

Was Hitler a Marxist?

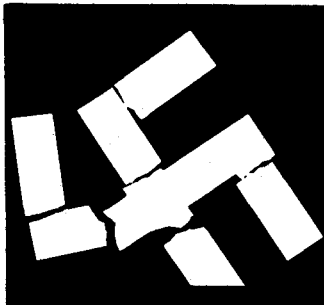
Reflections about certain Affinities

"One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail."

SHAKESPEARE, *Coriolanus*

"Hitler's radical Fascism can only be understood in its connections with Bolshevism and Marxism."

PROFESSOR ERNST NOLTE, *FAZ* (21 July 1984)



IN MAY 1913 a 24-year old Austrian stepped off the Vienna train in Munich, and sniffed its air with delight. "A German city", he called it ten years later, in *Mein Kampf*. He had come to Germany to paint. But when the young Adolf Hitler was not painting, or sleeping, he was reading voraciously in

books borrowed from Munich libraries—among them the writings of another revolutionary thinker, Karl Marx. That bout of study lasted for over a year, down to the outbreak of war in August 1914, when Hitler joined the German army to fight. "A doctrine of destruction", he calls Marxism in his autobiography, in a remark not entirely depreciatory, perhaps, coming as it does from someone who all his life saw himself as an apostle of destruction. And he read around it as well as in it:

¹ Heinz A. Heinz, *Germany's Hitler* (London, 1934), p. 58, a Nazi propaganda biography designed for foreign readers and published only (so far as I have discovered) in English and Polish.

The best general account of Hitler's intellectual sources is H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Mind of Adolf Hitler" in *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-4* (London, 1953, rev. 1973), which mentions Marxism only in passing (p. xxxv), however, though it usefully confirms the probable authenticity of Rauschning's *Hitler Speaks* (London, 1939).

Friedrich Heer, *Der Glaube des Adolf Hitler* (Munich, 1968), dismisses any suggestion that Hitler had so much as read the chief writings of Marxism, let alone studied them (p. 121), on the tenuous ground that he misquotes Marx's famous dictum about religion as an opiate for the people. But mistakes like that are easily compatible with avid, careless reading, which is what *Mein Kampf* suggests. And recently Peter R. Black, *Ernst Kaltenbrunner* (Princeton, 1984), a well-documented life of another Austrian Nazi, has shown in its first chapter, "The Austrian Roots of Ideological Commitment", how far removed from any Catholic tradition of anti-Semitism the ideas of pan-Germanists like Schönerer were in the 1880s and 1890s, and makes any merely traditionalist interpretation of Hitler's views harder to sustain.

"I immersed myself in the theoretical literature of this new world, trying to be clear about its possible effects."

His Munich landlord, Herr Popp, and his wife later reported how in 1913-14 "the Austrian charmer" (as they called him) would politely decline to share their meal downstairs—obstinately climbing to his room with a pile of books under one arm, and sausage and bread under the other. He lived like a hermit for days on end, Frau Popp later said, with his nose stuck in heavy books, and "you couldn't tell what he was thinking." And when she asked him why he bothered, he would reply evasively: "Dear Frau Popp, does one ever know what is, and isn't, likely to be useful in life?"¹

I want to argue that Hitler did find Marxism useful in life, even indispensable, and that recent historians of Nazism have failed as utterly as his landlady to tell what he was thinking. And they have failed because, like Frau Popp when she saw those books under his arm, they have missed the evidence under their noses. They have missed Hitler's Marxism.

1. "Racial Trash"

HITLER'S EVENTUAL DEBT to the Soviet Union, as a technical model for racial extermination, has already been argued. Several years ago ("Rehearsal for the Holocaust?", *Commentary*, June 1981) I suggested that the Nazi exterminations of 1941-45 may have been directly inspired by Stalin's Russia, which by then had a good twenty years of exterminating experience. Hard as Soviet evidence is to collect, Communist extermination beyond doubt came first; and it is likely enough that the Nazis borrowed from it after 1941. After all, they had been allies of the Russians by then for two years.

The article had a mixed, even a stormy reception. That demonstrated something, at least: that the scriptures of socialism are not much read nowadays, outside a few familiar quotations. Marx and Engels are the sort of authors that people imagine they already know. Very few socialists today, and surprisingly few of their opponents, have troubled to study the 19th-century pioneers carefully, or to reach out into the darker corners of their minds. There is occasional entertainment to be had here. In the 1970s, for example, the Italian Catholics amused themselves, and embarrassed their Communist ad-

versaries, by quoting a diatribe by Marx against divorce on their referendum posters, and the astonishment of Italian Communists was comical to behold: it had not even occurred to them that their ideological hero might be a committed conservative in family matters, slightly to the right of the Pope. Even dedicated anti-socialists are inclined to assume that in intention, at least, socialism is a humane and emancipated doctrine, however deficient in practice. It is imagined to be high-mindedly unrealistic, at worst. The name has a halo, and haloes dazzle. This article, which is about the socialist commitment to racial extermination and Hitler's debt to it, is designed to switch that halo off.

IT IS NO LONGER WIDELY KNOWN that Marx, Engels and some of their socialist successors believed in genocide, declared that belief, and held it because they were socialists.

There is a quick test of socialist literacy. Ask a Marxist friend if he accepts the view of Marx and Engels that social progress demands racial extermination. For myself, I have never met with anything here but a blank stare of astonishment or an indignant demand for evidence. Since the 1930s we have convinced ourselves that Fascists believe in race war and Marxists in class war; and we are wrong. Marx and Engels publicly declared that whole nations as well as whole classes would have to be exterminated. And that, they proclaimed, was essential to any advanced doctrine of scientific socialism.²

In January-February 1849, Friedrich Engels published an article on the Hungarian crisis in Marx's journal, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, calling for the extermination of whole races in Europe. "*Der magyarische Kampf*" has been collected more than once, even in East European editions of Marx and Engels, and its authenticity is not in question. For a young man using Munich libraries in 1913-14, the most available text is likely to have been in Franz Mehring's *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Marx, Engels und Lassalle* (where the Stuttgart title-page reads "1902"). It was reprinted in 1913, the year Hitler settled in Germany. The Staatsbibliothek in Munich, which was a lending library before the First World War, records that the first edition was acquired in October 1901.

It is sometimes thought that the 1849 Marx-Engels programme for racial extermination dropped out of sight in modern socialist debate, a forgotten morsel. It may be forgotten now by political scientists, perhaps out of embarrassment; it was not forgotten in the early decades of this century. Stalin alluded to it approvingly in *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924) some months after Lenin's death, when he was laying hands on power. His book was extensively read in the Soviet Union and promptly translated into German as

Lenin und der Leninismus (1924), appearing in Vienna during Hitler's confinement in Landsberg. Stalin's argument is frankly genocidal, and his warrant for genocide is the 1849 article. The Soviet state, Stalin argues, will have to destroy whole peoples who stand in the revolutionary path:

"In the forties of the last century, Marx supported the national movement of the Poles and Hungarians, and was opposed to the national movement of the Czechs and the South Slavs. Why? Because the Czechs and the South Slavs were then 'reactionary peoples', 'Russian outposts' in Europe, outposts of absolutism; whereas the Poles and the Hungarians were 'revolutionary peoples' fighting against absolutism."³

So the 1849 article was orthodox Marxism, in Soviet terms. We might have understood Stalin's policy on nationalities earlier, and more clearly, if closer attention had been paid at the start of his dictatorship to what he so publicly declared.

The socialist programme of nation-killing in 1849 had been German in its emphasis. Some nations are bearers of progress, Engels believed; others (mostly Slavs) are not. Being counter-revolutionary, they must "perish in the revolutionary holocaust" that he and Marx imagined in the 1840s to be imminent. Their reasoning was blunt. The socialist revolution will leave certain races two whole steps, at least, behind the vanguard of progress, and forever unable to catch up. Not even bourgeois in a bourgeois age, socialism will leave them so far in the rear as to be irreclaimable. They are "*Völkerabfall*", he argues—racial trash—and their fate is to disappear with the new socialist order. Genocide is progressive, in these terms: "... and that too is progress."

The Marx-Engels hit-list for historical progress was a curious one, and it had little to do with Jews. In fact Marx's famous essay on "The Jewish Question" can so easily be exculpated as a programme for extermination (though not as a programme for repression) that it may well have contributed to a glib neglect of other evidences of genocide in the Marx-Engels corpus. The races to be expunged are Scottish Highlanders who (as any reader of Scott's *Waverley* novels would know) were tainted with feudalism and Jacobitism; Bretons, who had supported royalism in the face of the French Revolution; Basques, who were backing the reactionary side in the struggle for the Spanish throne; and Yugoslavs (as we should call them now), who were helping to bring a reactionary Czarism deeper into Europe. Engels's language in 1849 is uncompromising:

"Until its complete extermination, or loss of national status, this racial trash always becomes the most fanatical bearer there is of counter-revolution, and it remains that. That is because its entire existence is nothing more than a protest against a great historical revolution."

A touch of *Mein Kampf*, even, in its rhetoric. And Hitler, if he ever read the article, may have relished Engels's concluding sentences most of all:

"The next world war will cause not only reactionary classes and dynasties, but also entire reactionary peoples, to disappear from the earth. And that too is progress."

After 1859, when Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared, the notion of a racial Survival of the Fittest rapidly

² See also my "Race and the Socialists: On the Progressive Principle of Revolutionary Extermination", *ENCOUNTER*, November 1976, reprinted in my *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain* (London, 1977). Paul Johnson's "Marxism vs. the Jews", *Commentary*, April 1984, is a recent account of Marxist anti-Semitism.

³ Stalin, *Works* (Moscow, 1953), vol VI, pp. 147 f.

became associated with his name—unjustly, since Darwin, who was never a socialist, nowhere supported that political interpretation. But for Marx, Darwin's book was "the scientific foundation of the historical class war", as he put it exuberantly to Lassalle; and he was to retain his enthusiasm for an historical model of a Nature red-in-tooth-and-claw till the end of his life in 1883. Scribbled in the years shortly before his death, his late notes on race have only recently been edited from manuscript as *Ethnological Notebooks* (1972)—an untidy book that confirms his abiding belief in tidy ethnic solutions. Engels was to survive Marx by a dozen years, to continue the long tradition of socialist racialism in his writings on kinship, and inserting elements into late editions of *Das Kapital*.

MODERN SOCIALISTS ARE INCLINED to be at least a trifle embarrassed by revelations of this sort: to murmur that they know nothing of such matters; that for all they know most Victorian thinkers held racist views of one kind or another; and that in any case genocide has nothing to do with the high-minded traditions of socialism in the advanced Western world in the 20th century.

The plea of ignorance, at least, one may unreservedly accept. It is highly unusual to meet a socialist who has read far into the collected writings of Marx and Engels, and in a busy political life there are doubtless better things to do. At a stretch, Marx and Engels are boring authors. But intellectuals do not have that excuse: they are supposed to have read a book before proclaiming a view of it, and they are not so lightly to be forgiven for bouts of dogmatic indolence. It is always rash to declare an allegiance to an author one has not read. And to imagine that one can know what Marx and Engels said by imbibing the warmed-up brew of commentators is to take a view as hopelessly easy as it is rash and perilous.

As for the suggestion that leaders of 19th-century political opinion were commonly racist, that is nothing more than a convenient fiction. Disraeli was, in a Semitic-mystical way; so was Carlyle, in a manner less amiable. But John Stuart Mill, who answered Carlyle in liberal style on the Negro question, was not (ENCOUNTER, November 1976), and there was absolutely no obligation in Victorian intellectual circles to hold some races genetically inferior to others. In Britain, at least, where Marx lived after 1849, I know of no evidence that either of the two great parties of state held what would now be called racist views—still less that they believed in genocide, on any ground whatever. Genocide, then, was not merely a fact of Victorian socialism: it was a characteristic fact. It helped to mark socialism off—and sharply—from its Liberal and Conservative adversaries.

To suppose that Marxist genocide has nothing much to do with English-speaking socialism is equally rash. H. G. Wells was an English Fabian who was never a Marxist, though he eventually supported the October Revolution on progressive grounds. But in 1902, in *Anticipations*, he demanded the extinction of what he called "swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people who do not come into the new needs of efficiency. . . ." That applies Engels's grand principle of racial tidying-up across the whole

face of the globe—an imperial doctrine, by now, for an imperial age. The British Empire was never run on socialist lines, but Wells (p. 317) shows what the fate of blacks, browns, and dirty-whites might have been:

"The world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they will have to go."

He also advocated the painless killing of incurables, which is where Hitler's programme of extermination began in 1939. Wells's perfect future was a tight, white, right little world run by socialist technocrats.

A few years later Havelock Ellis, in *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1912), urged eugenics on a future socialist government as an unavoidable moral duty, to produce "fine individuals"; under socialism, he argued, quality will supplant quantity, that foolish fetish of capitalism. And by the 1930s, in *Soviet Communism* (1935), Sidney and Beatrice Webb were publicly praising the concentration camps of Stalin's Russia.

No wonder, then, if some socialists in Western Europe willingly suspended their hostility to Hitler's cause during the Nazi-Communist pact of 1939-41. Bertolt Brecht, for example: *Mutter Courage* opened in neutral Switzerland in April 1941, some months after France had fallen to Hitler. It is a Marxist play about the futility of war. A Zurich reviewer perceptively called it "*zeitnah*"—topical, concerned with the historical moment—which it was, being an attempt to persuade Britain and her supporters to accept defeat and lay down their arms. The French Communist Party, meanwhile, was actively collaborating with Vichy and the Nazi occupiers of France, on the grounds that Western Imperialism rather than Nazism was the international enemy of the working classes. Shortly after World War II had begun, J. B. S. Haldane wrote memorably in *The New Statesman*, on 30 September 1939:

"I would sooner be a Jew in Berlin than a Kaffir in Johannesburg or a Negro in French Equatorial Africa. If Czechs are treated as an inferior race, do Indians or Annamites enjoy complete equality?"

And by 1939, as if on cue, the Hitler who had recently allied himself to Communism was embarking on an act recommended by the socialist scriptures of the 19th century: the mass murder of whole races.

2. Selective Affinities

IN WHAT sense was Hitler a socialist? What was Hitler's probable knowledge of the socialist tradition of the 1840s, in favour of exterminating whole categories of mankind?

It is certain that Hitler had read widely in Marxist literature in Munich as a young man in 1913-14; it is also clear that he had read extensively during his enforced leisure in Landsberg prison in 1923-24, after his failed *putsch*. While Lenin lay dying in Russia, Hitler again took to a course of Marxist reading, though in the fresh knowledge that a revolutionary Marxist state had recently come to life on the face of the earth. Word

had been made flesh: October 1917 must have looked as mighty a revelation of the power of ideology as anything since 1789. In a cell in Landsberg prison, as Hitler tells in *Mein Kampf*, he read his Nietzsche and his Marx. "Landsberg was my college education", he would joke to his friends, "and at state expense"—and with the large advantage, he would add, of no pretentious professors to be endured. Lenin's death in January 1924 filled the prisoner with a rapturous sense that history was about to repeat itself, as indeed it was, and at home in his adopted Germany: his own movement now firmly set to replace a Slavic Communism which, like all things Slav, seemed to him weak, incompetent, and backward.

Hitler never called himself a Marxist in public. He came surprisingly close, however, to calling himself one in private, even after he seized power in January 1933. In the early biography by Konrad Heiden (1936-37), he is reported as finding Trotsky's memoirs nothing less than "brilliant" (I.355): an unexpected reaction from one who has passed into history as readily hostile to anything Communist. But the truth is that official Communism was objectionable to Hitler less because it was too radical than because it was too tame. "I have learnt a great deal from Marxism", he remarked to Hermann Rauschning just after he took power,

"as I do not hesitate to admit. . . . The difference . . . is that I have really put into practice what these peddlers and pen-pushers have timidly begun. The whole of National Socialism is based on it [p. 185]."

That is from the *Hitler Speaks* (1939) of Hermann Rauschning, a Bismarckian conservative who fled Germany in 1936 because he had come to believe, as an early Nazi, that the Hitler movement was secretly more radical than Bolshevism. The book presents a terrifying picture of National Socialism as a sort of non-theoretical Marxism where action has confidently supplanted the niceties of abstract speculation. The world belongs to those who do.

Stalin (as Hitler remarked in his table-talk at the height of his war against him, in July 1942) was "*ein genialer Kerl*"—nothing less than a genius in his own fashion—since he understood that deeds rather than theories count. Pen-pushers write pamphlets; the Nazi, by contrast, acts boldly according to the violent principles laid down in broad terms by great revolutionaries. He does not hesitate to act. No point, as Hitler explained to Rauschning in 1934, in wasting time on intellectual finesse. Nazism is a "revolutionary creative will that needs no ideological crutches"; and one that has no single or fixed aim, what is more, since history is a matter of "eternal change." That is why Marxists, he believed, make the best Nazis. At least they understand that politics by its very nature is a violent activity; and they only need to be shown that violence does not stop with a single revolution, as the Bolsheviks fondly imagine, but must go on and on:

"In my youth, and even in the first years of my Munich period after the war, I never shunned the company of Marxists [p. 186]."

That sounds as if the debt to revolutionary socialism was as much from conversation as from books—a conclusion altogether likely in an inherently lazy man with an avid taste for

crowds, and company, and face-to-face confrontations. The trouble was, Hitler added boastfully, that the Marxists he had known were such little men. But he could still work with them. Indeed he had already conceived of a Soviet alliance, Rauschning reports, as a "trump card" with which he would some day astonish the world. Germany and Russia were made for each other. "It is not Germany that will turn Bolshevik", he happily predicted to Rauschning in the spring of 1934, "but Bolshevism that will become a sort of National Socialism" (p. 134). The similarities, after all, had always been greater than the differences:

"There is more that binds us to Bolshevism than separates us from it. . . ."

and the *Führer* went on to explain that he had instructed his Party to admit former Communists at once. They were the right material:

"The petit bourgeois Social Democrat and the trade-union boss will never make a National Socialist, but the Communist always will."

ALL THAT IS ILLUMINATINGLY FRANK, and highly controversial: Rauschning's revelations of Hitler's private mind were considered indecorous, even incredible, when they were first made public late in 1939, whether on the Left or on the Right. If books are meant to make friends, *Hitler Speaks* could hardly have chosen a worse moment to appear. The Left had enough work on its hands explaining away the Hitler-Stalin Pact without the discovery that Hitler, in a sense, was more or less one of themselves: that he had consorted with Marxists, admired Communists, and found in Bolshevism a way forward. Conservatives were unhappy to see their ideological map of Europe so drastically redrawn. In his next book, *Make and Break with the Nazis* (1941), Rauschning observed that *Hitler Speaks* had been widely rejected "because it upset the general assessment of Nazism as a merely nationalist movement, and showed that its real roots lay in Marxism" (p. 194). And that is evidently right. The *Times Literary Supplement* review of *Hitler Speaks* (16 December 1939) had coolly noticed that "from Nazism, as this book portrays it, to Bolshevism is barely a step." And no wonder if socialists too found it hard to accept: "at the best, historical fiction", Richard Crossman had called it damningly in *The New Statesman* (16 December 1939). But if fiction was strange, the facts were stranger still; and Nazi war propaganda during the Soviet Pact could be explicitly socialist, calling on the British masses to demand of their leaders "Socialism in Action." Even Hitler's anti-Semitism was essentially anti-bourgeois, as Rauschning believed by the time he came to write *Make and Break*: "The principle of these inventions must be sought in Socialism, in Marx and Sorel" (p. 202).

Meanwhile Henri Rollin's *L'Apocalypse de notre temps*, published in Paris in 1939, had similarly proclaimed the "Russian roots" of National Socialism, though most copies were destroyed after the occupation of France in 1940. The truth had no soil to grow in, in those days; and by 1945 it had withered from view. Rauschning, who was to settle in Oregon as a farmer after the Second World War, lived on to his mid-

nineties, dying as recently as 1982. He is by now a figure largely forgotten in modern German history, though George Orwell had praised him during the War, in *Horizon* (August 1941). But he is not known to have been a myth-maker; and recent German research has shown that his reports of Hitler's conversation in 1932-34 are likely to be essentially trustworthy.⁴ The Bismarckian who lost his faith in Nazism may, after all, have been telling the literal truth about his master and his master's mind. If he was, it would help to explain some of the deeply resistant ambiguities of Hitler's ideological convictions.

3. The Neglected Connection

HITLER WAS NEVER A MARXIST, as Mussolini once was; and yet he could tell a confidante in 1934 that he had learnt a lot from Marx. His public hatred of Marxism, from first to last, may never have been anything less than sincere. But though it may have been the truth, I doubt if it was ever the whole truth. As a young activist in Munich, Professor Walter Laqueur has shown in *Russia and Germany* (1965), Hitler never appeared to regard Communism as the main enemy: when he attacked "Communism" in those hungry, stormy years after 1919 when many hoped, and more feared, that a defeated Germany might quickly follow Lenin's path, he seems to have meant the ruling Social Democrats who had accepted the Versailles Pact—a use of language well calculated to confuse contemporaries and biographers alike. Professor Laqueur helpfully quotes a parallel from *Bolshevism* (1924), by Dietrich Eckhart, Hitler's friend and adviser in those early years, who had demanded a "German Bolshevism" hostile to rents and dividends and intent on forcing the German rich to disgorge their wealth. The socialist roots of National Socialism are not just a matter of party title: they are confirmed by public record and public debate. By the time he wrote *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's anti-Soviet sentiment is, of course, entirely clear; but whether he ever ceased to be a socialist in a wider sense is another matter.

In his own estimation, it appears, he never did. As late as January 1943, according to Albert Speer in his *Spandau: the Secret Diaries* (1976), Hitler derided Franco as a fat little sergeant; and he demanded superior treatment for Spanish Communists in German-occupied France. At least, he told Speer, Communists were neither democrats nor reactionaries:

"They're lost to democracy, and to that reactionary crew around Franco—we have real chances there. I believe you to the letter, Speer, that they were impressive people [p. 167]."

During the Spanish Civil War, he added, the idealism had been altogether with the Reds, and the Catholic Church had always oppressed the Spanish people. "One of these days we'll be able to make use of them", he told Speer—sending the Reds back into Spain to start the Civil War all over again, "but with us on the opposite side." And on the same day he ordered special privileges for his Spanish Communist prisoners.

⁴ Theodor Schieder, *Hermann Rauschnings Gespräche mit Hitler als Geschichtsquelle* (Opladen, 1972).

But then, as Speer perceptively remarks earlier in his diaries, Hitler always "hated what he admired"; so that his hatred of Jews, Stalin, and Communism amounted to an "admiration that he refused to acknowledge" (p.30). That is an ambiguity that may have caused evidence to be misinterpreted for a long time. In the Nazi mind, noisy hatred is a tribute of frustrated praise, and envious emulation can lie at the heart of its bitterest diatribes. Certainly Hitler's opposition to Marxism was at no time of his life instinctive or immediate. Early and late in his political life, and even at the height of his war with the USSR, it was a fervid compound of rejection and admiration fuelled by envy. In the history of revolutionary socialism, Marx had said it first, as his disciples believed, and (in part at least) got it wrong: Hitler would correct and complete his faith and his dogma. As like contends with like, so were Fascism and Communism enemies in collision for a whole generation after 1918—contesting, like heavily armoured vehicles at high speed, the same space at the same time.

Goebbels, too, in the 1920s, could be openly pro-Soviet. The good Nazi, he wrote in *The Second Revolution* (1926),

"looks towards Russia, because Russia is that country most likely to take the road to socialism with us; because Russia is an ally nature has given us against the devilish temptations and corruptions of the West [p.47]."

and he called the defaming of the infant USSR the work of "a chorus of bourgeois liars and ignoramuses"—adding that no Czar had ever understood the Russian people as Lenin had done. He had given the peasants land and freedom.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, there is no case for thinking of Hitler as any sort of consistent thinker; and those who agonise over his faith and works soon throw up their hands at the spectacle of a zany mish-mash of ill-digested and derivative ideas. The very confusion of his writings has protected them, I suspect, from serious analysis—perhaps the last of his tricks to be exposed, and in some ways his best. Hitler simply did not care about writing, or about desk-work of any kind; and it is reasonable to guess that he would never have written *Mein Kampf* at all if he had not found time heavy on his hands in a prison cell. Widely read in his wilful way, he was openly a man of untrained mind, and resolute that no teacher and no book would ever train it. Despising everything but action, he was untempted by authorship, and the recent forger's *canard* that he kept a diary was always implausible. The published writings and reported conversations that survive are, of course, a chaos; and even if their sheer content did not repel, they would still look shoddy as argument and unkempt in style. But I believe a picture can be made of Hitler's sense of the one political doctrine, Bismarckian nationalism apart, that he is known to have studied. That doctrine was Marx's.

Like Bismarck, Marx had been a German. Like Bismarck, he was abundantly in the political air of the Germany out of which Hitler rose, in the years before and after the First World War. And Hitler acknowledged the debt. The task now—no easy one—is to relate his public revilings of Marxism to his private avowals of a deep-felt intellectual debt; and it can be done.

EARLY IN *Mein Kampf*, in its second chapter, Hitler attacked "the Jewish doctrine of Marxism" for its crass denial that "nationhood and race have a primary significance"—degrading as that denial must be, he argues, to all human life and civilisation. If Hitler's argument had stopped there, it would be easy to suppose that he shared the simple view of most socialists today that Marxism was not a doctrine of race. But he does not stop there. At a mid-point in his book, in a chapter entitled "People and Race" (ch.11), Hitler attacks Lenin's Russia on the interesting ground that the Bolshevik Jews who (as he believed) governed the infant USSR had already begun their own programme of racial extermination, "the great and final revolution." In Russia the Jew had already shown his true nature:

"In the course of a few years he endeavours to exterminate all those who represent the national intelligence. And by thus depriving the peoples of their natural intellectual leaders, he fits them for their fate as slaves under a lasting despotism."

That is a very exact account of what the Nazis were to attempt in occupied Poland and elsewhere after 1939, systematically deporting and killing leaders of intellectual life like priests and professors. What is remarkable is that as early as *Mein Kampf* Hitler believed Lenin had already done just that in Russia itself:

"Russia furnishes the most terrible example of such a slavery. In that country, the Jew has killed or starved thirty million people in a bout of savage fanaticism, partly by the use of inhuman torture."

And he warns that a day of reckoning is coming:

"The final consequence is not just that the peoples lose all their freedom under the domination of the Jews, but that those parasites themselves will disappear. The death of the victim is followed, sooner or later, by the death of the vampire."⁵

Thirty million. . . . There is something of an uncanny coincidence about Hitler hitting on that figure for Lenin's exterminations. If it was not at that time a fact of Communist extermination, it may not be far out as a prediction. Robert Conquest in *The Great Terror* (1968) has suggested 25-30 million as a probable total for the exterminations of Lenin and Stalin taken together, between the October Revolution of 1917 and Stalin's death in 1953. So Hitler's guess was to become

⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1924), ch. 11, "Volk und Rasse":

"In wenigen Jahren versucht er [der Jude], die nationalen Träger der Intelligenz auszurotten, und macht die Völker, indem er sie ihrer natürlichen geistigen Führung beraubt, reif zum Sklavenlos einer dauernden Unterjochung.

Das furchtbarste Beispiel dieser Art bietet Russland, wo er an dreissig Millionen Menschen in wahrhaft fanatischer Wildheit teilweise unter unmenschlichen Quälen tötete oder verhungern liess, um einem Haufen jüdischer Literaten und Börsenbanditen die Herrschaft über ein grosses Volk zu sichern.

Das Ende aber ist nicht nur das Ende der Freiheit der vom Jüden unterdrückten Völker, sondern auch das Ende dieser Völkerparasiten selber. Nach dem Tode des Opfers stirbt auch früher oder später der Vampir."

more or less true, it may be, and then by the most savage of ironies: he had spoken too soon. And it is doubly significant that he should speak of torturing victims to death—an essential element in the Nazi programme from the foundation of Dachau as the first concentration-camp of the *Reich* in 1933.

Mein Kampf is a compound of fascination and repulsion. In its handling of Marxism, above all, it amounts bluntly to a declaration of revenge. Revenge is an element in Nazi ideology that has recently been underestimated; its causes and its sources are not now much studied, and not much valued when they are. We do not know, or do not easily accept, that Nazism was a reply to Communism, or that the Holocaust (as it is now called) could ever have been seen as a vengeful act on those who had already supposedly committed mass exterminations of whole peoples as early as Lenin's dictatorship of 1917-24. And yet that theme was to echo obsessively through Hitler's speeches as leader in the 1930s, and it is hard to doubt that the killing of the Jews in 1941-45, in Nazi understanding, was retributive. What the Jews received, in that fanatical view, they had already done to others. No wonder if Speer believed that Hitler hated what he admired, or that his bitterest enmities were towards those he envied and sought to outdo.

4. Sympathies & Antipathies

THERE MAY BE SEVERAL REASONS, I suggest, why Hitler's debt to Marxism has been so largely neglected. One is that the racist element in Marxism has been widely ignored in our own age, though understood and even applauded before 1914 by socialists themselves. And to ignore Marxist racialism is to dismiss, at the outset, any serious possibility that Hitler might owe anything important to Marx.

Again, the sincerity of Hitler's anti-Marxism convinced the millions who heard it in the 1930s, whether for him or against him. Paradoxical as it may sound, I believe they were right to be convinced. But Speer's interpretation of motive casts reasonable doubt on whether Hitler's hostility was ever a simple dogmatic rejection. It was the envy, rather, of a dedicated nationalist in an hour of defeat after 1918 who, impressed beyond all persuasion of the urgent case for revolutionary violence, saw a corrupt and imperfect version of that view triumph in a backward eastern land and even presume to spread its influence into Germany. Soviet Marxism and its German allies must have represented for the young Hitler a hopelessly incomplete view of human history, if only because it was an internationalist view; and a hopelessly corrupt view, if only because he believed the Russian and German Communist Parties to be led and inspired by cosmopolitan Jews. But it was still a dogma out of which Nazism would take its rise. Nazism was a totalitarian answer to totalitarianism, answering like with like.

That interpretation was sometimes suggested by foreign observers at the time. Mussolini and Hitler had devised national forms of Communism, as the 1930s sometimes believed; and Hitler's title of "National Socialism" for the party he led was not always seen as cynical, even by socialists. "A socialist experiment" is what Harold Nicolson called

Mussolini's Italy in his diary when, in January 1932, he visited Rome with Sir Oswald Mosley. Fascism was fighting fire with fire.

And that emulation, equally, may never have been anything less than sincere in its hatred. Perhaps we need a new term or phrase to explain Hitler's Marxism and its complex impulses. Jealousy is too simple; but certainly Lenin and Hitler remind one of two rivals in love with the same woman—detesting each other not because they disagree, but precisely because they agree so completely on what in all the world it is that matters most. And what mattered most for both was to replace plutocracy—or capitalism (what Marx often identified as “Jewish greed”)—with the rule of a new revolutionary élite that was dogmatically pure.

“The part played by the bourgeoisie is finished—permanently”, Hitler once told Rauschning (*Hitler Speaks*, pp.48-49), in a monumentally inaccurate prophecy. That was the first common ground. And the second was to see that the call of dogmatic purity made extermination simply inevitable.

Since there are millions who will not accept the new order of Lenin or Hitler, history demands that they should die. So dogmatic purity equals extermination. For the first time in Europe since the Inquisition, perhaps, Lenin and Hitler enacted the notion of killing by category, with financiers, kulaks, and Jews in the role of heretics.

But it was not Hitler who invented the notion of killing by category for modern Europe, when after 1939 he destroyed whole classes of beings like incurables, gypsies, or Jews. That doctrine, shrouded in notions of “progress” and “historical inevitability”, is to be found in the public writings of Marx and Engels as early as the 1840s. It had been enacted already by Lenin in the death-camps he created in northern Russia in 1918, when Hitler was only an aspiring leader of a national movement in Germany not yet fashioned or formed. And, I am convinced, it had been revealed to him as a doctrine as early as 1913 when, as a 24-year-old wanderer still utterly unknown to fame, he had settled in a Munich boarding-house and there devoured, in his lonely hours, the writings of the socialists.

Cargo Cult

I

There is a tall man in a beige and waxy suit,
His fawn attaché case beside the reading stand
Where the government newspaper hangs. Dating
From the previous week, it announces summer sales.
“A request may be received for a volunteer

To work with Boran watchmen and Kikuyu
Market ladies in the field of adult literacy.”
In the stairwell there were four Africans,
Their leather coats, and yet, apart from
Her and me, I saw no one in the building.

As I left, they all assumed I knew
The meaning of their softly spoken
Instructions, when I was uncertain.
Their pink tongues uncurved, “Good morning, Sir.”
I was shown a side door to the street.

II

Like the crake of a pheasant heard suddenly beside
The parade of shops, I was dispossessed.
When I had brushed at that mark causing you
To jump so, I straightened up beside four people
In a car. The shadowed man in a front seat
Turned to pass a flask to his companions.

Ian Pople