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Notes about the Re-Education of the Germans.

Mann, Klaus

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NOTES ABOUT THE RE-EDUCATION OF THE GERMANS

By K l a u s M a n n

I am writing this in a tent, somewhere in Italy.

The War in Europe is not yet over, but it will be over soon -- in fact, it may already have come to an end, by the time these lines go to press. Germany is defeated. That's of course the main thing.

War is a bore and a horror. It will be good to have some kind of peace again. What kind of peace? Maybe we shouldn't worry. There are plenty of experts whose job it is to make blueprints for the post-War world. As for us, our job is the War -- as long as the War lasts...

Yet I cannot help worrying.

I cannot help worrying when I remember the faces of certain German prisoners-of-war I have seen -- some of them blank with ignorance and bewilderment; others cocky, stubborn and aggressive. They are defeated, all right -- and most of them know it, too. They realize that Germany is licked; even the most arrogant ones don't sound very convinced or convincing when they speak of the new German Secret Weapons which are going to bring ^{about} the decision. They are a pathetic lot -- weary, fed up, apathetic.

Why then do they continue to fight?

"Because we have to," most of them will tell you. "We're just little 'Landser' following orders -- that's all." Desertion is technically difficult, if not impossible. Besides there is the fear of reprisals against their families.

But that isn't all. Nor are patriotism or the lust for adventure the only motives for their stubbornness. They go on fighting --

not only because they are forced to do so, but mainly because they are unable to conceive a world without Hitler and without war. To them, war and Hitlerism are the natural order of things; the end of hostilities and the fall of the Nazi régime are the beginning of chaos. Utterly lacking in any constructive vision, they believe in Dr. Goebbels' prediction that a German defeat would be tantamount ^{to} ~~just~~ an apocalyptic disaster -- not only for Germany but for the universe.

Then there is their bad conscience. "What do you think the Russians will do to us, once we are defeated?" German prisoners asked me. "Surely they'll make us pay for what our SS troops have done to them..."

And others inquired, with an almost disarming naïveté: "Why is the whole world against us? Why are we so much hated?"

When will it be possible to accept the Germans -- those guilt-laden complices of a cursed system -- again as trustworthy members of the family of nations? Undoubtedly, the German people, as a collective body, is to a certain extent responsible for the outrages of Hitlerism. But to what extent? And why? And what can be done to cure them ^{of} ~~from~~ their moral perversion?...

I am only too familiar with all the complexities of the problem. The German Riddle has ^{been} ~~kept~~ haunting ^{ed} ~~ing~~ me, since the beginning of my conscious life. I know all that can be said in favour of that famous "Other Germany" to which human civilization is so deeply indebted and whose cultural manifestations I ~~she~~ will never cease to admire. I know also that Fascism is by no means a German invention or speciality but a universal danger and disease. No doubt, there

are decent Germans -- bitterly opposed to Nazism. But it would be a dangerous fallacy to overrate their number or ^{their} influence. A realistic policy cannot, and will not, be based on the sentimental distinction between the "good Germans" and the "wicked Nazis." The American and British advocates of this generous discrimination are inadequately informed or they indulge in wishful thinking. As for certain German anti-Nazi refugees who keep defending or even praising the "innocent" German people, they are, in my opinion, alarmingly and embarrassingly lacking in political tact -- if they are not downright agents or fore-runners of a new German nationalism. How ~~do they~~ ^{fl + y} dare to be so noisily concerned about the well-being and dignity of the future Fourth Reich, while the Third Reich is still devastating the European continent? The vast majority of the German people prove every day their dogged and idiotic loyalty to the criminal ruling gang; yet some exiled German politicians and publicists insist that the Germans have actually nothing to do with Hitler, and should be treated with the utmost delicacy and respect, as soon as Hitler is gone. Whoever ventures to doubt the fundamentally democratic leanings of the Germans and to blame them for any of the misdeeds committed by the "Nazi minority," is denounced as an adherent to that ugly heresy known as "Vansittartism."

I am sick and tired of this kind of hypocritical nonsense.

Lord Vansittart's ideas about Germany are by no means beyond criticism. But if I had to choose between the English statesman and political thinker, on the one hand, and certain champions of "Free Germany," on the other, I would unhesitatingly come out for the skeptical lord.

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~~The coming German collapse -- no matter in which form and under which conditions it is going to take place -- must not be mistaken for a German revolution. The moment for a German revolution has passed.~~

The Germans hate revolutions.

~~We have to accept and face the fact that most Germans are~~
Nazis.

X But there is one basic point about which the two schools -- "Free Germany" and "Vansittartism" -- undoubtedly agree: the German people have to be re-educated. (As for the Vansittart school, it may be inclined to drop the euphemistic prefix, "re," and to claim bluntly that the Germans will have to be educated.) No matter what kind of conditions -- military, economic, and political -- the "Unconditional Surrender" formula may imply -- the issue of Germany's moral and political re-education remains of paramount, immediate significance. The German people will have to be disarmed, policed, in many cases punished; but they will also, ^{and} ~~for~~ above all, have to be mentally cured. To assert that the Germans are "incurable," means practically to deny the possibility of lasting peace. The German character has been shaped by history -- not by any innate "racial" conditions. This character can ~~be~~ ^{be} and must be, changed by means of education -- or else we are bound to have another war, in twenty-five or fifty years.

It is a tremendous task -- not to be performed in a few months or years but in decades. But it has to be done. And as it has to be done, it ought to be tackled now.

Of course, it might be argued that the success or failure of such a mental and moral "cure" will primarily depend on the material conditions under which it is carried out, and that it would therefore be wiser to postpone the discussion of any peda=

gogic experiments until a time when those in power will have decided upon a new economic and political order to be established in Germany and Europe. But if it is true that any effort to re-educate the Germans would be doomed a priori without a sound and stable reorganization of German-European economics and politics; it is also true that no European scheme will have a chance to function in the long run without Germany's good will and collaboration. But how could one expect a reasonable and constructive attitude from a people that has forgotten, or has never known, the fundamentals of ~~Christian~~ human ethics?

Of course, the problems of physical reconstruction and recovery in a ruined, exhausted, ^{disorganized} impoverished country like Germany are so vast and so urgent that all cultural and moral issues may appear comparatively insignificant. But I venture to predict that it will take the Germans surprisingly little time to overcome this chaotic state. They hate anarchy. An ^{Orderly} efficient, hard-working people, they will manage to rebuild their bombarded cities, to reorganize their economic life. But they may prove incapable of regaining, without help from outside, their psychological and ^{moral} ~~mental~~ equilibrium.

The re-education of the German people will have to be planned and prepared as one of the vital campaigns in our effort to win the peace.

I am not in a position to know exactly how much planning and preparing has already been done. All discussions of the German problem lead to the conclusion that the German people will somehow have to be re-educated; but in none of the many books and articles I have

dealing with the German problem do we find anything like a definite educational program. Have the basic objectives of the coming pedagogical campaign already been clarified and formulated? Are there competent individuals or committees in charge of this delicate and crucially important job?

All German school books -- especially the history books -- will have to be revised. The whole personnel of German schools and universities must undergo a strict and thorough examination testing its political and moral qualification. Film industry and newspapers, the repertoires of theaters and radio stations -- all mediums of instruction, propaganda and entertainment will have to be supervised and directed according to a new cultural policy. (Nazi organizations like Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy) should be replaced by similar institutions of a different tendency.) It will not be enough to refute or to ignore the absurd doctrines of Nazism; it will be the task of pedagogues and publicists to explain and popularize the very principles which are at stake in this crisis of our civilization.

Naturally, a new philosophy of life -- a new Weltanschauung -- cannot be taught over night but must be given time to develop gradually and organically. Any constructive effort to establish such a new philosophy ought to be encouraged -- as long as it is free of the Nazi and nationalistic bacillus. The Germans need a Weltanschauung, ~~like the air to breathe~~. They are apt to abandon themselves to apocalyptic moods, unless they find a new philosophy -- a moral raison d'être.

But the most urgent and most difficult job that will have to be done is, to teach the German people the fundamentals of politi-

cal thinking. There are reasons to believe that the Germans -- traditionally lacking in political instinct and initiative -- have now reached a state of complete ^{inability} political apathy. Where other people have political ideas and aspirations, there seems to be a blankness in the average German mind. It's something like a pathological deficiency. Just as certain individuals are color-blind, the average German is incapable of visualizing political problems and realities.

All the contacts I had with German prisoners confirmed this discouraging fact. Nine German soldiers out of ten will tell you -- not without a certain absurd pride -- that they are not, and have never been, interested in politics. They don't have the faintest inkling, indeed, not the slightest curiosity, what kind of a German government ~~may~~ might be established, after Hitler's fall. Their stereotyped answer to such a question is: "I don't care -- as long as it isn't Communism!" (None of them would be able -- almost needless to say -- to explain what "Communism" means.) Occasionally I was told by German prisoners that they wouldn't mind some kind of monarchy; but ~~if~~ when I tried to find out if they were thinking of any special pretender, they just shrugged their shoulders and couldn't even remember the name of the Hohenzollerns.

The name of Rudolf Hess was repeatedly mentioned as a possible successor of the Führer, in the case of German defeat. Others favoured Papen or General Guderian. The most ~~are~~ imaginative and enlightened ones -- mostly older men -- mumbled something to the effect that Brüning wouldn't be so bad. ~~A~~ ~~certain type of stubbornly indoctrinated youngsters may come~~

I have talked to German soldiers who had never heard the words "republic" and "democracy." Some were of the opinion that it would be the best solution for Germany to be ruled by Britain or the United States. Of course, a few Nazi fanatics grimly anticipate the coming of "another Hitler", to avenge the German defeat. But the "political" credo of the average German soldier can be summed up as follows: "I don't give a damn under what kind of a régime I live. All I want is, to be left in peace."

The Germans will have to learn the rudiments of social consciousness and responsibility -- the ABC of a truly civilized and democratic way of life.

We will hardly be in a position to re-educate the Germans, unless we understand their present state of mind.

It may be correct to presume that most of them are by now bitterly disillusioned and no longer believe in the blatant lies of Goebbels propaganda. But it would be a dangerous fallacy to underestimate the thoroughness of Nazi indoctrination. Even those Germans who begin to realize that Hitler has led their country to disgrace and disaster, are not necessarily immune to the poison of Nazi ideology. Hitler's propaganda machine commands more subtle and more effective devices than Streicher's pornographic anti-Semitism or Göring's primitive rodomontades.

We must not forget that the Germans still are enormously "Kultur"-conscious -- today more so, perhaps, than ever before. The more hopeless Germany's military situation becomes, the more frequently and fervently do German propagandists rave about the greatness of Teutonic culture. As they can't boast anymore of their planes and tanks, they

^{take}
~~have~~ recourse to Bach and Beethoven, Dürer and Grünewald. The Germans, on the verge of defeat, discover suddenly that they were never fighting for the might and power of the Greater Reich but, on the contrary, for the maintenance of European culture. Signal -- a German propaganda magazine distributed in the occupied countries -- comes out with the surprising statement that Hitler's real war aim was, to keep alive the spirit of Homer, Plato, and Sophocles -- now threatened by the onslaught of the barbaric Red Army. German popular papers and illustrated weeklies -- especially those addressed to the German soldier -- are much more highbrow and pretentious than the corresponding publications in America. The same SS man who professionally specializes in the murder of innocent hostages, finds in his official SS magazine poems by Hölderlin and essays on Gothic masters -- nicely illustrated with colored reproductions. The little "Landser" is fed with mottoes by Goethe and Schopenhauer.

Goebbels has adapted his methods to the more solemn and ~~more~~ sophisticated style of Alfred Rosenberg.

~~It is he~~ -- Alfred Rosenberg, Commissioner for the Ideological Education of the National Socialist Party -- whom we should consider the most dangerous man in Nazi Germany. ~~From the educational point of view,~~ His power will survive the régime; his influence will prove our most tenacious, most vicious enemy.

Goebbels, for all his shrewdness and impertinence, is comparatively harmless. His rampant fabrications will soon be forgotten. The Germans are bound to find out, in the not too distant future, that they were fooled, for almost twelve shameful years, by the most cynical liar. But the case of Rosenberg is more complicated.

Rosenberg is slimy, pompous, hypocritical. A cunning demagogue, he ^{masters} specializes in the grandiloquent jargon of the German professor. The Germans fall for that kind of stuff; to them, Rosenberg is "profound." He revels in big, beautiful words, the meaning of which remains conveniently nebulous. He speaks of "dynamics," "revelations," the "Faustian Man" (Faustischer Mensch), and the "Occidental Feeling of Life" (Lebensgefühl). Glibly and arrogantly, he tries to impress his reader with quotations from the Greek philosophers and medieval mystics. An intellectual impostor without any authentic originality, Rosenberg apes Oswald Spengler -- who, in his turn, is a second-rate imitator of Nietzsche. The decline from Nietzsche over Spengler to Rosenberg, in the literary sphere, corresponds ^{to} ~~with~~ the decline from Bismarck over Wilhelm II to Hitler, in the political.

Yet Rosenberg's ^(main work) ~~book~~, The Myth of the Twentieth Century, should be a "must"-book for every ^{one} ~~body~~ interested in the re-education of the German people. We ^{must} ~~have to~~ know what we are up against. We must familiarize ourselves with the tricks of our ^{adversary} ~~enemy~~. It is our painful duty to study his gibberish, to scrutinize the shady secrets of his persuasion. For there can be no doubt that Rosenberg's turgid eloquence appeals even to those Germans who look through Goebbels' obvious manoeuvres and are bored or shocked by Hitler's Mein Kampf.

The leading thoughts of The Myth are well-known and simple enough. The two magic words, repeated hundred# of times, are Race and Blood. The new myth is the "blood-myth" -- the innate superiority of the Nordic-Germanic race. Needless to say, it is to the fair-haired species that our civilization owes all its vital values. The "Nordic Man" is gallant and creative -- much in contrast to the "Syrian-Semitic" bastards who are sterile and dastardly. The obscenities of Etruscan art (for one

reason or another particularly loathsome to Rosenberg), the Roman Catholic Church, Marxism, the stock market, Freemasonry, liberalism -- all these are nasty manifestations of the Syrian-Semitic spirit, for ever inimical to the Nordic genius. The higher form of life will survive and triumph only if all "Northmen" -- especially the Germans! -- become proudly aware of their racial mission. The "Nordic Man" has to reject everything that is not racially pure. International or humanitarian ideas are corrosive poison. Ideas -- according to Rosenberg -- are "racially conditioned" (rassisch bedingt). There are no such absolute values as Truth, Justice, Liberty, and Honor; Rosenberg believes in "racial Truth," "racial Law," "racial Beauty." To him, "soul is but race seen from within."

All this may sound rather hackneyed. But what interests us, and what makes the reading of The Myth worthwhile, is not so much Rosenberg's ~~principles~~ ^{doctrines} as his way of presenting them. His demagogy is disguised as scientific research and mystic revelation -- which makes it acceptable even to the most fastidious Germans. Impudently ambitious, he undertakes to survey the whole scope of human civilization. He pretends to be omniscient -- thoroughly familiar with such varied subjects as Indian wisdom, Prussian strategy, higher mathematics, Greek architecture, Chinese literature, contrapuntal music, the Roman Law, and the history of the Islam. His cultural panorama -- in reality one-sided and superficial -- appears systematic and comprehensive.

Nietzsche, the most merciless and most clear-sighted critic of the German character, recognized an innate or traditional intellectual dishonesty as the basic fault of his compatriots. They are unable or unwilling to face the truth: that is why they like Rosenberg.

He is by no means an exception or a revolutionary, but the most con-

spicuous and most repulsive protagonist of a typically German school of thought. There are hundreds of little Rosenbergs -- presenting the same kind of intellectual forgeries with the same air of erudite profundity and sacerdotal zeal. These Weltanschauung tricksters have to be carefully watched. The dangerous spell of their pseudo-scientific rhetorics cannot be expected to fade away automatically with Hitler's military defeat.

We must not underrate the prestige and the persuasion of the mystic-nationalistic German professor -- no matter ^{whether} ~~if~~ he teaches from a university cathedra or writes in newspapers and magazines. All our pedagogical efforts will be in vain, if we allow him to keep his grip on the imagination of German youth.

There are sinister rumors to the effect that Himmler and Goebbels are already busy preparing a future Nazi underground organization. No less disquieting, however, is the prospect of a coming intellectual underground movement inspired and directed by Alfred Rosenberg and his ilk. If it is the job of Allied military and civilian authorities to prevent the clandestine survival of the National Socialist Party, the Allied, and pro-Allied, intellectuals in post-War Germany will be confronted by the even more delicate task, to recognize and counteract the subversive activities of the Teutonic intelligentsia.

But this Kultur-consciousness of the German people -- so viciously exploited by the highbrow demagogues à la Rosenberg -- has also its more encouraging implications. No doubt, the Germans, while turning murderous and barbaric, have managed to remain "idealistic" -- if only in a rather corrupt and paradoxical sense. They still like to think of themselves as "the People of Poets and Thinkers" (das Volk der Dichter und Denker) -- unaware of the fact that they have become, in the eyes of the world,

a people of gangsters and megalomaniacs.

But the fact that the Germans -- notwithstanding their recent moral and cultural decline -- are still proud of their geniuses may prove extremely useful to our educational effort. It is true that this national pride has always been, and still is, rather superficial and unjustified; for the Germans have done very little -- and during the last twelve years less than ever before -- to live up to the lofty standards set by their own masters. To the average German, the great German poets and philosopher painters and composers, were just ⁵⁰ ~~as~~ many names -- something to brag about, another "national glory," like the Big Bertha or the Zeppelin. Yet it is undeniable that those illustrious men -- however ignored or ^{works may actually be} misunderstood their ~~messages~~ -- still enjoy a considerable prestige among their compatriots. Hitler, with the help of Rosenberg, was remarkably successful in making use of this prestige for his own purposes: all the great Germans (excepting of course those of Jewish stock) were impudently claimed as intellectual forerunners of the Nazi movement.

This dubious claim seems to be supported and confirmed by certain out-and-out anti-Germans. Plus royal que le roi -- or more "Vansittartish" than Vansittart --, they make it their hobby to trace "Nazoid" elements ^(all) in ~~the~~ artistic and intellectual creations of German origin, -- thus proving that even the most talented Germans ^{were} ~~are~~ fundamentally wicked, and that Nazism is not an aberration of the German character but its true expression.

Now, quite apart from the fact that it is ~~in my opinion~~ absurd to denounce Goethe and Beethoven as potential Nazis, such a policy strikes me as most clumsy and short-sighted, from a practical and tactical point of view. It can hardly be in our interest to legitimate the Nazi madness in the eyes of the more literate Germans by tracing its intellectual roots back to the founding fathers and most celebrated representatives of Germanic culture. Only if the Nazi-like tendencies actually and

obviously predominate in the work of a German artist, should we try to diminish his influence. (To me, the one great German creative mind who can justly be described as a "potential Nazi," is Richard Wagner, against whom we ought to launch a tactful and respectful little propaganda campaign -- notwithstanding the undeniable fact that he happens to be ~~also~~ a musical and theatrical genius...) In most cases we will find, however, that the ~~more~~ equivocal or inimical elements are counterbalanced by ~~more~~ trends and qualities of a more inspiring and more wholesome nature.

Instead of undermining the authority of the illustrious German authors and musicians, we should try to strengthen their influence and to popularize their messages. Most of the German masters -- far from being our enemies -- are our potential allies; without their blessing and assistance we might not be able to carry out our necessary educational crusade. We need Goethe -- the almost ^{superhuman} ~~mythic~~ prestige of this great German and great Citizen of the World; (Alfred Rosenberg, by the way, predicted that Goethe's influence would decrease during the "heroic" years to come;) we cannot do without Nietzsche, who is first of all an incomparable psychologist and a Good European -- not the capricious eulogist of the Blond Beast and the Superman. Gotthold Efraim Lessing, the upright champion of Reason and Tolerance, is our trustworthy friend; Friedrich Schiller, bard of Liberty, extols with flamboyant verve the ideals we are fighting for; Emmanuel Kant wrote the Tractate of Eternal Peace, from which we are free to quote some brilliant passages about collective security and international organization. Heinrich Heine -- the only eminent German poet who was also a sagacious political thinker and at times an amazingly clairvoyant political prophet -- could help us in teaching the Germans the fundamentals of social consciousness. Hegel -- although politically somewhat suspect -- remains one of the

great pedagogical examples, in virtue of his intellectual potency and the logical grandeur of his philosophic vision. And why should we discourage the cult-like devotion of German youth to such pure poets as Friedrich Hölderlin, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Stefan George? Their spiritual integrity and sublime fervor cannot but have a healing influence on confused, struggling minds. It will be our task, not to question the validity of German masterpieces, but to prove that their very spirit is incompatible with the preposterous doctrines and shocking practices of Nazism.

The great German composers are definitely on our side (with the one above-mentioned exception). Their appeal is universal -- gloriously transcending and refuting all nationalistic narrow-mindedness. Bach, Gluck, and Mozart; Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann; Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler are the most persuasive advocates of a "Better Germany;" there is no aggressiveness or arrogance behind the triumphant power of their symphonic eloquence. We can trust them; they speak our language, or the language that should be ours -- the idiom of human solidarity.

Do we want to lead the Germans back to the ethos of Christianity on which our civilization rests? Let them listen to Bach's Mathäuspassion -- one of the purest and most lasting monuments of the Christian-Occidental genius. -- Mozart's The Magic Flute -- based on the rituals of Freemasonry -- is an enchanting song-of-songs of Enlightenment and humanitarian ideals; it ought to replace Die Meistersinger as the representative festive opera at German theaters. Another operatic masterpiece glorifying the idea of Freedom is of course Beethoven's Fidelio, which we should try to make as popular as Lohengrin and Tannhäuser.

It was a generous and significant gesture on our part to choose a Beethoven theme as the leitmotiv of Allied Victory. I would like to take his meaningful selection as a promising omen for our educational policy

in post-War Germany. Our policy should be, to cure the German disease with the help of the anti-toxin inherent, if only latently so, in the German national organism.

X I recall once more the faces of the many German prisoners with whom I have talked during the past few ~~months~~^{years}. Some of them seem to contradict my relative optimism. Yes, there were nasty fellows among them -- dumb, brutal, complacent, incapable of any generous impulse or any honest, independent thought. Can they be educated? Will they ever respond to the appeal of reason and decency? Frankly, I do not think so; nor do I know what should be done with them. The only argument they understand is physical force. In many cases we will have to use it.

But I remember also the helpless and bewildered ones who looked like victims rather than like criminals. Surely, they would not be impervious to our educational approach. Disappointed in Nazism, they seemed lost in a kind of intellectual vacuum -- waiting for advice, for moral support, for guidance. Their yearning is dark and muddled -- mostly subconscious, inarticulate. Yet there it is -- and it will be our task to awaken and develop this rudimentary impulse -- away from barbarity and retrogression, towards higher and sounder forms of ~~human~~ civilized human life.