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Heroes of the Nazi Underworld.

By Klaus Mann.

Words fail when it comes to describe the Nazi phenomenon and its representatives. For Nazism is not merely a "false policy" or a "dangerous philosophy"; rather, it is the absence of all policy, in the civilized sense - and the absence of thought itself. It is chaos, the jungle, a relapse into subhuman form of existence; and subhuman events can no longer be described in human terms.

Since the Nazis are avowed enemies of reason, they take a keen delight in mythology; and possibly the vocabulary of mythology is most appropriate in describing the heroes of the underworld, whom we find to be, not so much individuals, as evil itself incarnate. Under the reign of the Führer we have once more learned to understand why the Middle Ages believed in the Devil.

Every Gestapo torturer fancies himself a miniature Satan or at least a minor deity from the nether regions. In reality the diabolic element in Nazism is supplied only in the collective whole. Taken by themselves, the propaganda ministers, air force generals and S.S. officers are half-pathetic and half-disgusting rather than demoniac. Together they represent pandemonium - to their own seeming pride. If they had their own way, they would broadcast to the world: "Attention, please! This is station UNDERWORLD!"

Small wonder that the Nazi patron saints are picked exclusively from the criminal or near-criminal element. Like every primitive religion, Nazism has its sinister cults. What of these figures, before whom even the Führer bends his knee? What of the legends which every child in the Third Reich must learn?

The name of the Nazi hero, Horst Wessel has become widely known even

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abroad.In addition to his "martyrdom for the Cause"and his authorship of the official Nazi anthem,he is known to have been a brutal little pimp.The portrait of Horst Wessel adorns German school rooms,public halls and private homes,side by side with that of the Führer.Monuments have been erected in Wessel's honor;poems,biographies,monographs per= petuate his memory;German professors do not shrink from pronouncing his name in the same breath with Luther and Goethe;(a historian,Willi Andreas by name,(at the time Dean of the Heidelberg University) edited a book "Great Germans,from Hermann the Cheruskian to Horst Wessel";)he is the Führer's own acknowledged ideal;all young Germans are to be as nearly like Horst Wessel as possible.

What of the truth behind the myth?It is a wretched story,far from adventurous,let alone heroic.Horst Wessel is an average boy gone astray;his allegiance to the "underworld" - in the sociological sense - is purely instinctive and voluntary;there was no tragic com= pulsion whatever.He was reared in a parsonage in one of Berlin's ancient side streets,ironically named "Jüdenstrasse",since it was once part of the ghetto.His father,Ludwig Wessel,D.D.,died when Horst was still a little boy.

This father deserves closer scrutiny.He bears but little resem= blance to his brave colleagues of the Confessional Church,to such truly imposing figures like Niemöller.He belongend to the type of North German Lutheran,obsessed by the furor teutonicus rather than by the Lord's Word,who laid the spiritual groundwork for the Third Reich.When the World War brake out he was beside himself with de= light.In his memoirs he describes the tragic days of August,1914, as follows:"Never was Berlin as beautiful as in this hour of passionately submissive love for the Hohenzollern Dynasty.How we rejoiced....!"A strange Christianity,this - a Christianity that goes ecstatic over the onset of the great butchery!

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Parson Wessel also wrote a war book and dedicated it "in happy memory and deep respect to His Excellency,General von Ludendorff" - that same Ludendorff who became an outspoken enemy of Christianity. In his periodical,"At the Well of German Strength",which he edited together with his wife Mathilde,the Christian faith was attacked as the root of all evil,and the gospel of Wotan was proclaimed.The war-mad Prussian minister paid obeisance to Anti-Christ himself!

It is not surprising that his son did not take to Christianity. No crucufix hung over his bed;but even when he was a boy there was always a revolver under his pillow;for he belonged to semi-military, ultra-nationalistic organizations long before he reached maturity - the Bismarck Bund ,the Vikings ect.He joined the "Black Reichswehr" while he was still in school - "in place of a vacation",as he himself put it.

"I became a National Socialist not from conviction,but from dis= appointment."These are his own words.At the time Hitler,in one of his speeches,had just proclaimed:"To be a pacifist means to have demon= strated one's lack of character."Horst Wessel,who had learned nothing but shooting and fighting,was bound to feel that here at last was his true leader.

What did National Socialism mean to this disappointed fellow who had joined its ranks from boredom?It meant a dissolute life - the life of a hooligan,invested with the shoddy glamour of the petty gangster.It meant meeting-halls battles,free-for-all fights with poli= tical or personal enemies.It meant cowardly attacks from ambush..It meant embarking upon a life in the jungle.Yet actually it was not nearly as dangerous as it sounds;for in those last years before Hitler's seizure of power,the Republic already was secretly playing into the hands of these half-grown Nazi ruffians.It was only the

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"Reds"who were persecuted in earnest.

That lad,Horst Wessel,might have lived to witness the Third Reich, but for his filthy pandering activities.He lived with a professional prostitute by the name of Erna Jünicke,who,~~a~~ acquaintance he had made in a notorious tavern known as "The Mexico".Hans Heinz Ewers,specialist in horror stories,in his biographical novel written around Horst Wessel, makes a valiant attempt to represent the relationship between his hero and the street-walker as that of the missionary and the courtesan.Horst "saved"and "redeemed"the girl - he "lifted her to his own level".This view does honor to the extravagant imagination of the biographer; Wessel's colleagues,however - the other pimps at the "Mexico"bar - took a more realistic view.They resented a rival taking away a highly profitable girl.

Not a few of Wessel's Nazi comrades looked askance too.They had a more pronounced sense of the proprieties than the prodigal parson's son.One of his biographers laments:"How deeply it must have wounded him to see men from his own camp rise up against him and set out to undermine his work..."

Astonishingly enough,Horst at the time lived in a rooming house run by a widowed Communist woman named Salm.His landlady plottet with his enemies - or,perhaps more accurately,his rivals.He was murdered, in Frau Salm's flat,but not for political motives.He was cut down as a pimp is cut down.Bloody affairs of this kind are not unusual in the underworld.

The whole voluminous Nazi literature on the subject of Horst Wessel contains not a single detailed account of the trial of his murderers. The topic is too delicate.The German people might learn the embarassing circumstances under which their "youthful hero"lost his life.The real background of young Wessel's vulgar tragedy are the dirty in= trigues of the "Mexico"bar...

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The German people,under pain of ghastly punishment,are forced to stand at attention and enthusiastically raise their arms whenever the Horst Wessel song rings out - this song in which a pitiful little ruffian and gigolo tried to express his coarse and confused feelings; this cheap lyrical ecstasy of a hanger-on,culminating in the dream of "Jewish blood spurting under the knife".That was the limit of his imagination.That discovery was to make the wight "immortal".And immortal it has become - this single "work",this miserable product of a dishonorable,wasted,soiled life -:an immortal symbol of Germany's shame. -

There are other figures,less known abroad,whose memory is honored in the Third Reich no less than is the name of the sadistic gigolo. One of them is Albert Leo Schlageter,immortalized in a drama by none other than Herr Hanns Johst,"poeta laureatus" of the Third Reich,personal friend of the Führer,"Staatsrat"and president of the German Academy of Poetry.It is in this drama that the famous setence occurs: "Whenever I hear the word culture ,I draw back the safety catch of my revolver."

That setence certainly would have pleased Schlageter,who could not stand culture and who always was quick on the draw.He had fought in the World War and found it impossible to discard the craft of murder. After the war he did not know what to do with himself.From the college town Freiburg,he wrote in despair:"Is this life?Why not rise and smash everything to pieces?Desks and the glasses on the professors' noses too!"

And so he returned to the only profession he knew.First he fought against the Russians in the Baltic,then in Upper Silesia.For a time he was a Polish spy in Danzig.A Polish official by the name of [redacted] Brzybiczewski got him the job.Schlageter himself later insisted that he had merely want to doublecross the Polish;but it is improbable that the Poles would have trusted him in the first place,had they not been sure

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of him.They knew his past.His checkered career was a familiar story in that neck of Europe.The fact remains that he took money from the Poles.

He always took money,and in very considerable amounts.During the Ruhr occupation he was active against the French.He became a specialist in railway sabotage - a branch of the art invested with no particular nobility.The French military authorities caught him red-handed and convicted him,as any court-martial anywhere would have done.Schlageter, however,now was advanced to martyrdom.Heretofor he had only been a paid agent.His anti-French sabotage activities in the Ruhr district netted him 18,ooo paper marks from the government daily.He lived on this income;for all his business enterprises had failed.During his trial he made the following statement,which appears in the record: "What I did,I did because I had sustained great business losses.I said to myself:'Let business go and look for something else!'"

Schlageter,the hero,squealed on his pals to save his own skin;but he did not succeed.He himself had been arrested because of a leak from among his most intimate friends - as his Nazi biographers sadly admit. Horst Wessel had suffered the same fate - a fate not unknown,though not the rule,in gangster circles.

Hitler has claimed that "Marxism preaches freedom of all bad in= stincts".In the light of his own most intimate circle the assertion is not devoid of humor.Everyone who has ever been close to the Führer has been characterized by a total lack of moral inhibitions.The odd indulgences of the late Captain Röhm at the sight of innocent young S.A.men will be remembered.Hitler was weâl aware of the special leaning of his old friend,but did not feign indignation until he wanted to get rid of him.The omnipresent Doctor Göbbles then took a keen delight in regaling the German public with the pornographic details of Röhm's

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bedroom.A little later the Propaganda Minister himself was to become the subject of piquant anecdotes - a lovely motion picture star being involved,for a change.The gallant doctor got off with a black eye - which must be taken literally.A popular prize-fighter,however, whose wife happens to be an attractive screen vedette,threatened him in the following terms:"If I ever catch that guy,I'll break his neck!"

The language befits the company.The Nazis are spoiling not only the morals but even the language. ~~In Germany~~/Perhaps this is why the great German poets are no longer popular in their homeland.Goethe, Lessing and Hölderlin are hardly mentioned any more.On the other hand, one Dietrich Eckhart comes in for a great deal of praise.He was one of Hitler's "Old Faithfuls".Unfortunately he was unable to witness the meteoric rise of his cronies.He died as the result of dissipation. The Führer,however,was quick to show his gratitude.Eckhart was elevated to the rank of a "legend".School children are now compelled to learn his miserable verses by heart,and streets are named after him.But, to the Führer's regret,there was no way to compel theater audiences to support his boring plays for any lenght of time.The "great poet" of the Third Reich has remained utterly unknown abroad,and despite all possible ballyhoo has proved a miserable flop even in Germany.

Eckhart disliked the Jews because he mistakenly thought that they had ruined his literary career.He declared:"Jews are absolute materia= lists who deny eternity and the spirit."This sounds a bit strange when it is remembered that the Jews gave mankind the Holy Scriptures. These Scriptures,however,are far from holy to Eckhart."Cheap filth,to be torn to pieces,"he called them.His chief work,embodying his "philoso= phy"and "Weltanschauung", is charmingly entitled "Bolshevism,From Moses to Lenin." Among the "Jews"he numbered the Catholic statesman, Erzberger,and the German worker who became first President of the

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Weimar Republic,Ebert,as well als Lenin."I decide who is a Jew",the antisemitic Mayor of Vienna,Lueger,one of Hitler's forerunners,is supposed to have said...

Like Worst Wessel,Eckhart by no means came from the lower strata of society.It was his character and his instict,rather than his origin that consigned him to the underworld.His father,a well known notary, had left him a considerable fortune.One of Eckhart's Nazi biographers - a man by the name of Reich - explains not without pride, that young Dietrich "spent his fortune in a few years".Later his fortunes declined to such an extent that he was forced to sleep in public asylums or on benches in the Berlin parks - a fact again recorded by his biographers with an odd kind of satisfaction,as though this decline, this dissolute life,were in themselves indications of genius.

He was a typical Nazi,this Dietrich Eckhart - an arrogant fellow without any talent,a brutal neurasthenic,a miserable blend of ~~Bohe~~ Bohemian and mercenary. ~~Hin~~ Withal he was afflicted with physical cowardice,as testified to by numerous uncomplimentary anecdotes about his "political career".Rosenberg,the official "theoretician"of the Third Reich and the celebrated author of the confused "Myth of the Twentieth Century",has this to say of Dietrich Eckhart:"Any sustained equilibrum of affairs brought him to the verge of despair,which manifested itself in violent outbursts.He resorted to drink,or to another vice,in order to resolve his unbearable inner tension."

To put it plainly,Eckhart was a dope fiend,and when deprived of the drug he drank.The tendency to indulge in intoxicating drugs is remarkably widespread in Nazi circles.When Flying Officer Hermann Göring lived in Sweden after the war,he occosionally created an embarrassing public nuisance by setting up loud screams on the street. He raged because he could not endure life without Morphine injections.

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Later he underwent a number of different treatments,which must have been successful,or our glamourous "Marshall"could hardly look so large and jovial.Thus one old friend of the Führer at least has been "redeemed"...Dietrich Eckhart,on the other hand,did away with himself,though in his case there was little of value to destroy. -

...A pimp,a paid stoolpigeon and saboteur,and a mediocre dope-fiend - what an imposing "mythical trinity"they make!The weird cult leader, court magician and prophet whom the Nazis kept for a while - though they rubbed him out as they did so many others of the faithful when the time came - fits well into this company.The true name of this eccentric personality who called himself Hanussen,was Steinschneider. He was a Jew,by the way,his baptismal ceremony not taking place until 1932.That did not keep Hitler from shaking hands with him;nor did it keep the police commissioner of Berlin,Count Helldorf,from taking a very lively interest in the "non-Aryan"prophet.The Nazi Count was not only an intimate friend of the notorious charlatan;he took Hanussen's money - a whole lot of it - ,his own fortune have gone for drink.Further details anent the pleasures which Hanussen provided for the Count are of a nature too gross to be set down here.Hanussen owned a beautiful yacht on board of which he arranged the most extravagant parties for his aristocratic protector.There were then as yet no Concentration Camps where the gay Count might have vented his sadistic impulses.The youngsters whom the "prophet"introduced to Herr von Helldorf fared somewhat better that the victims of the Gestapo.They at least were paid to be beaten....

Count Helldorf proclaimed Hanussen's importance to the Nazi Party - in its "struggle against intellect,and as the embodiment of magical and super-rational forces".Göbbels grew jealous;the newcomer was muscling in on his own domain.The Propaganda Minister attacked Hanussen publicly on account of his Jewish origin;but Hitler himself intervened

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to protect the prophet.It was the climax of Hanussen's grotseque career.

His rise to the top of the heap had not been easy.He had started out as a ham actor and impostor.In Constantinople he impersonated the opera singer Titta Ruffo,and filled an engagement with a "Lehar operetta"which he himself had written.This at least indicates a spark of imagination - a quality of which he was to give further evidence during the War.It was then that he began to interest himself in magic.For a long time he was satisfied with relatively primitive tricks.His great success as a "mind-reader"in the music halls of Europe dates from the year 1927.

As he became more pretentious he started to prophesy political events.In the beginning he declared that Heinrich Brüning,at the time Chancellor of the Reich,was the "coming man".It was as late as 1932 that he changed his mind in favour of Adolf Hitler whose imminent triumph he foretold.He trusted the victory of the Nazis would guarantee his own great position.The cunning prophet evidently was ignorant of the fate which was in store for himself.

Count Helldorf had a special interest in Hanussens's disappearence. The magician had lent him large sums of money.The gentleman,who remained the police commissioner of Berlin up to now,was decided not to pay back his personal debts...It was just at that time that the Reichstag fire was prepared by the Nazi leaders;Helldorf was among the initiators of the fantastic intrigue.Hanussen enjoyed the full confidence of the chiefs.He was almost an official personage.When he gave one of his well-attended shows in the W Berlin Wintergarten,the Nazi Party honored him with a special S.A.escort.He had made so much money with his hokus-pokus that he built himself a "Palace of Occultism".At the opening ceremonies he seems to have lost his head - or perhaps he

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had simply drunk too much champaign. At any rate, he forgot himself so far as to "prophesy" certain events that had probably already been predetermined. "There will be a fire!" he shouted, obviously referring to the Reichstag. The Nazi dignitaries present exchanged horrified glances. Hanussen was lost.

Between two performances in the "Wintergarten", he was "taken for a ride" by some S.A.-men. His body was found in a wood near Berlin. The official police report states that "the guilty party must be sought in underworld circles with whom Hanussen had recently established intimate relations."

Such cynicism is almost incredible. It sounds like a stale joke. However, it proves once more that the Nazis know all about themselves - even though only half-consciously. They all bear the mark of Cain on their foreheads. They know whence they come, and we know where they will end.

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