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SPENGLER AND THE THIRD REICH

BY CARL DREHER

IT IS now over two years since Oswald Spengler, after prescribing heroic death in the Prussian manner for Western man, died quietly in his bed in Munich, leaving behind him the most gigantic wish-fulfilment in interpretative history, buttressed with the learning of the centuries and charged with a misanthropy of astounding potential. There was a time when he might be dismissed as a purely speculative scholar, formidable in his way, yet, when all was said, essentially a myth-maker. But too much of the myth has already become reality. Prophecies, however subjectively grounded, sometimes come true, and one of these days Hitler may essay a long leap toward that tragic destiny which Spengler oracularly told Western civilization it could not escape.

If so, Hitler and the Nazi thinkers will be in debt to Spengler for more than the bare prediction. He was not only an invaluable ally in attacks on the Weimar Republic and on Marxists, pacifists, democrats, and "world improvers" of all varieties, but he provided skeletal Nazi ideas and gave them a respectable pedigree. The doctrinaires of the movement lifted convenient parts of his *Weltanschauung*, subjected them to a thorough Party processing, and threw them in with the rest of their philosophic merchandise. Some of these ideas, also, were of practical political value.

At this stage, while they were on the make, the Nazis esteemed Spengler highly. Their gratitude, however, was not boundless; when they came to power, and he declined to join in the "Heil Hitler!" chorus, they brusquely shouldered him aside. But by that time his contributions had been incor-

porated in their ideology, and in this guise Spengler lives to-day in the minds which decide war and peace in Europe.

I

Spengler at one time considered himself a socialist. To understand "socialism" in his peculiar sense, one must bear in mind that in the first years of the German republic the term was in the air, and anybody who wanted to sell something to the voters, or merely to get an audience, resorted to it automatically. Long before the World War numerous professors and political thinkers had tried to promote a union of the socialist ideal—which to the majority of German workers represented merely orderly social progress—and the high-powered nationalism of Prussian officialdom, the Junkers, and the army. Consequently, when Spengler, in 1919 (the same year in which Anton Drexler founded what was to become the N. S. D. A. P.), published his small book on "Prussianism and Socialism," he was not offering anything basically new. Nevertheless, it had its importance, for the time was propitious, and the author was not only a scholar with a reputation which was shortly to become worldwide, but he possessed an audacity rare in academic circles.

He began by paying his respects to the November revolution and its sequelæ as "the most disgraceful act in German history," and to its perpetrators as "freed convicts, littérateurs, and deserters," while of the moderate Social Democrats in office he said that at the critical moment they had crawled into their holes—"instead of standing at the head of red armies they stood at the head of well paid trade-union officials." In the light of what happened in 1933 this last must be regarded as a bull's-eye. Even in 1919 it struck home, and later Spengler referred gleefully to the scream of rage which the book called forth from the Social Democratic bureaucracy, and said that from its publication the national movement had its impetus. It was no idle boast.

Addressing himself particularly to the young men of

Germany, Spengler sponsored, in "Prussianism and Socialism," a brand of socialism which was anti-Marxian, anti-republican, anti-proletarian, nationalistic, bellicose, capitalistic, and aristocratic. Germans were not revolutionaries, he maintained. The sadistic French, yes. The Frenchman is not satisfied without human heads on pikes, aristocrats hanging from lamp posts, priests massacred by women. As for Marx—*Marx belongs to England.*

Here, of course, Spengler, who from 1914 to 1918 was occupied with the first volume of the "Decline," was doing his bit after the armistice, but he went on to explain that the Prussian socialist ethic says, "Do your duty, work," while the English capitalist ethic says, "Get rich, then you don't have to work any more"; and as it was English capitalism at which Marx aimed his critique, all he produced was a degenerate Manchesterism, while the true, deep idea of socialism stemmed, not from Marx, but from—Frederick William I. This "socialism of the blood" entailed "command and obedience in a sternly disciplined community . . . whose servant every member without exception is." It meant to do one's duty "without any dirty craving for profit." Marx saw work as a commodity, not as a duty, and thus he made the worker a trader, a speculator in his own commodity, whereas under Prussian socialism every worker had the honorable character of an official, as did every entrepreneur. With Olympian impartiality Spengler warned the workers that for them it was Prussian socialism or nothing; for the conservatives, socialism or annihilation. And not only socialism, but democracy. Not, however, English-French democracy. "We have our own."

In his later writings Spengler went further and developed the thesis that Marxian socialism and capitalism were merely the two faces of the same coin, the substance of which was thinking in money. The result was wage capitalism, or capitalism from below—what was a trade-union but a trust for lifting wages?—while capitalism per se was socialism from

above, the socialism of the stock exchange. Trade-unionists and communists, whom he lumped together as "wage bolshevists," were nothing but capitalists without money.

"Prussianism and Socialism" wound up with a fiery appeal to "all those who have marrow in their bones and blood in their veins." "Be men!" Spengler cried, and he called for "a class of socialistic ruling natures," for "socialism implies might, might, and again might." He saw the regeneration of Germany in a welding together of the "best elements" of the working class and the bearers of the old Prussian state tradition. And the method—Spengler made no bones about this then or later—would be through war, "the eternal form of higher human being."

These sentiments naturally appealed more than a little to the coalescing forces of the Nazi movement. The apotheosis of war, of the state, of rank, the emphasis on duty, not rights, on "spiritual" instead of material values, all accorded with the capitalist collectivism toward which they were groping. As for ideas, they took them where they found them, and while Spengler was by no means their only source (nor were the ideas he propounded always original with him), he was, beginning in 1919 and for over a decade thereafter, probably their foremost intellectual as well as spiritual progenitor.

Consider, for example, his identification of Marxism and capitalism. The Nazis discarded the few reservations attached to it, and, adding the racial angle, they had a perfect campaign appeal. Marxism and capitalism were the same thing because both were (1) international, and (2) Jewish. This line had the additional advantage of enabling the Party to retain Gottfried Feder's distinction between Aryan capital, which was creative and virtuous, and international Jewish capital, which was exploitative and vile. Another Nazi slogan, "The common good before individual gain," was the cognate of Spengler's "community whose servant every member without exception is," and in practice both led to the industrial system of present-day Germany, under which

that servant of the state who is an employer is no longer harassed by strikes and collective bargaining. Consistently enough, Spengler's demand that the worker comport himself as a state official was carried out by making the worker a "folk comrade," privileged, on festive occasions, to wear a blue uniform (for which he was also privileged to pay) as a member of the Labor Front.

Even Spengler's frequent self-contradictions were utilizable. His devotion to Prussian socialism did not prevent him from declaring later, in "Man and Technics," that man, as a beast of prey, can brook no limitation of his property rights. His logic was forthright: "A beast of prey is everyone's foe. Never does he tolerate an equal in his den. Here we are at the root of the truly royal idea of property. Property is the domain in which one exercises unlimited power. . . . It is not a right to mere having, but the sovereign right to do as one wills with one's own." Obviously all that was wrong here was the confusion of property and the state. The industrialists who contributed to Hitler's campaign chests may have shared this confusion; if so, the Nazis clarified the question for them after coming to power. For themselves, as the embodiment of the state, they reserved the royal prerogative of unlimited power.

Hitler's National Socialism and Spengler's Prussian socialism were essentially similar in that one was all nationalism and the other all Prussianism. The difference was one of personalities rather than character, but that difference was important. The Reichswehr and the Junkers would no doubt have preferred Spengler's version, but Hitler happened to be behind the other, and he was indispensable. The dynamics of the situation were summed up in a statement by Colonel-General von Fritsch, when he said that he had considered it his task to "unite and merge the heritage of the Prussian-German soldier tradition with the victoriously forward-storming spirit of Adolf Hitler's Reich." In that merging Spengler, the scholar, was left out in the cold

much like Hugenberg, the Minister of Economics in 1933. The latter's contribution to the Nazi triumph is generally conceded. The contribution of Spengler's Prussian socialism deserves an equal measure of recognition.

II

In the field of "race" the Nazis owe little to Spengler; from a scholarly standpoint, this is certainly to his credit. About the only similarity is that both his teachings and theirs are imbued with a proper savagery. Spengler decried "morbid reflection" on human suffering, and in this Hitler followed him, referring to "the contemptible fetters of a so-called humanitarianism of individuals," in contradistinction to "the humanitarianism of Nature which destroys the weak and thus makes room for the strong." Spengler assailed modern medicine for interfering with natural selection and for accelerating racial decay. A strong race he defined as one with an "inexhaustible birth rate" compensating for a "severe selection process, which is provided by the resistances to living represented by misfortune, sickness, and war." The test of race was for him speed of reproduction.

But, otherwise, Spengler's racial ideas were too ethnologically respectable, too metaphysical, and, above all, too lacking in venom toward the Jews to serve Nazi aims. Spengler was a consistent anti-materialist, always stressing the soul, the symbol behind the physiognomy. "Race" he regarded in the same way. Even in his frequent allusions to "blood," his thought was detached from purely physical aspects. Comradeship, he said, breeds races, and he cited French *noblesse*, Prussian landed nobility, and, in the same breath, the European Jew, "with his immense race-energy and his thousand years of ghetto life." Anybody has race who has tenacity, strong fighting instincts, who feels himself born to mastery. The idea of race purity, he said, was grotesque, all stocks and species having been mixed for centuries. In "The Hour of Decision" (1933), he struck directly at the Nazis:

“Those who talk too much about race no longer have it in them. What is needed is not a pure race, but a strong one, which has a nation within it.”

Thus there is no overt anti-Semitism in Spengler's books. He detested Marx, but the worst thing he could say about him was, “His thinking is purely English.” The Englishmen whom Spengler mentions with approval, “as possessed of the true political instinct,” are Burke, Pitt, Wellington, and Disraeli. If a Jew defended the conservative forces of state, monarchy, army, property, et cetera, he was practically as good as anyone else. This, of course, gave little comfort to practical politicians looking for a scapegoat.

In consequence, the Nazis diverged sharply from Spengler at this point. They approved heartily of the substitution of “spiritual” for material values in such matters as wage rates, but “race” was a different affair. They did indeed indulge in a good deal of rhetoric about the spiritual significance of race, as when Rosenberg wrote that “Nordic blood represents that great mystery which supersedes and excels the ancient sacraments,” but as soon as they got down to cases they became gross materialists, and their viewpoint was and is completely chemical. The great mystery of Nordic blood must be protected from Jewish seed, a fearful biological poison, which, if present in any amount above twelve and a half per cent, makes any examination of the individual's soul (even assuming that he has one) entirely unnecessary. Typically, Hitler in “Mein Kampf” describes Marx as the one man who recognized “in the slough of a corrupting world the essential poison, and extracted it, as if by magic arts, in a concentrated solution in order to bring quicker destruction to the independent existence of free nations on this earth. And all in order to serve his own race.” The Führer has as yet not allowed one Nuremberg Congress to pass without references to “international world-poison,” “the decomposing leaven [or ferment] of decomposition,” and similar technicalities. Now that Italy has also gone racist, Virginio

Gayda, Mussolini's mouthpiece, follows suit by holding the Jews responsible for a "process of corrosion."

In this matter of race, official Nazi doctrine clashes with Spengler in another respect. Spengler, at least in the "Decline," regarded cultures as inherently cyclic and limited in span; they grow aimlessly like the flowers of the field and like flowers decay, and nothing can be done about it. Thus, our culture, having almost expended its allotted thousand years, is nearing its foreordained end. But Hitler—and, therefore, Rosenberg and every other Nazi thinker—knows that blood mixture is the only reason civilizations disappear and that pure blood is the only preventive. Moreover, he does not, like Spengler, merely reduce a spent people to "fellaheen" status; he fears, or pretends to fear, that as a result of blood contamination humanity will completely perish. But Spengler derided also the Nazis' belief in skeletal indices of race, and such terms as "Aryan" and "Semite" were to him nothing but "silly catchwords borrowed from philology." Here the *Oberlehrer* in him revolted against systematic distortion of authoritative technical opinion. Yet his hatreds were sometimes stronger than his scholarship, as when he classified Russians, South Italians, and South Spaniards as colored peoples.

III

In the last five chapters of the "Decline," which in wealth of analogy and seminal thought are major works in themselves, Spengler presented his picture of the genesis of society and adumbrated the future. As with all of his earlier writings, the citations and the piercing observations with which he sprinkled his work could be used in the service of conclusions quite different from those he reached. To Spengler the only possible outcome was the emergence of Cæsarism, the conquest of the powers of money and machinery by military adventurers beside whom Napoleon was only a small-timer, with present-day dictatorships as a prelude. By a different selection and interpretation it would be just as easy to

prove the inevitability of a world-transforming communism. And by threading a third path through Spengler's maze of fact and fancy, the Nazi-minded reader could arrive at the German totalitarian state and glean a few pregnant suggestions for its policy and conduct. As far as the Germany of today is concerned, the first two conclusions are conjectures for the future; the third is a fact.

The sale of the "Decline" was in itself an event in intellectual history, and it was praised as well as criticized by such figures as James T. Shotwell, George Santayana, Charles A. Beard, and Thomas Mann. (Mann detested Spengler for his "hyenlike gift of prophecy," called him a snob and a defeatist of humanity, but said that nobody would deny that the "Decline" had "great characteristics.") The definitive word from the Nazi standpoint, however, was not said until Rosenberg published "The Myth of the Twentieth Century" in 1930. Rosenberg, whose claim to a doctorate was based on a degree in architecture, whose academic experience otherwise was principally in the editorial office of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and whose vast reading did not prevent him from believing in the validity of the "Protocols of Zion," told Spengler that although his work had been great and good in some respects, the awakening of the German racial soul had now advanced far beyond such studies. He took Spengler to task, not only for the racial heresies already mentioned, but for standing with those "political criminals" who wished to reduce the German people to the misery of fellaheen. As for the cosmopolis of twenty million which Spengler had predicted, Rosenberg said flatly that it would not be permitted in Germany, that the people would have to go back to the land, and like it. Which was better, he asked—"voluntarily" to die miserably on the pavement, or to be "compelled" (Rosenberg's quotation marks) to a healthy regeneration in the country or in smaller towns? Moreover, he pointed out the advantages of decentralization from the standpoint of protection from air raids in future wars.

Spengler had identified honor more or less with race, race with nobility, and nobility with land. Rosenberg, omitting the middle terms and applying the concept nationally, declared: "Wherever the idea of tormented national honor arises, the demand for more land will be heard. . . . Today, when all the enemies of Germany are insulting her honor, they have also stolen her soil." He claimed additional territory for the "millions of unborn Germans," and indicated where it could be had.

When the Nazis came to power, while they could not seize the Sudetenland and the Ukraine immediately to assuage their national honor and provide land for the unborn, they did apply some of Spengler's ideas of blood and soil without delay. The peasant was attached to the soil in a "community of duty" by decrees providing for primogeniture and against the sale or encumbrance of peasant holdings. Thus the soil was immobilized and protected from the "mammonism" and "vulturism" of the cities. In the current speeches of Darré and the other mentors of German agriculture only the overtones are of Nazi origin; the fundamentals are strongly Spenglerian.

For the rest, most of the links between Spengler's thought and Nazi doctrine are self-evident: the absolute subservience of the individual to the State; the leadership of the élite (except that Spengler's élite had to come to terms with the Nazi élite and be glad of it); the absurdity and degradation of contending parties and democracy; the splendor of war against the meanness of peace. And, with his reiterated scorn for "submen of the monster city, Marxists, and literary folk," it is a pity that Spengler could not have lived to see more of "that great period of history in which," Hitler exulted, "not the wiseacres but the brave will come out on top."

IV

Perhaps, though, Spengler saw enough of it. For this must be said to his credit: one was never in doubt as to where he stood. To weasel words he was not addicted, to other

men's opinions he was neither deferential nor tolerant, and the intellectual atmosphere of the Third Reich could have been no more to his liking, although for very different reasons, than that of the Weimar republic. Under the latter, at least, he might, like everyone else, speak his piece; under the Third Reich, a Spengler, like any unknown scribbler, was subject to the pleasure of a Dr. Goebbels.

As we have seen, except in a common hatred for the "November criminals," Spengler had never been in complete accord with the Nazis. He had served the Nazi cause by contributing new ideas, or trenchantly restating old ones, and the prestige of his name helped the Party even though he was only loosely identified with its aims. But he had also permitted himself to make vicious cracks at the expense of his allies, as in 1924, when the Nazis, after the *Bürgerbräukeller* putsch, were almost down and out, and Spengler sneered at "idealistic dreams, romanticism, party spectacles with flags, parades, and uniforms," and referred to Hitler, although not by name, as a "heroic tenor." Later he called for "statesmen, not party leaders and visionaries of a Third Reich." In 1932 he struck at "idiots" attempting to promulgate a "national communism." It was at about this time that he began to get on Party nerves, especially those of the National Socialist left wing, such as it was. (The genuine national bolshevists, such as Otto Strasser, Walter Stennes, and their small following, had split from the Party in 1930). That would hardly have amounted to much, since the left wing was in any case on the way to eclipse, but there were also serious political differences between Spengler and the Party's official position.

In 1933, with "The Hour of Decision," Spengler leaped into the arena of practical politics. Two years before he had approached it with "Man and Technics," which was in part an epitome of the political sections of the "Decline." It marked a transition, however. In the "Decline" Spengler was completely committed to political predestination — all

that man could do was to jump on the cosmic bandwagon: "*Ducunt Fata volentem, nolentem trahunt.*" In "Man and Technics" Destiny spoke through Spengler's mouth, gave general political advice, and exhorted thoroughbreds to die like the Roman sentry at Pompeii. "The honorable end is the one thing that cannot be taken from a man." Then in "The Hour of Decision," after a passing nod to Fate in the preface, he told Germany and the world exactly what to do, and in such language that even the Nazis were aghast. It was like an archbishop succumbing to a manic attack in the pulpit. Only a trace of scholarship flickered amid gusts of diatribe against eighteenth-century rationalism, Rousseau, the urban intellect, the workers, the eight-hour day, the colored races, missionaries, insurance, finance, critics, the priest rabble, "Christian bolshevism," and everything else that he had come to hate in his fifty-three years. It was blood-curdling political megalomania, and in places it approached the threshold of the madhouse.

The Nazis were already in power, but Spengler's only concessions to prudence were a prefatory explanation that the first one hundred and six pages of the book had been written and set up before January 30, 1933, a remark that the uprising of 1933 was Prussian through and through, and an occasional transparent veiling, such as the substitution of phrases like *Sozialromantik* for National Socialism when he was attacking policies of the Party. Even this was discarded wherever he dealt with the "national bolsheviks," who, he remarked, "rave like mendicant friars about universal poverty and squalor—in delightful agreement with the Marxists." The attack was by no means confined to the pseudo-radical Nazis; it was merely most intense in that sector. Spengler defined the whole mass base of the movement as a form of leftism. Any dictatorship that courted favor in the streets was against his principles. He had predicted Cæsarism, he wanted it then and there, and no substitutes were acceptable.

He warned Hitler that even in Fascism there exist two

fronts, and pointed out its implications. Every revolutionary movement, he said, attains power with a prætorian vanguard, which is thenceforward not only useless, but dangerous. "The real master is known by the manner in which he dismisses them, ruthlessly and without thanks." This advice Hitler shortly followed in disposing of Roehm and the rest.

A more general piece of counsel, which fell on barren soil, was addressed to National Socialists who believe that "they can ignore the world or oppose it, and build their castles-in-the-air without creating a possibly silent, but very palpable, reaction from abroad." Spengler's denunciation of autarchy, which he defined as "the attitude of the dying animal," was similarly ignored.

In 1919 Spengler had paid tribute to the German workers' unrevolutionary and sternly Prussian virtues, but now that they had failed him, he took a club to them. He ascribed the post-War housing shortage to the desire of the proletarian to live under middle-class conditions, and commented, "It was the pathetic symbol of the fall of all the ancient powers of class and rank." Unemployment was the result of "luxury wages," which made it impossible for European industrialists to compete with those of the colored peoples. Thus the German workers, with the rest, by demanding high wages, were abetting the fearful menace of the colored peoples, who, allied with Asiatic bolshevism, would overwhelm civilization.

The Nazis now moved against their former coadjutor. Spengler, of course, was used to polemics. The academic controversy over the "Decline" had reached enormous proportions. At first, somewhat overawed, they handled him respectfully. Arthur Zweiniger, among others, rebuked him, more in sorrow than in anger, for not recognizing the greatness of Hitler, and explained to him the difference between Marxism, or as the Nazis now called it, *After-sozialismus*, the socialism of the anus, and the noble, anterior socialism of the N. S. D. A. P. Spengler was adjured to abandon his

beast-of-prey complex, and to cease railing at ideals and systems. German happiness, peace, and justice were defined for him at length, and he was forthwith summoned to the mourners' bench.

But this was only a preliminary. It soon became plain that this arrogant teacher would not play ball, that he had served his purpose, and that, like the prætorians, he was dangerous. He was still arguing that "ancient tradition must continue effective," that government must rest on the army and a restricted ruling minority. As head of the government, not a lower-middle-class upstart, but a Frederick the Great. Just below, not the Party, but a hereditary racial aristocracy—racial in Spengler's sense: the Junkers. And then—the fighting force—not the Storm Troopers nor even the *Schutz Staffel*, but the Reichswehr.

A redoubtable Nazi champion now entered the list: Johann von Leers, Director of the Division of Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations of the German Institute for Politics. He was twenty-two years younger than Spengler. Although a lawyer, he considered himself an expert on ethnology and anthropology, and had written "History on a Racial Basis." He was the author of two N. S. D. A. P. best-sellers: "Fourteen Years of the Jew-Republic," and "Jews—Take a Look at Yourselves," the latter classifying Jews under such headings as "Murderous Jews," "Lying Jews," "Swindling Jews," "Obscene Jews," et cetera, and illustrated with pictures of Elizabeth Bergner, Einstein, Liebknecht, and Emil Ludwig ("actually Jew Cohn").

This savant and others like him now confronted Spengler. Their own omissions, distortions, and howlers were not in question. Spengler's were. Lifted from their patriotic context, they had the quality of pure raving. He was branded a "Communist" and even threatened, unofficially, with arrest. He became—a passing bit of poetic justice—a first-rate intellectual scapegoat. It was the last purpose he could serve. The Nazis attacked him as a contemner of the people, as in-

deed he was, and they assumed the rôle of defenders of the working class.

Spengler took the hint. Intellectual courage he had, but it was impotent in the face of the Nazi machine which he had helped to create. In 1935 he wrote a "Contribution to the History of the Second Millenium B. C." On May 8, 1936, he was found dead in bed of a heart attack, thus obviating further unpleasantness.

V

The virtues which earlier critics found in Spengler remain. Had he kept silence after the "Decline" he could have gone down in literary history as a somewhat eccentric scholar, but without question of his genius. The later writings cast a lurid reflection over his power of allegorical synthesis, the vast range of his information, and his high poetic gifts, well nigh obscuring these and other marks of greatness. Yet they are there. To deny them indiscriminately because one recoils from the author's politics is scarcely defensible.

At the opposite extreme—and the error here arises from lack of information rather than temperamental differences—is the belief that a vast psychic deterioration took place between 1918 and 1934, that a monstrous *Spiessbürger* suddenly emerged and slew the philosopher. No one can hold this view if he reads the "Decline" after the later works, and gives due attention to the books which were never translated from the German and hence have largely escaped the notice of English and American commentators. Every one of the ideas which startled the liberal reviewers in "Man and Technics" and "The Hour of Decision" is to be found in the second volume of the "Decline," which appeared in 1922, and they were not presented for the first time then. The difference is that in the shorter works these ideas are divested of their flowing contextual garments, stripped down for action, and thrust forth with spleen and violence.

The "Decline" had the soaring magnificence of a Gothic cathedral, and it arose in fact from the same sources of Fau-

stian ambition, of which Spengler had his share. A lot of things can be intoned in a church, in Latin, with lights and music, which, baldly stated in daylight, will not hold water—and are not meant to. But when Spengler began to epitomize and select he was no longer sheltered by the awe-inspiring edifice.

The fact is that Spengler's débâcle was inevitable the moment he stepped out of the library. It was the result of the inherent limitations of a mode of thought resting on poetry, metaphor, analogy, and intuition. He himself pointed out in the first volume of the "Decline" that poetic ideas, when exposed to the test of facts, yield grotesque results. If Spengler had heeded his own warning, he would have realized that a poetic and intuitive interpretation of the history of Apollonian, Magian, and Faustian man could result only in an intuitive and poetic structure, and that the application of the same mind and method to the realities of contemporary politics was foredoomed to produce ludicrous results. On the latter ground any shrewd Nazi polemicist could beat a devil's tattoo on the beetling brow of the most brilliant historical philosopher in Germany. Spengler had repeatedly stressed that only the "fact-man" could cope with political questions, but he was no fact-man himself.

A closely related weakness was Spengler's addiction to the metaphysical view, even though his metaphysics was strictly of this world, the entelechy of fact and force. Metaphysics, like any other structure of the mind, has its internal validity, but it has its perils when applied to society. For instance, Spengler regarded the hatred of the Aryan for the Jew as a phenomenon of metaphysical origin, originating in a phase difference of cultural cycles and expressing itself in attacks on Jewry on its intellectual and business sides, as it did once in the religious sphere when religion was of first importance. Now racial hatred may not be wholly economic in origin—what is?—but to deny the economic causes is to shut out common experience, as well as possible remedies.

We know that in Germany and Austria the Nazis' anti-Semitic agitation appealed to shopkeepers and professional men because it promised to eliminate Jewish rivals, but that these same shopkeepers were appalled when the Storm Troopers not only closed up the store of the dirty Jew down the block, but ruined the good Jews—that is, their own customers. In Russia, in a partially socialized society, there may be metaphysical anti-Semitism, but pogroms have ceased and it is feasible to station Jewish policemen in Cossack towns, although the phase difference of thirty centuries between Cossack and Jew has certainly not been affected by twenty years of Soviet rule. Here, as in much of Spengler, metaphysics affords a flight from reality.

All these basic errors of emphasis and method were aggravated by the violence of Spengler's nationalism, intensified by the World War and the peace that followed. His chauvinism, of course, was in evidence from the beginning. He said in the preface that he was proud to call the "Decline" a German philosophy. It would and should have been, anyway, but the italicized fervor with which he called attention to the fact was a bad augury. What Treitschke said of himself was equally true of Spengler: "The patriot in me is a thousand times stronger than the professor!"

VI

Is there a solution to the riddle of this complex and striking personality? The biographical data are so meager — Spengler deliberately suppressed any information about himself—that one can only conjecture. He said once to a friend: "There are two more works I want to write. When they are done, I am going to throw my library into the Isar." The remark was no doubt made humorously, but the protest against books which it implies was not incidental. It was the application to himself of his philosophy of blood against intellect.

Certainly its author was not a satisfied man. He wrote in

the "Decline" that the fortunate beings who possess the "last and highest gift of complete humanity" — ability to command—enjoy "a wondrous sense of power that the man of truths can never know. . . ." This passage, one among others of the same kind, is written with such yearning that one can hardly escape the suspicion that Spengler was at war with himself, and that his constant flings at "ink-slingers" and "ideologues" were a form of self-castigation. He read and wrote more than any other man in Europe, and of necessity his reiterated contempt for the men of truths came down on his own head.

This I believe was Spengler's personal tragedy. He admired men of action, and as it happened he was caged among the men of thought. He who had cited Polycletus and the Gracchi and the tyranny of Cleisthenes of Sicyon, who could weigh Al-Farabi and Alkabi against Aristotle, who had taken method from Goethe and from Nietzsche the questioning faculty, who had discerned the mythology of modern science and seen Faustus in the machine—he should have been a von Moltke (whom he worshiped), or at least one of those soldier-scholars who play a dual rôle in history. But that was not to be. Like the melancholy trumpeter of Säckingen, Spengler could have said before his death, "*Es wär' zu schön gewesen; es hat nicht sollen sein.*"

He was a tragedian rather than a historian, and a reactionary of more than natural size. In him the Junker spirit reached its peak. His longings were feudal: he was for the country against the town, for caste against democracy, for war against peace, for instinct against reason, for everything early against everything late. And he never lacked magnitude. He was no puny reactionary regurgitating a few decades: Spengler spewed up five hundred years all at once. Magnitude he never lacked.