Distorting German History

Current Publications in Former Reich Whitewash

The War and Hitlerism

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Today Western Germany, our solicitously nurtured test-tube democracy, is being swamped with nationalistic and militaristic literature singing the praises of the grand old times of the Third Reich. With more or less outspoken nostalgia, many political writers in Germany are telling their people that Germany would have been fine if Der Fuehrer had not gotten a little out of hand. Adolf Hitler should have listened a little more to the diplomats, to the generals, to the admirals, and Germany would have been the victor in World War II.

Let us take a look at some typical newspapers, periodicals and books now in heavy demand in Germany, and see how they are treating the recent political past.

From Duesseldorf, Rhineland city near the seat of the Bonn Federal Republic, the spicy weekly Herzadme (Queen of Hearts) is distributed over all western Germany. In the issue of Sept. 10, 1949, we find on the cover page Adolf Hitler's picture three times, three pictures of his Reichs Marshal Hermann Goering with his wife, Emmy, and infant daughter Edda, and one picture of the Fuehrer's sweetheart, Eva Braun; on other pages, a picture of Hitler with the wife of his architect, a picture of Eva Braun with Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, a picture of Hitler and his deputy, Rudolf Hess.

Munich contributes the periodical Revue (Review) with a picture of Der Fuehrer smiling somewhat shyly at the side of his niece, Angelica Reubel, a girl, whom the records indicate, he later, in a less gracious mood, had killed by poisoning. Here in the picture niece Angelica smiles radiantly out at the postwar public, attired in a charming dirndl dress, and Adolf's friendly arm is about her shoulder. Last September, the Review began serial publication of "The Great Lover, Adolf Hitler," a story in which movie director Leni Riefenstahl is one of the leading ladies, Here again Der Fuehrer is humanized, this time his loves are sung by the connoisseur and Holbrau cavalier, Hermann Esser, once state secretary for Tourism in Goebbels's propaganda ministry. After his release from detention as a suspected war criminal, Hermann Esser went in hiding and made use of the time that the German police were seeking him to compose his great love stories. Sentenced in absentia to five years of hard labor by the Bavarian Denazification Court, he finally was taken into custody when he went to pick up his publisher's payments.

While the Nationalistic sentiments of the women of Germany are roused by moving stories of Hitler and Goering, the appeal to the men is based on doughty episodes from the "best time of their lives," the military time. This campaign is a bold, whitewashing attempt on behalf of the military men who, willingly following their beloved Fuehrer's bidding, led the German people to disaster. Today their line is: Hitler alone is responsible for the defeat; if we had been heeded, we would have waged a better war, and we would have led the nation to victory!

The militaristic brochures are offered for sale to the public under the most blatant advertising, and they fill an enthusiastic demand. Hitler as Feldherr (Hitler as Strategist), with the picture of Der Fuehrer on the cover, put out by the chief of his general staff, Franz Halder, is an apologia for the German generals, who would have done things better. The contents are in gross contradiction to Halder's own diaries from the Nazi time.

The German navy gets its share in recent German articles on the "Heroic Battle" of the cruiser Bismarck, and the miraculous break-through of the Bremen. The Munich paper "Revue" competes in this theme with the Stuttgart weekly Christ und Welt (Christ and World), which otherwise did an excellent job in sponsoring the integration of refugees from Eastern Germany.

More dangerous for most Germans than these publications are articles and books of latter-day Hitler enemies. They call themselves "experts" and employ the subtle venom of quoting each other as proof for their theories.

A typical instance of the ricochet self-promotion going on in this mutual society for muffling the Third Reich record is the publication of Hitler's chief interpreter, Paul Otto Schmidt, in the Suddeutsche Zeitung (South German Newspaper), Munich, on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the outbreak of war in September, 1949.
Instead of placing before the public from the files of the German Foreign Office, the Fuehrer-loyal diplomatic preparation of the Second World War, this series of articles, which is already available in book form, makes the reader believe that the negotiations with the British and the Poles were sincerely intended and that the outbreak of war came as a surprise to the same men who had organized its initiation! Paul Otto Schmidt, eyewitness of the diplomatic preparations for the murder of the French General Maurice Mesny and similar acts, has, of course, the perfect right to suppress the darkest chapters of his experiences. However, for German publishers to present Paul Otto Schmidt’s stories as the recounting of an objective historian to their trusting readers, will lead to dangerous consequences for Germany’s future.

A VERY HARMFUL BOOK in the political field has unfortunately been published by the reputable Nymphenburger Publishing House. The book Was Wirklich Gescheh (What Really Happened) claims to be an objective representation of the German policy. However, it became a publicizing effort on the exclusive guilt of Hitler and possibly of a handful of his fanatic henchmen, and a bold whitewashing of other top officials, no matter how notoriously implicated. It is typical of this method of history-writing that the horrifying diplomatic documents pertaining to the massacre of the prisoners of war and of the Jews are missing.

Two high Hitler officials who were acquitted of major war crimes charges in Nuremberg for lack of sufficient evidence have taken up their pens to give their expert versions of the past years: Hjalmar Schacht and Hans Fritzsch. The field of recent German policy is covered by a book of Hitler’s one-time financial wizard, the much overrated Hjalmar Schacht. With no lack of a bold front he titles his book Abrechnung mit Hitler (Settling the Bill with Hitler). Encouraged by his success, Herr Schacht recently published a sequel volume on his dubious financial theories.

Hans Fritzsch, the notorious radio boss of Nazi Propaganda Chief Paul Joseph Goebbels, devoted his book Hier Spricht Hans Fritzsch (Here Speaks Hans Fritzsch) to his experiences in Hitler and post-Hitler days. The book, published in Switzerland, enjoys a wide circulation in Germany and a German publisher is preparing a new edition.

Indeed, a survey of the books and articles on the Nazi regime currently offered shows only a few authors forthright enough to present their experiences in the Third Reich without too much caution about the roles they played. One is Werner Stephan, a former councillor of the Propaganda Ministry, in his book Joseph Goebbels, Demon of a Dictatorship, in which a sincere account is given of Goebbels’s personal life and his propaganda machine. Another open-minded author is Rudolf Diels, the first chief of the dreaded Gestapo, preceding Heinrich Himmler in that office. In his book Lucifer ante Portas he tells the story of that agency in the first beginnings, when the groundwork was laid for the abolition of all civil liberties. A third publication giving an accurate historical account is the book of the general staff officer, Gerhard Boldt, Die Letzten Tage der Reichskanzlei (The Last Days of the Reich Chancellory).

In this connection, some books of real resistance fighters should be mentioned, such as general staff officer Fabian von Schlabrendorff’s Offiziere gegen Hitler (Officers against Hitler); Ambassador Ulrich von Hassel’s posthumously published diaries, and the excellent German edition of Allan Dulles’s Germany’s Underground. The book of the anti-Nazi Bernd Gisevius, Bis zum Bitteren Ende (To the Bitter End) was published in Germany about two years ago. Today, it would be hard for a German publisher to take the risk of such a publication.

To the utter disgust of the falsifiers of recent history, a series of well-based articles on Nazi foreign policy was published by Wanda von Bayer in the magazine Frankfurter Heute. An objective document collection on Nazi-Soviet collaboration was published by Dr. Alfred Seidl in Munich.

What are we to conclude from the poll of present-day German publications on recent history? Is the situation hopeless? In Germany itself we hear such discouraged voices as that of Friedrich Sieburg in an editorial in the November issue of the magazine Die Gegenwart (The Present Day): “We are entirely unconvincing that the ever mounting sensational publications concerned with Hitler and his agents can be dismissed as mere stupidity... The incontrovertible fact is that the public is lining up at the newsstands and asking what there is on Hitler. Of course, they are not asking with that for any of these historic records brought to light in the Nuremberg Trials which are not available even for any one who might show an interest.” Sieburg’s comment is very interesting since he speaks not only as a German but as one who went through the Nazi mill and is none the less able today to look the ghosts of the Third Reich in the face.

I myself, during the years from 1945 to 1949, have had the opportunity to discuss this problem with representatives in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, and I have come to the conclusion that there are indeed many publishers who would sincerely prefer to tell the history of recent years objectively. But they lack the financial backing to undertake such risks. The market for objective books and articles on the Third Reich would have to be developed from scratch, and with long-range financial backing.

It is high time to publish and place before the German public the wealth of interesting, factual material that has come to light in German archives, in the Nuremberg investigations, and in the clarifying statements of true German patriots. This is the only way to combat the systematic poisoning of the German mind going on under our very eyes in the infant German Republic.

Berlin Phones Top 1938 Total

Nearly 2,300,000 telephones are now in operation in western Germany and the three western sectors of Berlin, representing an increase of 10 percent over the 1938 total.