

ORIGINS OF THE SWASTIKA-MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

THE history of the Swastika-Movement goes back to the early nineteenth century. At that time, when the first archaeological excavations were made in Germany the Swastika was found on many objects from Germanic tombs of the first Christian centuries, and so it came to be regarded as a Germanic symbol. The first to popularise the sign was a man named Jahn, who in 1806 founded the German gymnastic clubs, which politically had a strongly nationalistic tendency. Jahn subsequently came to be known as 'The father of the gymnastic movement.' His motto was: 'Frisch, Fromm, Froehlich, Frei'—'Brisk, Pious, Joyous, Free'; and he arranged the four 'F's' of this device to form a badge in the shape of a Swastika.

Then, the seventies of the last century saw the rise of Anti-Semitism in Germany and the foundation of various Anti-Semitic parties, which in the years before the World War 1914-18 took an increasingly radical direction under the influence of the race theorists. The Swastika, which the Viennese author Guido List (1848-1919), in his bombastically written books, called 'The holy symbol of the Aryans,' became, some years before the World War 1914-18, thanks to his writings, the generally adopted badge of the Anti-Semites.

In order to understand later developments, it is necessary to study List's writings, which prior to 1914 were widely current in 'nationalist' circles in Germany and Austria—although indeed they are completely forgotten to-day. Fundamentally, Guido List's ideas are based on the vague and disputed writings of the Germanised Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and his predecessors, such as the French count Joseph de Gobineau and the latter's compatriot, De Lapouge. To these must be added the publications of the East Prussian archaeologist, Gustav Kossinna, and certain misinterpreted teachings of the famous German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche.

List's main interest is in the Aryans, whom he characterises as the noblest race, and for whom he ordains it a right—nay, a duty—to dominate the other, allegedly inferior races. He contrasts the Aryan and the other races as follows: 'The Aryan man is a well-defined 'Ego-Individuality'—he is a 'Master Man' as opposed to the 'Mass Man' of the Mediterranean races, the Mongolian mixed races or the anthropoid races. According to List, this higher, Aryan race must not in any circumstances mingle with the other, lower races. Purity

of race being essential, mixed marriage must not be permitted in the future racial state. Thus he provides the basis for the subsequent 'Nuernberg Laws' of the Nazis. In 1910 he expresses himself on the subject as follows :

'The reason for avoiding racial admixture is that we may produce a pure-bred Aryan-Germanic strain: that is, we must have on the one hand the German, the noble race, and, on the other, clearly separated from it, the mixed and anthropoid races. Therefore, in the future the decisive factor in the obtaining of scholarships, stipends, senior and well-remunerated positions in the civil service, in the law courts, at the universities, and so on, must no longer be paper certificates from schools and universities, but the results of the examination of the candidates' claim to be members of the German tribe of the Aryan race. There must and shall be prizes for Aryan-German pure breeding, special facilities for engaged couples of pure race, and other measures to the same end, taken and accorded for facilitating and furthering pure breeding; while mixed marriage between those of noble and those of inferior race must at all costs be prevented.

Aryan-Germans must re-establish their own Germanic law founded on the *Manusgesetz* and the *Sachsenspiegel*, and must adapt it to present-day life. On the other hand, the mongrels living in Aryan-German states, countries and towns must be forced into that position of dependence on the noble race allotted to them by the *Manus* Law and the *Sachsenspiegel*, and by 'German Law' as a whole. In future no non-Aryan German must be allowed any kind of *Fuehrer* position in an Aryan-German state, for which as a 'Mass Man' he is not fitted. All minor clerical posts, however, are open to him, provided there is no Aryan-German applicant for these. Further, all menial positions are open to him, and in general all those posts which, owing to the stereotyped nature of the work, are degrading and mentally destructive for the man of noble race, the 'Master Man,' but are most suitable for the racially inferior 'Mass Man,' in order that he may be usefully employed.

„In a word, the strict racial division between the 'Master Man' and the 'Mass Man' must be maintained as a basis for the entire order of development; and this in such a way that the racial discrimination begins at school: 'For the offspring of the "Master Man" education, for the offspring of the "Mass Man," drill.'

List demanded, further, that the education of the German people should no longer be on liberal principles, but on lines laid down by its leaders. On the 'Fuehrer' theme he expresses himself elsewhere as follows: 'The Aryan German demands a self-chosen *Fuehrer*, to whom he willingly subordinates himself.' The repudia-

tion of Roman Law and the return to the Germanic Law of the Middle Ages has since List's day been effected. The return to the medieval division of the country into *Gaue*, ruled by *Gauleiters* and *Statthalters*, likewise advocated by List, has also been carried into effect by the Hitler régime.

I shall further mention that List's writings are full of fierce attacks on invisible foes. Thus, he speaks of the international *Plutocracy*, which he asserts is seeking *World Domination*, or heaps abuse on *The Great International Party*, which he describes as 'traitorous.' As heraldic figure and symbol of the future Aryan State envisaged by him, List advanced the Swastika, which for him was 'The great sign of salvation.'¹

Although the Anti-Semites, influenced by his teachings, adopted the Swastika as their symbol, it cannot be said that List was taken seriously as a whole. Scholars, for whom his teachings were too silly, ignored him completely, while the masses regarded him as a crazy visionary. Moreover, the bombastic style in which his pseudo-scientific books were written, contributed much towards making him appear ridiculous.

But List did not stop short at theorising. In Luedenscheid he actually owned a factory in which he mass-produced Swastika brooches, breast-pins, etc., and thus created a 'German nationalist' fashion which had made tremendous progress by the end of the World War 1914-18. This earned him bitter criticism from some of his colleagues, who ironically reproached him with exploiting the 'holy symbol of the Aryans' to drive a thriving trade, while his theories on the Aryan origin of the Swastika were also challenged and characterised as 'soap bubbles from List's inexhaustible soap-dish.' Finally, he himself was described, on account of his turgid style and his vague manner of expressing his thoughts, as 'a genius of confusion.' Yet all this could not check the Swastika-Movement, which in the immediate post-war period assumed immense proportions. Indeed, by that time in Germany the Swastika was to be seen everywhere. It appeared on thousands of pieces of jewellery, dangled from thousands of watch-chains, was smeared on doors and walls by young people. Chocolate manufacturers produced chocolate in Swastika shape; shrewd hotel-keepers had all their hotel equipment

¹ Cf. List, G. :

(a) *Die Rita der Ario-Germanen*, Vienna, 1908.

(b) *Das Geheimnis der Runen*, Vienna, 1908.

(c) *Die Namen der Voelkerstaemme Germaniens*, Vienna, 1908.

(d) *Die Bilderschrift der Ario-Germanen*, Vienna, 1910.

(e) *Die Armanenschaft der Ario-Germanen*, Pt. I, II, Vienna, 1908-1911.

adorned with it; the symbol was printed on note-paper, on invitation and New Year cards; there were Swastika stamps and seals. Besides the Anti-Semitic societies, the Boy Scouts adopted it as their emblem. To make a long story short, the Swastika had—without the people as a whole knowing really how or why—all of a sudden become the most popular of signs.²

It is therefore not surprising that the Nazis, when just about this time in 1919 they founded their party, adopted this emblem. They could certainly have chosen no more popular device. The Swastika banner received the name 'Hitler Banner,' and in this way the preliminary history of the symbol that was to play such an ominous part in the future was completely obliterated. The Hitler banner is composed of a white circle containing a black Swastika, the whole on a red ground. In the colour scheme red predominates. The name of Hitler's party being 'National-Socialistic-German-Workers' Party,' his ensign had to symbolise all these sub-groups. The dominating red colour expresses 'Socialistic-Worker.' For 'German' the colour scheme black-white-red remains, whilst 'National' is symbolised by the Swastika, the alleged symbol of the Aryans.

Thus the 'Hitler Banner' represents the break, not only with the historical German past, but also with the entire conception of our Christian world, and purposely reverts to a prehistoric 'Aryan epoch.' It is this mythical pagan world which the Nazis want to resuscitate. Hence German scholars strive hard to prove that the light of European culture spread from the North, and they assert that the Swastika was an Aryan symbol and a token of the sun originating in Northern Europe. They also maintain that the sign was unknown to Semites and Jews.

None of these claims will stand the test of scientific research. We know that at a time when Europe was no more than an area inhabited by hunter tribes and fisher-folk the peoples of Egypt and Mesopotamia could already look back upon three thousand years of highest culture. Nearly everything that goes to make up our civilisation to-day was invented by these peoples: The wheel, the potter's wheel, agriculture and cattle-breeding, the arts and crafts, industry, technology, currency, trade. The sciences such as medicine, mathematics, geometry, astronomy, the calendar, the clock and the zodiac, the system of measures, the alphabet and writing, paper and ink, books and libraries, schools, literature and music, monumental sculpture and architecture, jurisprudence, laws and administration, planned towns, etc., and last though not least, philosophy and mono-

² Cf. Hupp, O. *Runen und Hakenkreuz*, Munich, 1921.

theism. Not Europe, therefore, influenced the South, but the South, or more correctly the South-East, influenced Europe. The evolution took place from the Near East. From here agriculture penetrated into South-Eastern Europe during the later Stone Age.

I have shown that the Swastika was neither Aryan nor a symbol of the sun and that it appears in Northern Europe only during the Bronze Age, while it was common in Mesopotamia as early as about 4000 B.C.³

The Nazi claim that the symbol was unknown to Semites and Jews is likewise unjustified, as it is to be found in prehistoric Palestine,⁴ and later on in the same country at about 1200 B.C.⁵ The semitic Assyrians, too, knew the symbol which occurs in Ashur at the beginning of the twelfth century B.C.⁶ Still at a later date the sign is established with the Jews.⁷

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³ Loewenstein, J. *Swastika and Yin-Yang*, London, 1942.

⁴ On a stone club dating from about 3000 B.C., found in the so-called Teleilat Ghassul, East Jordanland. See, Mallon, A., Koepfel, R., Neuville, R.

⁵ On pottery from Gezer. See, Macalister, R.A., *The Excavation of Gezer, 1902-1905 and 1907-1909*, 3 vols, II, p. 191, III, pl. 167, No. 16, London, 1912. Incised on the wall of a cave in Hurbet-el-C'Ain. See, Bliss, F. J., and Macalister, R. A., *Excavations in Palestine during the years 1898-1900*. p. 225, pl. 97; London, 1902.

⁶ In the Anu-Adad temple in Ashur, where it must doubtless be regarded as a religious symbol, in the days of Asurrisisi I (1127-1116) and his son Tiglathpilesar I. (1115-1103). See, Andrae, W., *Der Anu-Adad Tempel in Assur* (Wissenschaft. Veroeffentlich. d. Deutschen-Orient-Ges. No. 8-11, pl. 22), Leipsic, 1909.

⁷ On objects from Ezion-Geber, the Red Sea port of King Solomon (975-937). See, Glueck, N., 'King Solomon's Seaport of Ezion-Geber, on the Gulf of Agabah (Ill. *London News*, No. 5233, 5th Aug., 1939).