Racing and the Motorization of the German People: 50 Years of the Automobile at the 1935 and 1936 Berlin Auto Shows

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to show how the National Socialist regime participated in popular commercial events such as trade fairs in order to posture their propaganda. I demonstrate how the inter-trade organization and one particular company – Daimler-Benz AG – tailored their advertising to the communication strategies used by the Nazi regime.
Methodology – This case study is based on the archival records of Daimler AG. The way in which the 50th anniversary of the automobile was staged at the Berlin Motor Shows of 1935 and 1936 is read as part of the communication strategies of the German automotive industry, as well as of the Nazi regime.
Findings – This paper shows how intimately connected the 50th anniversary of the automobile was to the themes of racing and motorization. The automobile as a German invention had the potential to reconcile the motorization of the German people – a sign of modernity – with the blood and soil ideology of the Nazis. The Berlin Auto Show became an important platform for this project. The paper also shows how Daimler-Benz’s approach should be read differently.
Originality/value – The article sheds new light on the interaction between and interdependence of one particular company’s – Daimler-Benz AG’s – communication strategies and those of the Nazi regime. Furthermore, the 50th anniversary of the automobile, celebrated at the auto show in Berlin, provides a good opportunity to add exhibitions to advertising history of the 1930th Germany.
Key words – advertising, trade fairs, anniversary, motorization, modernity
Paper type – case study

Introduction
During the Third Reich the Berlin Auto Show became a mass event. The idea was both that visitors would be able to share in the widespread fascination for automobiles and that the event could serve as a platform for National Socialist propaganda pertaining to the motorization of Germany. Already before the outbreak of the First World War, many Germans aspired to buy an affordable car. But until the 1930s there was no such car produced in Germany. Adolf Hitler exploited these aspirations and promised that the German people would be motorized. Nevertheless, the modernity expressed through the automobile – and even Hitler would often refer to the USA as a model here – needed to be reconciled with the backward-looking blood and soil ideology of the National Socialists. This central contradiction of National Socialist ideology – that between modernity, on the one hand, and blood and soil ideology, on the other – led to a mindset that has been referred to as autochthonic modernity. Autochthonic in the sense of down-to-earth, connected to the people and to home, grown together with the native soil – whilst at the same time expressing a desire to look back in time for retardation, reference old traditions and demonstrating a dynamic environment (Graeb-Könneker, 1995, p. 29-30). In simple terms, mass motorization became the motorization of the people. It would seem that the automobile as a German invention became an organic part of German history and something through which seemingly contradictory ideals were able to be harmonized.

When considering these ambiguous tendencies in Nazi ideology it is important to reflect on the wranglings over National Socialist modernizing tendencies amongst certain historians. But the question of whether National Socialism reflected the “totalitarian side of modernity” (Zitelmann, 1991) or, as Mommsen termed it, “a simulated modernity” (Mommsen, 1990) cannot be answered using the example of the automobile anniversaries which I am considering here. Instead the staging of
the automobile can help us to analyze the “self-stylization” of the National Socialists. The regime aimed to generate a lasting “knowledge of the ‘modernizing’ shearing force of the NS-Regime” in the people’s consciousness (Maszolek, 1993, p. 312). In this project, motorization played a central role. As a promise in the context of National Socialist consumption policy (König, 2004), it is possible that it made a considerable contribution to acceptance of the regime, even though motorization was a military necessity from the point of view of the Nazis’ plans for expansion.

Exhibitions and mass media have often been used to generate interest in the automobile. The regime used not only hitherto established forms of advertising – like trade shows or posters, for example – but also popular media, such as the radio (Westphal, 1989, p. 73-75; Schug, 2007). Corporative anti-capitalist values have been propagated by modern media of advertising industry. (Reinhard, 1993, p. 448) The Nazi regime greatly influenced commercial advertising, which was noticed by those involved in the industry themselves and identified as modernizing (Berghoff, 1997). Frequently the boundaries between propaganda and promotion were blurred, even if advertising with National Socialist symbols was prohibited by law. It was not always possible to distinguish between corporate merchandizing and the staging of national virility. In the particular context of the similarities of some brands to the “brand” of Hitler, the anniversary of the Mercedes-Benz brand is of special interest. In scholarly literature this is sometimes referred to as co-branding (Schug, 2007, p. 339).

My argument is that the anniversary of the automobile was used to legitimize the National Socialist motorization policy. The history of the invention of the automobile became an important argument for the motorization of Germany. For Daimler-Benz the main concern was image advertising – but under the application of very similar communication strategies to those of the Nazis. Hence Daimler-Benz’s closeness to Hitler was only one possible strategy, as will be shown.

The Berlin Auto Show in the context of the National Socialist motorization program

Since 1901, the Imperial Association of the German Automotive Industry (Reichsverband der Automobilindustrie – RDA) had been staging its central industry event, the Auto Show, in Berlin. The exhibition took place on the RDA’s spacious premises which were constantly being enlarged. In 1921, Berlin’s racing circuit, the ‘Automobile Traffic and Training Circuit’, or AVUS (Automobil-Verkehrs- und Übungsstrecke), was opened next to the exhibition site. During the years of relative economic prosperity, such as the year 1928, the number of exhibitors rose to more than 600. In years of crisis, such as 1930 and 1932, the exhibition did not take place at all. The political situation at the time would occasionally determine whether international exhibitors were in attendance or not. While state officials were still making extremely protectionist statements in 1925, the presence of foreign exhibitors in 1927 allowed the exhibition to reclaim its ‘international’ title. Despite the supposedly anti-car policy of the Weimar Republic, leading politicians such as President Hindenburg and Julius Curtius, Minister for Economic Affairs, officially opened the exhibition. Hindenburg remained patron of the event until his death in 1934 (Stuhlemmer, 1982).

Adolf Hitler had already announced a more car-friendly set of policies before being appointed Chancellor of the Reich in January 1933. It was therefore no coincidence that he used the Berlin Auto Show as a stage to present himself as a big promoter of motorization – indeed he officiated at its opening a mere 11 days after his appointment as Chancellor in 1933. This would be his first public speech in that role. Dressed in a suit instead of his military uniform, Hitler aggressively championed the motorization of Germany at this event. His speech, as well as the discussions held beforehand with the RDA, reassured the automotive industry, which had been severely unsettled by what had been perceived to be the anti-car transport policies of the Weimar era and by the economic crisis that had been brewing for years. The new Chancellor promised to support the automotive industry and announced a series of tax reliefs for car owners as well as investments in road building and motor sports events (Stuhlemmer, 1982, p. 122). The speech, later interpreted as a ‘turning point in the history of motorization’ (König, 2004), might initially have been designed to have a short-term impact. Hitler was styling himself as the savior of the German automotive industry. Signs of the sector’s recovery had, however, been apparent since November 1932, when sales were 50 percent higher than in November of the previous year. In 1933, the production of commercial vehicles rose by two thirds compared with the previous year, with sales of passenger cars increasing by more than half. The number of people employed by the automotive industry had tripled by 1936 (Feldenkirchen, 2003, p. 122). What National Socialist propaganda constantly declared to be the resounding success of its policies, might actually have been partly due to a recovering economy. Hitler himself always contrasted these successes with the imaginary scenario, had the downward trend of the period 1929 to
1932 continued into the future. He used the topic of automobiles and racing to present himself as Führer of a modern movement (Day, 2005). At the same time, he could count on the support of an industry that had previously been in the grip of a severe crisis.

In accordance with the first enactment of propaganda in June 1933, the Werberat (Advertising Council) was installed, which would not only organize advertising but also trade shows. The Werberat was subordinate to the Propaganda Ministry. Sometimes this ministry intervened directly in the planning of trade shows, like in the case of the IAMA (Internationale Automobil- und Motorradausstellung – International Automobile and Bicycle Exhibition) in 1935. Adolf Hitler himself had a personal say on a variety of issues (RDA, 1935b). In the run-up to the 1935 automobile exhibition, he expressed the wish that the RDA “should publicly promote the largest international motor vehicle exhibition to an even greater degree than previously” (RDA, 1934a). New forms of mass media had been used in this context since the 1920s – indeed the opening ceremony of the 1928 exhibition was even broadcast on the radio (Stuhlemmer, 1982, p. 140). The National Socialists greatly increased the event’s media presence and tried to involve the entire German population. Thanks to nationwide billboard advertising, special trains, buses and an extensive supporting program, the character of the exhibition increasingly morphed into that of a mass event. Many companies brought their entire workforce to Berlin for the weekend (Stuhlemmer, 1982, p. 169). In 1934 some 600,000 visitors passed through the spacious new exhibition halls on the Kaiserdamm during the exhibition’s standard run of 10 days, with the result that it was extended for an extra seven days. A particular effort was made to encourage young people to visit and admission prices were reduced. The 1933 and 1934 exhibition posters illustrate the IAMA’s semantic shift under National Socialism.

The couple dressed in white on the poster of 1933 can be seen as an idealized version of classic automobile purchasers in the early 1930s. Cars – other than tradesmen's cars and doctors’ cars – were luxury goods that only few could afford. The woman with her cap, gloves and scarf can be interpreted as the embodiment of the elegance and the 'beauty of technology' associated with automobiles in the 1920s. The man represents the sporty side of the motor car. The sophisticated world of automobile transport, weekend trips and motor racing seem to be the driving force here.

The poster of 1934 is entirely different. The bright colors of the earlier poster have given way to somber brown and black tones. With its depiction of a factory landscape, this later poster is the sole example in the history of German automobile exhibitions, in which manufacturing (and therefore by implication the worker) comes into the picture. The car here is not being driven and purchased, rather it is being manufactured. The arm with the swastika armband, thrusting itself out of the factory stacks
shows the political resonance attached to the Berlin Auto Show, as well as to manufacturing. It also shows how the National Socialists were making a grab for the car and the automotive industry. However the poster can also be seen as an expression of the huge effort of the industry, which, "in the spirit of national socialism" and "by working amicably together as a team", was charged with making Volksmotorisierung (motorization of the German people) a reality. This aggressive gesture of the outstretched arm with swastika armband is typical of the imagery found in illustrations, speeches and texts, continuously associated with motorization and motor racing from 1933.

In accordance with the wishes of the Ministry of Propaganda, the RDA developed a new overall concept for the 1935 Auto Show. "New Germany" was supposed to be clearly communicated, particularly to "foreign countries". This change was accompanied by three reforms: firstly, the manufacturers’ stands were harmonized in terms of their architecture and design, so as to give an "impression of unity". This was supposed to demonstrate the purported end of competition within the German economy: "This is no longer a matter of industrial companies fighting for supremacy, but of the German automobile and motorcycle industry firmly uniting to fight for our national prestige and the national success of a wonderful cause," wrote one press and news agency correspondent, for example (Der Motorrist, 1935, p. 2). Secondly, the exhibition was broadened thematically. Where it had been previously divided into categories for passenger cars, trucks and accessories, there was now an attempt to portray "motorized transport as a whole" (RDA, 1935a). Hitler himself had suggested including a display called The Road, which had previously been shown in Munich and showcased ideological and nationalistic aspects of the history of road-building as well as the plans for the national network of highways. These plans were presented as "solely the work of Hitler" (Gundler, 2010, p. 373). The Reichsbahn (German National Railway), the Reichspost (German National Postal Service) and the Wehrmacht (Armed Forces) were similarly showcased. The third reform was the central Hall honoring German engineers and workers. In the first two years of the hall’s existence, it focused particularly on the history of the automobile, incorporating Benz, Daimler and other famous engineers into an epic story of national heroism, as will be shown below.

The invention of the automobile and the exceptional technical aptitude of the Germans

In 1934, the ONS (Oberste Nationale Sportbehörde – Germany's motor racing governing body at that time), brought the idea of establishing a Hall of Fame to the attention of the companies involved in motor racing (ONS, 1934). Since its founding in September 1933, the ONS had been in charge of organizing the sport and its races (Hochstetter, 2005, p. 277). It was not easy to persuade the various manufacturers represented by the RDA to unite around a single concept. On December 18, 1934 a meeting took place at the RDA which was attended by the responsible architects and one to two representatives from each of the following companies: Opel, Auto Union, Daimler-Benz, Continental, Bosch, NSU and Fichtel & Sachs. A representative from the ONS was also present. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Wilhelm Scholz of the RDA, and was the scene of ‘lively debate’, specifically regarding the details of this Hall of Fame (RDA, 1934b). The participants finally came to an agreement: the Hall of Fame should not be dedicated solely to motorsports, but should also address "those construction elements typically used in German automotive engineering" that would be exhibited "in a particularly dignified setting", and also it should provide "evidence, that has become well-known in this past year, of the high standard of German engineering and German craftsmanship, namely the racing motor cars and motorcycles that have gone from strength to strength in 1934" (RDA, 1935a, p. 27). Motorsports became proof/an index of German workmanship.

When the Hall of Fame was finally complete, it contained two racecars: one of the Auto Union racing team and the other of the Daimler-Benz racing team, and these were located on the left- and right-hand side of the foyer's central walkway. A series of motorcycles were positioned further inside, in front of diagonal partitions. A variety of busts, together with engines and other motor vehicle parts were on display in front of the pillars. [1] The individual components on display represented state-of-the-art technology: compressor and diesel engines, railcar diesel engines, three-axle/rear-axle aggregates, gearboxes, clutches, axles, wheel suspensions, steering systems etc. "All the latest models" as the exhibition catalog emphasized (RDA, 1935a, p. 27). The RDA, the ONS, the National Socialist Motorists' Corps (Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrerkorps – NSKK) and the German Automobile Club (Der Deutsche Automobil-Club – DDAC) each had a corporate booth in the wings of the hall, separated from the racecars by high partitions. There were also booths for the German and foreign trade press. Two historical vehicles were exhibited in the center of the hall: the first Daimler motorcycle, built in 1885, and the three-wheeled Benz Patent Motor Car from 1886. "50 years of the
automobile – the world's first petrol-fuelled automobile, constructed by Benz", was written on each of the four plaques placed on the pedestal for the Benz Patent Motor Car.

A photographer hired by Daimler-Benz AG took several photos of the Hall of Fame, but only included the exhibits produced by the company. The pictures must have been taken outside of opening hours or before the exhibition had been formally opened to the public, as the hall is completely empty. The only people caught on camera are part of the staging: a cleaning woman, who is cleaning the Daimler motorcycle with a feather duster and two uniformed NSKK employees, who are standing guard, with somewhat stiff postures, next to the W 25. Key details of the exhibition in the Hall of Fame will be discussed below with reference to two selected photographs.

In the foreground of the first photo is the Daimler motorcycle from 1885, which is standing on a small, garlanded podium. The placard on the podium reads: "The world's first motorcycle, built by Daimler". Other photographs show that this exhibit stands in the center of the hall and that it was arranged to face the entrance. Behind the motorcycle (as seen from the hall's entrance and therefore out of shot in this picture), stood the Benz Patent Motor Car, which was on loan from the Deutsches Museum in Munich. An engine with an explanatory placard and a bust mounted on a pedestal can also be seen in the picture. Behind the two pillars, Daimler-Benz AG's Grand Prix racecar – which, together with Auto Union's Grand Prix car, dominated international racing in 1934 – is mounted on a podium almost at chest height. NSKK honor guards stand to either side. This part of the hall is easier to make out on the second photo.
The Mercedes-Benz Grand Prix racecar in the IAMA's Hall of Fame in 1935. (Daimler Archive)

A laurel wreath with two ribbons is situated below the car, the imperial eagle with swastika above it. The tablet mounted to the left of the racecar lists various records, and the words "historic victories" are discernible. The placards bear the ONS insignia. Four lights, each above head height, have been placed at some distance from the vehicle. They are reminiscent of fire bowls. The entire way in which the Hall of Fame is furnished and arranged gives it the feel of something in between a museum and a heroes’ shrine. Different design elements can be attributed to both of these. The engines and busts are arranged and labeled as if they were in a museum. The racecars and the two historical vehicles are adorned with various decorative items – whilst the two historic vehicles were only on small, garlanded podiums, the racecars were mounted at a height which actually made it difficult to view them properly. Visitors must have marveled, particularly at the cars’ wheels and radiator grill, that’s if they dared to get close up. The staging of these exhibits leads one to conclude that visitors were not supposed to inspect these racecars, but rather to make them objects of veneration. The quasi-sacral elements, such as the wreath, lights, tablets, imperial eagle and the honor guard, serve to further reinforce this impression. In some ways, the car appears as though it were lying in state. This staging transforms the racecar from a secular object into a machine that symbolizes German greatness and superiority. The NS symbols introduced a political dimension. Both the RDA and the ONS drew on the full range of stylistic presentational elements of National Socialism here, elements which, with increasing regularity, were being encountered by the public in municipal buildings and the like (Clemens, 1990, p. 84).

Standing in the middle of this temple to German design engineers and workers, which visitors had to pass through before they could reach the actual exhibition halls with the manufacturers' stands, were the two historic vehicles. Given the varying degrees of staging however, they were only ostensibly in the center of the room. They were the stumbling blocks placed in the visitors' path to slow them down, so that they would turn to look at the cult objects in the wings. Nevertheless, due to their central position, they were key to the presentation of German engineering prowess: German engineers not only brought the automobile to its highest state of perfection, they were the ones who had created it in the first place. The achievements of Daimler and Benz were presented by Robert Allmers, Chair of the RDA, in his opening speech, for example as part of a long series of German inventions. He elevated that into a sense of religious mission: "The nation of thinkers has given the world a means of advancing humanity" (Allmers, 1935 a, p. 8). In the omnipresent war and fighting metaphors of Nazi Germany, he lets the car conquer the world.
He thus tapped into to a widespread interpretation of automotive history, according to which German achievements were emphasized and the achievements of other countries played down. The inventions of 'non-Aryan' engineers suffered a similar fate (cf. Day, 2005, p. 117, Holzer, 2010, Königsberger, 2010). Inspired by nationalism, Allmers extended the technical aptitude of a few individuals to the entire German nation. Daimler and Benz were shown to be typical of the "on average [...] extraordinarily high level of technical competence and natural ability" of the Germans, of the outstanding achievements of German engineers, and the "stamp of quality" of German workers. Wounded national pride can be heard when he bemoans the "malicious gossip overseas" that despite all these German achievements could not be quieted (Allmers, 1935 a, p. 8).

Even more striking is the claim of the heritage of the Swabian and Bardic inventors in Hitler's speech. That became an argument for the domestic nature of the extensive modern motorization of Germany. "Why this industry particularly in Germany developed to such an unfortunate course is hard to understand. The automobile was invented in our country. The names Daimler and Benz belong among mankind's great pioneers of transportation!" Daimler and Benz themselves became proof of the "on average [...] exceptionally high technical skills and talents" of the engineers and the "quality" of the German worker (Hitler, 1935, p.11). Technical history here serves to defame the policy of the Weimar Republic, and the motorization of Germany appears a historical necessity.

Despite Allmers' enthusiastic outpourings on the "will and unity, the spirit and the joyful dedication of this German nation, once again German after long years of humiliation", the RDA representative from the German automotive industry remained committed to the commercial interests of his RDA members: in his eyes, it was the "record sales" of automobiles in this "jubilee year" that clearly pointed to the future (Allmers, 1935 a, p. 8). These record sales had been achieved, however, solely through increased domestic sales. Sustainable growth would require the long-term improvement of export figures, as the car manufacturers knew from past experience. Before the First World War, the automotive sector had achieved an export rate of more than 60 percent. In 1935 it was languishing, even with a slight upward trend, at only 10 percent. Manufacturers were attempting to regain the high, pre-war export ratio, but in spite of the active promotion of exports, they were nowhere near achieving this. If the automotive industry was to continue to grow, the procurement of foreign currency was all the more important, as the urgently required raw materials could only be purchased overseas with foreign currency (cf. Tessner, 1994, p. 37).

When the Chair of the RDA therefore spoke of the "superior technical aptitude" and the "stamp of quality of the workers," this should primarily be understood in light of the industry's attempts to improve exports. This objective was also described in the exhibition catalog as the IAMA's most important goal (IAMA, 1936, p. 23). Allmers used this "positive bias in favor of Germany", demonstrated by his citation of German automotive history, as a sales argument for German passenger cars (cf. Zschiesche, 2007). Automobile racing and the invention of the automobile blended into one in the 1935 Hall of Fame and in the wording used by the RDA in praise of German design engineers and German workmanship became an image factor designed to boost overseas sales.

Altogether the Hall of Fame seemed to fulfill expectations. The Berlin Auto Show stayed true to the concept of thematic broadening. In the years that followed there were displays at several times of other transport providers and the Hall of Fame was setup every year until the IAMA in 1939. In different ways but always in a similar style the themes of racing, automobile heritage and German engineering art were used to demonstrate National Socialist strength.

The invention of the automobile and the motorization of the German people
In 1936, the self-stylization of the Nazi regime in the Hall of Fame was particularly focused on Hitler. That was the year in which the exhibition had the motto: "50 years of the automobile". Special attention was drawn to the anniversary on the exhibition's promotional leaflets, and the RDA's Chair Robert Allmers and Adolf Hitler both mentioned the anniversary in their opening speeches. Allmers indirectly defended this renewed celebration in his speech, referring to the patent for the automobile, which Benz "received" in January 1936 (Allmers, 1936, p. 6). A huge celebration of "100 years of German rail" had taken place in the summer of 1935 and might have been one reason for this repetition. There was still competition between motorized transport and the railway, the latter of which was clearly still more important. 30,000 people came to watch the "railway parade" held in Nuremberg, where the first railway line had been opened in 1835 (cf. Sonneberger, 2010). Allmers himself referred to the special commemorative stamps that were issued in honor of the occasion in a letter (Allmers, 1935 b). Daimler-Benz took out an ad to congratulate the German Railway and to point
out that the railway uses a great deal of Mercedes-Benz products for passenger transport (SFS, 1987, p. 804).

Overall, much more was made of the anniversary of the automobile and of automotive history than had been the case the previous year. Increased coverage of this anniversary indicates that there was an intensive public relations campaign. In a move that mirrored the railway's anniversary celebrations, two special stamps were issued with portraits of Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz. A revue entitled "100,000 horsepower in the Deutschlandhalle" presented the history of mobility to the public, from the Stone Age to a simulated Grand Prix race (including pit stop) as light entertainment. The RDA organized this "people's revue" at "the express suggestion of the most senior government bodies" (RDA, 1936 b). The automotive industry reluctantly supported the event (RDA, 1936 b). The premiere, at least, was sold out, with 10,000 spectators filling the hall in the presence of Adolf Hitler.

In the Hall of Fame too, automobile history was more emphasized than it had been in the previous year. Only a few pictures remain of the 1936 exhibition. A postcard of the exhibition shows a view of the "Auto Show's Hall of Fame", according to the caption.

A large section of the hall can be discerned on the postcard. The room's brightly-lit anterior section is the Hall of Fame. Behind it, separated by two thick pillars and in half-light, one can see the exhibition Hall No. 1. Various vehicles, busts and floral decorations are visible in the Hall of Fame. Dominating the hall is a bust of Adolf Hitler, standing on a plinth in the centre, surrounded by an arrangement of flowers. The motor vehicles are arranged in a circle around the bust. The vehicles in the foreground of the picture are historical models, with newer models positioned further back, garlanded with boxwood and decorated with swastika ribbons. The rear part of the exhibition hall is dark, and some of the vehicles there even have protective covers draped over them. The corporate nameplates of the first row of exhibitors are clearly legible: Opel, Mercedes-Benz and Auto Union. These were the largest three car companies of Germany in the 1930s. Opel, as a small car producer, profited from the trend to smaller vehicles and the motorization policy of the Nationalist Socialists. Since 1929 in the hand of General Motors, the German traditional brand became the biggest German manufacturer with more than 40 percent market share. The share of the Auto Union amounted to 20 percent, followed by Daimler-Benz, Adler and Ford, each with 10 percent of the German market share (König, 2004, p.253). Swastika flags and the flags of different nations can be seen on the right and left hand side of the exhibition hall. These are the British, and probably the Italian and French flags. Until 1939 international auto makers were present at the automobile show in Berlin. Ford and Opel were the
victims of certain, albeit hidden, discriminations, but the National Socialist regime depended on their large production facilities to achieve the military buildup they required (König, 2004, p. 253).

Which constitutive components attract attention when we look at the 1936 Hall of Fame? The most eye-catching is the bust of Hitler, which focuses attention on the center of the hall. The historical vehicles are on show again, but are no longer in the limelight, which has instead been captured by Hitler. Politics have taken center stage. The fact that all the vehicles have been arranged around this central point is also striking. This layout is unusual in that it results in the cars in the foreground presenting their rear to the viewer. The effect of that is that they are being exhibited to him rather than to the guests of the exhibition.

The show’s booklet provides information about the vehicles in the hall. The old cars in the foreground are historical ones produced by various manufacturers, thus showing “the historic development of the German automotive industry across its entire spectrum of brands” (Hitler, 1936, p. 9). The RDA started collecting them for the exhibition at the IAMA. Longer term these antique cars were supposed to become part of the motor vehicle exhibition that the Deutsches Museum München had started to construct. Hitler had a personal interest in this exhibition.

The rear half of the circle contains cars that had been owned by Hitler in the 1920s, some of which would later be exhibited in the Deutsches Museum (Gundler, 2010, p. 376, 386, 400). Here, they have become part of the “movement”: “they [the cars] have, through tough and faithful service, played their part in helping the Führer and the movement to victory” (RDA, 1936 a, p. 9). Bedecked with laurel wreaths and personified, the cars have thus been accredited with the German virtues of industry and fidelity. The five vehicles representing the Mercedes-Benz brand showed clear signs of use – seen by the press as evidence of the Führer's hard work during the “Kampfzeit” (the period of the National Socialists' rise to power between 1919 and 1933). According to the Münchner Neueste Nachrichten, the cars “have been run into the ground and you can see that they have been driven for tens of thousands of kilometers on the roads of Germany” (MNN, 1936, p. 4). The cars have become witnesses of Hitler's struggle, which is represented here.

The link between the motor vehicles and Adolf Hitler was a two-way affair: having become Führer with the help of the automobile, he was now championing the development of automotive engineering. Just as autobahns became the “single-handed work of Adolf Hitler” and the “roads of the Führer”, racecars now became the racecars of the Führer (Schütz, 1996, p. 14). According to the brochure, these racecars and motorcycles were manufactured at “the Führer's behest” (RDA, 1936a, p. 9). The ensemble in the Hall of Fame can, on the other hand, be seen as an analogy. There were parallels between the stories told of Hitler’s “Kampfzeit” and those of the pioneers of the automobile. In both cases the narrative tells of how they had to fight for their vision in the face of substantial resistance, finally achieving success. It was the archetypal heroic tale that was being recounted here. Hitler himself interpreted the invention of the automobile as a national act. In his eyes it fulfilled an old yearning of mankind for mobility. Automobile manufacture was able to capture “in an unexpected and barely imaginable dimension its dominant position in today’s world economy” (Hitler, 1936, S. 9).

Hitler's central position in the Hall of Fame is of particular interest regarding the Volkswagen (people's car) project. Even before the First World War the motor press and automobile enthusiasts had been hoping for an inexpensive car for the masses. This hope was expressed in terms such as “Volksautomobil”, “Volksauto” and “Volkswagen”. Since Ford produced automobiles in Germany and General Motor acquired Opel, all hopes for a Volkswagen were concentrated on them. After the introduction and quick distribution of the Volksempfänger (people's receiver) in 1933, Hitler, an admirer of Henry Ford, announced the development of a small affordable automobile at the automobile exhibition in 1934. This small car was supposed to make individual car ownership affordable to many German “Volksgenossen” and was to be produced as a collective product by German car manufacturers (cf. Niemann 2012). In 1936, two years after the car's announcement however, the automotive industry had still not achieved any success in this matter. After the negative experiences of the broadcasting industry with the Volksempfänger, car manufacturers were not particularly enthusiastic about pressing ahead with the project. Because of the very cheaply sold Volksempfänger, the market for radios collapsed entirely and many producers struggled for existence. Adolf Hitler admonished the automotive industry in his speech, saying that they too had to help the automobile move from being a “luxury object for a few individuals to an object of daily use for everybody” and recommended that the industry let itself be guided by the German populace's income when pricing its cars (Hitler, 1936, p. 15). Later in 1936 the responsibility for the Volkswagen project went from the RDA to the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF – German Work Front) and the small car for the people became the so-called KdF-
Wagen, (Kraft durch Freude – Strength through joy). But because of the start of the Second Word War it wasn’t before the 1950s that the former KdF-Wagen would mobilize Germany.

Any connection between this conflict and the Hall of Fame is purely a matter of conjecture. However, there is reason to suspect that the manufacturers' association wanted to flatter Hitler personally so as to be able to bypass a joint manufacturing effort that was judged to be bad for business, without suffering any adverse consequences. Indeed Adolf Hitler merged in the Hall of Fame with the “German design engineers and workers” to whom the hall was actually dedicated. Elsewhere, Hitler was even placed in a lineage that included Henry Ford. The entire history of the German automobile was thus linked to Hitler. “Behold the German automobile industry in Adolf Hitler's Reich!”, crowed the exhibition brochure in response to the continuing increase in sales figures, thus getting to the heart of the intention behind the Hall of Fame, in which the sales figures were displayed in glowing numbers above the entrance. On the whole, the ensemble in the Hall of Fame could be interpreted as follows: Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich thanks to the automobile and is now leading the German automotive industry forward into a promising future, a motorized Germany.

50 years of the automobile in Mercedes-Benz advertising
History always played a major role in advertising for Daimler-Benz AG. Before the merger in 1926, both predecessor companies – Daimler-Motoren-Gesellschaft and Benz & Cie. – had claimed that they had invented the automobile, and/or that they were the oldest automobile manufacturer in the world (cf. Mühr, 2011, p. 170). What occasionally gave rise to an exchange of media-based blows between the two manufacturers when they were still competing became one of the most important areas of common ground after the merger and might indeed have played a significant role in the success of this merger. The tradition featured particularly strongly in the company's advertising in the late 1920s. The long tradition as the “oldest car plant in the world” is one of the important brand characteristics of Mercedes-Benz still today. So how did the company itself integrate the anniversary into its communication strategies? Were they in accordance with the staging in the Hall of Fame?

Many manufacturers exhibited historical vehicles, especially racecars, on their stands. However, Daimler-Benz AG did this particularly frequently. As early as 1934 the company erected a small ensemble on its stand in honor of its company founders, and the head of the NSKK corps decorated it with a wreath (Daimler-Benz AG, 1934 b). Possibly spurred on by the attention that the history of the automobile garnered, and without doubt inspired by its sales and racing successes in 1934, the company intensified its historical commitment at the 1935 IAMA. A small corporate pavilion with the Mercedes star on the roof was erected directly opposite the main entrance. Twelve historical racing vehicles were housed inside, underneath the slogan: “40 years of motor racing”. The oldest vehicle was the Benz Modell Vis-a-Vis, dated in the catalog to 1891, and the youngest vehicle (on display in the center of the pavilion) was the then fastest car in the world, in which Rudolf Caracciola had set a number of different land speed records, including the world record, with a top speed of just over 320 km/h (Daimler-Benz, 1935, p. 55 and 70). Other exhibits included the 1909 car, nicknamed the “Blitzen-Benz”, and the first compressor racecar by Mercedes dating back to 1923. A few photographs, some of which were printed in various newspapers, show this display. Here one of them will be shown to give an impression of the display.
This photograph must have been taken from the pavilion's entrance. It shows the view that would have greeted visitors when they entered the exhibition. The center of the room is dominated by the aforementioned “World's Fastest Car.” It sits on a small, garlanded podium. “FASTEST ROAD CAR IN THE WORLD” is written above the list of top speeds achieved, international records and the world record. Facts and figures on the company's racing successes were fixed to the wall areas above the stands, as can be seen to some extent on this photo. Just behind the car there are two large portraits. To the left and the right of this large picture there are several smaller portraits. Trophies beneath the pictures are surrounded by boxwood. On the far right and far left hand side one can see the radiator grille of automobiles, above them large-sized photos and lists with racing successes.

The most striking element of the backdrop to the central stand is the large double portrait showing Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz. A bright frame surrounds the two heads within a single picture, thus providing a visual representation of the company merger in 1925. The fact that the two images have been lifted out of context means that they are strikingly different from the other photographs and lifts the two founders out of their historical environment, making them appear timeless. While Carl Benz is looking directly at the camera, meeting the gaze of visitors at the door of the pavilion, Gottlieb Daimler is pictured in semi-profile, not looking at the camera. He is looking to the right, towards Carl Benz, following the direction of travel of the World's Fastest Car. The most striking of the trophies under the double portrait also points in this direction. In accordance with our reading and viewing habits, shaped by the written word, we associate the progression of images from left to right with the progress of time into the future. Both the racecar and Gottlieb Daimler are therefore facing the future. This is also the direction in which the chronological exhibition is ordered.

To the left and right of the bodiless inventors can be seen small photos of race drivers who had driven, or were still driving for DMG, Benz & Cie. and Daimler-Benz (Daimler-Benz, 1935, p. 70). Daimler and Benz appear as the automotive forefathers of all race drivers, thus giving rise to an ancestral line. The current race driver myth passed, in the process, to the historical personalities, imbuing their achievements with a present-day relevance (cf. Day, 2005, p. 183). Conversely, the history of racing provided the current victories with a tradition, and made them appear historically logical. Their continuation into the future was thus obvious. Its history was proof of the advantage of experience enjoyed by “the world's oldest automobile factory” and of its “design progress”. The repeated emphasis of “world” underlines this advantage in an international context. The fact that Daimler-Benz AG had been victorious “for Germany in virtually all the major races” became proof of the “premium quality of the materials used and its outstanding precision work” (Daimler-Benz, 1935, p. 3). Racing thus became an image factor and sales argument for the company's brand in general.
If the racing exhibition didn't stint at all in terms of its affect-laden staging and its emotionalization of the subject, it was nevertheless designed to be very informative. This becomes evident in comparison with the quasi-religious super-elevation of the vehicles displayed in the 1935 Hall of Fame. The exhibition's designers were trying – very much in the style of classical sales prospectuses – to win over their audience with information. The victories elevated the companies (both of which entered cars in racing events) from the mass of other companies. In comparison with Auto Union, which was only founded in 1932 through the amalgamation of four companies (Audi, DKW, Horch and Wanderer), it was precisely their long history of racing victories that was the crucial distinguishing feature. In its “40 Years of Motor Racing” exhibition, Daimler-Benz AG thus adeptly linked the prevailing enthusiasm for racing with its – for a company in the automotive industry – long history. The company was careful to present its racing history rather than its corporate or engineering history, for example. In PR terms, more weight appears to have been attached to the public's fascination with racecars than to the ten years that were "lost", by focusing closely on the company's racing rather than on its general automotive history which had begun in 1886. This appears to have worked. The exhibition even had to be partially closed due to the enormous crush of visitors. Newspapers made even more references to the racing exhibition than to the anniversary of the automobile, and several papers carried photos of the exhibition.

In the following year, no special consideration was given to history on the Daimler-Benz AG stand, when the IAMA was once again held under the motto “50 Years of the Automobile”. Instead, the theme seems to have been increasingly used in public relations, internal communications and advertising. The company prepared a large number of images of historical objects, prospectuses and places, which were published in various newspapers and magazines. Press releases and speeches referred to the anniversary and the company committed itself to its tradition. Adolf Hitler sent a telegram, which was hung up in the factories and read out at the IAMA press conference. It contained his congratulations to the company on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Carl Benz's patent approval. (Martin, 1936) Daimler-Benz AG's press director, Mr. Martin, talked in some detail about the achievements of the company's founders at this press conference. He defended the company's claim to having invented the first automobile by explicitly emphasizing the “totally new path” struck by Carl Benz and placed his and Daimler's achievements in a global context, both in cultural and industrial terms. Daimler and Benz were thus not only inventors, but also founders of an industry. Martin also allowed for themes such as the heroic impetus, the visionaries and their pugnacious attitude to resonate: “With an admirable farsightedness, its creators recognized the enormous opportunities inherent within their inventions and pursued these despite all obstacles with the greatest tenacity” (Martin, 1936, p. 2). Accompanying this heroic narrative was the promise to safeguard and enhance this “legacy” which was seen in the nature of the products: “Technical progress and superior quality are and remain our overriding principle!” (Martin, 1936, p. 2). Martin cited the company's achievements in motor racing as evidence of its adherence to these basic values.

As there is no specific staging by Daimler-Benz of the anniversary of the automobile at the IAMA of 1936, Mercedes-Benz’s advertising will be examined here. Progress and quality were the most important aspects here, too. In an advertisement on Labor Day, May 1, the company emphasized the pride and the “double joy” because of this day in the anniversary year. Here the meaning of the Mercedes-star is interpreted as a “symbol of German engine building that a world is looking up to.” To this international meaning, already known from the racing exhibition, the reference to racing and the diesel engine stressed a new point: the contribution of Daimler-Benz to the motorization of the German people. This chorus of praise ends with the proclamation of a responsibility: “to fully meet the expectations set by our customers on our brand in the future as well” (SFS, 1987, S. 807).

As had happened so many times previously, tradition was used as a selling point. The company's references to its history became more frequent in the mid-1930s, however (cf. Mühr 2011, p. 176). Within the context of the anniversary of the automobile, it was primarily presented against the backdrop of the company's racing victories and its “supreme performance in terms of design and materials”, and vice versa: the company's history was the background to its achievements. The brochure accompanying the 1936 model range shows a current model with a shadow of an undefined old-fashioned car in the background. If the depiction of the car is construed as a symbol for tradition, then the fact that it is a shadow renders it intimately connected to the car in the foreground. This juxtaposition emphasizes the modernity and “perfection” of the current vehicles all the more, while simultaneously showing the great technical progress of the past 50 years. The poster promoting “50 years of automotive engineering” deploys a similar visual rendition of history.
The illustrator, Jupp Wiertz, highlighted the anniversary of the automobile in an advertising poster. In the picture, a Benz Victoria is driving along in front of a historical, urban backdrop somewhere in southern Germany. That the vehicle is just one step removed from a horse-drawn carriage is immediately apparent. The vehicle with two passengers is reminiscent of a photograph taken in 1894 of Carl Benz and his daughter Clara in this very same model. The car seems to be in motion. In the foreground, Wiertz has depicted the current Formula racecar, complete with race number and Mercedes star, the “crowning glory” (Daimler-Benz, 1935, p. 54). Like the carriage, it is driving from left to right; however it seems to be cornering and almost heading straight for the viewer. The car's dynamic spirit is signaled by the strongly blurred colors. The driver's plain white clothing and orange face stand out sharply against the blue and black tones of the surrounding images and the historical car. The legends “50 Years of Automotive Engineering” and “Mercedes-Benz” are picked out in the same white. The arrangement of the colors on the poster determines where the eye is drawn to first and subsequently: behind Mercedes-Benz you have a list of current racing successes, and behind that, the history of the automobile. The traditional urban backdrop stands for localization, the place where the car was born. So it is the German tradition that the automobile is coming from. In spite of the strong emphasis on tradition in the 1930s, motor racing remained the most important part of Daimler-Benz AG’s publicity efforts; indeed the company was enormously successful in this area. The car embodied speed, automotive progress and quintessential modernity. Both in this promotional poster and in the company's general self-publicity, the company's history constituted no more than the background against which its current source of prestige, namely motor racing, could be presented. The poster is a typical example, in both graphic and iconographic terms, of automotive advertising in the 1920s, and this style is still very much in evidence in the 1933 IAMA poster. Tradition, progress and elegance come together to promote the Mercedes-Benz brand without coming across as National Socialist propaganda in either content or style. How much these elements were used seems to have depended on the different contexts and the extent to which they were politically charged. Here history served to underpin the company's successes and to demonstrate the special properties of the brand.

Conclusion
As I’ve demonstrated the Ministry of Propaganda and the ONS had a vast influence on the presentation of the IAMA. It becomes apparent that the Regime used the exhibition to propagate the motorization of the German people. The thesis, the history of the automobile as a German invention, was used to legitimize the motorization of Germany and to harmonize that with the blood and soil ideology of the
Nazis, Hitler used the narrative of the invention of the automobile in Germany to defame the “lag in motorization” as unnatural and as not suitable to the German Volkscharakter (character of the people). So a propensity and a talent for engine and vehicle production became a national quality. From that, Hitler extrapolated the domestic nature of Germany’s motorization. The RDA chairman Robert Allmers argued in a very similar way, but he emphasized the high quality of German products. In both cases the invention of the automobile was interpreted racially, as proof of the attribute of the whole German people. Germany’s current racing success proved the reconstitution of the “proper” state by NS policy. Modern motorization was not only reconciled with blood and soil ideology, but became directly entangled with it.

Daimler-Benz AG treats the anniversary in a different way. The company didn’t stress the superiority of the German worker, but that of its own workers – even if it didn’t fail to point out that they were working for Germany and for Hitler. Here the same strategy was essentially pursued: Daimler’s and Benz’s inventive genius was transferred to all workers of the company, but only to them. The argument is a cultural one. Until that point, work had been conducted in the “spirit of the founder”. The corporate culture was the bracket which connected the current success with the mythic origin. Furthermore, the company used its own racing history to demonstrate an unbroken line of success. Times of crises like the mid-1920s or the beginning of the 1930s receded behind the immense success of contemporary and past victories.

Finally, the co-branding of Hitler and Mercedes-Benz should be considered. Linking the vehicle to the “Kampfzeit” in the Hall of Fame is the most noticeable technique here. It demonstrated a close connection between Hitler and Mercedes-Benz, just as Hitler always liked to present himself with representative cars. Daimler-Benz AG's representatives would surely not have found the many tributes paid to the company's two founders unwelcome and they probably also helped steer the staging of the exhibition in that direction (cf. Gundler, 2010, p. 395). But to demonstrate the proximity to Hitler and to the ideas of the people and plant community was only one of their communicative strategies. Another was to continue in the tradition of advertisements of the 1920s, to point out the elegance, the sportiness and the technical superiority of their products. Finally, it should be pointed out that even if the anniversary is interpreted in different ways, all those different narratives reinforced each other. As has often been said, to better remain in the minds of the people: Daimler and Benz invented the automobile!

Notes
[1] It has not been possible to identify the figures in the photos. However the correspondence between Daimler-Benz and RDA indicates that busts of Gottlieb Daimler, Carl Benz and Hans Nibel (the chief designer, member of the Board of Management and design engineer with Daimler-Benz AG, deceased in 1933) were provided by Daimler-Benz AG. Daimler-Benz AG provided eleven technical items for the exhibition, in addition to the busts (Daimler-Benz AG, 1934, p. 5).

[2] A list of “world records” and “victories in 1934” would also have been displayed next to the Auto Union car on the opposite side of the hall, according to the correspondence of Daimler-Benz AG with the ONS (ONS, 1934).

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