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**The  
Burning  
Bush**

**ANTI-  
SEMITISM  
AND  
WORLD  
HISTORY**

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minor role at the Paris Peace Conference, from which it departed disgruntled with insignificant gains. Strikes paralysed government, citizens were compelled in droves to seek low-prestige employment beyond Italy's frontiers, penury and illiteracy were rife. Mussolini imposed his Fascist order through strong-arm tactics. Suppressing all opposition, he inspired thousands of young men to march through the streets in their black shirts, and made flamboyant orations connecting his regime with the glories of the ancient Roman Empire, whose raised arm salute he revived. By 1930 the Duce, having given a livelihood to millions in public works, taken Austria under his protection, expelled unfriendly foreign correspondents and bribed the sycophants, had produced the façade of a virile nation commanded by a leader of personality and vision. Soon the world became generously endowed with potential Mussolinis delivering speeches of blood and fire, all surrounded by followers in variously coloured uniforms. Adolf Hitler's wore brown though he distinguished his personal élite corps, the Schutzstaffel (SS), by putting them in black.

Democracy looked effete in contrast, apologetic. And while it strove to justify itself, elected governments began to reckon with Fascism as a growing factor in international affairs, though not necessarily a hostile one. But Stalin, after a momentary flirtation with Mussolini in 1932, regarded Italy as a menace, specifically directed against the Soviet Union. Preoccupied with its own dire agricultural and industrial backwardness, the Soviet Union betrayed no ambitions for a world role in those days. It did not achieve membership of the League of Nations until 1934, after Stalin had, as it were, abandoned the policy of 'world revolution' and replaced it with 'Socialism in one country'.<sup>6</sup> In the diplomatic scheme of things Russia counted for little, and could be ignored.

Hitler created a far more disturbing impression than Mussolini on his accession to power in 1933, by introducing the racial dimension to Fascism. When he spoke of Bolshevism it was in the same breath with which he berated 'international Jewry'. Yet Hitler found apologists just as speedily as his fellow-dictator

<sup>6</sup> With a ruthless collectivisation process involving genocide of the kulak peasantry. See, e.g., Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, London, 1986.

across the Alps. People who could not really abide Hitler's trumpeting about the Jews, and the primacy of the Aryan race, took heart from the rise of a new ally against Bolshevism. The unemployed in the democratic states were falling fast into the arms of left-wing revolutionaries, and anti-Communism needed all the friends it could get. Observers failed to realise that it was no mere rhetorical extravagance when Hitler charged the Jews with master-minding Bolshevism's infiltration of every country in Europe.

He went still further. The purposes of the Judeo-Bolshevik alliance, he declared, were served also by modern art, ungodly literature, cosmopolitan science and the bankers of London and New York. His version of totalitarian discipline was offered as the sole bulwark against an all-pervading European decadence. The Nazi leader discounted any considerable contribution by the Duce in this regard, his respect for Mussolini being diluted by his contempt for Italy. Hitler claimed for Germany the unification of the *Volk* and the restitution of territory forfeited in Europe – for the present no more – while Mussolini demanded space in Africa. So the two could well go their separate ways, in neither friendship nor enmity. Conventional statesmen in England and France dismissed these respective territorial aspirations as bombast: between them they controlled the League of Nations, where manifestly such problems would be peaceably argued out.

As to the Jews, Hitler's intention to liquidate their presence in Germany had long been established, through his turgid ideological dissertation *Mein Kampf*, first published in 1925. The term most frequently arising is 'removal' (*Beseitigung*), which ambiguously embraces the simple literal definition but could also imply a much more radical fate. Nowhere does *Mein Kampf* spell out proposals for the solution of the Jewish question by a process of physical annihilation. Perhaps the printed record imposed its inhibitions, for there can be no doubt that Hitler's imagination did not exclude such a possibility. Throughout his book he refers to the Jews with a pathological loathing.

Thus:

With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people.

With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate. Just as he systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers of others, even on a large scale. It was and it is Jews who bring the Negroes into the Rhineland [the French employed Senegalese troops in their occupation force, 1919-30], always with the same secret and clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily resulting bastardisation, throwing it down from its cultural and political height, and himself rising to be its master... In Russia he killed or starved about 30 million people with positively fanatical savagery, in part amid inhuman tortures, in order to give a gang of Jewish journalists and stock exchange bandits domination over a great people.<sup>7</sup>

Naturally, Hitler accepted the authenticity of what had been conclusively demonstrated as a virulent antisemitic hoax:

To what an extent the whole existence of this people is based on a continuous lie is shown incomparably by *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, so infinitely hated by the Jews. They are based on a forgery, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* moans and screams once every week: the best proof that they are authentic. What many Jews do unconsciously is here consciously exposed.<sup>8</sup>

Jewry had already subjugated Germany in pursuit of its own insatiable ambitions:

The leadership of our destinies has, since the end of the War, been quite openly furnished by Jews... Conscious purpose is destroying our nation. And once we examine the apparent madness of our nation's leadership in the field of foreign affairs from this standpoint, it is revealed as the subtlest, ice-cold logic, in the service of the Jewish idea and struggle for world conquest.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Tr. Manheim, pp. 295-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 611.

Ranging over Germany's misfortunes, Hitler's mind visualised death as exemplary punishment for Jews by a method that today carries a hideous retrospective resonance: 'If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of those Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.'<sup>10</sup>

The author of these sentiments assumed the chancellorship of Germany on 30 January 1933 quite legally, for at the elections the previous November his National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) Party achieved 33 per cent of the vote, the Socialists 20 per cent, the Communists 17 per cent and the Catholic parties together 15 per cent. President Hindenburg acceded to his demand for dissolution of parliament, emergency decrees and new elections, on the grounds of the Communist danger to the democratic order. Hitler thereupon increased his vote to 44 per cent, still not a majority, and immediately embarked upon the rooting out of all opposition. Many Socialists and all known Communists were arrested, including some elected to the Reichstag. The first concentration camp was opened in the grounds of a former gunpowder factory at Dachau, near Munich. In July 1933 the Nazi Party became the only one sanctioned by law, and so a Fascist revolution was silently achieved.

Jewish storekeepers saw no immediate cause for panic. They did not put up their shutters, though attempts to boycott them had already begun, while SA members, the stormtroopers of the Sturmabteilung, exceeded Hitler's own orders by dragging Jewish judges from the courts and molesting individual teachers and pupils in the schools. The nation followed these developments in a political stupor, as illustrated by the plebiscite conducted in association with fresh elections on the single party list and a programme of withdrawal from the League of Nations. This gave Hitler the endorsement of 92 per cent of the electorate. The freedom of the election may be gauged by the astounding result in the Dachau concentration camp: 2,154 of its 2,242 inmates voted for the government.<sup>11</sup> A million and a half copies of *Mein Kampf*

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 620.

<sup>11</sup> William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, London, 1964, p. 265.

were sold in 1933, and the following year the Führer's thoughts entered the educational curriculum as compulsory reading in the schools. This progressive consolidation of power was accomplished by warnings to the Jews beyond Germany's borders to stay out of the country's affairs.

Certainly, they had been staging protests against the regime and the dangers it portended – for the Jews, for the future of Germany, for the peace of Europe. Christian leaders and other public figures readily joined their demonstrations. But this found no echo in a Jewish reaction within the Reich itself. Warnings that they had better keep in line, and the fear of new excesses against them, contributed of course to their silence. Stronger in its effect, however, was the persisting naïve hope that what had so far transpired represented a momentary aberration, an outburst of emotion uncharacteristic of the German personality. Anti-Jewish violence was the work of undisciplined thugs: hence the community's urgent appeals for restraint to their co-religionists abroad. They could not recognise the ravings of the petty agitator of *Mein Kampf* in the statesmanlike speeches of Hitler in office. His programme outlined to the Reichstag late in March 1933 struck some German Jews as a rational approach to the country's problems. A prominent German Zionist, hearing the address on the radio in Palestine, described it as 'significant, interesting and absorbing'.<sup>12</sup> Talk of emigration fell from many lips, but not enough to dissipate the illusion that life could still be bearable under the Nazis. And this despite the methodical expulsion of Jews from official positions in the civil service, the universities and the bench, besides the revocation of citizenship of those naturalised under the Weimar Republic. Old-established German Jewry argued that such measures applied mostly to *Ostjuden*, recently arrived, poorly adjusted and without their own sterling patriotism. Moreover, they noted, Jews were by no means the only victims; liberals of the Christian faith, including some in holy orders, were also being forced out of public life.

On 10 May 1933, at midnight, an eerie ceremony, reminiscent of the spirit of the Middle Ages, took place in the centre of Berlin and in many other cities besides: the burning of the books. The

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, London, 1971, p. 263.

test as to which authors should be made a sacrifice at this cultural *auto-da-fé* seemed to be a matter of individual whim. But without exception the writings of known Jewish authors were given to the pyre: the scientific works of Einstein and Freud, the speeches of Walther Rathenau, the fiction of Feuchtwanger, Wassermann, Schnitzler, Arnold and Stefan Zweig, Proust, the popular biographies of Emil Ludwig. Also non-Jewish authors, German and foreign, calculated to corrupt the mind: Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Karl Kautsky, Erich Maria Remarque, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis, Émile Zola, André Gide. Culture as translated into *Kultur* would now be accorded a definition consonant with the virtues, dignity and disciplines of the master race. Thus orchestras could no longer play the works, classified as Jewish, of Mendelssohn and Schoenberg, nor of Hindemith, exponent in music of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (neo-realism) expressed in art. The denunciation of modernism led to the disappearance of 16,000 paintings, drawings and pieces of sculpture from the public galleries. Stupor in politics evidently needed reinforcement in a stupor of the spirit.

And so it was. The man who could command the support of only a minority of his people while elections were free now had the acclaim of the Church, the army, the judiciary, the broad mass of intellectuals, the great capitalists of heavy industry. This was a national leader indeed: at a stroke he had wiped from the memory the puppets and intriguers of yesterday's republic. Nullification of the Versailles diktat, restoration of pride, economic revival, elimination of corruption, everything he promised the German people surged into the sphere of practical objectives. Also, to court the goodwill of the outside world Hitler exerted restraint over his followers' public attacks upon the Jews; in due course that unwanted race would realise the country had no place for it and they would all depart.

By the end of 1933 some 50,000 Jews had reassessed their situation and indeed emigrated – ten per cent of their total, together with another 10,000 Christians of non-Aryan descent (i.e. converts or part-Jews) as well as others regarded as enemies of the state. Those remaining still clung to a belief that, despite the painful adjustments involved, they might continue their lives on the soil they worshipped. Who is not reluctant to abandon his