

Barbarism Advances. “The 1930s All Over Again in Europe”

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In October of 1930, Thomas Mann made “An Appeal to Reason” in The Berliner Tageblatt:

“This fantastic state of mind, of a humanity that has outrun its ideas, is matched by a political scene in the grotesque style, with Salvation Army methods, hallelujahs and bell-ringing and dervish-like repetition of monotonous catchwords, until everybody foams at the mouth. Fanaticism turns into a means of salvation, enthusiasm into epileptic ecstasy . . . and reason veils her face.”

The appeal failed. Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, and shortly after the Reichstag fire, he passed the “Enabling Act,” suspending personal freedoms, freedom of opinion, including the freedom of the press, the freedom to organize and assemble, the privacy of postal, telegraphic and telephonic communications. Though subject to house searches, restrictions on property and confiscations, Germans felt free so long as they behaved like “good Germans” and obeyed the law.

It seems to be the 1930s all over again in Europe, though “ideologies” were supposed to have died with the overthrow of the Soviet Union. Thankfully, Marine LePen’s radical right party, National Front, has just been defeated in France’s regional elections, but not before the media went “epileptic” over her projected victory. Still, France remains in a “state of emergency,” decreed by a socialist government after the attacks on Paris.

Today’s Europe reminds me of the city in Albert Camus’ novel, [The Plague](#) (1947). The novel’s Oran in the early 1940s, then in colonial French Algeria, was depicted as a merchant city, without trees, gardens, or pigeons, where flowers imported from elsewhere announced the coming of spring. An artificial city with an artificial life and inert consciousness. At first, the industrious colonials of Oran refused to notice the plague-carrying rats scurrying about or piling up dead in peripheral sections of the city. “They fancied themselves free, [but] no one [is] ever free so long as there are pestilences.” For a metaphor of lurking, studiously ignored evil, you can’t top *The Plague*.

Today, pestilence-carrying rats are back infesting Europe. Ukraine writhes in a delirium of historical topsy-turvy. On 14 October, it celebrated the first Defenders’ Day, a national holiday legally decreed by the Ukrainian Parliament. The date is significant, for on this day, seventy-three years ago, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was founded. In WW II, UPA cooperated with the Nazis, supplying a Ukrainian voluntary SS division– the SS Freiwilligen-Schutzen-Division “Galizien,” the infamous Galitian Division.

What if one of our worthy NATO allies in Europe—say, Germany—declared a national holiday, say, The Day of Defenders of the Fatherland, in honor of the *Schutzstaffel* (the

Nazi SS), the paramilitary “protection squadron” or “defense corps” of Heinrich Himmler’s industrial death army, indicted at Nuremberg as a criminal organization along with the Nazi party and its elite? Would Israel pause in its latest killing spree to justifiably raise the wrath of the ghosts of the Shoah? Would the Holocaust-conscious United States raise the voice of indignation against this opprobrium to the sacrifice of the Greatest Generation? Would the members of the European Union, laureled with the Nobel Prize for Peace, stop the frantic building of walls against the tidal waves of refugees and cry, “not again?”

Perhaps not. Judging by the silence in the media and among officials over the grotesquerie in Ukraine, the return of fascism hardly raises an eyebrow. And after all, hasn’t “Russia invaded Ukraine”? How, then, could Neo-Nazis be roving about, when, instead, the place is alleged to be crawling with Russian troops, in pursuit of restoring “Putin’s Soviet Empire”?

The nostalgia for anti-communism adds a surreal element to the acquiescence to fascist revivals. Thus, one simply cannot get over-excited about Nazis when the imaginary Soviet threat looms again so large on the borders of NATO. Like shifting sands, these borders move ever more inexorably east, to encircle Russia, so that the map of NATO Europe today looks exactly like Nazi-occupied Europe in 1941, when Hitler launched his doomed Barbarossa invasion of the Soviet Union in June.

The parade in Kiev on Defenders’ Day consisted of only 3,500 participants, members of the Svoboda and Right Sector parties, the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the infamous Azov battalion. The most prominent politician at the event was far-right Oleh Tyahnybok, who in April 2005, wrote to President Yushchenko, calling for a parliamentary investigation of “the criminal activities of organized Jewry in Ukraine.” Of the UPA Nazi collaborators he’s on record as saying,

They were not afraid and we should not be afraid. They took their automatic guns on their necks and went into the woods, and fought against the Muscovites, Germans, Jews and other scum who wanted to take away our Ukrainian state.

That is the truth. The UPA and their Nazi overlords did clear Ukraine of a considerable amount of “scum”: three million non-Jewish Ukrainians and other nationalities; a million Jews; 2.3 million Ukrainians deported for slave labor to Germany. Had it not been for the Red Army’s victory, the Nazis had planned for the extermination of 65% of 23.2 million Ukrainians, with the remaining 35% scheduled for Germanization or enslavement.

Elsewhere in Europe, the official boogey-man —an essential component of fascist faith—has been updated from “Jew” or “communist” to “Muslim.”

Poland’s former Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski, *eminence grise* of the Law and Justice Party, echoed Nazi propaganda when he said that Muslim refugees were bringing “cholera to the Greek islands, dysentery to Vienna, various types of parasites” to the rest of Europe. Russophobic, pugilistically nationalist, Law and Justice Party won elections and are now at the helm in Poland. In Hungary, Viktor Orban has been in power since 2010 and will remain until 2018. His only opposition is the Neo-Nazi Jobbik movement, yet his xenophobia is exemplarily fascist. He has said openly that Hungary has no place for Muslims and that he, as a Christian, defends the borders of Europe from a Muslim invasion. Orban has a huge electoral mandate—two-thirds support. In Germany, from Patriotic Europeans Against the

Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA), a speaker issued a veiled appeal for reactivating the policy of concentration camps.

As in Mann's novella, [Mario and the Magician](#) (1929), there is, once again in Europe, a concentration of hypnotic, seductively perverse "evilness" in the air. It is carried by a reactionary western wind that blows from centers on both sides of the Atlantic.

It induces opiated stupor and passive complicity with the performance of demagogic magicians, harnessing and twisting the fears, the desires, and the frustrations of masses of people. The greatest, most deceptive magician of them all—Mann's hunchbacked mesmerizer, Cavaliere Cipolla—is the Western media.

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