

IS THERE A NAZI THREAT?

World War II has been aptly termed the Liberals' War. More than that, it was the Old Left's War, in which the entire Liberal spectrum, from proto-ADA types grouped in the Union for Democratic Action on the Right to the Communist Party on the Left, happily banded together to take their fighting places in the serrated ranks of U. S. imperialism. Present-day peaceniks were proud to serve as Majors in the Field Artillery, as heads of the U. S. Army Orientation program to indoctrinate new recruits on the glories of America's world mission, and as high officials in the War Production Board. It was the glorious high point of the Old Left's cherished policy of what Staughton Lynd has trenchantly called "coalition with the Marines." Your typical Old Leftist was not only apt to be in coalition with the Marines; he was even likely to have enlisted in that notoriously freedom-spreading wing of America's armed personnel. The Old Leftist is apt to look back on his World War II experience as the high point in his checkered career; for then, as in no other time before or since, he was in the broad mainstream, arm-in-arm with Rockefeller agents, J. P. Morgan partners, and A. F. of L. bosses, taking us all onward and upward toward the New Tomorrow and the Century of the Common Man.

Essential toward this kind of a really broad coalition is, of course, the existence of a Nazi Threat, the more threatening and glowering the better, and the Old Left has been wont to look back wistfully on the Good Old Days of the Nazi Menace and to yearn hopefully for its

renaissance. And so the Old Left periodically pokes around in the embers of the Nazi past, trying desperately to discover a recrudescence of the Enemy long gone.

The current white hope for a Nazi threat is the latest political events in West Germany. Onstage: the new Chancellor, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, an authentic former member of the National Socialist Party, who edifyingly informs us that, from the very beginning, he did, down deep in his heart, oppose the whole system. And then: off in the wings, like a cloud so far no bigger than a man's hand, the new National Democratic Party, which scored some successes in the recent West German elections. This party, we are assured by everyone, is "neo-Nazi." Here we have the basic ingredients for a new anti-German and anti-Nazi mixture with which the Old Left will try manfully to revive the heady anti-Nazi coalition of yore.

The big problem with this Old Left approach is similar to its grievous error on the home front, where the Old Left is always looking to revive a very broad domestic coalition against the menace of the Ultra-Right, which can often be tenuously linked together with the foreign, German foe. It is the same problem that the Ultra-Right suffers from in its perpetual worry about a Communist Menace lurking under the bed and around the corner. That problem is that while the eye is fixed on some far-off, tenuous, and insignificant Menace, the real Menace is right here, and running the whole show. In short, the real problem is not some far-off Threat, but the people who are ruling and oppressing us right here and now. Whether it is a Communist Menace or an Ultra-Right Menace or a Nazi Menace we are all supposed to band together to prevent, it is the very people we are asked to rally behind who are our real enemies. Often, of course, our ruling classes are happy and eager to foster the myth of the far-off menace, precisely because our rallying behind them distracts us from the real Enemy and enormously cements their power. This is the true meaning of all Popular Fronts with existing governmental rulers, of all Coalitions with the Marines, whether against Right-Wing or Left-Wing Threats.

The brilliant libertarian journalist Garet Garrett put it all very well thirty years ago when he wrote: "There are those who still think they are holding the pass against a revolution that may be coming up the road. But they are gazing in the wrong direction. The revolution is

behind them.”¹ By “revolution” Garrett meant the New Deal, or, more widely, the great shift in the locus of power in America from the people, i. e., from a largely free market and free society, to the apparatus of the Leviathan State. Our task is not to guard the pass against some form of threat coming up the road; our task is to organize and do something about a “threat” that long ago succeeded all too well, succeeded in foisting upon America a corporate-state. Our problem is to dismantle our own existing imperial Behemoth.

What, then, of West Germany? The problem there is not whether Chancellor Kiesinger is a very appetizing specimen; clearly he is not. The real problem is that West Germany, especially now that France has been displaying a keen and manly independence, is U. S. imperialism’s most pliant and powerful tool in all of Europe. West Germany, our former enemy, is the linchpin of America’s structure in Europe; let West Germany go, and America’s imperial position there would become untenable. This is the really important question: not whether or not West Germany’s rulers were Nazi party enthusiasts thirty years ago, but whether or not they are willing tools of American imperialism here and now. Of course, the tool can become a dangerous and ultra-imperialist force on its own hook: a Syngman Rhee can drive North, a Marshall Ky can call for invading North Vietnam, a West German finger on the nuclear trigger could force us to support a war of revanche for lost German territories in East Europe. But the important point is that West Germany has been hand-in-glove with U. S. imperialism since the end of World War II; and the vital goal for anti-imperialists is to split West Germany off from the American grip and to have it seek accomodation with the East rather than reunion through a war of “liberation.”

The important reality about West Germany is that, in the last several years, a danger has arisen to its role as right bower of American imperialism and mainstay of the Cold War in Europe. For the vast, sprawling Christian Democratic Party had lost its absolute majority in the German parliament, and the balance of power in West Germany between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats had been held for the past several years by the unsung but extremely significant Free Democratic

1. Garet Garrett, “The Revolution Was,” in The People’s Pottage (Caldwell, Id.,: The Caxton Printers, 1953), p. 15.

Party. The Free Democrats have been a quasi-libertarian party in many ways corresponding to the Left-Right tendency in this country; for the Free Democrats, like the Taft Republicans of an olden day, have been in favor of free enterprise, low budgets, and a peaceful foreign policy. With the outlawing of all Left parties in that bastion of the "free world", the Free Democrats have become the only hope that Germany might leave the path of war and U. S. imperialism and pursue a peaceful, independent role in Europe.

The ascendancy of the Free Democrats as the swing party precipitated the ouster of the fanatically war-mongering Konrad Adenauer, whom the Free Democrats steadfastly refused to support, and his replacement by the centrist moderate Ludwig Erhard. More importantly, this meant the rise to the Foreign Ministry of Gerhard Schroeder, the leader of the pro-peace wing of the Christian Democrats and a man well-liked by the Free Democracy. In 1966, Erhard drove the Free Democrats to break off their support by two anti-libertarian actions: the raising of taxes, and use of these taxes to pay for the occupation armies of imperialism. The Free Democrat breakaway and the consequent fall of Erhard presented West Germany with two choices: one, a Social Democrat-Free Democrat coalition based on a peaceful foreign policy and a shift away from American imperialism; or two, a sinister "Grand Coalition" between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats behind the pro-war stance of the Adenauer-Strauss wing of the Christian Democrat party. The Christian Democrats, propelled by Adenauer and Strauss who had long yearned for the crushing of the Free Democrats, proffered the Grand Coalition; and the spineless Social Democrats, turning down the chance to head the German government for the first time since the war, accepted the proposition. Germany is now ruled jointly by its two major parties, which has the same implications for democracy as if the Democrats and Republicans were to join in a formal coalition to govern the country. It is true that we are not so very far from this right now; our much-vaunted two-party system is always close to an ideal fusion into a frank and open one-party dictatorship. But the point is that open one-party rule means the abandonment of even the formal trappings of democracy, and that this has been accomplished without a single iota of criticism from America's vaunted free press. Not only criticism; there was hardly mention of the fact that all this was done in order to end the influence of the Free Democrats and

to eliminate their powerful threat to American hegemony over West Germany.

The big "threat", then, is not the phantasm of a West German conquest of the United States; the real problem is the continuing American rule over West Germany. It is within that context that we must see the recent beginnings of the National Democratic Party in Germany. The significance of this party is not so much its "neo-Nazi" trappings, as that it, like the Free Democrats, offers the Germans a foreign policy independent of American dictation. Neither the National Democrats nor even Kurt Kiesinger constitutes the real German problem; that problem is the smashing of the Grand Coalition that rules West Germany today.

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