The History National Socialism & Hilterism

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Introduction

The conventional view within scholarship of the history is that solely Adolf Hitler conceptualized National Socialism. I challenge this historical perceptive, as I contend that the political-philosophical principals which Nazism espoused had been in existence well before Hitler came to the foreground of German politics. Furthermore, I will argue that it was through sheer force of will and political manoeuvring that Hitler managed to attain the leadership of the Nazi Movement and then expropriated it for his own worldview.

My argument will be built on three major points. Firstly I will show that the essence of Nazism can be traced back to 19th century Germanic intellectualism, secondly I will analyse how these ideas were implemented within the political realm by examining the agenda of the original German Workers Party along with its founding members and finally, I will examine the not only the influence of Hitler on the party but the difference between the original ideals of National-Socialism and Hitler’s own personalized interpretation of Nazism. Essentially, I will establish there existed a predominate Germanic intellectual lineage which began with Friedrich Hegel and ended with Adolf Hitler.

However before going further, I acknowledge that my thesis echoes the Sonderweg argument, but I would claim it differs in substance. The Sonderweg argument proposes that Germany was the realization of an ‘Apollonian-Dionysian Greek Tragedy’. implying that they were destined to descend down a ‘special path’ that led to the inevitability of Nazism. The implication is that the concepts that were advocated by the Third Reich were embedded into the very character of Germany itself. Thereby if on analysis the Germanic intellectual, political and cultural history over the centuries, dating back to the days of Martin Luther, the conclusion is that the Germanic nation, unlike the West, possessed inalienable flaws that set Germany on its course to reach the ultimate destination of Hitlarianism.

The Intellectual Godfathers of National Socialism

The ideology of National Socialism did not originate with Hitler. As historian Robert Waite expressed in The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler, the ideas which were later fused to create Nazism were conceived by five German intellectuals, such as; Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich List, Paul de Lagarde, Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler. I would also add Karl Marx to the list of influential figures that also affected Nazism. However, it would be inaccurate to think that these men had intended to create such an ideology. To the contrary, as seen in the case of Spengler who not only came into conflict with the Nazi Movement but also condemned it. However, regardless of their feelings toward the Hitler-led party, it was their ideas that provided the political-philosophical foundations that saw the transformation of Germany from Bismarck, Wilhelm II and the Weimar Republic into the totalitarian Third Reich.

The earliest traces of German-fascism can be found in the 19th century within the works of Friedrich Hegel, who wrote of the importance and power of the State, absolute idealism, the dialectic and the master-slave dynamic. In regards to the power of the State, Hegel asserted that the State must be revered above all institutions, as Government itself was the institutionalization of God. According to Hegel, the State is the synthesis that evolves from the clash of thesis and antithesis; the will of the individual and the collective, power and justice must merge in the form of the State.

Furthermore, Hegel also expressed hostility towards the parliamentary system, describing it as ‘incompetent and ignorant’, going on to express his admiration of the ‘Great Men of history’. I will argue that Hegelianism was proto-totalitarianism, as it will soon become apparent that this philosophy has influenced many other theorists from all sides of the political spectrum, must notably Karl Marx.

Another 19th century academic, economist Friedrich List, also advanced the power of the State. However, List perceived this outlook from a nationalist-economic standpoint. Contrasting the father of Western laissez-faire capitalism, individualism and cosmopolitanism, Adam Smith, List championed State intervention and control. Unlike Smith who supported global Free Trade, List advocated the creation of a ‘National Customs Union’, based upon German ethnicity that was to encompass the coast, from the Rhine to Poland, including Holland and Denmark. All these countries were too unite into one body that would be spearheaded by Germany, thus establishing a ‘Pax Germania’ upon the European continent. Although international Free Trade was frowned upon, economic liberalism was favored within this Germanic Customs Union, yet high tariff walls were to be upheld thus protecting the Union against external economic threats. Although List came to his nationalist tendencies predominantly from an economic perceptive, I would state there was an authoritarian undertone to his worldview, as he also proposed a ‘Royal Dictatorship’ to be established.

Contemporary scholar Paul de Lagarde was said to be a brilliant Prussian conservative and rabid anti-Semite, who later
The many publications of Friedrich Nietzsche have influenced the future Nazi ideology, such as *Will to Power* and the Übermensch. He declared that democracy was a decadent disaster, as it meant that ‘At the bottom is one and all self-seeking cattle and mob’.[13] In order to combat what he described to be ‘parliamentary drivel’, he challenged the German youth to prevail over the democratic principal by becoming a Übermensch/Superman. He furthered this idea in *Will to Power*, where he spoke of two species of men with two systems of morality and modes of conduct: masters and slaves. From this perspective, those who were considered ‘inferior’ simply did not measure up to Übermensch standards and thus allowed to be treated like chattel.[14] Although Nietzschians have declared that his ‘Superman’ was achieved by transcending culture, not declaring racial superiority, I would say that he almost invited Hitler to pervert his ideas when he described his herculean-being a ‘magnificent blond beast, roaming wantonly in search of prey and victory’.[15] This ‘new order’ of Great Politics would be a ‘will create a new breed humanity’. [16] It is interesting to note that Nietzsche also longed the ascension of a mighty leader to become the ‘Master of the Masses’, who would set forth the dogmas of power and control.[17]

It was Karl Marx who provided a prototype synthesis of the abovementioned intellectuals for the Nazi Movement to develop and alter for their own means. Marx had combined the power of the state, the principal of struggle, economic nationalization, race theory and the realization of the ‘Superman’. According to Marxist thought, humanity was axiomatically imperfect therefore only through scientific socialism could humanity be perfected.[18] Once the socialist revolution occurs and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is established, the Nietzschian ‘New Man’ can be born. According to George Watson of Cambridge University, this was the ultimate goal of Marxism, to creation a new breed of Man.[19] In regards to race, it is often overlooked that socialism advocated genocide. Watson cites Marx’s *People's Paper* that those classes and races too weak to master the conditions of life must perish in the ‘revolutionary holocaust’. [20] Anti-Semitism was also considered, as Marx that tied Judaism with capital in his essay *On the Jewish Question*. [21] However others have argued that he meant that the international working class must emancipated form the global Capitalist system.[22] It is not surprising that Hitler had privately stated that he learnt a great deal from reading Marx and that the whole doctrine of National Socialism was based on Marxism.[23]

It was the historian-philosopher, Oswald Spengler, who promoted the reasons as to why Germany had to reject Western ideals and adopt non-Marxist version of socialism. Due to his great deductive abilities, he argued that the Great War was simply a geo-representation of a struggle between German and Anglo ideas: the dominant Anglo-Establishment and the Prussian Alternative.[24] As he wrote in *Prussianism and Socialism*, the English supported individualism, liberal-democracy, and capitalism. Contrasty Germans held authoritarianism, communitarianism and hierarchical socialism are hallmarks of their society.[25] This explains his repudiation of the Western model of the Weimar Republic, as he described it as a ‘hothouse of careerism, interest-groups politics and corruption’.[26] In *Hour of Decision*, Spengler particularly attacks liberalism, stating that it pulls down all pillars of civilization.[27] However, it would be wrong to presume Spengler supported communism, as he frequently and openly criticized Marxism by stating that the great political task was to ‘free German-Socialism from Marx’. This means to achieve this was by overcoming the central idea of class struggle, implanting nationalistic spirit and awakening consciousness of the innately socialistic ethos of German society.[28] True Germanic Socialism did not mean nationalization through expropriation or robbery: his socialism meant the slow transformation of the worker into an economic functionary, and the employer into a responsible supervisory official.[29] In Spengler’s Germany, the fusion of Nationalism and Socialism must occur as neither could truly exist without the other.[30]

The themes that becomes apparent within 19th century Germanic thought is anti-Semitism, hostile rejection towards the Western principals of individualism, democratic thought and liberal-capitalism along with the embracement of collectivism, racial-cultural superiority and the principal of absolute rule: the very same credence of what will become National Socialism.

**The Founding Fathers of Nazism**

It appears that neither the ideas nor even the name ‘National Socialism’ was a novelty. Not only did the ideas predate Hitler, but also so did attempts to create a political party based on some of these very principals. The brilliant politician of the Wilhelmina era, Friedrich Naumann, undertook the 1896 political creation known as the named National-Sozial.[31] Furthermore, the ideas set forth by Spengler came thorough Naumann as he sought to achieve an economic and cultural hegemony over the European continent with his ‘Mitteleuropa Plan’. In his 1915 work *Mitteleuropa*, he proposes...
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The precursor of Hitler’s Nazi Party originated in much less prestigious surroundings, as being one of the many

political debating circles that sprang up across Germany after the First World War. These gatherings mainly functioned

as a social-instrument which dissatisfaction and rage could be vented. The leader of this group, which took this

frustration and channelled it to form a political movement, was former Unionist, Anton Drexler. This ‘enlightened

workman’ urged German workers to support the reforms advocated by socialism, however being a patriot he

denounced its internationalism. It appears that Drexler instinctively agreed with List and Spengler, in wanting a

socialized independent Germany. By 1919, Drexler reconstituted the party as the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (DAP) or the

German Workers Party, and was mainly comprised of politically minded workingmen and returning soldiers.

Among its early membership were two rabid anti-Semitic Russian Revolution refugees, Dietrick Eckart and Protocols of Zion supporter Alfred Rosenberg. It is no surprise that Rosenberg later said that Langede was his ‘spiritual brother’ and forefather of the Nazism. Eckart was more so concerned with anti-capitalism proclaiming: Down with envy! Our demand is true Socialism. Power should only be given to him who has German blood alone in his veins! Count von Bothmer echoed Hegel in his belief that the individual must assimilate into an ‘organic whole’, soon joined them.

Another early member, Gottfried Feder, appeared to be the heir of List who essentially gave the infant German Workers Party an ideological-driven economic program that upheld State ownership of land and the prohibition of private sales and lands, nationalization of banks with the abolition of interest thus distinguishing between productive and non-productive capital and destroying the ‘slavery of profits’. [40]

Another notable personality joined during the early 1920’s: First Lieutenant Ernst Rohm. In these early days, Rohm was instrumental in building the paramilitary wing of German Workers Party known as the Sturmabteilung (SA). This had unforeseen consequences as their activity made German Intelligence send a spy to report back their activities, former Corporal Adolf Hitler [42].

The Rise of Hitlerism

Upon first joining the Party, Hitler quickly fell under the tutelage of Rosenberg, Feder and Eckart. Inspired by the March on Rome, Hitler decided to attempt his own coup, known as the Beer Hall Putsch. But after it failed, he found himself jailed for attempting an overthrow of the government.

It was during his incarceration that Hitler began to develop his own personalized brand of Nazism. He no longer drew a distinction between ‘Germanic-influenced national Russians’ and the ‘Bolshevization’ of Russia brought about by Jews. No longer did he speak of collaboration with non-Bolshevik Russia and now looked with hostility eastwards, for only the destruction of Russia could ensure Germany’s safety. This created the foundations of Hitler’s ‘New Order’ that saw the dramatic shift from Mittelueuropa to Lebensraum. Professor Karl Haushofer developed the ladder with his Geopolitik, which was a geo-political theory developed Oswald Spengler and it attempted to dethrone Britain from global domination and halt the US or Russia from assuming that role. Its fundamental five pillars: the Hegelian concept of the superiority of the State over the individual, autarky, pan-Germanism, and colonial imperialism land/sea strategic control. Hitler is shown to adopt such ideas in his policy-centric, lesser-known Zweites Buch. In regards to Russia, it was now viewed to be source of all the world ills and therefore Germany was no longer interested in a ‘buffer zone’ and was now driven for ‘living space’ for the Germany people and the exterminate of those considered subhuman. After Hitler was released, he set about regaining the leadership within the NADSP and then to reconstruct it according to his personal worldview.

The Anschluss of Nazism by Hitlerism

The long ideological cold war rapidly heated up when a major confrontation between the Hitler and Strasser factions finally occurred. It was Otto that accused Hitler of betraying the revolutionary aims of the National Socialist Movement. Being originally based upon anti-Western ideals, the Party was concerned with the idea of joining an alliance with the British Empire. Hitler counted by saying that England was in the interest of Germany because it was necessary to establish Nordic-Germanic hegemony over Europe. However it was the concept of the ‘Great Man’ that further escalated tension between the two. According to Strasser, Nazism was the ‘idea’ of Germanic socialism, and although
he recognized that Hitler had played a vital role over in elevating the Party into mainstream politics, he was not synonymous with the movement. Hitler denounced Strasserism as nothing more than pure Marxism. When Otto recalled List's theory of economic nationalism, Hitler scoffed 'I have never heard more wretched theism and dilettantism. Believe me, Nazism would not be worth anything if it were to be confined to Germany and will not secure the rule of superior race over the whole world.' According to Hitler, ‘socialism’ was a revolution based not on politics, social issues or economics but race. 

This exchange highlighted one of the key differences between the two philosophies: the role of the Leader. The notion of a ‘Great Man’ had always been present within 19th Germanic thought, such as Nietzsche’s ‘Master of the Masses’. However, once the Führer-cult was established, who was viewed as the embodiment of the ‘idea’ and thus provided a sense of unity. The aura surrounding the ‘Führer’ allowed Hitler to expropriate the ideology itself. However, this Hitler-cult did create a backlash as his domination had alienated and angered old comrades due to his refusal to demand the Chancellorship without compromise. By 1932 many within the Party began to view Hitler as an obstacle, rather than an advantage, in obtaining Government and once again that thought of replacing Hitler with Strasser was contemplated. Unlike Hitler, he did not possess an ‘all-or-nothing’ attitude and was open to working in coalitions and exploring alliances. It was these traits, which made him acceptable and was therefore was approached by Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher and offered the Vice-Chancellorship. This offer held a dual function; it would prevent Hitlerism taking over the Nazi Movement and/or even split the Party itself. This provided Strasser the opportunity to overthrow Hitler and advance ‘traditional Nazism’. This was prohibited coming to pass by two factors; Hitler imposing a personal loyalty-oath to his person by members, which prevent any wavering supporters within the Movement from breaking away, and support a Strasser-Chancellorship. And although Strasser considered accepting such an offer, he was above all loyal to the ideology and realised this event could destroy the Party itself and ultimately refused the Office. It appears that Strasser misjudged the situation and failed to win over Hitler subjects or divide the party itself and found himself in political exile.

Conclusion –

In conclusion, I believe that there exists a ‘fascist lineage’ within Germanic-intellectual thought that ranged from Hegel to Hitler. However, this does not vindicate the Sonderweg argument, as that theory rests on the belief of predestination. I believe that although Germany may have been destined to experience a form of autocratic rule it was not predestined to be ruled by Hitlerism. I contend that the ideas put forth by the ‘Nazi Godfathers’ was essentially power politics, and with the exception of anti-Semitism, had no sinister bearings. When Germany was in a weakened state during the period of Weimar Republicanism, these ideas were adopted and perverted by Hitler. If this Germany had another individual come to power, it could have experienced a Chancellor Strasser or another Bismarck, that is to say a Philosopher King of sorts, and forever alter both its own and world history.

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[10] Ibid., p. 274.


[14] Ibid., p. 281.


[16] Ibid., p. 281.

[17] Ibid., p. 277.


[22] Ibid.


[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid. p.154.


[33] *Loc. cit.*

[34] *Loc. cit.*


[41] Ibid., p.8.


[45] Ibid.


[49] Ibid., p. 185.


The Great Man Theory suggests that leaders are born, not made. The world has gotten its current shape because of the influences of some big heroes. Some theorists, however, claim that these questions have already been answered by the Great Man Theory. In short, the Great Man Theory of leadership posits that great leaders are born, not made or trained. Individuals are born with certain traits or characteristics, and these characteristics are different in natural-born leaders compared to others or are only present in such leaders. These specific traits or characteristics enable them to lead people while they shape the pages of history. The Great Man Theory of leadership is not an empirically validated theory. What value then does the theory have and what might an aspiring leader learn from it? First, you must realize that despite the lack of scientific proof, the idea that leaders are born and not made is a commonly repeated mantra and is still debated, both inside and outside scholarly circles. Because of this, many individuals are reluctant to become leaders because they believe that they don’t have what it takes. It is therefore important to understand that, while it is true that some individuals possess qualities that ca:

The great man theory of history was initially proposed by Scottish philosopher and essayist Thomas Carlyle (1797–1881) in 1840 in a series of lectures, which were collected into a book in the following year. The examples that Carlyle gave fell into six categories, one for each lecture: The Hero as Divinity: Odin. The Hero as Prophet: Muhammed. The Hero as Poet: Dante Alighieri and William Shakespeare. The Hero as Priest: Martin Luther and John Knox. The term “Great Man” was used because, at the time, leadership was thought of primarily as a male quality, especially in terms of military leadership. According to contemporary theorists, leaders are not like other people. They do not need to be intellectually genius or omniscient prophets to succeed, but they definitely should have the right stuff which is not equally present in all people.

This orientation expresses an approach to the study of leadership known as the great man theory. Assumptions. The leaders are born and not made and possess certain traits which were inherited. Great leaders can arise when there is a great need. Theory. Much of the work on this theory was done in the 19th century and is often linked to the work of the historian Thomas Carlyle who commented on the great men or heroes of the history saying that “the history of the world is but the biography of great men.”