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The German Riddle.

Mann, Klaus

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The German Riddle

Soldier-Writer Discusses
Important Question

By T/3 KLAUS MANN.

"The German character is one of the most fascinating but also most disturbing developments of human nature." This sentence by the English writer and diplomat, Harold Nicholson, is amusingly poignant; but the term "disturbing," in this particular context, sounds like a typically British understatement. The German nation has provoked two world wars within three decades. Some little disturbance indeed!

Clearly, there must be something wrong with the Germans. Most of them seem nice enough fellows—efficient, friendly, punctual, sensible. But if the average German is a civilized human being—as he appears to be—how can it be explained that the Germans, as a national body, are obviously possessed by morbid impulses and aggressive manias? If Germany's great men—musicians, scholars, poets and inventors—were capable

of contributing so richly and essentially to the grandeur of human culture, why is the sum of all Germans, Germany, so alarmingly prone to destructive follies? The very nation which produced lofty symphonies and cathedrals; which excels in scientific discoveries and solid craftsmanship—the neatest, smartest, most ingenious nation is also guilty of the most sordid excesses—polluting civilization with blatant lies and rampant violence. The nation of Weimar and Bayreuth is responsible also for the horrors of Rotterdam, Warsaw and Lidice; for the disgrace of pogroms and concentration camps. What extraordinary contrasts! What perplexing contradictions! What is German? Who represents the German character? If Goethe is German—how could Goebbels be German, too? Are the Germans mentally unbalanced—stricken

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German Riddle Is Discussed by Soldier-Writer

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with a kind of collective paranoia? And if so, can they be cured? Will it ever be possible to live in peace with Germany? Among all the questions confronting us at this pivotal point of human history, this issue—the German Riddle—is perhaps the most intriguing and most crucial one.

What is wrong with the Germans?

There are two principal schools of thought regarding the German problem. One group insists on differentiating, strictly and emphatically, between "Germans" and "Nazis"—between the misguided German masses and their vicious leaders; whereas the second group denies the validity of such a distinction. To them, "Germans" and "Nazis" are just two different names for one thing: the Germans ARE Nazis by nature and tradition—wholeheartedly, with gusto. According to Theory No. 1, the Germans should not be blamed for their crimes and outrages; for they committed them against their own will, only because they were forced to do so. Theory No. 2 holds, on the contrary, that the Germans have always been arrogant and pugnacious; that their wickedness is innate—not imposed on them by the Nazi regime.

Neither theory is quite original; both were used by Allied propagandists during the first World War. President Wilson, as most liberals in this country, believed in the essential difference between the peace-loving German people and the Prussian militarists—in contrast to other champions of the Allied cause, like Georges Clemenceau of France, who indicted not only the imperial regime with its Junkers and generals, but the whole German nation. In that time the second school of thought—the outright horror of the "Boche" and "Hun"—was undoubtedly more popular with the patriotic average American than any subtle psychological or idealistic approach.

Today the American "man in the street" (including the company streets of our training camps) seems rather inclined to accept the Wilsonian line. This may appear paradoxical—considering the fact that the Fuehrer is incomparably more monstrous than the Kaiser was. And while one might say, in favor of the Germans, that they followed Wilhelm, in 1914, because he happened to be their legitimate ruler, "by the grace of God" this argument makes no sense in the case of Hitler-Schickelgruber, whose power and prestige are not rooted in any law or tradition. Yet most Americans—soldiers as well as civilians—would consider it "unfair" to blame the German people for the atrocities of the Nazi regime. The same observers who identify, as a matter of course, the

Japanese with their fanatic war-lords, discriminate scrupulously between the "decent" Germans and their "evil" chieftains—visualizing, as it were, the German character as divided into two incompatible parts: one, reasonable and kindly like Dr. Jekyll; the other, nasty and obnoxious like Mr. Hyde.

Ideas of this kind have been fostered by German anti-Nazi refugees, whose main argument against Hitler was, and still is, that he—the Fuehrer—does not represent the "real Germany" (which is to say, the "Dr. Jekyll" half). Among leading American publicists, Dorothy Thompson—one of the first to warn against the Nazi danger—repeatedly advocated the "Jekyll-Hyde" theory. Her recent book, "Listen, Hans!", is not only a striking arraignment of Hitler and Nazism, but also a warm and eloquent appeal to, and in favor of, the "Other Germany"—the Germany of a glorious past and an equally splendid future. In a transatlantic radio debate which Miss Thompson had with the English statesman and political thinker, Lord Vansittart, her message was definitely "pro-German," notwithstanding her implacable hatred of Hitler and all he stands for.

As for Lord Vansittart, he may be considered as the outstanding protagonist of the "anti-German" school of thought, although his views are far less extreme than some of his critics want us to believe. In any case, Vansittart's opinions and suggestions regarding Germany are not extreme enough for the purposes of Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels. Nazi propagandists try to frighten and infuriate the German people by telling them, over and over again, that, in the case of Allied victory, they would be killed, castrated, tortured, expropriated, sold as slaves, and what not—in short, that we, once we have won the War, would give to the Germans the same kind of treatment which they are now giving to the Poles, the Jews and other helpless victims. Naturally, there is nothing in Lord Vansittart's judicious writings to justify such gruesome prophecies.

Goebbels can't help lying; it's a compulsion with him. Whenever he makes a statement we may presume the contrary to be true. So since he claims that we hate the Germans, we can take it for granted that the reverse is correct. As a matter of fact, we do not hate the Germans. Neither in this country nor in Britain or in the Soviet Union are there any symptoms of Germanophobia. If there were any such symptoms I would think it my duty to point out that, after all, not all Germans are Nazis or in favor of Nazism. But it seems to me that too many people in our camp—far from being blinded by hatred—are rather inclined to look at things through the rosy mist of pleasant illusions. That is why I deem it necessary to stress the obvious fact that, if not all the Germans are Nazis, many of them are.

No doubt, there are elements and traditions in the German character essentially opposed to Nazism; certainly the Germans, as a people, are infinitely better than their ruling gangsters; in other words, the concept of the "Two Germans"—the "Jekyll-Hyde" idea—is by no means without sound foundation. But, on the other hand, we must not forget that the Nazi regime has not been imposed on Germany from without, but was planned and prepared within the Reich and was enthusiastically accepted by the vast majority of the German people. They idolized Hitler—fully aware of his character and intentions, which he expressed with such shocking frankness in his book, "Mein Kampf." While a few thousand German heroes risked their lives by organizing the underground fight against Nazism, millions of their compatriots believed in their sham-Messiah, as long as he seemed to succeed in his world-conquering projects. Those millions have never tried—indeed, they have never considered to rebel against the Fuehrer. They will not rise against him until our victorious armies invade the Fatherland.

What conclusions are we to draw from such disquieting facts? Is Germany hopeless, then? Must we consider and treat every German as a potential Nazi and, therefore, as an intransigent enemy?

Not necessarily. But we should remember, perhaps, what Germany's most illustrious son and most merciless critic—Goethe—once observed, with the uncanny penetration of genius:

"Germany is nothing, but every German is a great deal, though the Germans fancy the reverse to be true."

(A second article about Germany is to follow.)

The German Riddle Soldier-Writer Continues Discussion of Question

By T/3 KLAUS MANN.

The German problem is infinitely complex, if conceived with all its historical, psychological, social and moral implications. It is one thing, however, to discuss a matter in the sphere of theory and abstraction; another thing, to tackle it in reality. It may be necessary, under circumstances, to simplify an intricate issue in order to master it. Action means simplification.

The main thing, at this point, is not to analyze Germany, but to defeat it. That is what matters—imperatively, above all. Germany must be licked; all other aspects of the situation seem insignificant, almost futile, compared with this vital, cardinal requirement. Indeed, it would be inadvisable, or even dangerous, to dwell on the complexities of the German Riddle, if such an intellectual exercise were liable to weaken our fighting spirit. There may be people who think that the solution of the Teutonic enigma is indeed very simple and can be summed up in two stringent words: Unconditional Surrender.

"Victory first!" is a fine slogan—sturdy and persuasive. But what if victory could be speeded up by our increasing knowledge of German psychology? Both the experiences of the Allies during the first World War and the Nazi successes in the opening phase of this conflict are apt to confirm the paramount importance of psychological weapons in modern warfare. If it is true that wars are won with planes, tanks and guns—not with beautiful words—it is also true that the effectiveness of military action can be decisively intensified by the well-timed use of constructive ideas and cogent arguments.

The length of the war in Europe depends on one crucial factor: namely, German morale. The day on which German morale collapses will be the day of our ultimate triumph. This triumph will be due primarily to the power and fortitude of the Allied armies. But their task can be facilitated if we succeed in convincing the German people, first, that they cannot win; secondly, that the world, after Hitler's defeat, will be a better place to live in—better even for them—than it would have been in the event of Nazi victory.

There may have been divergences between American, British and Russian views of the post-war settlement in Germany and of the kind of Allied propaganda which would have the strongest effect on enemy morale. Some time ago, the Soviet press announced the foundation of a Free German committee consisting of German refugees and prisoners of war in Russia—some of them high-ranking German army officers, others prominent members of the former German Communist party. The manifesto to the German people launched by this group had evidently the endorsement of the Kremlin, but hardly that of Washington and London. It seems, however, that this "Free German" movement has lost its significance—at least partly so—as a consequence of the Moscow conference between Secretary of State Cordell Hull, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden and Soviet Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov.

According to Mr. Hull, no definite decisions were made in Moscow as to afterwar treatment of Germany; such plans, Mr. Hull disclosed, have been left by the three foreign ministers to be dealt with by higher authority—which is to say, by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshal Stalin. Yet there can be no doubt that the Moscow parley was instrumental in preparing and shaping the policy to be adopted by the Allied Nations toward the German people.

Even now some essential features of this future policy become more and more apparent. Of course, the now Nazi-occupied countries (including Austria) will be liberated and their democratic governments restored. Moreover, the three great powers seem to have agreed upon the necessity of military occupation of the German Reich, at least until Nazi officialdom has been completely stamped out. This measure will be abso-

lutely indispensable, if only in order to drive home to the Germans the lesson of defeat (which the Allies failed to do in 1918). Another significant point—announced on previous occasions already—was impressively reaffirmed and publicized in the declaration issued jointly by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. It is now certain that, when an armistice is granted, it will provide for delivery of "all German officers and soldiers and members of the Nazi party, who have been guilty of atrocities, for trial in the countries where the offenses were perpetrated."

This statement, for all its strictness, seems to suggest a definite distinction between the German masses and the comparatively small group of culprits. Only those "guilty of atrocities" have to expect punishment—not the people as such. In fact, there are influential circles in London and Washington who think it likely and desirable that a tri-power proclamation will be made before long—guaranteeing a fair treatment to the German masses, if only they get rid of their evil masters.

There is much to be said in favor of such a gesture—for instance, that it would greatly embarrass Dr. Paul Goebbels and his industrious staff. Their vociferous assertion, that the aim of the Allies was the complete annihilation of the German race, would be effectively refuted and counter-balanced by such a positive declaration. Neutral observers report that Hitler fears nothing more than an ultimatum from the Big Three to the despairing people of Germany, telling them either to overthrow the Fuehrer and get out of the war, or be burned and blasted off the map. It is true that a similar warning brought about the Italian surrender almost immediately. But it is also true that the German people—not just a few thousands of them but millions—are much more laden with guilt than were the Italians. To treat them too leniently might turn out to be a ruinous mistake.

Clearly, it will be the supreme objective of Allied post-war policy to organize and safeguard international peace. The crucial question is: What will be the place and function of the German people in this peaceful world of the future? How can they be prevented from provoking a new disaster? Of course, it will not be feasible, and it would hardly be ethical, to "liquidate" a nation of eighty millions. On the other hand, it will not be possible, for many a year to come, to forgive those eighty millions for their undeniable complicity in the crimes of their present government. In short, a constructive, practicable compromise will have to be found.

No doubt, the Germans—after being utterly defeated and disarmed—will have to be policed, for a longer or shorter period. This will be a tedious job, but it has to be done, lest we forfeit the fruits of victory. Even more delicate, however, and maybe even more essential, will be the task of re-educating the German people. It may take a long time, and will be a difficult process, to cure the German organism from the Nazi poison with which it has been saturated during the past decade. "One of the leading nations within the framework of our civilization"—as Emil Ludwig puts it, in his remarkable pamphlet, "How to Treat the Germans"—"has to be handled as a gifted but dangerous boy who must be watched and controlled by strict though well-meaning masters. This is a novel situation in history."

Mr. Ludwig gives us many stimulating hints, first, concerning the psychological and historical sources of the typical German neurosis—namely, the mania of grandeur complemented, or caused, by the mania of persecution—and, secondly, as regards the most effective method of healing the Teutonic dementia. (Just to quote one of Mr. Ludwig's minor suggestions: He recommends the banishment of certain operas by Richard Wagner, whose "seductive work has spread the German ideas of world domination more than the world is ready to admit.") At times the author may appear one-sided and arbitrary—for instance, when he tries to blame Prussia almost exclusive-

the limits of the camp.

ly for the German outrages (as if Hitler's career had been launched from Potsdam, not from Munich, Bavaria!); but the gist of his argument is soundly realistic—based on Goethe's word (quoted by Mr. Ludwig) that "Germany is nothing, but every German is a great deal."

If that is so, then the victors should not be too gingerly in their treatment of Germany as a collective body; (a partition of the Reich, for instance, might prove a most wholesome measure); but they should avoid to treat the individual Germans as half-wits or barbarians. The Germans are too dynamic a people to be enslaved or eliminated; also, their national character is so distinct and deep-rooted that it cannot be essentially transformed. Ludwig is right when saying: "The ideal of an educator is not to change a character but to develop it." In order to "develop" a character, it may be necessary to protect it against its own evil impulses. By

compelling the Germans to adapt their way of life and their philosophy to the standards of Christian civilization, we may succeed in leading them back to the finest traditions of their own heritage.

Our victory will be complete only if and when the Germans can be made to realize that, by smashing their military might, we will liberate them from their own curse and demon—their childish wicked dreams of the "master race" and universal conquest. Once they have overcome their absurd "superman" complex, they may learn, once again, to feel and behave as—men, and to live in peace with mankind.

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