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THE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE IN NATIONAL SOCIALISM

BY M. MARGARET BALL

Much has been written in the past few years about the National Socialist theory of the state. The author does not aspire to an exhaustive analysis of the theory, but believes that some consideration of a part of it, the Leadership Principle, may be of some value at the present time. This study of the concept of leadership in National Socialism is chiefly based on an examination of the speeches and writings of present German political leaders rather than on the works of contemporary German intellectuals but an attempt has been made to indicate some of its sources.

I

Any theory of the state which seeks to justify the right of One or the Few to rule the Many (no matter how benevolently), manifestly involves an assumption of the basic inequality of men. The idea of inequality may take the form of emphasis upon diversity of talent or capacity, in a theory which considers the state to be an organic entity in which each individual has a place consistent with his character and special endowments, as in Plato or Hegel; it may find a place in a philosophy of history in which all important historical events turn upon the Great Man, the Genius, as in Carlyle; it may be found arising out of a realistic analysis of existing or historical conditions, as in Treitschke; or it may be developed in a Nietzschean individualism—in brief, it may be found in these or any one of a number of other types of theory in which the differences of men are, for one reason or another, considered to be more important than their similarities. Nietzsche's vehement denunciations of the idea of equality are doubtless, among these, the most closely related to the Nazi doctrine; in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, to select a single instance:

Thus do I speak unto you in parable, ye who make the soul giddy, ye preachers of equality! Tarantulas are ye unto me, and secretly revengeful ones! . . .

With these preachers of equality will I not be mixed up and confounded. For thus speaketh justice *unto me*: "Men are not equal!"¹

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common (*Com-*

The doctrine of inequality of persons within an organic state received considerable diffusion in Germany in the 1920's through the lectures of Professor Othmar Spann, sociologist and, until 1939, Director of the Institute for Political Economy at the University of Vienna. His concept of "universalism" regards society as an organism composed of heterogeneous rather than homogeneous parts, and reverts to the Platonic conception of distributive justice as consisting in the performance by each part of the function appropriate to its nature and place in the system.² Spengler, too, in his *Jahre der Entscheidung*, conceives of the state as an organic community, characterized by a basic inequality of men.³

In National Socialist theory, however, the belief in the inequality of men takes a dual form. One aspect is that of racial inequality, a doctrine of pseudo-scientific character derived primarily from Gobineau and Houston Stuart Chamberlain and heartily espoused by the latter's father-in-law, Richard Wagner.⁴ The thesis of racial inequality is, of course, of fundamental importance to National Socialist doctrine, but it has been so exhaustively treated elsewhere that no discussion of it will be undertaken here. The other aspect of inequality in National Socialism is that of persons within an organic racial community. This inequality is emphasized throughout National Socialist writings, as, for instance, in *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler more than once affirms not only the inequality of races but of men within races.⁵

plete Works, edited by Dr. Oscar Levy, Vol. XI; N. Y., 1911), pp. 118 f. Again, in his *Will to Power* (*Complete Works*, Vols. XIV, XV; London, 1924), Nietzsche attacks the principle of equality implicit in Christian doctrine: the idea of equality before God is "the most pernicious of all valuations! If one regards individuals as equals, the demands of the species are ignored, and a process is initiated which ultimately leads to its ruin" (Vol. I, p. 202). Crane Brinton, in his "The National Socialists' Use of Nietzsche" considers that "both the Nazi idea of the master-race and the *Führerprinzip* are among the most obvious and most congruous derivatives" of Nietzsche's concept of the Superman (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. I, p. 149). Cf. also Crane Brinton, *Nietzsche* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), pp. 205 ff.

² *Der wahre Staat* (3rd ed., Jena, 1931), p. 43. This volume represents a course of lectures given at the University of Vienna in 1920.

³ Oswald Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung* (Munich, 1933), p. 66. Hitler evidenced some familiarity with Spengler's theories at the Reichsparteitag in 1933 (*Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933* [Munich, 1934], p. 14).

⁴ Cf. *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. W. E. Ellis, Vol. IV (London, 1895), pp. 158 ff., 140; Herbert Schack, *Denker und Deuter* (Stuttgart, 1938), p. 19.

National Socialism has not, however, been content with a theory of aristocracy within a racial group; the leadership principle bears traces, in addition, of the idea of the supreme importance of the Great Man, of the Hero, in history. In this the National Socialists have followed a well-trodden path. Hegel, for instance, believed that "At the summit of all actions, including world-historical actions, stand individuals. . . ."⁶ Carlyle, who was influenced largely by Fichte in this matter,⁷ and in turn exercised a considerable influence upon later German thought, wrote that:

Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; . . . all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the souls of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.⁸

It was Wagner,⁹ however, who gave to the German nation, through

⁵ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), pp. 580, 660 etc. Marshal Göring, speaking before the *Akademie für Deutsches Recht* in November 1934, speaks of the concept of equality as the "sworn enemy" of National Socialism (*Reden und Aufsätze* [Munich, 1938], p. 144), and Professor Otto Koellreutter of Munich writes that the National Socialist state repudiates the idea of the equality of citizens, while emphasizing racial diversity and the resultant "political inequality of individuals" (Otto Koellreutter, *Deutsches Verfassungsrecht; ein Grundriss* [Berlin, 1936], p. 140). In his view, the goal of political activity is not equality of treatment, but "jedem das Seine" (*ibid.*, p. 176). Similar views are held by other National Socialist writers; cf., for instance, Theodor Frhr. von Hahn, "Zur Ideengeschichte der deutschen Nationalen Revolution," *Preussische Jahrbücher*, Vol. 234, p. 103 (November 1933).

⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (London, 1896), p. 344.

⁷ B. H. Lehman, *Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: Its Sources, Development, History, and Influence on Carlyle's Work* (Durham, N. C., 1928), p. 128. See also Charles F. Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought* (New Haven, 1934), pp. 180 ff.

⁸ *Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History*, edited by P. C. Parr (Oxford, 1910), p. 1. Again: "For if we will think of it, no Time need to have gone to ruin, could it have found a man great enough, a man wise and good enough: wisdom to discern truly what the Time wanted, valour to lead it on the right road thither; these are the salvation of any Time. . . . In all epochs of the world's history, we shall find the Great Man to have been the indispensable saviour of his epoch;" (*ibid.*, p. 12).

⁹ Wagner was not unfamiliar with Carlyle (C. F. Glasenapp, *Life of Richard Wagner*, trans. W. E. Ellis, Vol. II [London, 1902], p. 324).

his operas, a real consciousness of the heroic,¹⁰ and it was doubtless largely through him that Hitler was so profoundly (and permanently) impressed with the historic rôle of the "hero,"¹¹ although there were other sources upon which the National Socialists may well have drawn. In Treitschke, for instance, is to be found the conviction that "It is individual men who make history. . . . This great heroic truth will endure forever."¹² Nietzsche's theory of the Superman merely continues this tradition: it is the individual, the genius, who is the creator, and that he may be lifted up, the masses must be levelled down.¹³ Spengler, while he does not support the thesis that all great historical events are the work of particular geniuses, in the *Decline of the West*,¹⁴ comes to precisely that conclusion in his later work, *Jahre der Entscheidung*,¹⁵ although he continues to maintain that "we are all, without exception, slaves to the 'will' of history, cooperative, executive organs of an organic process (*Geschehens*)."¹⁶ Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, a young German conservative, did much to popularize the idea in the period immediately following the World War. In his *Das dritte Reich*¹⁷ to which National Socialism owes if not the ultimate, at least the immediate, origin of the name of its own utopia, he made a scathing attack upon Liberalism, which, he considered, was inspired by the jealousy of the masses which prevented the realization of the true leadership of the genius.¹⁸

¹⁰ According to Glasenapp, "hero-worship was as great a characteristic of Wagner as of Carlyle" (*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 317). See also *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 234, 274, 342.

¹¹ Hitler refers to early impressions of Wagnerian opera in *Mein Kampf*, p. 23.

¹² Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, trans. Blanche Dugdale and Torben de Bille (New York, 1916), Vol. I, p. xxxvii (author's introd.). And "Monarchy rests upon the profound belief, derided by all modern Liberals, that history is made by men" (*ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 65 f.).

¹³ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, p. 20; *Will to Power*, Vol. I, p. 91; *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 153, 296, 305 f.

¹⁴ Trans. C. F. Atkinson; 2 vols. (New York, 1928), Vol. I, p. 149.

¹⁵ "Die grossen Einzelnen sind es, die Geschichte machen" (p. 129).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁷ Moeller van den Bruck nationalized socialism; that is, to him, the social idea was of genuine importance, but on a national, rather than an international scale. The common interest of a united nation would replace the class struggle.

¹⁸ The material factor is always the subordinate in history. "Der Mensch macht die Geschichte: aber die Geschichte macht nicht den Menschen" (*Das dritte Reich* [Hamburg, 1931], p. 46; the book was first published in 1923).

With this tradition behind him, it is not strange that Hitler has emphasized the importance of the great individual as responsible for all progress and all culture.¹⁹ Hitler, however, insists upon a relationship between the great man and the great race: "Men make history, but they also forge the instruments which are suited to the forming of history, and above all, they give them spirit. Great men, however, are themselves merely the strongest, most concentrated expression of a nation."²⁰ This linking of the genius to his nation becomes of great importance when one examines the supposed relationship between leader and followers under the Leadership Principle.

A doctrine which considers that it is the natural differences between men, rather than their similarities, that are of primary importance for the state, necessarily leads to a repudiation of all forms of representative democracy. This was substantially Plato's view when he referred to democracy as being "full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike."²¹ Hegel's organic state could not tolerate a popular control of the legislative body, for "the people, in so far as this term signifies a special part of the citizens, does not know what it wills. To know what we will, and further what the absolute will, namely reason, wills, is the fruit of deep knowledge and insight, and is therefore not the property of the people."²² Carlyle opposed democratic institutions,²³ and Treitschke took the view that since the state is power, "that State which gathers authority most completely into the hand of one and there leaves it most independent, approaches most nearly to the ideal."²⁴ Nietzsche made

¹⁹ *Mein Kampf*, p. 479. The subjection of leaders to mass majorities, such as occurs in liberal democracy, the failure to give effect to great personalities, are considered by Hitler to be the result of Marxism, controlled by the Jews (*ibid.*, p. 666). The movement "must never forget that the value of all that is human is rooted in the personal value, and that every idea and every achievement are the results of the creative force of a man, and that the admiration for the greatness is not only a tribute of thanks to the latter, but that it also winds a unifying band around the grateful" (*ibid.*, p. 488).

²⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Speech Delivered in the Reichstag January 30th, 1939* ([Berlin, 1939]), p. 59.

²¹ *The Republic*, Book VIII, p. 336 (Modern Library edition).

²² Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

²³ Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes*, p. 178.

²⁴ Treitschke, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 13. He considered a class basis essential to

his position amply clear in the passage: "I am opposed to parliamentary government and the power of the press, because they are the means whereby cattle become masters."²⁵

Paul de Lagarde, publicist and Professor of Oriental Languages at Göttingen towards the end of the last century, who is sometimes considered to have been largely responsible for the development of the concept of German nationalism as it has been incorporated into National Socialist theory,²⁶ is also a part of the stream of anti-democratic theory upon which National Socialism drew. He was opposed to parliamentary government chiefly, perhaps, because he felt it to be irresponsible.²⁷ According to him, all Germans are aristocratic, not because they hate freedom, but because they want "true" freedom. "Freedom and democracy suit one another like fire and water. . . ."²⁸ Spengler took the view that democracy amounts to anarchy, the absence of any responsible authority, a levelling-down process culturally speaking,²⁹ that state is strongest which is a class state and in which a particular class rules.³⁰ Moeller van den Bruck made a distinction between parliamentary democracy, which he abhorred, and what he considered to be "real" democracy; the latter could not be achieved through parliamentary institutions.³¹ Hitler's statement that the current German régime constitutes a truer democracy than those of

the survival of society (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 303), and thought that democracy lacks "certain finer attributes of political intelligence" (*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 282).

²⁵ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Vol. II, p. 206.

²⁶ Hermann Platz, "Lagarde, Paul," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. IX, p. 14.

²⁷ *Deutsche Schriften* (Göttingen, 1892), p. 120. He stressed the fact that the state should not be considered an end in itself, but should exist for the nation; this is now, of course, a basic tenet of National Socialism. He also opposed liberalism, was anti-semitic, opposed the international power of the Church. He advocated German unity in a highly centralized state, saw in Central Europe the natural object of German domination, and advocated the creation of a new nobility, based not on birth but on moral and intellectual qualities. His aspirations for Germany are summarized *ibid.*, p. 246. See also pp. 117 f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²⁹ *Jahre der Entscheidung*, pp. 24, 68 f.

³⁰ *Decline of the West*, Vol. II, pp. 368 f. The "longing for majorities," the sacrifice of quality to quantity, has no legitimate place in that stage of a declining civilization in which we find ourselves (*Jahre der Entscheidung*, pp. 132 f).

³¹ Moeller van den Bruck, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

the parliamentary democracies is strongly reminiscent of Moeller van den Bruck's position. Professor Spann, once in high favor with the Nazis but since rejected by them, must also be taken into consideration in this connection. His assurance that "all great philosophers, from Plato to Hegel, from Euripides to Goethe, have repudiated democracy, because in the long run, democracy means the death of culture,"³² his castigation of individualism,³³ political parties,³⁴ liberal democracy in general,³⁵ offered particularly rich grist for the Nazi mill.

In view of the fact that these and other strong anti-democratic currents were in the air, Hitler merely reiterated what, in certain German circles, was accepted as a truism, when he declared that "there is no principle looked at objectively that is as wrong as the parliamentary principle."³⁶ He considered it wrong for many reasons: the masses are not capable of forming proper political judgments;³⁷ parliaments make decisions for which no one bears real responsibility;³⁸ the principle of parliamentary government demolishes "the idea of leadership as a whole";³⁹ it violates the aristocratic principles of "nature";⁴⁰ leadership in a parliamentary democracy must be at the level of the "mentality of the assembly" and is therefore bad.⁴¹ Since, then, parliamentary government is "one of the most serious symptoms of mankind's decay,"⁴² it must be eliminated, along with the political parties essential to it. Other National Socialists have taken a similar view. The German Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, has denounced parliamentary democracy as "un-German,"⁴³ while Alfred Rosenberg, Director of the Foreign Office of the N.S.D.A.P., Super-

³² Spann, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 80, 84 ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91 f.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

³⁶ *Mein Kampf*, p. 107.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107 f.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 102 f.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103. See also Hitler's address to the Reichstag, January 30th, 1934, *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* (Berlin, 1936), Vol. 458, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Mein Kampf*, p. 104.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 479.

⁴³ Joseph Goebbels, *Der Nazi-Sozi. Fragen und Antworten für den Nationalsozialisten* (Munich, 1932), p. 23.

visor of Instruction within the Party, and self-appointed theorist of the Revolution, asserts that liberalism, with its freedom, free trade, emancipation of women, equality, and parliamentary democracy, has "sinned against a law of Nature."⁴⁴

II

A political theory which emphasizes human inequalities leads logically to the conclusion that the best should rule; the Great Man interpretation of history implies that the great man either should, or does, control the state. The National Socialists are willing, even anxious, to accept both of these conclusions: the great man is to be given unrestricted authority; the best elements within the state (from the Nazi viewpoint), are to be given the positions immediately subordinate to him. But who is the great man? What are his qualities?

To Plato, the great man was the philosopher with all of the qualities which the term implies; knowledge and wisdom were to be the outstanding characteristics of the ruling class of the Republic. Carlyle's Hero, like Plato's Philosopher, was the seeker after and the interpreter to lesser men of the eternal truths which govern the universe.⁴⁵ The Hero may appear in many guises, but whether he be prophet, priest, poet or king, he has the qualities of "sincerity,"⁴⁶ "insight,"⁴⁷ which permit him to know and to transmit his knowledge to the common man.⁴⁸ The king, the political leader, ought to be the "Ablest Man"; his heroic qualities make him the guide of his people not only in secular, but also in spiritual matters.⁴⁹ Hegel's great man is he who is able to discern

⁴⁴ Alfred Rosenberg, *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1938), p. 503.

⁴⁵ "The Hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial. . . . His life . . . is a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself" (*Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes*, p. 141).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 50, 134.

⁴⁷ "To know; to get into the truth of anything, is ever a mystic act,—of which the best Logics can but babble on the surface" (*ibid.*, p. 52). To know a thing at all requires morality: "a thoroughly immoral *man* could not know anything at all!" (*ibid.*, p. 97).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 141. Cf. also Lehman, *op. cit.*, pp. 54 f.

⁴⁹ *Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes*, p. 181. "The true King [the Ablest Man] as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him—guide of the spiritual, from which all practice has its rise" (*ibid.*).

the truth of his time;⁵⁰ his monarch, though he be but the final dot on the “i,” represents the final synthesis of the Idea in the political realm.

In contrast to the above, Treitschke believed that “the men of action are the real heroes of history,”⁵¹ while Nietzsche’s “higher man” was primarily a creature of strong will, rather than the seeker after an absolute truth.⁵² In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche suggests that the realm of this higher individual is beyond or outside the state, rather than within it.⁵³ In any case, he is beyond the traditional wisdom, the conventional morality.⁵⁴ He is an “absolute,” a creator who “has to seek the valuation for his actions in himself.”⁵⁵ Spengler stresses the “ability to command,” which he considers to be the “last and highest gift of complete humanity,” in his political genius. A man with this ability feels a power which “the man of truths [the scholar, philosopher, priest] can never know.”⁵⁶ Will, power, ability to command; these are indeed different from the qualities of the philosopher-king.

The qualities attributed to the leader by National Socialists are more strongly reminiscent of Nietzsche and Spengler than of Plato. Hitler declares that “The leadership proper not only demands will-power, but also ability, whereby one has to ascribe a greater importance to will-power and energy than to genius itself, and most valuable is a combination of ability, determination, and perseverance.”⁵⁷ The leader is not apt to be a theorist; he is more

⁵⁰ “In public opinion all is false and true, but to find out the truth in it is the affair of the great man. He who tells the time what it wills and means, and then brings it to completion, is the great man of the time. In his act the inner significance and essence of the time is actualized . . .” (Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 325).

⁵¹ Treitschke, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 25.

⁵² *Will to Power*, Vol. II, pp. 366 f. He, the man of strong will, is “colder,” “harder,” “less cautious” than ordinary men; he is the leader, or, if there be no one to lead, is solitary. “He would rather lie than tell the truth, because lying requires more spirit and *will*”; he is a sceptic; he has the consciousness “of his power over a people, and of the fact that he coincides temporarily with a people or with a century” (*ibid.*).

⁵³ “There, where the state *ceaseth*—pray look thither, my brethren! Do ye not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the Superman” (p. 56 f.). Cf. also *op. cit.*, pp. 116 ff.

⁵⁴ *Will to Power*, Vol. I, p. 199 f.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 215.

⁵⁶ *Decline of the West*, Vol. II, p. 444.

⁵⁷ *Mein Kampf*, p. 485.

likely to be an agitator who can sway the masses. The theorist is not wholly useless, but it is the man of action, the organizer, who is truly important.⁵⁸ Darré, National Socialist Minister of Agriculture, acclaims Treitschke's recognition that, in the last analysis, a leader's character is more important than his knowledge.⁵⁹ Dr. Robert Ley, Leader of the National Labor Front, considers "instinct" to be the primary necessity of the political leader;⁶⁰ leaders are born, not made.⁶¹

Statements of National Socialist writers on this question appear to be very largely derived from, and are frequently confused with, the position which Hitler actually occupies within the state. It would seem to be to the latter that Göring referred in 1934 in his very broad statement regarding the infallibility of the leader:

it is axiomatic that the Leader must possess any quality attributed to him in its highest perfection. Just as the Roman Catholic considers the Pope infallible in all matters concerning religion and morals, so do we National Socialists believe with the same inner conviction that for us the Leader is in all political and other matters concerning the national and social interests of the people simply infallible.⁶²

The most difficult hurdle which any theory of the rule of the One or of the Few has to surmount is that of determining a satisfactory method of selection of the ruler or rulers. Plato believed strongly in differences of hereditary endowment, but relied, it will be recalled, on a selective and very careful training-program to determine the leaders of the state. Carlyle recognized a "divine right" of the Ablest Man to rule, but admitted that the problem was how to find him, and how to get his right to rule acknowledged.⁶³ Treitschke, too, recognized the problem, but came to no

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 848.

⁵⁹ Walther Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich, 1938), p. 48.

⁶⁰ *Soldaten der Arbeit* (Munich, 1938), p. 188.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35. Leadership also requires faith in and love for the nation (*ibid.*). Dr. Nicolai, Ministerialdirektor of the Department of the Interior, in his *Der Staat im Nationalsozialistischen Weltbild*, also stresses the factor of innate ability, which is superior in this regard to education and knowledge. Among the necessary talents he includes courage, idealism, political instinct, the gift of oratory, the ability to think logically and "cosmically" ([Leipzig, 1935], p. 37).

⁶² *Germany Reborn* (London, 1934), p. 79.

⁶³ "That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: this is precisely the healing

more satisfactory solution than Carlyle.⁶⁴ According to Spengler, in the transition from "Napoleonism to Caesarism" which appears in every culture, "possibilities open up for the energetic private person who means to be politically creative, who will have power at any price, and who as a phenomenon of force becomes the Destiny of an entire people or Culture."⁶⁵ It is apparently the strength, the "will-to-power," of the great man which brings him to power in such periods.⁶⁶ In this connection it may be noted that Caesarism, according to Spengler, involves "not the dictatorship of a party, but that of a man against all parties, particularly his own."⁶⁷ On the other hand, the National Socialists have rejected Spengler's thesis of the inevitable decline of cultures, and believe themselves to be the means to a western renaissance.⁶⁸

To the National Socialists, the idea of natural selection of leaders has had a strong appeal; indeed Dr. Nicolai, Ministerialdirektor of the Department of the Interior, states explicitly that Darwin's theory of selection has had a considerable influence upon National Socialism.⁶⁹ Certainly Hitler himself considers that natural selection plays a strong part in the determination of true leaders: "The selection of these heads is carried out above all . . . by the hard struggle for life." Those who are not able to survive the struggle are not fit to lead.⁷⁰ In organizing a political movement, "*one man* must step forward in order to form . . . granite

which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after!" (*Carlyle's Lectures on Heroes*, p. 181). Professor Lehman, commenting on Carlyle's hero, suggests that Carlyle believed that the hero might be justified in forcing himself upon a people, if the people reject his leadership (Lehman, *op. cit.*, p. 185).

⁶⁴ "How it happens that the right man appears at his appointed time will always be a mystery to our mortal minds" (Treitschke, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. xxxvii).

⁶⁵ *Decline of the West*, Vol. II, p. 418.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 418, 452.

⁶⁷ Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung*, p. 135. Cf. also Carl Dreher, "Spengler and the Third Republic," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. XV, pp. 176-93 (April 1935).

⁶⁸ *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933*, p. 14. Cf. also Hitler's speech to the Reichstag of May 21, 1935, cited in Melvin Rader, *No Compromise* (New York, 1939), p. 296.

⁶⁹ Nicolai, *op. cit.*, p. 10. The current National Socialist leadership was determined by natural selection in the course of a revolutionary struggle which guaranteed leadership of particular excellence. Future leadership, however, will have to be determined artificially (*ibid.*, pp. 37 f.).

⁷⁰ *Mein Kampf*, pp. 665 f.

principles, and to take up the fight for their sole correctness, until out of the playing waves of a free world of thought a brazen rock of uniform combination of form and will arises. The general right for such an activity is based on its necessity, the personal right, in success."⁷¹ Natural selection the process; success, the criterion of validity.⁷² There is, however, also to be found in National Socialist writings, the suggestion of divine ordination (in the case of Hitler's own leadership, in any event). Hitler has at least on one occasion indicated that he regards himself as "called upon by Providence" to deliver his people from their misery,⁷³ while Göring declares that the German people consider that "God has sent him to us to save Germany."⁷⁴ Ley writes that fate provided Hitler for the German people,⁷⁵ and Krüger, in his monograph on *Führer und Führung*, not only asserts that the Leader is the gift of a "Higher Instance"⁷⁶ but suggests that it is the leader who first creates the community.⁷⁷

III

The advocate of the rule either of the Great Man or of an *élite*, is faced with the question of the sort of relationship which exists or should exist between the ruler and the ruled. The simplest solution to the problem is the thesis that the ruled should voluntarily obey the rulers simply because the latter are, by definition, better (wiser, stronger, *etc.*) than the former. This possibility has not been overlooked by the older believers in the government of the Few. Carlyle, for instance, says of his Ablest Man: "what he *tells us to do* must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn;—the thing which it will in all ways behove us, with right royal thankfulness, and nothing doubting, to do!"⁷⁸

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 577; see also p. 477.

⁷² Göring, in *Germany Reborn*, refers to "political instinct" and "iron will" as helping Hitler to power (p. 109).

⁷³ Adolf Hitler, *Speech Delivered to the Reichstag April 28th, 1939* (Berlin [1939?]), p. 61.

⁷⁴ Göring, *Germany Reborn*, pp. 79 f.

⁷⁵ Ley, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁷⁶ Herbert Krüger, *Führer und Führung* (Breslau [1935]), p. 27.

⁷⁷ There was no nation, properly speaking, when Hitler came into power; there was merely a number of classes, parties and other groups without consciousness of national unity. "Der Führer hat also erst das Volk geschaffen; erst am und durch den Führer hat sich das Volk zur Einigkeit, das heisst zum Volk zusammengeschlossen" (*ibid.*, pp. 107 f.).

Treitschke, too, stressed the duty of obedience, submission; rational assent to government is desirable, but not essential.⁷⁹ Where there is presumed to exist an identity of will (or interest) of ruler and ruled, the problem of enforcement may be supposed to be simplified, but the principle of obedience to the superior remains the same.

Where the superiority of the One or of the Few derives in no sense from the people, a principle of simple obedience suffices. The problem for National Socialism, however, was complicated by the racial nationalism which had been incorporated into its doctrine, and which had proved to be of such practical value in its rise to power. The emphasis on the primary character of the nation, the racial interpretation of history, meant that no doctrine could be considered wholly satisfactory which failed to give considerable weight to the nation in defining the relationship between the leaders and the led. At the same time the nation must not be permitted to control the leaders by the democratic methods which had already been repudiated; it had already been decided that there is little connection between a numerical majority of German citizens and the sound instincts of the "real" German nation. Indeed, the National Socialist leadership appeared to have little faith in the intelligence of the German in the concrete.⁸⁰ The problem, then, was how to acknowledge the paramount importance of the nation, at the same time leaving the leaders completely free to control the national policies.

Here again the National Socialists found the way paved for them. Hegel's distinction between "real" and "apparent" wills provided the essence of a solution, and made it possible to conceive of a real will of the nation which could be intuitively perceived by the leadership, even when the members of the community were

⁷⁸ Carlyle's *Lectures on Heroes*, p. 178. This simple necessity of obedience is the stronger since man has a need to reverence the Heroes which are sent to him (*ibid.*, p. 184 and elsewhere).

⁷⁹ Treitschke, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 23, 105, 192 f. And to Nietzsche, the masses should be merely the tools of "the most powerful individuals" (*Will to Power*, Vol. II, p. 135).

⁸⁰ We are frequently assured that the people do not really want to take an active part in politics, that they would prefer to be ruled, or that they have insufficient insight to control policies (*Mein Kampf*, pp. 56, 678; Göring, *Germany Reborn*, pp. 88 f.). The majority of the people are governed less by "sober consideration than by feeling and sentiment" (*Mein Kampf*, p. 237).

wholly unconscious of it. An obligation of simple obedience quite naturally followed, and the technique of propaganda could be brought into play to bring the people to a consciousness of the national will and of the rightness of obedience. There was, however, another strain here which was perhaps of greater actual importance in influencing National Socialist thought than Hegelianism, namely the recalling of the earliest German institutions by Lagarde, Moeller van den Bruck, Wagner and Stefan George.

Lagarde had insisted that there was only one form of government which was essentially German—the monarchic form of early German history in which the ruler, while neither absolute nor irresponsible, was regarded as the trustee of the nation.⁸¹ Moeller van den Bruck, writing immediately after the World War, had also stressed the value of the relationship of “trust” (rather than formal control through the ballot⁸²) between leaders and followers in early German history, which he considered to have been “genuine democracy.”⁸³ Wagner, as early as 1848, had been convinced that the old German kingdom had exemplified the proper relationship of ruler and ruled and had incorporated his ideas on the subject in his *Vaterlandsverein* address, published in the *Dresdener Anzeiger* on June 14.⁸⁴ It was the celebration of the old traditions in Wagnerian opera and in the poetry of Stefan George,⁸⁵ however, which was largely responsible for impressing upon the German mind the beauty and value of the personal, confidential relationship between leader and follower which had characterized early German institutions.

National Socialism consequently found in this heritage a useful model for the relationship between leaders and public which it wished to establish in its own institutions, and Rosenberg, for instance, could point to the relationship of command and voluntary

⁸¹ In Lagarde's words, “für uns ist seit der Zeit, in welcher zuerst Germanen in der Geschichte erscheinen, der Fürst der Vertrauensmann des Volkes, des Stammes, des Gaues” (*op. cit.*, pp. 121 f.). See also *ibid.*, pp. 249, 355.

⁸² Moeller van den Bruck, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 f., 117.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁸⁴ *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. IV, p. 144. Cf. also Glasenapp, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

⁸⁵ See particularly *Sagen und Sänge*, published in the collection *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, Der Sagen und Sänge, und Der Haengenden Gaerten* (Berlin, 1899), and Friedrich Gundolf's comments on this aspect of George's work, in *George* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 110 f.

obedience between the elected Herzog and his following in early German history as an original example of a genuinely Germanic form of democracy.⁸⁶ The past, gilded by the passage of time and the praises of newer generations, had provided the National Socialists with a justification of present obedience.

There were, in addition to the foregoing, other influences which had a bearing in this connection. In Prussian discipline, which Spengler celebrated in his *Preussentum und Sozialismus*, and especially in the Prussian army, we find a further example for National Socialism. According to Hitler, the principle which made the Prussian army what it was, namely “*authority of every leader towards [those] below and responsibility towards [those] above,*” ought to underlie the constitution of the German state.⁸⁷ Other models of organization were furnished the National Socialists by the hierarchical system of the Catholic Church⁸⁸ and, of course, by Fascist Italy.⁸⁹ These latter models were of value to the new movement in indicating the means by which the absolute control of the leader could be realized.

In National Socialism, then, is a recognition of a dual necessity; as Hitler put it in 1934, to unite “the will of the people with the authority of a real leadership.”⁹⁰ At the Reichsparteitag in 1933, he stressed the fact that the new leadership must be one which does not regard the people purely as an object of its activity, but which is firmly rooted in it,⁹¹ although, as he had already pointed out, the leadership must be prepared to do without popular approbation if the truth requires it.⁹² Ley considers close contact with the peo-

⁸⁶ *Der Parteitag Grossdeutschlands vom 5. bis 12. September 1938*. Offizieller Bericht über den Verlauf des Reichsparteitages mit sämtlichen Kongressreden (Munich, 1938), pp. 111 f. A similar view is taken by Nicolai, *op. cit.*, p. 12. See also von Hahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 102 f.

⁸⁷ *Mein Kampf*, p. 670. Cf. also Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 516–22; Nicolai, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Koellreutter, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁸⁸ In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler several times expresses admiration for the organization and techniques of the Catholic Church; see for instance, pp. 149 f., 643 f., 682.

⁸⁹ Nicolai, *op. cit.*, pp. 13 f.; Hermann Heller, *Europa und der Fascismus* (Berlin, 1931), p. 155. Nicolai suggests that Sorel influenced National Socialism through Italian Fascism (*op. cit.*, pp. 13 f.).

⁹⁰ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* (Berlin, 1934), Vol. 457, p. 27.

⁹¹ *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933*, p. 21. The idea that the Leader is a member of the community just as any other member is stressed by Fritz Müller in his *Caesarismus, Absolutismus und Führung* (Münster, 1937), p. 48.

⁹² *Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933*, p. 20.

ple to be of the essence of the leadership principle,⁹³ while Dr. Dietrich, Reich Press Chief of the N.S.D.A.P. asserts that the people find their own nature embodied in Hitler.⁹⁴ Koellreutter similarly maintains that the criterion of genuine leadership is the identity of the will of the leader with that of the *Volk*⁹⁵—which means, substantially, that the leader expresses what the nation would acknowledge to be its will, did it properly understand it.

At the same time that this somewhat mystical doctrine is elaborated, however, we find it given a rather strange associate, namely, the theory of representation. Hitler, announcing the law on conscription to the Reichstag May 21, 1935, declared that “With 38 million votes the German Volk has elected a single deputy as its representative.”⁹⁶ He goes on to say that, while there are differences between the German and other democracies, “I feel myself to be precisely as responsible to the German nation as any parliament. I act by virtue of its confidence and upon its authorization.”⁹⁷ He reiterates this same idea in his speech to the Reichstag, March 7, 1939, in which he credits the achievements of his régime to the fact that he has never regarded himself “as the dictator of [his] people, but always only as its leader and thus its agent (*Beauftragter*).”⁹⁸ On this basis, Hitler has felt justified on more than one occasion in asserting that the German government is a more genuine democracy than are the parliamentary democracies.⁹⁹

It is quite in line with this peculiar adaptation of the much criticised term “democracy” (and certainly not inconsistent with the racial interpretation of history), that Hitler acknowledges a responsibility to the *Volk* which, despite the fact that the people

⁹³ Robert Ley, “Social Policy in the New Germany,” *Germany Speaks* (London, 1938), p. 184.

⁹⁴ Otto Dietrich, *Die philosophischen Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus* (Breslau, 1935), p. 36. “In der Persönlichkeit des Führers aber verbindet sich das weltanschauliche und künstlerische Element dieses deutschen Wesens zur vollendeten Einheit, zu dem was wir das Mysterium des Schöpferischen nennen” (*ibid.*). This view is also taken by Krüger, *op. cit.*, pp. 106, 128.

⁹⁵ Koellreutter, *op. cit.*, pp. 66 f.

⁹⁶ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, p. 10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 458, p. 40.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 458, p. 75.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 458, pp. 9, 40. Adolf Hitler, *On National Socialism and World Relations* (Berlin, [1937?]), pp. 12, 15.

have no means of enforcing it, has something of the ring of the old doctrine of popular sovereignty. In addressing the Reichstag on January 30, 1934, he declared that whatever the ultimate form of the German state, the authority of its head would be derived from the German nation.¹⁰⁰ Later in 1934, he stated that his reason for holding a *plébiscite* on the question of combining the Reich Presidency with the Chancellorship was that since "all state authority is derived from the *Volk*," the move should be expressly sanctioned by the people.¹⁰¹ Again, in announcing conscription to the Reichstag in 1935, he took occasion to report on the various problems which confronted the country, and said: "The German nation has a right to require this of me, and I have decided to obey it."¹⁰² In 1937, he expressed the view that, since the revolution of 1932-33, "there is only one trustee of the supreme power among the German people and that trustee is the whole people itself."¹⁰³ And in 1938, "There can be only one sovereign power in the German Reich. It proceeds from the entire German people and not from a part of the people."¹⁰⁴ This is Hitler's theory of the sovereignty of the nation—but it is the sovereignty of a mythical entity, and the theory has no place for the expression of the opinions of the masses, for which the National Socialists have so little regard. Rather, the rôle of the masses of the people, under the leadership principle, is that of loyal and obedient followers of the national leadership. Göring, in particular, frequently stresses the importance of faith, loyalty and "blind obedience" to the Leader,¹⁰⁵ although he insists that this obedience is given of free will.¹⁰⁶ The Leader, in order to remain true to the nation, need only keep faith with himself.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1934, Teil I, p. 751.

¹⁰² *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, p. 40.

¹⁰³ Hitler, *On National Socialism and World Relations*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Speech Delivered to the Reichstag February 20th, 1938* ([Berlin, (1938?)]), p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ Göring, *Reden und Aufsätze*, pp. 48, 139, 274 f. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, pp. 6, 33, 61 f.

¹⁰⁶ Göring, *Reden und Aufsätze*, p. 293. His emphasis on blind obedience is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Rosenberg criticizes the Catholic Church on the ground of the blind, "cadaver-like" obedience rendered to it, particularly by the Jesuit order (*op. cit.*, pp. 176 ff.).

¹⁰⁷ Krüger, *op. cit.*, p. 36. See also p. 123.

IV

The Leadership Principle involves a complete centralization of authority in the hands of the leader, to be delegated if, when and as he sees fit. Göring summarizes the essence of the theory on this point when he writes :

the laws of Nature demand that authority should be exercised from above downwards and responsibility from below upwards [in contrast to the opposite principle as exemplified by democracy]. Each leader has authority and he issues his orders to officials and followers below him. But he is responsible only to his superiors, and the leader at the top is responsible to the people as a whole and to their future.¹⁰⁸

Or, as Hitler put it, "He who wants to be the leader bears, with the highest, unrestricted authority, also the ultimate and the most serious responsibility."¹⁰⁹ This "unrestricted authority" precludes, in practice, a separation of legislative and executive powers; this is clear from the fact that the German cabinet has the right to make not only administrative regulations but also laws.¹¹⁰ All political functions are centralized in the Leader, who is the highest legislator as well as the chief executive. That he is also the supreme judicial power is evidenced by Hitler's report to the Reichstag on the Roehm affair, in which he said that at the moment when Roehm and the others were shot, he was responsible for the "fate of the German nation and [was] thereby the highest judge of the German people."¹¹¹

As to the actual political leadership within Germany, the Party constitutes an *élite* with the aid of which the present leaders found their way to power. Originally a self-designated *élite*, in the sense that no specific criteria of achievement or ability were required, requirements for membership are now definitely established and status within the Party hierarchy is determined from above. Despite the fact that the rise to power of the current leaders may be attributed to something resembling natural selection, that process is not to operate unassisted in the future. In accordance with Hitler's pronouncement that "*The best State consti-*

¹⁰⁸ Göring, *Germany Reborn*, pp. 37 f.

¹⁰⁹ *Mein Kampf*, p. 479.

¹¹⁰ See the Enabling Act, *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1933, Teil I, p. 141.

¹¹¹ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, p. 30.

*tution and State form is that which, with the most natural certainty, brings the best heads of the national community to leading importance and to leading influence,'*¹¹² it is now considered to be the task of government to see that true ability, whatever its social or economic background, is trained for leadership through a special educational program, and is assured the highest positions within the state.¹¹³ As far as succession to the Leader himself is concerned, the law of August 1, 1934, authorized Hitler to deal with the question; in a speech to the Reichstag September 1, 1939, he indicated that the succession would be through Göring to Hess,¹¹⁴ and that should Hess not survive, a method of election of his successor had been provided.¹¹⁵ Natural selection thus appears to have given way, for the future, to artificial selection.

The relationship between leaders and followers, in practice, has obviously been characterized by the triumph of the authoritarian principle over the notion of the sovereignty of the *Volk*. The National Socialist idea of true German democracy has been bolstered up by the *plébiscite*, but that device does not, nor is it intended to, provide any genuine control of the people over the government. Its primary purpose appears to be to provide a demonstration of solidarity—for purposes of external as well as internal politics; or it may be viewed simply as an expression of trust on the part of the people in the Leader on important questions of policy.¹¹⁶ In any case, the *plébiscite* may be instituted only by the government, and never on popular initiative. The function of the nation has become simply to render obedience to a self-appointed leadership. The propaganda technique so expertly developed has its function in encouraging that obedience, and thus has a very great practical value. It is, however, difficult to comprehend an assumption of the necessity of propaganda¹¹⁷ in a *theory* which identifies the will of the Leader with that of the people, which at

¹¹² *Mein Kampf*, p. 669.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 644 f. Hitler, *On National Socialism and World Relations*, pp. 12 f. *Der Parteitag Grossdeutschlands vom 5. bis 12. September 1938*, p. 330.

¹¹⁴ In view of the flight of Hess to England in the spring of 1941, this provision has doubtless been altered.

¹¹⁵ *German White Book: Documents Concerning the Last Phase of the German-Polish Crisis* (New York, 1939), p. 41.

¹¹⁶ Koellreutter, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

¹¹⁷ *Mein Kampf*, pp. 152, 468 and elsewhere.

the same time considers that the Leader "represents" the people—although they have no means of communicating their wishes to him—and in which he interprets the national will intuitively. Koellreutter's explanation, although it is as clear as any which have been offered, leaves something to be desired: propaganda, the activities of the Party, the political education of youth, are all necessary because "without a political following, the leadership loses its meaning."¹¹⁸

Are there, then, no limits to the authority of the government under the leadership principle? Clearly there are not, either in theory or practice, despite the tribute occasionally paid to the ultimate authority of the nation, indicated above. Both in theory and in practice there is to be found in National Socialism a centralization of authority, an autocracy, which is perhaps made more palatable, but is certainly in no wise weakened, by the appeals to tradition, by a deference to a *Volk* the will of which its individual members have no independent part in determining. That government which, Hitler declares, is rooted in the people and has "never thought otherwise than in the people, with the people and for the people"¹¹⁹ is, by definition, one which by virtue of its organic character must always represent the real will of the nation; and it alone is a purely German form of government, the government which the German nation is fated by destiny to have. This theory precludes in principle any possible opposition between the government and the real interests of the nation, with the result that not even an ultimate right of revolution can be admitted.¹²⁰

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¹¹⁸ Koellreutter, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹¹⁹ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, Vol. 458, p. 10.

¹²⁰ This essay was in the press before the publication of Raoul de Roussy de Sales' translation of a selection of Hitler's speeches (*Adolf Hitler: My New Order*, 1941), and Peter Viereck's *Metapolitics. From the Romantics to Hitler*, 1941. The former includes a few relevant texts not cited here, but is in general somewhat scanty in material on this subject. The latter contains interesting brief passages on the *Führer*-concept in Jahn (p. 72), Rosenberg (pp. 243-4, Chamberlain (p. 137), and an extensive one on the same idea in Wagner (pp. 110-4), but a connected analysis of the Leadership Principle does not fall within the plan of the volume.