

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF NAZISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

The growth of Nazism outside of the old Reich is much more astonishing than the development in Germany proper. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the Nazis had so skillfully concealed their real goals that nobody knew what the future had in store. The overwhelming majority of the Nazi voters had had no intention other than to give a new party a chance: they liked their radical and frequently not quite unfounded denunciation of the political set-up, and they had no idea that the government would mean the end of the Republic, and later on, the second world war.

But in 1938, everybody knew or had at least the opportunity of knowing what Nazism meant. Nevertheless, the Nazis were stronger than ever - many observers thought, stronger than in Germany itself - in spite of the attempts of the various ~~Central European~~ governments to suppress their activities. In Austria, they had no majority, but they formed not less than one third of the population, and since the rest was hopelessly divided between socialists and conservatives, monarchists and democrats, fascists and liberals, they were by far the strongest single party. In Sudetenland, they had even a clear-cut majority although the party which represented their ideas in that district, the so-called Home Front, disclaimed until the fall of '38 its true identity with Nazism.

This result was due to the peculiar historical situation in which the German population in Central Europe found itself after the first world war, but even more so to the skillful propaganda which combined the highest idealism with practical economic realism and the lowest appeal to mass emotion. This propaganda took into account all the three sides of human nature: the faith of the cultural elite; the interests of the average man; and the impulses of the mob. This combination proved so successful that it may deserve some attention even outside of the German orbit.

Let us first consider the historical situation. Central Europe had been united with the rest of Germany in the Holy Roman Empire, and later in the German Federation set up after the Napoleonic wars. The connection had been rather loose for the last 200 years. But the fact alone that the Habsburgs who ruled over Central Europe were the titular head of the Empire, gave it a strong sentimental force. When Bismarck succeeded in 1866 to exclude the Habsburg monarchy from the new German empire, this solution was deeply lamented by practically all the Germans outside of the boundary of the new Reich. Although the Habsburg monarchy prospered and although the Germans had a leading role in its political life - a role resented by the other nationalities -, they were dissatisfied and a considerable party advocated the return to the Empire in spite of the economic and political sacrifices such a policy would have brought about.

The world war gave this policy an unsought actuality. The peace treaties dissolved the Habsburg monarchy: an achievement of dubious political wisdom, but unavoidable because of the inability of its rulers to come to an understanding with the full dozen of nationalities of which it was composed. But the peace treaties failed to draw the only possible conclusion, namely to let the German parts of the monarchy unite with the German Reich. The representatives of Austria and Sudetenland voted un-animously for this union even before the peace treaties were signed, namely immediately after the armistice in November 1918. It is easy to

understand that the Allies were reluctant to allow Germany to increase in size and population as a result of a lost war. But nevertheless their policy to the contrary was short-sighted. The pacifistic Austrians would have had a moderating influence on German politics - up to 1932, anti-democratic parties had played no role in Austria while the Nazis were extremely strong in Germany as late back as the Munich Putsch of 1923. In addition, this addition would have been a consolation for the deeply wounded German pride. It would have brought about a real unification of the German people, and it would have been impossible to attack the peace treaties - to which this result would have been due - in the vicious manner which became one of the most efficient Nazi weapons.

But it was not enough that Austria had to promise not to join Germany without the consent of the League of Nations, and that Sudetenland was occupied by Czech troops and incorporated into the new Czech republic. Both in political and in economic respects, the life of the Germans in Central Europe became miserable. In Sudetenland, the Czechs took their revenge for the disregard in which they had been held by the Germans by using a subtle technique of discrimination within the law, by forbidding the public use of the German language in districts with a Czech majority and forcing the use of the Czech language even in purely German sections, by levying taxes which hit the German population much more than the Czech, by expropriating German property under slight excuses: in short, by using those means which the Nazis have meanwhile brought to perfection themselves. Of course, they never went as far as to jail innocent persons, or to evict them from their homes, to deprive them of their civil rights or to drive them in exile. It is true that the persecuted German under Czech or Polish rule had incomparably more liberty and security than the victorious German under the Nazi regime. But at that time, the Germans did not know this, and they had good reasons for wanting to overthrow the foreign rule. *It was a situation not unlike the reconstruction era in the Am. South.*

In Austria, there was of course no foreign domination since the population was exclusively German. But the economic conditions were much worse than in the other Central European states. Vienna, the capital which contained 30pc. of the entire population of the state, had been the political, commercial, and financial center of Eastern Europe, and the loss of this position meant the ruin of the majority of its enterprises. Any attempt to bring about an economic co-operation between the new small states failed because of the ultra-nationalism of the liberated nationalities. In 1930, Germany and Austria proposed a customs union which might have saved at least the Austrian export industry which ~~included~~ more than one quarter of the entire industrial output. But this scheme was defeated by the French who were still afraid of German recovery, in spite of the truly democratic government in power at that time. The great depression of 1931 was a direct result of this quarrel. It is interesting to note that the financial crisis started in Austria, with the crash of the Credit-Anstalt, the largest Central European bank, and spread from there to Germany, Great Britain, and finally to this country. So the fate of Austria had been decisive for the rest of the world as it had been in 1914 and was again to be in 1938.

In 1933, the situation in Austria was much worse than in Germany. The ruling conservative party depended for its majority on the small moderately nationalistic group which had favored the union with Germany without being exactly Nazistic. But the socialists were the strongest minority party, and any shift from the ~~conservatives to the Nazis~~ would mean that the socialists would have to form the government. Now the Austrian socialists were true Marxists, but by no means communists. They were in power in the city government of Vienna, and their record was on the whole

excellent. But the propertied classes and the Catholic church were deadly enemies of Marxism in any form. On the other hand, the shift to Nazism was obviously inevitable at the next elections since the Nazis began to use their well-known propaganda tactics in Austria as soon as they had come into power in Germany. The then Chancellor, Dollfuss, saw only one way out of this dilemma: a dictatorship of his own. This dictatorship cannot be compared with the Nazi government since its purpose was to preserve rather than to infringe the liberty of the people. In fact, except in the rougher treatment of the outspoken political opposition, the dictatorial character of the government was hardly felt until 1934. But the fact of the dictatorship alone lessened the moral prestige of the government: the liberals, the strongest ideological enemies of Nazism, could hardly become enthusiastic about even a mild dictatorship. As to the socialists, they knew very well that their fate under Dollfuss was much better than under Nazism, and they would have been willing to come to terms with him. But here another power enters the picture: Dollfuss depended in his foreign policy entirely on his alliance with Italy and Hungary. In both countries, fascist and semi-fascist governments were in power and they wanted to smash socialism even more than Nazism. So Dollfuss was induced to turn against the socialists, to provoke the uprising of February 1934, and after having shelled the Viennese workers into submission, to dissolve the socialist party, the trade unions, and even the wonderful charitable and social organizations the socialists had built up. By doing so, Dollfuss annihilated himself his strongest allies against Nazism.

The Nazis saw their opportunity and, five months after the February shooting, murdered Dollfuss and started an uprising of their own. It was premature: the internal Nazi organization was easily smashed by the police, and Italy threatened to give military help to Austria in case of a German attack. Dollfuss' successor, the scholarly, sincere and typically Austrian Schuschnigg, tried to correct the evil Dollfuss had done. He got rid of his fascist supporters, the so-called home-guards which had become a menace alike the Nazis, and he tried to reconcile the socialists. He succeeded in March 1938. When Hitler saw that the Austrian government was coming to terms with the socialists, he decided to act, and having secured the Italian neutrality, he invaded Austria two days before the plebiscite scheduled by Schuschnigg was to take place. ~~The result is known.~~

In Sudetenland the story is simpler than that. Here the democratic leaders of the Germans had tried for 20 years to get political parity. The Czechs went as far as to concede two or three ministerial posts to German parliamentarians, but they refused to grant the so-called cultural autonomy. German radicalism grew. When Austria was taken by the Nazis, the military position of Czecho-Slovakia became almost impossible in case of a conflict with Germany. Now Benesch was willing to grant to the Germans what they had asked before. But it was too late: Hitler again did not give the Sudeten Germans themselves time to decide whether or not they might be satisfied with autonomy. He asked for the complete cession of the German territory, and again the world knows the outcome.

This historical sketch shows that in the last end the Nazis had to resort to simple violence in order to spread their rule over other countries. But they would not have been able to do so without strong reactions from within and without, and the victims of aggression would have been much better able to defend themselves, if the propaganda had

not paved the way for the aggression.

This propaganda could make use of the real grievances of the German population. It could evoke the old dream of the unity of the entire German people, a goal for which Germany had fought the Napoleonic wars and the revolution of 1848, and which had enabled Bismarck to win the support for his militaristic schemes. In addition, they could display the banner of liberty against foreign oppressors in Sudetenland, against a reactionary dictatorship in Austria. Finally, they could point out that democratic means had failed to remedy the evil and to bring a just solution. It was easy for them to minimize the real gains, for instance for the Germans in Czechoslovakia, and to exaggerate their suffering. It was even easier to let the people forget how mild all these injustices were as compared to those inflicted by the Nazi themselves. If even impartial observers are able to talk for instance of British rule in India or Africa, and the Nazi rule in Austria, Bohemia, and Germany itself as of comparable qualities, it is clear that propaganda among Germans could distort the real aspect of guilt even more easily. ~~So the Nazis were able to fight for power under the slogan of '48, dear to every democrat, namely unity, justice, freedom, and they called their party with supreme irony the Liberty Movement.~~

These idealistic battlecries were supplemented by some very realistic economic slogans. The Nazis were able to promise the well-to-do the much needed protection against the threat of socialism. Just as the conservatives in Austria and the supporters of fascism in Italy were entirely willing to abandon democracy when the democratic trend seemed to bring about the danger of a socialistic majority, so many well-to-do manufacturers in Central Europe thought that Hitler would be a better protector of their property than a parliamentary majority. The Nazis made use of this idea by exaggerating the socialist menace, and their greatest claim for fame was the delivery of Central Europe from the red danger. At the same time, they proclaimed a new socialism, based on the idea of co-operation: ~~a very fine idea which did not impress the workers and the employers because they did not~~ but did impress quite a number of foreign observers. The other day I heard in an otherwise very good talk on fascism the opinion that fascism is less materialistic than democracy. Whoever has witnessed the behavior of the Nazis in Austria and has tried to check the most impudent private "expropriations" in favor of high and petty party officials, will doubt this lack of economic interests. But it is true that the party was always able to shift to the left if tactical conditions seemed to require it, and that the socialism which still forms part of the official party name, was sometimes used for more than a facade. For economic ~~ideas~~ reasons did not impress merely the well-to-do. The people themselves wanted one thing above all: the end of the menace of unemployment. The Nazis did achieve this end. It is true, they simply put the unemployed to work, unproductive in the strict economic sense, namely on rearmament, and paid them no more in real goods than their former unemployment benefits had been. But they had grasped the important truth that most people don't ask for their real wages and the productivity of their labor. If they are told that their work is important for the community, and they receive a living wage, they might grumble, but they are not willing to jeopardize their jobs by revolting as they will do if unemployment lets them despair of their economic situation. This achievement was not an economic, but rather a psychologic one. ~~But~~ it was true statesmanship, and it shows the ability of the Nazi leaders that they alone were able to produce it. Even their close imitators, the Italians, were not able to deal with the unemployment

any more than the democracies.

Neither idealism nor economic reasons in themselves could explain the success of the party if it was not for their mastery in handling mob psychology. Here the Jewish question enters the field. It is frequently assumed that anti-semitism is always connected with fascism. This is a mistake: the Fascists managed to get along without it for 16 years, and the Sudeten-German Nazi party even admitted Jews to their rank up to the spring of 1938. The reason was that in Italy there was no popular anti-semitism because there were practically no Jews, and in Sudetenland the hatred for the Czechs was sufficient to keep the "soul of the people" boiling, without the fuel of anti-semitism. In Germany, anti-semitism was used for many reasons. Because of the prominence of the Jews in the economic and scientific life of the nation, anti-semitism had been rampant for decades, especially among the smaller trades people and the professions, that is exactly among the groups which were the first followers of Nazism. Secondly, <sup>from the idealists</sup> the Jews could be easily represented as being typical for all the evils of democracy and pacifism: ~~that for the idealists. They had money and the Nazi followers could be promised spoils at their costs: that for the economic men among the Nazis.~~ <sup>Primarily,</sup> by inflaming the people against a small minority one could make a kind of rehearsal for more serious occasions. ~~This~~ is the importance of the Jewish question, first pointed out by Rauschning, that the natural aversion of modern man against killing and plundering, the result of some centuries of humanist training, had to be overcome in order to make the German people ready for the second world war. If the party leaders allowed the horrors of the pogroms and the concentration camps to occur, it was not only for giving the mob a Roman holiday, but for preparing them for wholesale slaughter and torture in case of war. The Jews were better in this respect than the Trotzkyists used to the same purpose in Russia, for no Russian can be sure whether he will be considered a Trotzkyist ~~the next day~~ while the average German needed not to fear that he would be treated as a Jew. This sense of security explains why the ~~protest~~ <sup>protest</sup> against these going-on were so much feebler than one might expect ~~from a people of such a high culture:~~ the German anti-Nazi was glad that someone was being treated worse than he was himself, and his sense of disgust was alleviated to a certain extent by a feeling of relief.

How did the propaganda proceed on these lines? first of all, the Nazis captured the youth. Here they could use their idealistic ideas to the largest extent, and in addition the fact that unemployment was largest among young people. If a youngster cannot get employment for years, he will turn without discretion to anyone who promises him work. Then they got hold of the civil service. Here again they could point to the corruption of modern politics and to the advantage ~~for~~ <sup>in</sup> the civil service if their actions ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> not checked any more by these parliamentarians. In this way, they ~~could~~ <sup>could</sup> cripple the governments they wanted to combat more easily than by the use of murder, arson and blackmail, to which they resorted in extreme cases. Thirdly, they invaded the same political field they wanted to destroy by ~~clever~~ playing off one party against the other. They always managed to find a "common enemy" against which they could align the others. First of all, of course, communism. Everybody who tried to oppose depriving the hated communists of civil rights was branded as a communist himself, and thereby silenced. Then the moderate socialists, simply by substituting "Marxism" for "communism". ~~Especially the destruction of the socialist trade-unions by Dollfuss proved to be more disastrous for the anti-Nazis than for the socialists themselves.~~ After the leftists were disposed of, the remaining liberals and conservatives were an easy pray. Especially

in Austria, the Nazis succeeded to some extent in getting the workers to avenge themselves for their grievances under the former government, and directing their hatred for Nazism against the Catholic church which had supported the Schuschnigg dictatorship more than seemed to be compatible with its spiritual mission.

Can this development teach anything to the rest of the world? First of all, it demonstrates that even a philosophy of brute force, ~~as which Nazism is to be considered,~~ cannot succeed without the help of idealistic and economic arguments. Secondly that it does not strike out of the clear sky: only were people had lost confidence in democracy because of long-drawn political and economic grievances, were the Nazis able to make headway. Among these grievances, apart from national questions which were rather peculiar to Central Europe, the most important are unemployment of the youth and ~~integrity of the military service.~~ Thirdly, that as soon as a totalitarian party appears, ~~all friends of democracy have to forget their internal quarrel for a while and unite against the common enemy, lest he succeeds in disuniting them and winning by their side.~~ The alliance of communism and Nazism in those days, has exposed the fallacy of the doctrine that either the Nazis are the savior from communism or the communists the saviors from Nazism. There is only one way to combat totalitarianism: respect for the three values which had been abused by the totalitarians themselves, unity, liberty and justice.

*Family, unity, justice*  
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## Speaker Relates How Fascism Has Hatred As Creed

"When youth realizes the true value of faith, love and courage, youth will readily see the hypocrisy of Fascism," said Professor Josef Herbert Furth, head of the political science department of Lincoln University, Tuesday night to the members of the Young Republican Club of Kennett Square and Southeastern Chester County. The meeting was held at the Kennett Square Golf and Country Club and was well-attended. Thomas B. Worrall, president, presided at the business meeting.

Professor Furth discussed in detail how Fascism had appealed to the youth of several European countries, and failed to show a distinction between Nazism, Fascism and Communism, as the latter is known in Russia, except for some minor differences unimportant in the whole scheme of political thought.

The speaker, a former officer of the Austrian army, declared Fascism taught a perverted system of values, first to kill one's personal enemies, then to kill political enemies, and finally to conquer nations which had been named as enemies. In turning the searchlight of truth on Fascism, the instructor stated that it embodied hatred in every known form, and combined action with colorful ceremonies to appeal to the younger people.

"Whenever we teach the youth of the world that life is worth living and that youth has an opportunity of achieving happiness as the past generations have known it, then people will prefer to live for their country instead of dying for it. We must also construct a system of sound values. I believe it is cowardly to tell youth to cease running for a certain goal, but Fascism takes the easiest way," Professor Furth declared. The speaker concerned himself solely with the youth angle of the Fascist movement.

The next meeting of the organization will be early in June, when James T. Tingle and A. Duer Pierce will provide the entertainment.