for restoring the language of Goethe and Schiller to a respected position in a world more and more dependent on English.

Particularly distressing to West Germans is the lack of interest in their language among European Community countries and other major trading partners. At a rate that Bonn considers alarming, West European high school students have been dropping German in favor of English, mainly because they believe English is easier to learn. In U.S. high schools, Spanish, French and Italian have muscled German into fourth place. Hartwig Kalverkämper, professor of romance languages at the University of Freiburg, charges that Americans regard Spanish as useful, French as chic, Italian as exotic—and German as simply too difficult. "For the Americans," he says, "German is a kind of modern Latin."

The West German government is fighting the trend, having set aside \$110 million to support cultural and language studies abroad. At recent hearings of the Bundestag's foreign affairs committee, experts in science, commerce and culture suggested the decline of German might be

halted. Harald Weinrich, a professor of German at the University of Munich, was praised for proposing what he called Euproponia, a scheme for a multilingual Europe that would require West European upper-school students to take two foreign languages. One of them should be English, but, said Weinrich, "German would also have a chance."

A key player in West Germany's undertaking continues to be the Goethe Institute, a government-sponsored organization founded in 1951. Its 148 institutes in 67 countries are devoted to promoting the German language and culture. To capitalize on West German export successes, the institute is now offering diplomas in business German.

Turks are learning the language in record numbers because many would like to work or do business in West Germany. In Ecuador, Peru and Chile, German is still held in high regard. The growing interest in China is based on economic and political developments. Günter Wehrmann of the Foreign Ministry's cultural department says that in opening up to the West, the Chinese are trying not to align themselves too closely with the U.S.—hence the choice of German as an "independent" language.

The Goethe Institute, in cooperation with commercial producers, is now preparing a television film to promote the study of German. The 15-minute video, which will first be used in Chinese schools, features three German students simulating normal daily activities; it also contains language drills and footage of Germany's scenic beauty. There are plans to produce English, French and Spanish versions of the video, with the idea of showing them on television networks abroad. The U.S.'s Public Broadcasting System, for instance, is scheduled to air the film next year. That could be good news. PBS's cachet with upscale viewers—its presentation of *Upstairs, Downstairs* made Edwardian England all the rage—could just make studying *Deutsch*, well, chic.

—By J.D. Reed.

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