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The inner decay of Naziism, 1941.

THE INNER DECAY OF NAZIISM

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On Sunday morning, May 18, 1941 The flight of Rudolph Hess has startled the world, has set everyone guessing. Certainly it has been the greatest sensation of the war, the most dramatic single episode. The war has been replete with sensational drama.

Leader #2 whom Hitler first designated as his successor, co-author with

Hitler of the black Bible of Naziism, "Mein Kampf", left Germany to seek sanctuary
in a country with which it is at war. Why did he fly to Scotland, to the
estate of a noted pre-war appeaser of the British Nobility, founder of Nazi
with
collaboration -- the Duke of Hamilton,/whom Hess has been in close correspondence
in recent months? Was he fleeing out of fear of assassination, having broken
with the other party leaders over some newly adopted party policy? Was he
warned of a coming purge? Was this flight of Rudolph Hess made on his own
accord in the hope of reaching and persuading some important elements in
British society, in an effort to persuade Great Britain to make peace with
Germany? Or, was the flight made with the complete knowledge and consent
of Hitler? And was Hess just the agent of/cunningly conceived diplomatic
peace maneuver?

On the basis of available data so far made public by Germany and Great
Britain the unitiated layman can form no certain conclusions. Perhaps before
the true
long Churchill will make known/facts. Certainly Great Britain has not been
in a hurry to publish the facts. The German government has published at
least two sharply contradictory explanations.

They are all crazy madmen, vicisous madmen. They have been driving the whole world to disaster. What the Nazis mean when they say that Hess is crazy is not that he was/a good Nazi. They said that he had a mental breakdown, was suffering from hallucinations. For years now, it was suggested at the

outset, he was out of his right mind, although as recently as two weeks ago he was still being photographed right along-side the Fuehrer, delivering addresses in behalf of the Nazi Party. He still retained the position of deputy leader of the whole Nazi Party.

The second explanation given by German authorities was that Hess was still the loyal and noble Nazi, unshaken in his devotion to the Fuehrer. But so persuaded did he become of Germany's invincibility, that he wanted to tell everybody. He wanted the English to know at his authority that they were doomed to be beaten — that is, the English were; that he came to warn the English of their inevitable destruction if they persisted in following the war-mongers and Churchill.

For the time being, and until authoritative information is forthcoming, if it is forthcoming at all, to theories offer themselves as quite plausible. But we should always bear in mind that what is plausible is often furthest from the truth. The first theory which is being accepted by many people both here and abroad is that Hess still is what he always was -- an orthodox Nazi. He was one of the earliest members of the Nazi Party. He still clings to the prime Nazi creed of bitter resistance against communism. Hess, according to this theory, disapproved of the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, and what is maintained as an even closer Nazi-Soviet alliance which was being consummated or has already been consummated. Hess saw this alliance as a calamity to Germany, to the world. His opposition was known, and insofar as dictators can not tolerate any opposition he was a marked man and scheduled for liquidation. In 1934, you will recall, Hitler purged his foremost and greatest adherents, Captain Roehm, Gregor Strasser and hundreds of others of the most important members of the Nazi Party for they were opposed or were suspected of being opposed to his policy. Generals like Von Fritsch who opposed Hitler's adventures against Czecho-slovakia and Poland were also purged. That is characteristic of dictators. In fact Stalin did the same

thing. He assassinated nearly all the old Bolsheviek leaders who brought about the revolution. He awarded them all with a bullet in the back. He purged the army of all its leading generals when he decided on a new policy. Dictatorships are very suspicious and fearful of opposition. They do not tolerate opposition for fear that opposition may become the nucleus of mutiny or revolution.

And inasmuch as Hess was opposed to the new policy of Hitler, the Nazi
Party, so runs this theory, he was doomed. It was only a question of time when the
Gestappo would get him. He fled to save his life. He thought that England,
the enemy of Germany was a safer place than Germany, itself.

This theory does not see Hess in the role of a man turning against his
Party and his leader, ready to join the enemy and like many other political
refugees, some of them former Nazis, resolved to save their country by working for
the defeat of the Nazi regime. Quite the contrary: This theory sees Hess as a
still fiercely loyal, rabid Nazi, but unable to get along with his Party, with
the new and unorthodox adventure in a closer Bolsheviek-Nazi military alliance,
found his position in his Party and in Germany both untenable and even dangerous,
and took to flight rather than commit suicide. There is not excluded from this
theory the further consideration by his flight to England Hess hoped to get
in touch with leading Englishmen, perhaps members of the former Cliveden set,
the former appearament set, to persuade them to make peace at once before Germany
was driven into the arms of the Bolshevieks and turning Europe over to one form or
another of Bolshevism.

The other theory is that Hess is simply an agent sent by Hitler to persuade not or to threaten England into peace. Perhaps this mission was carried out/without the knowledge of some people in England itself. Perhaps he also conveyed to the English in broad outline the terms upon which a peace could be arranged. Perhaps

it was also suggested that if England would consent to such an arrangement the Nazis would turn their campaign against Russia which, after all, would represent the classic program of Germany - destroy Russia. There were many in England before the war and still are who would look at this as/highly desirable solution of war. And if Hess could not persuade them to do that, he could threaten them with the direct consequences of what Nazi Germany would do in case it had to go through the war.

The flight of Hess, according to this theory, was thus a dramatic stunt, if you will, part of a shrewd diplomatic maneuver not at all out of character with similar Nazi stunts, like setting fire to the Reichstag and then blaming it on the Communists. Such a country could invent even such a scheme as the flight to England.

The average person who reads his newspapers has his choice between one or the other theory. There are a few significant things that one ought to bear in mind. The two or three authoritative spokesmen who have expressed opinions have rather been inclined to accept the second theory than the first. Bevin who is very close to Churchill and who does not speak out of turn expressed himself as definitely believing that the flight of Hess was made with the full knowledge of Hitler, not to be beguiled by him and not to regard him as a repentant Nazi seeking sanctuary in England, but to remember that he was a murderer. That is what he called him. He asked the English people to remember that he was responsible for £ all the crimes of the present-day and the last eight years, is that Hess, a loyal man, rabid Nazi, the most faithful and devoted friend of Hitler - that there was no reason to believe that this Hess had changed.

I came upon this description of Rudolph Hess in a very interesting book, "The House that Hitler Built", three years ago.

"Hess is not very impressive personally. He would not stand out in a crowd. For the most part, he repeats Hitler's statements and makes speeches which it would be difficult for Hitler to utter in his capacity as Chancellor. Hess says what Hitler thinks but is restrained from saying. He appears washed-out and lifeless. That is why nobody in Germany believes that he will ever succeed Hitler, although everybody respects his simple mode of living. He has not the dynamic personality a dictator needs. He has much of the reticence and unassuming nature of the upper middle classes from which he sprang, and does not appear comfortable in the brusque hurly-burly of a Nazi meeting. On the other hand, fifteen years of power in the inner circles must have accustomed him to the cruder side of political agitation, although he takes none of the obvious steps to make himself a popular hero or even to assure himself a place in the event of anything happening to Hitler. He is, I repeat, curiously negative, almost anaemic, and has high moral character, apparently without any personal ambitions. That is why even Germans have no clear idea about his personality. He is the least known of all the major Nazi leaders. Content to give out the reflected brilliance of his Fuhrer, he has drawn all light from himself and has really become a substitute -- a "Stellvertreter" -- for his Leader."

Now either theory reveals some very significant truth and after all, that is what we are interested in. If he has violently dissented from the Party, broke to such an extent that he decided to flee from Germany, then this fact reveals a sharp cleavage in the upper ranks of the people, and the publicized solidarity of the Nazi Regime is a viction. There must be deep ly-ing disagreements which cause a man so close to Hitler -- his devoted servant, his shadow, his co-worker from the very beginning of the Nazi movement - to leave not only his Party but to flee from the enemy camp. But if Hess did that, or could do it, certainly there must be many others in Germany outside of the Nazi Party

who feel as Hess did. Hess has a vast following in Germany. He is one of the most respected of leaders. The question then may well be put, and legitimately put: "Is the Nazi hierarchy cracking at the top? Is the Nazi over-weening military program, the emergencies to which it is being driven finally beginning to disrupt the Party? And if disruption is setting in when the Nazis are victorious, what will happen when Germany begins to suffer its first defeat?

England into a new appeasement program to effect a peace with Germany, then it reveals the desperate need of the Nazi Party and of Germany itself for an immediate peace. Why should a victorious Germany, secure in its confidence of invincibility resort to this trick of sending an embassador to a foe which Germany knows to be beaten and doomed to persaude that foe to ask for peace. Logically it should be the other way around. It should be Eden, Churchill who should fly to Berlin to persuade the Nazis to make a peace. Perhaps the Nazis are not so sure of their invincibility. Perhaps the Nazis are worried. Perhaps the German people are even more worried. The German people were promised peace a year ago. They were promised peace in 1941. They have been given victories, but no peace.

Great Britain is not beaten. The British Isles are not invaded. Great Britain does not seem to be on the verge of a break-up. Great Britains military strength seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. The power of her air force seems to be growing from day to day. Behind Great Britain now looms the United States of America which is rapidly speeding up its vast industrial machinery to turn out planes and tanks and munitions of war in such quantities which seem to be overwhelming the Nazis.

The German people are worried because it was the Uhited States that broke the back of the Kaiser in the last war. And the blockade is pinching hard.

Life is hard. British bombing is increasing in frequency and in intensity from day to day. A victorious people should not be driven into the cellars every other night. So the German people are weary of the war, and the reports of victory hardly thrill the German people. They refused to cheer a year ago even when Paris was entered by the Nazis. They were tired before the Nazis got them into war. The people are exhausted. They want peace. But the Nazis do not seem to want peace. They can only give them reports of military victories. The Nazis know it. They are fearful. They want peace. And England is determined not to give them peace until the Nazis are destroyed.

So that Hess' flight is evidence of fundamental dissent within the Nazi Party, and widespread discontent among the German people, or both. This is not to say that the situation has reached a point where it has become imminently dangerous. One should not exaggerate. It is clear that the maggot is in the apple, that the thorn is in the flesh. This is the traditional role which every dictatorship has taken in all past history and which will of course be taken today, a dictatorship whose aims are boundaries, whose methods are revolutionary, whose appetites are insatiable.

They say we should not exaggerate the importance of Hess' flight.

The Nazis are not licked. And they are not ready to abdicate. There are gravegrave days ahead. If the Nazis should consummate, or have consummated a closer alliance with Stalin, that will make the task of the Allied nations so much more difficult. Certainly France's recent submission, total submission to the Nazis in the Mediterranean has been a disappointment. The Vichy Government has finally collapsed. The Vichy Government, a Fascist Minority Government who no more represent the hopes and traditions of France than Hess and Hitler do - they have agreed to a complete collaboration with the Nazis. What that means is already indicated. The Nazis will use the air

bases in Syria to attack Palestine, Iraq, etc. Tomorrow it may mean Dakar....
Ultimately Britain and then the Western Hemisphere.

There is a long war ahead, and a war which will call for supreme sacrifices if the things which men hold dear are to be saved for mankind. It will call for even greater sacrifices from England, from us here in the United States if we mean what we said about giving maximum aid to the forces of freedom to fight Hitler in the world.

But the flight of Rudolph Hess from Germany to Scotland has, so to speak, pushed aside the curtain which veiled Germany and we have been able to see something of the slowly rotting core, the slowly disintegrating evidence of that beastly thing called Naziism. It is not a perfect thing. It is not an invincible thing. It is not a heroic thing. It is the old type of miserable tyranny which is always corrupt at heart and which carries the germs of dissention within itself. And it is only a question of time when that rottenness spreads to the whole organism and destroys it.

Free people can take heart from this flight of the Nazi leader to England. But also they should not be beguiled nor misled by it. They should more resolutely determine to carry on, not to compromise to these gangsters and murderers who will ultimately bring about their own destruction at their own hand, civil strife at the hands of their own people who are weary and sick of them.

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ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, EAST 105th STREET AND ANSEL ROAD ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1941.

THE INNER DECAY OF NAZIISM

On the basis of available data so far made public by Germany and Great Britain, the unitiated layman can form no certain conclusion regarding the reason for Hess' flight. Two theories recommend themselves, either of which yields very significant conclusions. The first is that Hess, an orthodox Nazi and a bitter Communist opposing an even closer alliance between Germany and Russia than that of 1939 which was being consummated of was already consummated by Hitler, found his position in his Party and in Germany both untenable and even dangerous, and took to flight. Not excluded from this theory is the further consideration that by his flight to England, Hess hoped to persuade prominent Englishmen of the former Clivden appearament set to bring about an immediate peace between England and Germany before the latter country embarked upon a closer alliance with Russian Communism.

The second theory is that Hess is an agent sent to England with the full knowledge of Hitler to persuade or to threaten England into peace. It may even hav been arranged with the knowledge of some appeasers in England. Herr Hess brought to England the broad outlines of peace terms, perhaps also the suggestion which would be welcome to the ears of British appeasers that Hitler was prepared to march against Communist Russia. If England refused to accept peace, the direct consequences would follow. Hess' trip, according to this theory, was one of those dramatic stunts not beyond the Nazis, a stunt like the Reichstag Fire.

It is significant that important men in England, of the type of Bevin, had warned the English not to regard Hess as a repentant Nazi seeking sanctuary in England, that his mission was sinister and that he is what he has been right along — a member of a gang of murderers which has thrived upon trickery,

deception and treachery.

If the first theory is correct, if Hess violently dissented from his

Party and fled, then the flight reveals violent dissension within the Nazi Party

ranks, a sharp cleavage which belies the much publicized unity within the Party

and within Germany. If Hitler's closest and most loyal friend, and the deputy

leader of the Party finds it necessary to break with his Party and with past,

and flee to England, then there must be many others like him. Is the Nazi

hierarchy beginning to crack at the top? Are the over-weening military program

desperate

and/military adventures of the Nazis finally beginning to disrupt the Party?

If this violent disagreement has set in with the Nazis scoring one victory

after another, what will happen when defeats begin to set in?

If Hess' flight was part of a plot to maneuver England into seeking peace, then the plot betrays a desperate need on the part of the Nazis and of Germany for an immediate peace. Why should a victorious Germany have to resort to such tactics if it felt secure in its invincibility? A conquering passe nation does not send emissaries to a beaten and doomed foe to persuade him to make peace. It would have been far more logical for Eden to fly to Berlin.

Perhaps the Nazis do not feel so secure. Perhaps they are worried.

Perhaps the German people in even more worried. They were promised peace last year, and again this year. They were given victories, but not peace. Great Britain was to be beaten and invaded last year. Great Britain is neither beaten nor invaded. The British blockade is beginning to pinch hard. Life is hard.

British bombing is increasing in frequency and intensity. A victorious nation should not have to hide in cellars. And beyond, there looms the United States rapidly gearing up its industrial machine to pour out tanks, guns and ammunition in such quantities as will overwhelm Germany. The Germans know that the United States broke the back of the Kaiser in the last war. They are sorely troubled.

The flight of Hess is thus evidence of inner dissension among the Nazi leaders, or of serious inner discontent among the German people. Possibly both. Perhaps not yet serious enough to be immediately dangerous, but "the maggot is in the apple", the thorn is in the flesh.

This is the inevitable road of all military dictatorships whose aims are boundless and whose methods are revolutionary. Relentlessly they lead their nations to war, suffering and disaster.

The importance of Hitler's flight should not be over-exaggerated by wishful thinking. But it has parted the curtain for a moment and has revealed the disintegrating core of that cheap and vulgar modern tyranny called Naziism.