

# Collective Neurosis of GERMANY

BY RAYMOND DE SAUSSURE

**I**N a previous article (June, 1942), I discussed the part that Hitler's neurosis plays in his success, but that factor in itself is not sufficient to explain his triumph. It is because Germany, like her Fuehrer, suffered after 1919 from a suppressed desire, and because thousands of Germans suffered during this epoch the same kind of deception in their own individual lives, that it became possible for an alien to be proclaimed chief of one of the greatest nations of Europe.

Historians explain the development of events by attributing them to general social causes. We, on the contrary, are forced to present in bold relief as the causal factors of historic events the importance of individual conflicts or of inner conflicts of special groups. It seems to us that it is easier to understand the sequence of events if one penetrates to the core of their psychological motives.

To summarize my findings in the previous article, it is sufficient to say that Hitler's success has been due to the very nature of his delirium. Hitler always visualizes a total and crushing victory over his adversary. He believes that every German is wholly and solely preoccupied with the wish to see Germany mistress of the world—and he forces them to work for that alone. The pleasures which Hitler enjoys are not those of the flesh. They are mental, and they are entirely concentrated on the delight of crushing and brutally destroy-

ing. A hundred per cent of his libido is placed in personal triumph and in battle with others.

A general whose mission it is to conquer a country faces his task, examines its various aspects as so many problems which are set for his intelligence. When he has determined his plan of campaign and given his orders, he is tired, relaxes, and waits for events. Other aspects of life occupy his thought. He will write to his people, talk to his comrades, read a newspaper or a novel. There is none of this with Hitler. He is absorbed day and night by his dream of power. There is a constant mental rumination in which he goes over the smallest details that may ensure his success. This state of mind is not the result of reflection, of an effort; it is a kind of dream which goes on constantly. It is accompanied by great satisfaction which for him takes the place of those of the senses. His thought ceaselessly anticipates victory.

At the same time Hitler is haunted by the dread of losing any smallest part of his power. He never foresees a victory won by chance, or by some heroic event; he always foresees a crushing triumph obtained by the development of tremendous means. That is why he never throws himself into action until he has created the instrument of his success. These measures are the result of carefully thought out tactics which are imposed on him by his complex of security.

The Fuehrer identifies himself entirely

with his country which has become the instrument of his power. The Reich is for him a force that replaces the phallic force of a normal man. He is a pervert, all of whose sexual activity has been transformed into dreams of power and destruction. This dream goes on from morning to night, it is always evolving new details of organization, new and more astonishing victories. His total inability to understand the thought of others obliges him to impose his way of thinking without the least compromise. It is not astonishing that a man so inflexible who, moreover, is armed with the widest power, should be feared.

## II

THE hysterical aspect of Hitler's nature has allowed him to feel the despair which was deep in the German people and to use it in playing his part of Messiah. It now remains to discover why in his own country he has been considered, not as a madman but as a hero. There are at least seven important factors which have contributed to this situation.

1. A large portion of the Fuehrer's ideas are not original. He drew them from various writers of the nineteenth century and also from certain theorists of the Third Reich. "Thus," writes Albert Rivaud, in his "Le Relevement de l'Allemagne," "a complete ideology, bearing on all domains, arises little by little from the contributions of hundreds of collaborators, many of whom do not belong to Hitler's party. This sudden abundance is the sign of a fundamental agreement between German sensitivity and the new gospel. All the ideas which are dear to the Germans—the primacy of instinct; the necessity of discipline, of organization, of a hierarchy; the love of military things, an innate liking for the police system, a passion for collective enthusiasms, respect for work and production; the cult of Pan-Germanism; and a longing for the endless expansion of the material and economic authority of the Reich—all these elements have been fused into a whole still indeterminate but where certain dominant traits give an image, indistinct yet seductive, of the future order."

2. The Prussians, who have always loved

war and cruelty, were delighted to find in Hitler a man ready to satisfy their tastes. Prussia is a poor country and the rigor of its climate brings a need for heavy eating. Economic conditions are, then, hard for the majority of the inhabitants. Every head of a family is called on to solve a budgetary problem which is not easy, and which is the less so in that children are numerous. To be able to face these circumstances the father is often obliged to be arbitrary, to limit the expenses of each, to exact from the children, even at an early age, effective labor. This severity, which influences all the family, leads to violent conflicts between fathers and sons. It creates a situation which we have mentioned in connection with Hitler. Although in general these men have robust natures, they experience as a result of family conflicts strong feelings of inferiority which they overcompensate by trying to shine.

As always when the authority of the parents is too heavy, the boy also tries to neutralize by affection the hostility which he feels toward his father. It is a mechanism of psychic economy which diminishes anxiety. The consequence is a stronger attachment to the father than to the mother, and from it results a latent homosexuality, that is to say, an unconscious and repressed attraction toward other men. This component of German character is prolonged by the difficulties of life. Men gather together into corporations for the defense of their professional interests; they take pleasure in the career of arms—both which are just so many opportunities for masculine companionship.

When the rivalry between two generations is open and frank, it often allows the young to develop fine qualities of energy, but when the conflicts are too acute, when there is too much repressed hatred, the child leaves the domain of reality and consoles himself by creating new myths. He becomes a hero who dethrones authority, who overthrows the old man become too feeble to govern, who creates a cult for the Mother Country—the idealized mother. This is the origin of the Pan-German ideas. These myths become symbols, all the more vital because the following generations experience the same feelings. In the family organization of Prussia the woman, who is

used to submitting to the tyranny of her father, later becomes a docile spouse and shows her devotion to the man more by the care she takes of the home than by expressions of love or of feminine tenderness. Thus the man is not softened by his mother; it is the harshness of the father which alone forms his character. When we consider this social structure and its psychological consequences, we can better understand the success of Hitler's ideas. He was able to appear as the incarnation of a hero who in the latent mythology of the German soul was expected as a Messiah.

3. As a result of the sharpness of the conflicts between the two generations, the German never completely frees himself from the equivalent attitude of obedience and of revolt. This emotional attitude is not without influence upon his intellectual development. The scientist will not dare to rely on his own experience; he will bolster up his affirmations by all those of the same nature which he can find, from antiquity to our own days. His need of submission prevents the German from reaching a full maturity and learning from free contact with reality. He is obliged to restrict himself to minute researches in the infinitely small, or throws himself into cloudy syntheses, which become disproportionately vast. He has not got the good sense and the certainty of judgment of the man who is in direct contact with the real. This lack of measure, which is natural to them, has made the Germans less critical than other peoples would have been of Hitler's eccentricities.

4. Among Germans, collective thought plays a large part in proportion to individual thought. They do not dare to wander from tradition. (I speak of the German of before 1914.) They have a servile respect for authority, for titles, for uniforms. Now as we have seen elsewhere, civilizations where collective thought is strong develop techniques and mysticisms, but not the critical and scientific spirit.

5. Hitler has revived old mysticisms. He has driven out men of science and called upon technicians. There also he was in full harmony with the German spirit. In these two cultural manifestations we find the two poles of German emotional life; technique

requires a docile submission to the instrument, a certain pedantry, whereas mysticism opens a way to explosions of passion and fury. The Prussians are divided between these two contradictory needs, to obey and to revolt. Hitler called them to revolt against their elders and at the same time preached to them total submission to his doctrine.

6. The fear of disobedience keeps the German in a constant state of anxiety; therefore he is happy to have to carry out a labor which absorbs his entire capacity of application. "The German exists less in and by himself than in what he does, in his production." He feels happier when he is in a group than alone, and in the same way his thought is never clearly detached from that of the collectivity. When he can no longer submit to his father, he obeys some rule, some scheme, some theory or idea. Rarely is his conduct the fruit of his own experience. Because of this perpetual adherence to a group, of this dependence on a chief, the German is afraid of criticizing his superior. He is afraid to see him just as he is, for that would already be the beginning of revolt. Since he does not dare to follow his thought through when weighing others, he is rarely able to know himself.

Here is a single example: Goering affirms, sincerely: "I believe that it has never been in the German nature to torment or to discredit the enemy. The love of cruelty has never existed in the German character." This quotation proves to what degree he lacks penetration and is unable to see himself as he is. This is the case with most of his compatriots.

7. The concept of liberty for the German does not correspond to the realization of individual autonomy, but to the gift, freely accepted, of himself. Many men entered the ranks of National Socialism without suffering in the least from the abdication of self. With a wholly spontaneous enthusiasm they made the sacrifice of their personality.

### III

WHAT we have said of the German character helps to make it understandable that Hitler should have triumphed in his

country without having to meet the critical spirit of his fellow citizens. We must now examine those causes of Hitler's success which belong to the post-war circumstances of Germany. But first certain psychological conceptions must be explained.

Freud has distinguished three elements in personality. The id, which is the passionate part of our being, the one which contains our desires, our instinctive needs, but in a crude condition. The greater part of this id is unconscious. The super-ego is the depository of civilization in our subconscious. It is formed by all the interdictions which have weighed on the child during his early years. The ego is the element which orders the id and puts it into communication with the outer world, while taking into account the exactions of the super-ego.

When education has been very severe, the super-ego becomes more imperative than the ego. It obliges the conscious portion of the personality to submit to an excessive discipline, and imposes on the individual all sorts of instinctive frustrations and restrictions. People whose ego is weak and whose super-ego is highly developed are easily hypnotized and are also inclined to be moved by the collective suggestions which emanate from a crowd. Thus German education, often made with the whip, had reinforced the super-ego and predisposed the Germans to allow themselves to be attracted by the grandiose ceremonies of the Third Reich.

The super-ego is interesting to us from another point of view. Thanks to it, in a normal society it is almost impossible for a man to kill one of his fellow men. Most of us are strongly inhibited from releasing all the brutality of our being. When an individual has reached full maturity, he acts according to his ego, which allows him to accept for a time the necessity of acting brutally during a war. He adapts himself progressively to this new situation, and he is able to return to his pacific ideal when hostilities are over.

It is otherwise with people who have not reached their full psychic maturity and whose passions are still held in leash by the unconscious reflexes of the super-ego. In battle they experience an insurmountable inhibition against firing. They only man-

age progressively to do so because they are under the threat of their corporals and officers. The constant fear of being punished if they do not kill the enemy creates a second super-ego, whose moral law is radically different from that of the first. This dualism disintegrates their personalities; after the war they will no longer accept the pattern of the middle-class life which was dictated to them by the super-ego of childhood.

Between 1920 and 1930, such people were very numerous in Germany, the more so that very many of them were unemployed. They resorted to prostitution, to perversions, to alcohol, to cocaine, to theft and vagabondage. This abuse of liberty and explosion of revolt among men who have been subjected to a severe discipline in their childhood was accompanied by immense suffering. It manifested itself in actual epidemics of suicide, and in all sorts of unconscious self-punishments. They were unhappy, desperate, unable of themselves to remake their lives. Their growing number made an amorphous mass in the nation. We mean by mass a crowd which is not organized, not integrated into the framework of middle-class life, whose members have no family, no profession, for whom life is lived from day to day without plan or continuity. Toward 1930, this mass represented about seven million individuals, a tenth of the Germany of that time. It was a ferment of disorder and of revolution, a permanent danger for the nation. Many of its members turned toward communism; others, less numerous, toward the church.

Adolf Hitler made of this amorphous mass an organized group, disciplined, ready to sacrifice itself for him. He directed all the discontent of these men toward the Jews and the neighbors of Germany (Versailles and the Communists). He exalted their strength, gave them back confidence by his megalomaniac visions, gave them an objective by calling on them to become a people of heroes, and calmed their hunger by promises of wealth. They were willing temporarily to give up butter for cannon. Even the unemployed found a sense of dignity. Hitler found them work, made them march in the streets, spade on shoulder, organized popular manifestations for



them, gave them back a place in society. He enrolled them in the framework of the party or of the army. These men demanded a new faith and a savior; Hitler, prisoner of his illusions of grandeur, had wanted for years to play that part. He needed to be adored and he needed a colossal army to realize his thirst for power.

## IV

WHY did the rest of Germany acclaim Adolf Hitler? The Germans are highly subject to mass emotions. The propaganda of the Nazi party had gathered in the sheep of Panurge, but there was more. The capitalists of the nation, seeing that the young Fuehrer had canalized and disciplined this mass which was a permanent danger to the State, were ready to trust this new man, in spite of all his eccentricities. They put their intelligence, will, knowledge, and time at the disposal of National-Socialism. They contributed to the few years of real renaissance which did exist in Germany between 1932 and 1937.

But Hitler's rigidity, his need of working *against someone*, and not *for something* caused him to quarrel with the best elements of the nation; some were fortunate enough to be able to go into exile, others were killed, still others were sent to concentration camps. When one part of the nation became aware that it had been deceived and that Hitler was leading his people to ruin, it was too late. The Fuehrer, holding the levers of command, now had the authority to arrest or kill all who might refuse to enter the infernal dance. The whole country was prisoner to his will and his madness. An army and a police interested in keeping him in power worked for him. Thus it came about that this mediocre being, this dangerous sick man became master of Germany.

Hitler had made sure of his success by turning to the young. His faithful followers have portrayed him to the coming generation as a god. The credo of the party was: "We believe in Adolf Hitler, our Fuehrer, and we confess that National-Socialism is the only faith that can lead our people to salvation." At the popular distributions of soup of the Philanthropic Committee of National Socialism, the children recited a

kind of prayer before and after the meals. This is how it was conceived.

Before the meal: "Fuehrer, my Fuehrer whom God has given me, protect and long preserve my life. Thou has saved Germany from the depths of distress, it is to thee that I owe my daily bread. Remain long with me, do not abandon me, Fuehrer, my Fuehrer! Hail to my Fuehrer!"

After the meal: "Be blessed for this food which I have taken. Protector of children, Protector of the old. Thy cares are many, I know, but thou knowest how to bear them. Day and night, I am near thee in thought. Rest thy head on my breast, thou art safe, my Fuehrer, because thou art great. Hail to my Fuehrer!"

Among the explosions of admiration which emanate from adolescence, we will quote this one, published in the German newspaper:

Youth which is rising in Germany believes in God but considers it shameful to seek Him in a foreign and far-off land, under cypresses and palm trees, when He manifests Himself every day among us, and manifests Himself in so admirable a way. It is in our country that we find the revelation of God, in the law of the growth and death of nature, in the history of our people, in the heroic annals of the Germanic legend, in the monuments to the dead of the great war. It is in the gallery of our Marshals that God has revealed Himself to us. In our blood, in our soil, God has given us the two sources of all strength, the two sacraments in the real meaning of the word. Whoever denies the holiness of blood and soil is a denier of God. Adolf Hitler is in our eyes more than the Fuehrer. He is the redeemer of the German people, and when all seems lost we still believe in him. Adolf Hitler, thy name is our faith. This faith has allowed us to carry throughout the country the standard which has become the symbol of German immortality. Take our lives, Fuehrer, take us entirely, take our bodies, take our souls. Into thy hands we commit our destiny.

How could German youth but adore the Fuehrer? He gave it a decisive importance. He had youth march in the streets; twelve-year-old boys would have a section marching behind them and a crowd applauding them! The boys preferred this open air

and ostentatious life to that of study. If their fathers took it into their heads to bring them to order and tell them to work, they would go to the party and denounce them. The party was their liberty; the Fuehrer their hero. All these youths have been brought up far from the bourgeois ideal; they do not desire a fixed profession; they do not want to marry; they do not seek to build themselves a life. They want an existence full of adventure; they want women who will throw themselves into the arms of a hero; but they do not want to take the responsibility of a wife and a career. All has been allowed to them and they can take no interest in the normal framework of a society.

This youth fights with remarkable fervor. Not only is it better equipped and better trained than that of other countries, but it has no other desire than to fight. Civilization does not temper its reactions; it was created brutal, savage, and cynical. All passions, all unleashed instincts urge these men to battle. Add to this the faith which they have in the restoration of the old Germanic soul and it is easy to understand why these soldiers are stronger than those who simply seek to defend their hearths, but who have a horror of war. Face to face with these facts we would err in thinking that German morale is about to break down. After the gigantic hecatomb of 1914-18, France entrusted the fate of its armies to old men, but Hitler has entrusted that of Germany

to impetuous and belligerent children.

He has presented himself as the Messiah of numerous groups. He has been the savior among others of the Pan-German racists. Baldur von Schirach has labored to make the doctrines of the old Pan-Germans and those of the Nazis agree. His object has been to unify German youth in a single national faith. Of this faith he has really made a national religion, as the following document shows. It is a young educator who speaks to his comrades.

Today I have just finished reading the book of Johann von Leers, "*Altes Wissen, Neuen Glauben.*" My last doubts have disappeared, my decision is taken; every consideration of personal interest must give way before the primordial duty, the struggle for the German soul, for the revivification of the Nordic soul, which a thousand years of Christianity have been unable to extirpate. I do not want a false education to make Orientals of the children in my classes. I want to fix in their hearts the principles of the German faith.

Hitler has exploited this current of thought for his own benefit. He has exploited the discontent of the beaten soldiers, of the discouraged unemployed, of the disillusioned idealists. He has exploited the ardor of youth, not to redeem the country, as he promised, but to satisfy his own frenzied vanity. He is not the Messiah who could give Germany back her place among the nations; he is the madman who rushes on, sowing misery and death on his way.

***CARRYING out a decision of the Executive Committee of the Free World Association, a European Council of the Association has been established. It is composed of representatives of various democratic and anti-fascist movements. At the first meeting, held under the chairmanship of Alvarez del Vayo, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and executive director of the Free World Association, the Council created various commissions to deal with the political, economic, and educational questions of European reconstruction. Following a discussion of the invitation to a forthcoming Pan-European conference received by some of its members from Count Coudenhove Kalergi, the Council decided to recommend nonparticipation in this conference on the grounds that the Free World movement is opposed to any European combination which is not based on the fullest co-operation with England and Soviet Russia. European reconstruction cannot be established on the old principle of power politics; it must, on the contrary, be carried out within the framework of a democratic world organization.***

# THE THIRD FRONT

BY ALFRED KANTOROWICZ

## A Report on the German Underground

**I**N a programmatic statement shortly before the outbreak of the war, Hitler's Gestapo head, Heinrich Himmler, labeled the opposition movement within Germany the Fourth Front. It represented, he declared, a potential power which had to be reckoned with in addition to the fronts on land, at sea, and in the air. The arrest of tens of thousands of suspect Germans at the beginning of the war was part of Hitler's mobilization plan. After that, the home front became outwardly quiet. Apparently domestic opposition was no longer a noteworthy factor during the two years in which Germany was defeating the countries of Europe. Occasionally some punitive action was given some publicity so that people would realize the Gestapo still existed and "got its man"—just in case.

This situation has changed completely in recent months. For almost a year, various officials have tried to outdo each other in vociferous propaganda designed to give the phantom of domestic opposition shape and name. Their minds are the type which must have a tangible adversary they can fight. They cannot stand the strain of groping about in the dark against foes they cannot lay their hands on. Departing from Himmler's classification, Goebbels has several times recently called the German opposition the "Third Front." Together with the primary threat of the Russian front and the potential danger of the "Second Front," it is considered a concrete peril. The fact that Goebbels expressly mentioned it testifies more clearly to the existence of an in-

ternal opposition within the Reich than the occasional confused reports which come out of that hermetically sealed country.

Over all German stations listeners are subjected to an unceasing flood of insults and threats against malcontents, doubters, and cowards. "But I also say in this hour that we will destroy pitilessly every saboteur of this community. . . . No habitual criminal should think that he will be saved by a new crime. We will see to it that these individuals will not survive the war. . . . We will exterminate these persons and have exterminated them." Hitler roared this in one of his last orations, his voice breaking with fury. Who, then, are these saboteurs, these habitual criminals, these people who must be exterminated? They are the domestic enemy, the German opposition which Hitler hates and which he fears so much that his voice breaks with rage when he mentions it—just as he is breathless with hate when he mentions the name of Roosevelt.

"There are some among us," writes Goebbels in his weekly, *Das Reich*, "who assiduously forget everything we predicted correctly and remember just as assiduously only the few cases in which we were allegedly mistaken." (Here he alludes to Hitler's solemn declaration, in the fall of 1941, that the Russian armies had been "definitely" annihilated.) "Yet it is even more irritating," he continues, "that these same people accord the enemy some sort of super-justice which is entirely out of place. If one of our newspapers handles