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THE PROBLEM CHILD OF EUROPE

By Dorothy Thompson

WHEN a drastic revolution occurs in a society the change in atmosphere and behavior is so overwhelming that one cannot believe one's eyes and ears. This is not the society with which one was familiar, the place where one felt so much at home. The old society had a face which one knew and trusted. Suddenly it is gone. Another face is there — a strange, foreign face. One thinks, "This is a nightmare." One closes one's eyes and pinches oneself, naïvely expecting that with another look the distorted vision will have passed, and the old familiar face will be there again. The first impression which a revolution gives anyone not a part of it is that it will certainly pass, and almost immediately. One says to oneself, comfortingly, "These people are not like that! I have known them for years!"

This attitude greatly contributes to the success and expansion of the revolution. For even the classes and groups hostile to it lend it collaboration, in the optimistic certainty that it is not really representative. This is inevitable, because all groups and individuals who have long enjoyed social power consider themselves, and themselves alone, as representative. They have a complacent conviction they can "handle" the situation. They need merely enter the revolutionary ranks, and in a short time the features of the revolution will conform to their own features. For *our* face, they argue, is the "true" face of this society.

The powers about to be dispossessed feel also that they enjoy an advantage in occupying a defensive position. They are fighting on home soil, against invaders. And actually, a drastic revolution does resemble a foreign invasion. I was in Germany when the 1933 Nazi revolution occurred. I remember standing with a fellow-journalist on the Grosse Stern in Berlin in April of 1933, watching a regiment of Storm Troopers march by. Their feet beat

the ground rhythmically, their faces were grim, and in short, sharp barks they were repeating with a horrible monotony, "*Judah Verrecke! Judah Verrecke!*" — left, right — "*Judah Verrecke!*" — the cry giving the tact to their march. The sight of several thousand grown-up Germans marching in broad daylight to the words "Perish the Jews" seemed almost funny. One had, of course, seen these Storm Troopers marching before, but not in this manner of complete confidence. They had been mavericks, no more representative than the Christian Front in this country — merely more numerous. "Crazy people," was the usual comment, "when times are hard some people get like that."

Of course, what had happened was that a numerous but hitherto invisible class had risen to the surface. One thought, "Where, in heaven's name, did these people come from?" Yet possibly that man there had waited on you in the restaurant the night before; perhaps that one was the concierge who had unlocked the door to usher you to the elevator in a friend's house; that boy may have delivered the groceries in the morning. Hitherto they had been anonymous, the anonymous and indistinguishable mass. Suddenly they were very visible indeed. But still, one thought — or more accurately, felt — they are not representative. "They can't last."

By and by one begins to discern in the strange new mass-face of a revolutionized society certain familiar features. But they are distorted almost beyond recognition. One then has a feeling that society has gone insane. This realization is accompanied by a feeling of pity. A madman is a sad spectacle. Pity also assists the "madman." One must not treat the revolution too roughly. A revolution is like an hysterical woman. The best thing is to give her her way until she snaps back into normalcy. Normalcy, of course, is the previous society, the society to which one belongs oneself. One still feels sovereign and superior.

The Nazi revolution was assisted by this attitude, and the person of Adolf Hitler helped to cultivate it. The psychopathy of Hitler is obvious, and the Nazi revolution was made in his image. To the candid eye he is immediately inferior. Above all, of inferior race and breeding. His fulminations about the great superior Germanic, Nordic or Aryan race brought a smile to the humorous lips of any handsome, virile Jew. "Is this the face to launch a thousand ships in a race war?" one bantered.

It would have been more pertinent to inquire why this person had acquired such power over the masses. Clearly, he was a frustrated and even sick individual. Even a layman's eye diagnosed some pituitary disturbance, some masculine deficiency. The Leader of Men is not at all a masculine type. Then, all his talk about the masses being like a Woman; his treatment of audiences — brutalizing and seductive, and culminating in orgiastic outbursts that were distinctly uncomfortable and embarrassing to the detached spectator. What frustrations must be in this man, one thought — so sensitive, so cruel, so weak, and so aggressive! And those fantastic characters around him — perverts and adventurers, frustrated intellectuals who could not hold a job on any good newspaper or get their plays produced or their books published. And his own background — "*Lumpenproletariat*" — not even a casualty of the economic depression; one of the permanent class of unemployables, caught up briefly into the common adventure of war, taking refuge the rest of the time in a dream-world; a man whom nobody "understood," full of envy, furtive hatred, frustrated creative power.

One dismissed him, still clinging to the concept of "normal," not wondering what might happen if such a man, surrounded by others with a capacity for organization, should come to the surface in a *society* which shared his own symptoms, a society which was also frustrated and sick. "Can the blind lead the blind?" is an open question. Do not societies make gods in their own images? The tendency of history to employ disreputable characters is lost sight of in "normal" times.

A psychopath is a person unable to exercise conscious discipline over his unconscious urges. A drunkard achieves release from inhibitions by means of a stimulant. But all psychopaths and all drunkards do not behave in the same way. Nothing comes out of the released unconscious that is not there. Some men are aggressive when they are drunk, and some are amorous; some are garrulous, and some morose. Many go crazy, but not everybody goes crazy in the same way.

Release from the inhibitions and disciplines imposed by habit, tradition, reason, and fear comes also in dreams. Freud says, "Tell me what you dream and I will tell you what you are." It would seem that not only individuals but whole societies have an unconscious life, a dream life, which differs from the unconscious and dream life of other societies. A revolution releases the un-

conscious; it destroys inhibitions. The result is a caricature of the society, as an individual in a psychopathic state is an aberration of himself and no one else: as a drunk is a caricature of himself sober.

And so, gradually, one comes to observe in the distorted Nazi face of Germany certain familiar German features. The face is more representative than we thought in the first shock of surprise. The patient will be quieter one of these days; this is certainly not his permanent condition; he will recover. But meanwhile he has revealed more of himself than he ever would have shown us, sober. It is worth watching this society released from its inhibitions. For we hope to live on good terms with it when it is well again, if we are well ourselves. And we shall understand it better hereafter.

But we have also had an opportunity to watch revolutionary developments in an urbanized middle-class society in the twentieth century. In the distorted features of this case we can discern more than German features. The behavior is not German only; it is, in many ways, twentieth century. Let us try to separate two sets of symptoms: symptoms peculiar to *Homo Germanicus*, and symptoms somewhat characteristic of all decaying middle-class society. We may learn something from both.

II

The German revolution did not begin in 1933, with Hitler. It began in 1918, with the loss of the war and the collapse of the Hohenzollern state. It has gone through many phases and will go through more before it is over. In all its phases it is "German"—the Weimar Republic as well as the Nazi dictatorship. The German revolution and the Russian revolution coincided at their births, and, for a brief time, collaborated. It is not certain that they will not end in a close embrace.

The German revolution of 1919 occurred after a lost war in a world in which the middle class was the most representative class, and bourgeois values generally accepted. It occurred, however, in a society in which middle-class civilization had never had the authority that it has exercised in France or Great Britain. Germany was a country where the social and political ideas of the French Revolution did not take permanent root; and it had escaped almost entirely the English Revolution which preceded the French. The belief in the individual and in democracy lacked

the authority which the spilling of blood for a cause lends to it. Germany had no Magna Charta, no Declaration of the Rights of Man, no Declaration of Independence, no popular cult of Liberty around which a moral unity could be built.

The ideal of individual autonomy had never had a real hold in Germany. There was a feudal Germany, an industrial Germany, and a workers' Germany. Feudal Germany was already in conflict with industrial Germany, and in that conflict seemed to come out on top. Actually, feudal Germany was closer to proletarian Germany, which was not democratic and individualistic, but Socialist.

Although radical Socialism was given no official encouragement and much official suppression under the monarchy, the form of the German state encouraged the tendency to Socialism rather than the tendency to individualism. The German state, from Bismarck's time on, was a "*Fürsorgestaat*" — literally translated, a "caring-for-you state," the state in the rôle of Providence. By the close of the war the economic organization of Germany had already brought about a strict social dependency. In the ensuing years Germany became urbanized to the point where only about a third of the population lived on the land; and in the east these lived on great estates as tenants and laborers. A quarter of the population lived in small towns, forty percent in large towns, a fourth of these in cities of over 100,000. A breakdown of the population into social classes would have shown that only a quarter of the population could be regarded as economically independent; three-quarters of all of them were tied to the "system."¹ The basis for liberal democracy — the democracy of individualism, thrift, and middle-class morality — was not there. The drift toward Socialism, Communism, National Socialism, or some other expression of an urbanized, industrial, socially dependent society was inevitable.

The revolt against middle-class values had started before the war, especially in the Youth Movement. This movement of twentieth century minnesingers was anti-bourgeois, anti-respectable, against pedantry, materialism, and what they called "tradesman morality." It was a revolt against all conventions, including those surrounding sex. But it was not a revolt in the direction of economic liberalism. It was a search after a more coherent social life, not dominated by the idea of personal profit. It affirmed the war,

¹See Pierre Viénot, "Incertitudes Allemandes" (Paris: Valois, 1931).

for the war represented heroism, sacrifice, and the spirit of the front — comradeship and mutual affection in danger.

The solidity of the Hohenzollern structure rested upon the Army, the Bureaucracy, the Church, the Junker Estates, the Great Industries. The organization was impressive and powerful. The Benevolent State could point with pride to the fact that Germany had no slums like those of Glasgow and Birmingham, no slaughtered forests as in the United States, no plutocratically controlled culture, but order, discipline, and strength. The organization was so impressive and powerful that it held the world at bay for four years. Then it collapsed. The world's best army lost the war; the All-Highest fled to Holland; the masses of the people were hungry. At a blow Authority had been destroyed, the authority of the Emperor and his caste.

The fall of Hohenzollern Germany was a psychological shock to a generation of Germans from which they never recovered. One must bear in mind that Germany, in the modern sense, the Germany created by Bismarck, had never fought a great war until 1914, and had never lost any war. England and France had waged many and lost several — and still lived and adjusted themselves. The lost war confronted Germany with a reality for which she was unprepared by previous experience. It was the incredible. If that could happen anything could happen. It made no difference that the Weimar Republic put down mob risings, dissolved bolshevism, and restored order in a remarkably short time. Gone was Faith in an Order. What had happened once could happen again.

The shock gave enormous impetus to the idea of historic relativism. Obviously there were no enduring values. Nothing was permanent except change.

The second shock to which the German mind was subjected was the Inflation. This cannot be overrated. In the inflation money disappeared. It simply vanished. It became utterly and completely valueless — a dollar was worth a billion marks. The effect of the total collapse of all money values upon an ill-founded and already weakened middle-class society cannot adequately be described. The German youth, who had lyrically denounced money values in the days when those values were very solid, saw that they really could disappear in the course of a few weeks. Germans ceased to believe in money. Ceasing to believe in money, they ceased to believe in thrift, or in any kind of individual security.

The entire economic structure of society came into question. If wages, the savings of a lifetime, pensions, bonds, the most gilt-edged securities could all disappear overnight, were not the standards which had encouraged those savings worthless also?

The Inflation brought about rapid changes in classes. A whole breed of parvenus and *nouveaux riches* speculators cropped up to become the targets of hatred. The spendthrift and the speculator were rewarded, the sober man punished. To be rich was contemptible.

Two such overturns of values in the course of five years induced an acute feeling of crisis. But people in some curious way managed to survive. Life, then, was not the Emperor, or the finely organized caste-state, or the financial and economic system. Life was — life. A new money was made, the *Rentenmark* based on grain and not on metal. But why try to hold on to this money, either? Perhaps it too would go. Foreign money began pouring into Germany. It was welcome. Entire urban districts were rebuilt with it, industries rationalized, there was an era of intense economic activity in which Germany built the finest civil aviation service in Europe and launched the best and fastest ships on the sea. But the feeling of crisis never diminished. "This, too, will pass," was in everyone's mind. Since it will pass, let us live while we live.

The sense of living in a crisis induces a feverish self-analysis. A society that constantly analyzes its own symptoms becomes hypochondriac. The Communists saw in everything a prophecy come true. Since the next thing to come would certainly be Communism, the wisest thing to do was to push the careening society further along the escalator. The Social Democracy was loyal to the Republic, but in a half-hearted manner, for what the Socialists desired was not liberal democracy but Socialism. The Republic represented no ultimate value, but only a bridge to something else.

This concept of the existing order as only a stopping place on the road to something else — something ahead or something behind — was reflected in all the political parties. The idea that political parties are one means of approximating that balance of interests which is called "the General Welfare" never existed in Germany. The Socialists and Communists were not interested in the General Welfare. Marxian and class-conscious, they sought the welfare of the industrial proletariat alone. The

German Nationalists were wholly interested in the reëstablishment of the caste state. The Democratic Party was liberal in the interests of the capitalists. Each party was a sort of sovereign state representing a specific interest and all coalitions were precarious. The party system tended to eternal divisions rather than to the repeated striking of an average. The political structure was therefore brittle, not elastic.

In 1929 came the third great shock, and again within five years: the world-wide depression. The over-expanded plant, over expanded on borrowed money, poured out, not goods, but wageless workers. The Providential state fed them, but at a table that became increasingly meager. The solidarity of the workers was broken. For there was not one working class of the proletariat, but a working class and an out-of-work class of the proletariat. The more privileged, the skilled, and those protected by the strong trades unions, were better off than the twice-dispossessed small bourgeoisie, and excited their envy and hatred. The Social Democrats, defending the Republic, held on to the privileged workers. The unemployed and the desperate small tradespeople, peasants, and white collar workers joined the Communists or the Nazis, looking for a radical solution. The Youth sat in employment offices, or took their various insurance cards to be punched. They had time on their hands — time to go to meetings, or march in parades. Soothsayers arose and the crop of mystic prophets who perennially rove the German countryside increased, to tell the people from crystals or stars or cabalistic books or out of their own visions that the world was going to collapse or that the Redeemer was at hand.

Characteristic of this time was that almost no one — but, precisely, almost no one — believed in capitalism. The little capitalists went broke for the second time in five years; the big ones also went broke but were salvaged by the state, which in instance after instance became the chief shareholder. The sons of all the Thomas Lamonts were Corliss Lamonts.

Marxian Socialism preached materialism, and it failed to excite the youth because they had long since ceased to believe in material values. To a great extent, Communism is based upon envy. But can an unemployed man really envy a bankrupt capitalist? Hitler offered to youth fellowship in a mystic community. "No one else wants you, but I want you. I need you. And I promise you that as long as I live you shall belong to me and I shall be-

long to you." In the ranks of the Storm Troopers there was a uniform and fellowship. It was the "front spirit" all over again, the front spirit of which the youth had heard their elders talk, but which they had missed.

The next phase in the revolution was Hitler's dictatorship. It cannot be wholly or even chiefly attributed to the Treaty of Versailles. It was the response to the 1929 depression, to the third shattering psychological shock in half a generation.

The revolution was gathering momentum, in a kind of psychological vacuum from which all values had been obliterated — belief in the old régime, belief in the economic order, belief in the present régime, belief in middle-class morality, belief in Communism. There was belief in *nothing*. If there is belief in nothing, one cause is as good as another. The most amazing thing about the success of the Nazi revolution is that most of its followers did not believe in most of its dogmas. In the years 1930–1934 I met scores of members of the Nazi Party but I never met a 100-percent Nazi in my life — except Hitler. They only believed in the crisis, and in the certainty that "Something Must Happen," that "It Can't Go on Like This."

Those who followed Hitler did not believe, they did not have convictions; they had faith. They *had* to have some faith. Only the very strong can bear to live in a world utterly devoid of absolute values, which was what the bourgeois middle-class world had become. The rock-bottom of faith in life is "blood and soil."

Hitler came, mind you, as the Redeemer of precisely that middle-class world. But he could not save it. It was in the Euphoria of death when it elected him.

III

I have what the Germans would call "*eine unglückliche Liebe*" for Germany — a frustrated love. Germany is the only foreign civilization in which I have ever attempted to plunge myself. The word "plunge" slipped out on the typewriter and is revelatory. One would not think of "plunging" oneself into France. One enters the life of France step by step, and has to undergo an examination before every new door. The French tolerate foreigners but they do not welcome them. One has to prove oneself, by sheer merit. One would not dream of trying to "plunge" oneself into England. It would be a very uncomfortable experience.

But Germany invites the plunge. The German mind, the German psyche, has about it something oceanic and boundless. Despite the xenophobia that rules under the Nazis, despite all the talk about "German art," "German science," "German this" and "German that," the odd fact is that no people seem constantly to pursue the universal and to seek the generality as do the Germans. It is a much less compact society than the French, and there is nothing of the finely differentiated hierarchical structure of the British. The German mind seems constantly to struggle between a tendency to be open to all the winds that blow — open on all borders, north, south, east and west — and to make convulsive gestures to close those borders and dam the ocean between rigid dykes.

Whereas the French and the British social structures represent a fine equilibrium between freedom and order and seem to have some organic cohesion, German society always seemed to me to represent an attempt to enclose chaos in the strait jacket of a rigid organization. This chaos exercises an enormous attraction. It is something like the primordial chaos out of which came Creation. It gives one the feeling that something great might come out of Germany, something greater than anything that has ever been, if only for the reason that it might be *anything*.

The German mind has never been able to make itself up. Most importantly, it has never been able to choose, once and for all, between the East and the West. Dominant Prussia undoubtedly pulls it north and east; Bavaria and the Rhinelands pull it south and west; Austria and the new Slavic territories acquired will pull it south and east. If there is anything in the call of the blood, then that call comes from all directions too. For Germany is a land of the most mixed bloods — Slavic, Tartar, Nordic and Danubian, the latter being itself a description of mixture.

It is characteristic of the German that he is likely to find his spiritual home somewhere else. Goethe and Nietzsche both despised Germany. Goethe, however, loved the Mediterranean and western civilization. Nietzsche's blood pulled him eastward, for he was of Polish ancestry. Yet he incorporates the German longing for the West, the longing for form; and, because he is paradoxical he is the more German. The desire of Germans to escape from themselves may account for the fact that they make first class colonists. Germany has to keep their loyalty to the Fatherland by all sorts of propaganda and organization. But it

still is easier to make an American out of a German than out of a Frenchman.

The Nazi leaders, who insist so strongly on Germanism, were to a quite remarkable extent born abroad. For them Germanism seems to be a kind of Zionism. Hitler was born in the Austria of the Hapsburgs and loathed it. He looked wistfully across the borders into the German promised land. Hess was born in Cairo; Darré was born in the Argentine; Rosenberg was born in Estonia. Ernst Bohle, head of the "Service for Foreign Germans," was born in England. I am sure that there is something significant in this. For to these men Germany is not a place, an existing organized society, but an idea. And that also is along the German line, for the Germans are the most idealistic people on earth, with a passion for the abstract.

The thinkers whom they have accepted, the men who have most strongly influenced their intellectual life, were idealistic philosophers and deductive thinkers, or else chaotic and explosive poets, like Wagner and Nietzsche. Hegel, who elevated the state into an ideal of total order and total virtue, is hardly more characteristic than Nietzsche, who was the total nihilist as far as the state is concerned, despising all forms of bureaucratic society as the enemy of the creative will. This polarity of the German soul (which Nietzsche said was a chronic indigestion) accounts for a great deal, particularly the German discipline and the pedantically organized order. The German does not accept discipline because of a neat love of order. He accepts it the way a drunkard delivers himself into a sanitarium. He wants someone to impose it on him, because he cannot impose it on himself. He is anguished, divided, at loose in the cosmos. Even prison, since it means four walls and a routine, may be attractive to him. But inside the four walls he wants to get out again, into the cosmos. It was probably a great mistake to put Hitler into prison, for in prison he dreamed of "*Lebensraum*," the cosmos of the whole world which he would conquer and dominate.

Goethe said "Zwei Seelen wohnen ach, in dieser Brust," and Goethe probably understated it. At least two souls dwell in the German bosom. The polarity accounts for the amazing German sentimentality. German feeling is to an immeasurable extent *imagined* feeling, and the German temperament unreckonable. Germany is the only country where I have seen "strong" men weep for what would seem to an Anglo-Saxon the most trivial

reasons. Observers under the Nazi régime have been amazed to see Germans cruelly beat some poor Jew one moment and pick up and comfort a stray kitten the next. It may also account for the curious lack of what other peoples consider loyalty. "*Deutsche Treue*" (German loyalty) has been a very odd thing from the Nibelungen onward. In twenty years we have seen the whole German people desert from the régime of the Kaiser to the régime of the Republic to the régime of the Nazis with a unanimity that is amazing. Each time they desert they have a plausible rationale for doing so.

But the Germans are also one of the most purely rational of peoples. It is a rationalism unhampered by common sense, a quality that the Germans, in their duality and profound inner individualism, possess less than any European people. They are rational but not reasonable. There is no "common" sense in Germany. The Germans do not speak of common sense or even of common aim, but of a common destiny. The lack of empiricism leads them to the rationalization even of their vices. Other societies have homosexuals; it remains for the Germans to make a systematic apologia for homosexuality. Xenophobia exists almost everywhere, and anti-Semitism. It remains for the Germans to make a rationale of anti-Semitism and elevate it into a cosmic explanation of the world. This in no way prevents Nietzsche, who loathed Christianity as a "slave religion" foisted upon the human race by the Jews, from greatly admiring the Jews for denying their own child, and from proclaiming them to be the most aristocratic of peoples, since they had learned how to live dangerously.

The German duality of feeling finds expression in many words in the German language. Take "*Schadenfreude*." There is no one word to translate this; it means literally "injury-joy" — joy in the injury of someone else. Now, this combination of emotions is known to all of us; it is the basis, for instance, of slapstick comedy. But some instinct warns other peoples to separate the concepts into different words. The fusion is dangerous. We see the same fusion of opposites in the word "*Liebestod*" — love-death — love, the assertion of life and creation, and death its opposite!

The very structure of the German language seems to indicate the desire to escape limitations. It is the greatest language in the world in which to express emotions. It is also the most useful in which to avoid an issue. French compels intellectual precision.

English, the preëminent language of the verb, impels to action. The French language constantly pulls us back to reality. The German language pushes us out, if we are not very careful, into a no man's land. In the French, English and Italian languages the noun — the thing or the concept — is tied as closely as possible to the verb, the word that acts. We say, "Father has built us a beautiful home." The Germans say, "Father has us a beautiful home built." You have father, the concept of beauty, and home, before you know what father has done about it — whether he has built it or set it on fire. It is a language of unsigned or revocable treaties. The German passion for the concept and the abstract is equal to the German fear of the fact. The verb postponed is the fact postponed — the fact being reality.

This plurality and boundlessness, so attractive and so repellent, so intemperate, immoderate and profoundly unclassical, gives German spiritual life its vitality and its anguish. The one thing that no German poet could ever have written about his race and his nation are the words of John of Gaunt in Richard II: "This *happy* breed of men, this *little* world." To be German is to be divided, perplexed, longing for form, aggressively saying "I am" because one is not quite sure whether one is; and one is sure that, whether one is or not, one is something-beyond-Germanism. With all this goes a remarkable notion of world mission, but a remarkable uncertainty of what that world mission may be.

IV

"Mein Kampf" is one of the most illuminating books ever written. In it can be read the content of the German mind in a degenerate and plebeianized form. There is nothing at all in "Mein Kampf," except the description of propaganda, that has not been part of German intellectual wares for a long time. I do not mean to put Mr. Hitler's scholarship at issue. It is of no consequence whether he ever read Hegel or Nietzsche, or Marx or Luther. These four men have so influenced the German mind that their ideas have become part of the German collective unconscious, including the unconscious of Hitler himself.

Martin Luther made a Protestant church divorced from the idea of political freedom, commanding complete obedience to the state in everything but theology. His counterpart today is the Reverend Martin Niemoeller, who, being imprisoned for his defense of the rights of the Church in theological affairs, neverthe-

less, and from prison, offered his services to Hitler as a submarine commander.

Hegel saw the glorified state and the possible total sweep of its character. He gave it a moral and intellectual meaning that nobody before him had thought to contribute. The concept of the state as encompassing all of life was never reached more clearly than in Hegel.

Nietzsche who hated the state and thought of life as torrential creative power, in which good and evil each had polar and equal functions, affirmed force, youth and violence.

Marx, who was a great deal more of a German than he was a Jew, was profoundly influenced by Hegel; he was a Hegelian scholar and took his famous dialectic intact from Hegel, using it, however, in the economic rather than the philosophical field. He is enormously important to the mental life of Germany, for Germany is the only country in the world in which the entire industrial proletariat was to some extent intellectualized, and in which all of it has been dominated by Marx. What Marx conveyed to the German workers was the *inevitability* of revolution, revolution according to inescapable law. Marxism combines the idea of will with the idea of predestination. It is therefore exceedingly powerful, for it puts a guarantee of success behind the will of men. The processes of history are inexorable and apart from human will; the human will can, however, expedite the processes. To be a Marxist is to be convinced that one is in an active alliance with inexorable history.

To hold these four men responsible for Naziism is, of course, absurd. Hegel, a profound moralist, must be turning in his grave at the thought of a frame such as the state which he conceived, filled with such bestial power. Nietzsche must be exploding in his, at the sight of *bureaucratized* violence. A "boiling soul of the people" organized to boil at the pressing of a button! And Marx's revolution is not going as he plotted it, either. That pedantic and embittered soul must be having one of his interminable arguments in purgatory.

But these men enlarged the psychological boundaries of the German mind. Naziism has usurped its content, and, of course, has indigestion. It is a fusion of perhaps unfusable concepts. The Nazi state is totalitarian and in that sense Hegelian, but it is also dynamic; and German "dynamism," which has direct roots back to Nietzsche, is rapidly turning the totalitarian state

into totalitarian and perpetual revolution, which is another way of saying perpetual war. The word "state" is connected with the Latin "stet;" so are the words "status," "stay" and "static," which means something that stays put. Hitler's state is a runaway state, which would seem to be a contradiction in terms. He has turned the state into a "*Bewegung*" — a movement — and even adopted as its symbol the Swastika, the wheeling cross. Instead of the Movement coming to rest, with the conquest of power, in the state, the state has become an enormous juggernaut to propel the Movement. The state and the Movement are in the relationship of the body of a motor car and the engine. All Germany rides in the body of the car (the state), but passively. The Movement is the propelling power, and the chauffeur is the Leader, who chooses the roads arbitrarily. This is the totalitarian state in one sense, but it is certainly not Hegelian.

Hegel is one of the most abstruse of philosophers. He is quoted as saying, "One man has understood me and he has not." It is pretentious for someone not a philosophical scholar to discuss him. But what is important is the residue of his philosophy in the minds of the intelligentsia, who have passed it on in a sloganized form to the masses. The idea of the *Volkstaat* is certainly to be found in Hegel. He conceived the individual as finding himself only in the society of which he is an organic member; religion was not universal, but the spontaneous development of the national conscience; the artist was not an individual but a concentration of the passion and the power of the whole community. The deformation of these ideas is part of Naziism. The organic state is the Nazi ideal, in spite of the fact that Naziism destroyed what is organic. For one cannot create an organism by *Gleichschaltung* — switching into line — an idea not derived from biology but from mechanics.

Reading Hegel, and observing the relationship in Nazi Germany between state and Movement, one can see how easy would be a jump to the conception of the state as a proselytizing church, an idea which possessed Byzantium and the Eastern Church, and which is given expression in Dostoevski's novels. In "The Brothers Karamazov" he makes Father Paissy say: "The Church is not to be transformed into the State. That is Rome and its dream. On the contrary, the State transformed in the Church will ascend and become a church over the whole world — the glorious destiny ordained. . . . This star will rise in the East."

I quote Dostoevski here because the sympathy between the German idealistic philosophers and the great nineteenth century Russian novelists is constantly apparent. The Russian Communist state is certainly not the state dreamed of by Dostoevski who, at the end of his life at least, was deeply Christian; but it is a state that is, at the same time, a secular religion with a mission of world salvation. And so is the Nazi state. And with this it stops being a state in any Western sense of the word.

The attraction between Germany and Russia is enormous, and always has been. The Russian revolution was made in Germany — it grew out of German idealism via Marx — and Russia has contributed to it, and to the German mind as well, the spirit of Byzantium. That these two revolutions, the German and the Russian, would one day merge has been anticipated by many people. It is interesting that in 1931, two years before Hitler, the German Kaiser gave an interview at Doorn in which he expressed his scorn for any pan-Europeanism that would link Germany in an economic and spiritual alliance with Western Europe, above all with France and England. In fact, he made the statement, startling from a conservative at that time, that Germany's next of kin was Russia. "Western culture has reduced itself to mere utilitarianism, but the pendulum of civilization is switching to Eastern Europe and its way of life. We are not Westerners. . . . We cling with all our roots to the East."

The German belief that the West is decadent reached its clearest expression in Spengler. Utilitarianism is interpreted as a sure sign of decadence. Except in the East — to which Germany belongs — idealism is dead. The West has lost its biological vitality, its will to life and power. So run the arguments. The Nazis' revolt towards paganism as a spring from which Life can be renewed, and their systematic anti-intellectualism, are both reflections from Nietzsche, who denounced the concepts of "the good, the true, and the beautiful" as arresters of Life. Good, true, and beautiful, are only relative. They are the values of impotent, humble, feeble men with slave minds. The morality of bold, vigorous, healthy men is different. Their ethic is an ethic of strength, cruelty, combativeness, vigor and joy. Caution, humility, cleverness, pacifism, are only virtues for slaves, who can best advance themselves by the cultivation of these qualities.

Every one of Hitler's ideas of the "master race" is in Nietzsche, who, like Dostoevski, prophesied what has happened. "The

democratization of Europe is an involuntary preparation for the rearing of tyrants." "A daring ruler race is building itself up on the foundation of the intelligent mass." "Man's fate depends on the success of its highest types." "The twentieth century will be a classical era of great wars and revolutions." "There is no moral code for the generality of men. I am a law only for my own." That this master race should be bred according to a stud farm formula, as Walter Darré has conceived it, and that it would be formed in a society where fierce pride is more likely to land you in a concentration camp than anywhere else, was certainly not in Nietzsche's mind, any more than that the master-race idea should be made actual in a régime headed by a man overcompensating for severe inferiority. But Nietzsche himself foresaw "unwanted disciples."

The point is that the idea of a total transvaluation of values occurs over and over again in only two literatures: the German and the Russian. It reaches its summit in Nietzsche and Dostoevski. The latter, in the scene of the Grand Inquisitor in "The Brothers Karamazov," makes the most brilliant defense of Satan against Jesus, demolishing the idea of freedom and substituting for it the idea of equality, and affirming the "spirit of the earth," which demands bread and not freedom. Dostoevski was obsessed with the idea that the masses crave equality, that equality must mean slavery, and that the élite, the lovers of freedom, must rule as a priesthood and as vicarious sufferers taking upon themselves the sins of the masses. The idea is completely formulated in the description of Shigalovism in "The Demons." Both Dostoevski and Nietzsche could face and affirm nihilism — the return of civilization to primordial chaos, its rebirth in slime and corruption, and the emergence of a new society. In Dostoevski, a society "redeemed."

Even Marx with all his intellectualism has something apocalyptic about him. Social and economic power is to be centered in the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." The state is to be an executive committee for managing the affairs of the proletariat, and for crushing their opponents. This accomplished, it is to wither away. Wither away into what? One asks — and comes again to the idea of the state as a Church or as a Movement. In Communist Russia as in Nazi Germany essential functions of the state are supplanted by the Party. In this sense, the state has already withered away in both countries; its power has withered.

It does not legislate, it does not plan, it does not direct. It does not even judge, except in minor matters. Power in Russia is not in the Council of Commissars but in the Politburo; and in Germany also the direction and decision regarding crucial affairs are not in the state at all, but in the Party. And the Party — whether Communist or Nazi — is built along the lines of a religious order. It is a Leader and a following, a priesthood and a flock. To call either of these phenomena the super-state is false. They represent the anti-state.

But these parties came into being in both cases as instruments of war — of class war or race war. The Party is at once a proselytizing and a fighting body, a flaming sword and a missionary society. It is concerned with the Propagation of the Faith, and obviously must place enormous importance upon the Propaganda Ministry, which in Germany as in Russia is attached to the Party not the state. The Party's purpose is to administer a war which has no foreseeable end, since in the one case the superior race, and in the other the class whose time has come in history (the proletariat), must first obtain their sway over the whole world.

For a long time the Western world made the mistake — a mistake that may be fatal — of believing that there was no possible synthesis between the Russian and German revolutions. The possibility of synthesis was implicit from the beginning. Hitler always spoke of Germany as a "proletarianized nation." This slogan was invented by the German Communists, and stolen by Hitler. It was they who first said that Germany was the coolie of international finance capitalism. Marx believed that Germany would be the first workable Communist state, and the natural Communist Mecca for good Marxians ought to be Berlin. The idea of the Master Class and the idea of the Master Race that embodies and leads that class are not incompatible. We are already getting hints from Dr. Robert Ley, leader of the Nazi Labor Front, who is advising the workmen of the world to unite, throw off their chains, and, obviously, accept German leadership.

Western civilization, so runs the argument, is commercialistic, utilitarian, bourgeois, and decadent. Karl Marx himself denounced the Jews and said they could only be emancipated when they were freed from *Judaism*, which he identified with commercialism. Translated into terms of "Communaziism," the war against the Jews is therefore a war against commercialism and the West, especially England. When the Nazis say that England

represents world Jewry, only the more gullible among them mean it in the sense of an Elders of Zion plot. The others mean it as a concept — that recurrent German abstraction! They mean that Judaism = Commercialism = England, and things equal to the same thing are the same.

One can imagine a slogan for the merged revolutions: "Proletariat of the world and all Have-Not nations unite under the Stakhanovite workers of Germany, and with your pure blood unspoiled by bourgeois marriages made for money, and your vital instincts to will and power uncorrupted by Christianity and Jewish Commercialism, throw off your chains! *Rot Front! Sieg Heil!*" This is not said as a joke.

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In Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, the Party, having caught up into itself the powers of the state, is, at the same time, a caricature of the ugliest forms of the state — arbitrary force, which is terror, and arbitrary and self-appointed leadership, which is tyranny. The Party-state does not govern, because it is incapable of directing its actions by law. The state does not make laws, and the Party cannot make them. The state merely executes the aims of the Party, according to criteria which neither have predictability nor offer any security. That this condition of affairs will, in time, produce its own antithesis and new synthesis, one is compelled to believe, whether according to Hegelian dialectic or according to historic experience.

But it is a mistake not to recognize certain things that will probably remain in Germany, whatever new synthesis may take place. One is forced to conclude that whatever changes occur, Germany will remain, in however modified a form, a socialist society. The nineteenth century middle-class order based upon individual economic liberty never had strong roots in Germany, and the roots and the plants have died or been destroyed. That flower will not grow again in German soil.

Furthermore, as long as the West represents what to average Germans is a dead or rapidly dying middle-class civilization, it will exercise no attractive power for them, just as it exercises none for the Russians. Herein lies the greatest weakness of the French and British approach to the German people. For the French and British representatives of middle-class economics and morality are trying to sell the German people something

that they have lived through or given up, whether they are Nazis, or Communists, or neither. The whole of Germany is convinced that the epoch represented by the economics, moral values, and social forms developed since the eighteenth century is over. They never liked it much, and they believe that the future does not belong to individualism and bourgeois ideas, but to some form of coherent and organic community in which the vitalizing forces rise from the masses. The German mind was already groping in this direction before the war, and the German revolution through all its phases has emphasized the tendency.

Actually, moreover, this German and Russian tendency exercises an attraction for the West, for the West has already discovered in itself advanced symptoms of the decay of middle-class forms and values and also has become conscious of explosive forces rising from the masses, the unemployed, and the youth. This attraction over the West exercised by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia is, to be sure, a kind of horrible fascination. But it is a fascination. The problem of the West is to effect the transition from one form of society to another without the appalling aberrations and boundless exaggerations and horrors of the Russian and German experiences.

The growing crisis of Western middle-class civilization is one of the greatest assets possessed by Hitler and Stalin, and they both count shrewdly upon it as a war potential. It is Hitler's "secret weapon." For he and Stalin know that the war will enormously accelerate that crisis. At present it is being pushed ahead in Great Britain and France by the policies of the most conservative middle-class society left on this planet — that of the United States of America. Our credit policy toward the Allies in the present war is forcing them into economic totalitarianism faster than they need otherwise go. The fact, curiously, is unobserved by our political representatives of capitalism, who preach laissez-faire domestically and simultaneously egg on state-controlled economics throughout the world.

Nevertheless, Hitler and Stalin probably exaggerate the results upon the conduct of the war of the rapid transition being made in France and Britain to a controlled economy and a form of military-socialist organization. (I am compelled to use the word "socialist" in a rather loose sense, as the opposite of individualism.) There is far more inner unity and spontaneous patriotism in England and France than there ever was in Germany. If in the

business of winning the war they find that they must dispense with capitalism, in the nineteenth century meaning of that word, they probably will simply accept the fact and pay the price. Even if they find they must erect the Moloch totalitarian state they will accept it and plan that it will be temporary and that after the war they will be able to make an adjustment closer to their own traditions and genius. The very fact that the war is going on will produce collaboration until the war is over.

And whatever changes occur in the organization of social and economic life in the Western democracies, the pattern that will emerge will not be the same as the German and Russian — unless the Germans and Russians win the war and impose it by force.

The German and Russian phenomenon that has emerged is military, messianic, despotic. It has a mass base. Its sources were latent in German and Russian thought and society. Both the Nazi and the Russian Communist movements are fusions between the army and the masses, forced by the Party. One must never forget that the modern German Reich — the Reich founded by Bismarck — was to an enormous extent the creation of the Prussian Army. Under the Hohenzollerns, the army had a symbolic value and moral authority that it does not have in France or in England. The French and English societies are civilian, and the army is their instrument. Soviet Russia is also very largely the creation of the Red Army, which established the Communist régime in the civil wars and the foreign invasions following the Great War. Russia never had had a middle-class of any strength, and feudalism was extirpated by the Bolsheviks. The Party state which emerged is, like the Nazi Party state, despot-led — army plus masses.

By a succession of purges, both in Russia and Germany, the army has been transformed more and more into an instrument of the Party, that is to say of the Movement. Hitler had Roehm murdered for wanting precisely this function for the army. But the fact that a man is murdered does not necessarily mean that his policies will not be adopted by his assassin. Stalin exiled Trotsky and executed Tukhachevsky, but he adopted ideas from both.

To what extent the German Army actually has become one with the Party is still disputable. Some of the strongest moral values in postwar Germany were there, and it is difficult to be-

lieve that they have been wholly obliterated. The Elite Guards and the *Gestapo* may render the Army politically impotent. But there are grounds for believing that it still has a primary loyalty to the German nation rather than to the Nazi Party, that it differentiates between them in its mind. Nobody can say that its aid may not one day be a factor in rehabilitating Germany and restoring to her an organic social order.

At any rate, the Eastern and Mohammedan-like concept is foreign to the whole spirit of Western civilization. We certainly shall have a form of military Socialism in France and England during the war, but one cannot conceive of it as permanent. The social and economic structures of both countries, and indeed of all Western countries, including our own, will certainly be profoundly modified before this great revolutionary period is over. But though German dynamism and Russian messianism have much in common, nothing in the tradition of England or France indicates a corollary there to the German and Russian experience. One can imagine a more controlled state economy there, and Socialism, and even dictatorship; but one cannot imagine oriental despotism or a mystique of despotism. One cannot picture the dictator in a halo, elevated to Godhead. The French had Jeanne d'Arc, but they burned her, and only canonized her when she had been dead a long time.

Because freedom in Germany was never so well rooted in political institutions as it was elsewhere in the West, and because it was never so universally associated with economic liberalism, is not proof that the Germans do not love freedom. They merely love it in a different way. The German universities, before Hitler, were as free as any on earth. Nothing so eager and paradoxical as the German mind can be wholly regimented and subdued. And the violent expression of the many ill-digested elements in that mind may bring about a great catharsis. The fact of another war, and within a generation, confronts the Germans with a check to that sense of illimitability which I have spoken of as so characteristic. A moving body moves until it meets an obstacle. The war is that obstacle. Germany cannot move now with the exuberance of a year ago. There must be something sobering for her in the recognition that other people also have force and that they can apply it. The German mentality is compelled again to recognize that there are limits, and if Germany is to belong to Western civilization that is the lesson she

has to learn. With the recognition of limits will come the possibility of making a truly organic and civilized society.

Docile acceptance of the unquestioned authority of the state, traditional in Germany, may be broken when Germans have had a sufficiently long and intimate experience of what the state, transformed into a militant messianic Movement, can become and do. Whatever may go on in the national mind, individual people remain individuals. They want to breathe and eat and make love according to their own tastes, have children and keep them around them, and die, eventually, in their beds. The *Gestapo*, the terror, the strangling red tape, the unceasing and horribly boring propaganda, the profound psychological insecurity of a country without law, the thousand and one petty irritations which this kind of system requires of the individual, may pull Germany out of the maze of abstractions and back to some simple realities. Freedom in the Western democracies dominated by the middle-class has been institutionalized in bourgeois forms, and is so wholly taken for granted that it is tarnished. Quite possibly it may find its rebirth in a socialist Germany in the form of something as real, intimate and necessary as daily bread, deeply personal, alive, and human, and founded not on middle-class economic ideas but on a profound and religious respect for the human soul. With the German transition into humanism the German prophesy may come true: "An Deutschem Wesen soll die Welt genesen" (The world will be redeemed by Germany).

If the state is to be transformed into the church, in Dostoevski's sense, then it must rest on moral foundations, and (since no one yet has invented anything approximately as aesthetically perfected and humanized) upon *Christian* foundations. Dostoevski came to this conclusion before he died; and Nietzsche died mad, trying to avoid the same conclusion. Satanism is not a permanent religion. The life of love is the affirmative life, releasing every creative instinct. The ethical content of Communism and Naziism is beneath contempt, and certainly beneath that great moralist Hegel. It was the German poet Schiller who said, in the words of the Marquis Posa to Philip II, "Man is greater than you esteem him." Germany is greater than Hitler esteems her to be and Russia is greater than Stalin esteems her.

One cannot avoid recognizing that the West confronts the

greatest danger in her whole history. But the recognition should lead us to the realization of what a renascence is demanded. If the West is to survive it must throw off, in its own way, the musty and outworn values of nineteenth century individualism. It was a great century, but it is over.

If the West is to be true to its eternal spirit, it must transform these values, if need be under a changed economic and social system, into the humanist and personalist values which have always been the source of its greatest strength. I use the word "personalist" rather than "individualist" to indicate that a civilized society requires that the natural man, born an individual, develop into a person, a socially conscious and coöperative human being, whose "rights" are in direct ratio to his obligations. The West must find the way simultaneously to feed men and to liberate them, to adjust the social system to the reality of social interdependency without reëstablishing slavery. When it has achieved this, the pull of the German soul will be Westward again. Or, if Germany finds the solution first, the pull of the West will be towards Germany.

Meanwhile, the West must save itself from destruction. Its awakening may accompany or follow the war. It has not yet come. But we who love the West, and yearn for a Germany integrated with the West, have faith that it will.

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