

THOSE WHO BOUGHT HITLER

Fritz Thyssen's apologia unintentionally indicts himself as one of those who helped bring the dictator to power. The real reason for his break with the Nazis.

I PAID HITLER, by Fritz Thyssen. Farrar & Rinehart. \$2.75.

THE contention that the Hitler regime was raised to power by German plutocracy is confirmed for the first time in this book by one of the chief financial backers of the Nazi Party. Thyssen's testimony is important; it definitely dispels the notion that Hitler's party was a "young anti-capitalist movement against the plutocratic powers."

German predatory interests have been creating their political instruments and organizations ever since the end of the last century. For example, the big banker Hansemann's brother-in-law, Kusserow, directed the Colonial Society which carried on mass agitation for the acquisition of colonies. In 1898 Krupp put his henchman Schweinburg at the head of the German Naval Association, an outfit whose chauvinist propaganda undoubtedly intensified the hostility between England and Germany, also bringing huge orders for Krupp's Works and his "Germania" shipyards in Kiel.

In addition to these two societies, there was the Pan-German Union, which acquired a world notoriety as the representative of the most rabidly annexationist wing of the German bourgeoisie. Its founder and chairman, Counsellor Class, tells us in his memoirs published a few years ago that the financial backers of the Pan-German Union were Kirdorf, Stinnes, Hugenberg (at that time general manager of Krupp), Reusch, and Borsig, that is, the owners and directors of the coal mines and steel mills of the Ruhr.

Kirdorf, head of the German coal syndicate, had joined the Nazis body and soul, but especially with his pocketbook, as far back as 1923. Stinnes placed his bets on the Hitler party also, and gave it money. Hugenberg, who had the job of distributing the slush fund for the predatory interests, gave twenty percent to the Nazis, according to Thyssen, during the last years of the Weimar Republic. As chairman of the German Nationalist Party, Hugenberg definitely paved the road to power for the Nazis, taking a personal part as Minister of Economics in the years 1933-34. Reusch, the general manager of the "Good Hope" mills, one of the six big German heavy industry trusts, supports the Nazis today just as he supported the Pan-Germans a generation before. That Krupp himself is intimately bound up with Hitler and the Nazi regime is one of Thyssen's most striking revelations.

According to his own report, Thyssen was one of the powers behind the Pan-Germans,

and financed the Hitler-Ludendorff putsch of 1923 to the tune of 100,000 gold marks, a sum which sounds rather modest but which was actually a formidable amount in view of the inflation prevailing at the time. One million marks were given annually to the Nazi Party by the coal and steel barons, of which Thyssen was one. Voluntary contributions each year by the Employers Association accounted for another 2,000,000.

This shows that *the leading German robber barons who financed those organizations whose annexationist policies led to the first world war, are identical with the big financial backers of the Nazi Party today.*

These German big-wigs gave the Nazi Party two commissions to execute. The first was of an inner political nature: destruction of the German labor movement and the democracy which gave the labor movement a legal basis for its struggle. The second was to be realized by armament and war, something to which the Pan-German Union had already aspired: incorporation of all European areas inhabited by German-speaking elements, annexation of territories important to Germany as sources of raw material and markets, the elevation of Germany as the dominant power on the globe. Hitler has fulfilled the first commission. He is now attempting to carry out the second.

Since the Nazi leaders are revealed as the executors of the will of big German capital, why has the big capitalist Thyssen broken with them? According to his book, Thyssen was repelled by Hitler's policies, and turned into a St. George of race equality, freedom of opinion, and pacifism. Nothing is further from the truth. The fact is that this man did not hesitate to profit from the expropriation of the Jews. Many large Jewish concerns were piratically taken over by Hitler's "Aryan" companies in which Thyssen was financially interested. For example, after the Jewish owners of the Essen banking firm of Simon Hirschland were thrown out, he joined its board of directors. As a board member of the Siemens Concern, he did not utter a word of protest when big electrical works belonging to Jewish owners were expropriated. As far as is known, Thyssen did not renounce the additional royalties acquired in this manner.

The author spares no words of revulsion at Hitler's butchery on June 30, 1934. But there is something peculiar about this indignation, for although he was in Argentina in 1935 and 1937, he neglected every favorable opportunity to protest. In this respect, Herr Thyssen is like his friend Rauschning, the former president of the Danzig Senate, now in the United States. Rauschning also waited for

the outbreak of the war before exposing Goering's complicity in the Reichstag fire, a fact that he had known for six years!

Anyone who carefully follows the literature of these Nazi renegades, whether they be Otto Strasser, Rauschning, or Thyssen, will notice immediately that they are of the very flesh of Nazism, arch-reactionary monarchists like Rauschning or anti-Semitic, feudal-minded politicians like Otto Strasser. "I consider it impossible to let working people participate in business," writes Thyssen, who twenty years ago demanded the re-introduction of the ten-hour day which now exists in Germany.

It was not, therefore, a matter of democratic principle which led to the break with Hitler. There were other reasons. Some he mentions, some he conceals. In the three documents consummating Thyssen's break—a telegram and letter to Goering, and a letter to Hitler—Thyssen emphasizes *the signing of the German-Soviet pact of Aug. 23, 1939, as the cause that led him to break.* The pact, he maintained, would make Germany dependent upon Russia and drive it into the arms of Communism.

"I had always warned industrialists, as well as military circles, against a rapprochement with Communist Russia. For me, this regime was the enemy of Germany and of Europe as a whole. The pact with Moscow seemed abominable, because it was an unnatural alliance with the enemy of Western civilization."

This is exactly the reason advanced by Hitler today for his aggression against the Soviet Union, which only reemphasizes the community of ideas between Thyssen and the Lord of the Third Reich.

One may ask whether Thyssen had not been informed in advance that this pact was not honestly intended, that Hitler signed it only for tactical reasons and with the intention of violating it later. It is probable that Thyssen had not been informed. For, on the eve of the outbreak of war, the relations between him and the fuehrer were exceptionally strained. The reason, which Thyssen suppresses in his book, goes back to the annexation of Austria in 1938. At that time, a grim struggle developed behind the scenes for the control of the Alpine Mining Corp. This company owns the large ore deposits in the Austrian province of Styria with an annual production of 4,000,000 tons. After a long struggle with Italian capital, the steel trust under Thyssen's leadership had seized the Alpine Mining Corp.

After the occupation of Austria, Goering's company demanded the enterprise for itself. Thyssen resisted. But Goering was no longer

the indigent salesman who, eight years before, had still permitted Thyssen to pay the rent for his Berlin residence. The Austrian ore deposits were taken back from the steel trust and became a bulwark of Goering's company. It was such material motives which gave rise to the hostility that broke into the open with the signature of the German-Soviet pact.

THE FACT that a powerful German monopolist has broken with the Third Reich will lead only the uninformed to judge the Third Reich as a young, revolutionary "have-not," struggling against plutocratic powers. *The plutocratic powers in Germany have never been as strong as they are today:* the banks and factories, the mines and ships and natural resources are the private property of a few thousand people. These people have been enriched still further by Hitler's "re-privatization" of numerous banks, industrial plants, and steamship lines. And no one profited more from this practice than Fritz Thyssen, who got back the money he had invested in the Nazi Party with interest. He was exempted from taxes in 1934 and received several million steel trust shares from the Reich in 1936.

The constantly increasing profits of production are only one side of the picture. Wherever Hitler's armies set foot, they are followed by German millionaires. German monopolists have appropriated the Rumanian oil industry, banks, and insurance companies. Bulgaria's banks as well as its agriculture are under control. The chief branches of Czechoslovak industry are the domain of Goering's Concern as well as of the Deutsche and Dresden banks. These two largest private banks of Germany have entrenched themselves in Budapest, Sofia, Athens, Bucharest and Pressburg, Belgrade, Agram, Krakow, Lemburg, Kovno, Tallinn and Riga, Amsterdam, Strassburg and Luxemburg, and have established financial domination in all these places.

General Manager Steinbrinck, of the heavy industry Flick Corp., rules Belgian economy as civil commissioner, while control of the Lorraine ore and smelting foundries has been entrusted to the Saar industrialist Roehling who has also annexed a number of enterprises in France and Polish Upper Silesia.

Hitler's present Minister of Economics, Kurt Schmitt, chairman of the board of directors of the General Electric Corp. and big German insurance companies, opened seventeen new agencies of these German insurance companies in France, twenty in Holland, and sixteen in Belgium, stealing two-thirds of the portfolios of the British companies in France (the remaining third is left to the Italians). Recently he was elected president of the newly organized "European Insurance Cartel."

While Hitler's finance capital thus makes huge war profits, at the same time it receives powerful government support against the workers. Despite the considerable rise in prices, State Secretary Koerner has openly declared to the workers: "The principle of stable wages must be preserved. An increase in wages is useless and economically dangerous."

To those middle class people in this country who were inclined to give credence to the idea that the Nazis are "saviors of the middle class," one cannot describe too graphically how Hitler's monopoly dictatorship has destroyed Germany's middle classes. Out of 1,600,000 independent shops which existed up to the beginning of the Hitler dictatorship, 600,000 had been closed by the beginning of this year. The government commissions organized a mass destruction of small independent livelihoods in order to force more workers into the war industries owned by Krupp, the Goering Concern, and the Steel Trust. And this policy of throwing the independent artisans out of their shops is now being intensified.

It is true that changes have taken place within the leading circles of German finance capital: one group of Nazi Party chiefs has itself become a part of the top monopoly circles. Goering's Concern has already outstripped the steel and chemical trusts. As a large stockholder in the Eher publishing firm, Hitler controls daily newspapers with a circulation of 16,500,000, making him a multi-millionaire. Ley, enriched by stolen trade union funds, is

building up a concern on a smaller basis. The Nazi agents, begotten by German plutocracy, are utilizing their government power in order to become as rich as their progenitors. The bodyguards and flunkies of yesterday have become the head clerks and business partners of today; but both are plutocrats, the old as well as the new millionaires.

In the course of this cut-throat process, Herr Thyssen became the victim of the tiger-eat-tiger competitive struggle. He is not an anti-fascist but a dislodged creditor of fascism. He gives himself away in his proposed war aim at the end of his book: the division of the Reich into a West German and East German monarchy. Monarchy, because "the German people have proved that they are incapable of adjusting themselves to democratic institutions," and this from the same man who contributed most to the disruption of German democratic institutions. Division of the Reich, because in an independent West Germany the real monarch would be Thyssen, who would like to resume his rule as master of hundreds of thousands of West German miners and metal workers. ANDREAS NIEBUHR.

THE MASTER REPORTER

The odyssey of Egon Erwin Kisch, whose writings topped the heap burned by Goebbels' inquisitors. A review by Samuel Sillen.

SENSATION FAIR, by Egon Erwin Kisch. Modern Age. \$2.75.

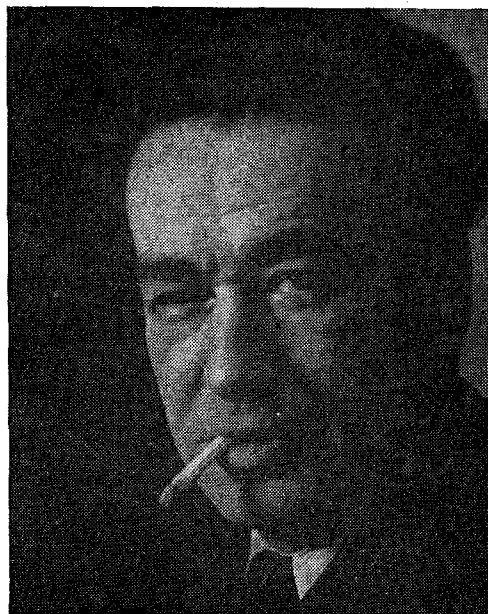
Egon Kisch has often been advised to stop calling himself a reporter and to stop labeling his work "reportage." Leave out dates and names, critics have suggested. Use "short story" or "novelette" as a subtitle for your writings. "Then you will be judged from a literary standpoint as a man of creative talent."

Had Kisch followed this advice his work would perhaps be more widely known in this country. His twenty-five books and count-

less periodical pieces have earned him a tremendous reputation not only in his native Czechoslovakia but throughout Europe. Yet American publishers have almost entirely neglected him, and his influence has been felt by the reading public only indirectly, through the scores of writers whom he taught to walk. "Why the man has written nothing but what he has seen," exclaims the philistine. He's not a novelist or playwright or political Nostradamus. How shall we advertise him?

Henri Barbusse, who knew a great writer when he read him, once gave the answer. "Kisch," he wrote, "is one of those who from 'reporting,' from the art of direct observation, has fashioned pictures and frescoes based on the wide panorama of life—a literary genre of the first rank." The important thing to note in Barbusse's description of this literary genre is that the writer only starts out with the materials of ordinary reporting; he does not end there. Out of these materials he fashions his work. And this fashioning implies an artistic process of a specific character.

I daresay that this process has been largely misunderstood by American writers of reportage, even among those who believe that they are following in Kisch's footsteps. While *Sensation Fair* is in some respects not typical of the author's method—it is an autobiographical record of his first thirty years—the book illuminates those qualities which distinguish all his work. And the over-all impression is that one is in the presence of a work of art. There is a third dimension



Egon Erwin Kisch